

Transforming the American South

Book Review by Wayne Lutton

The South, historically defined in black and white, is changing. While Hispanic (and Asian immigrants), legal and illegal combined, are increasing their numbers all over the United States, Census figures reveal an 87 percent increase in the Southern Hispanic population from 1990 to 2002. The South is now home to one-third of Hispanics living in the United States, second only to the West and more than the Northeast and the Midwest combined. North Carolina, Arkansas, Georgia, and Tennessee have the fastest-growing Hispanic populations in the nation, with four-to-six fold increases since 1990. Hispanic populations have tripled in Alabama, South Carolina, and Kentucky.

Louis Andrews and George McDaniel, two social scientists who are concerned with population dynamics, have just released a sobering study of the impact of mass immigration on the state of North Carolina. Based on recent government census data, they trace how the state's racial mix is changing and consider some of the consequences for the near and longer term.

North Carolina was settled in Colonial times by Scotch-Irish from Northern Ireland, who tended to be Presbyterians, as well as upper-class Englishmen from London and Bristol, and indentured servants from England. The first Africans arrived for agricultural labor in 1619. In 1860 they constituted approximately 36 percent of the state's population but declined to 25 percent a century later, due largely to out-migration to other states and regions of the country. In 1980, North Carolina remained an essentially bi-racial state. However, by 2002, large numbers of Hispanics and

Asians were residing in the Tar Heel state and their percentage of the population continues to rise. According to government figures, North Carolina leads the nation in percentage increase of the Hispanic population — 110

percent since 1980. As the authors remark, "Today American agribusiness, churches, and religious institutions welcome the low-skilled and unskilled of the world for the cheap labor they provide and the souls they present for salvation." They then go on to quote from biologist and ethicist Garrett Hardin's essay, "Free Immigration, the Enemy of Free Enterprise":

The businessman who imports labor from less developed countries is plugging shut the warning whistle. Each immigrant who comes in becomes the instant heir of all of the expensive infrastructure accumulated by generations of Americans. This structure includes public highways, the services of private enterprises, and the welfare function of the state.

In all fairness, the immigrant should "buy into the firm." He does not do it; nor does his employer buy in for him. Without paying a cent, the immigrant can instantly draw on the resources of public hospitals and schools which have been paid for over many years by tax-paying Americans. Moreover, the immigrant's demands are often increased by his family, generally large, which he imports or generates on the spot.

Andrews and McDaniel go on to point out that "tens of thousands of jobs traditionally held by blacks around the state have been taken over by Hispanics." As in other parts of the country, poultry processing plants are major employers of Hispanics.

The people they draw are swamping public service providers, especially schools and hospitals, and crowding

North Carolina's Demographic Transformation

by Louis Andrews

and George McDaniel

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Wayne Lutton, Ph.D., is editor of The Social Contract.

housing. They are also heavy contributors to crime. As the author's note, Hispanic males are four times as likely as whites to go to jail during their lifetimes and Hispanic females are jailed at almost double the rate of white females. And in the category of "hate crimes," an FBI study they cite revealed that two-thirds of the "hate crime" homicides of blacks officially attributed to white perpetrators were actually committed by Hispanics, who are regularly mis-categorized as whites in FBI crime statistics.

As elsewhere around the country, Hispanics in North Carolina constitute an alarming share of the drunk drivers. Half the NC Hispanic fatalities in the 16 to 35 year age group die in automobile accidents.

Hispanics play a major role in drug smuggling. Criminal gang activity has exploded in NC over the past decade. In Raleigh, the most recent police statistics

disclose that Mexicans made up 5.4 percent of the population but accounted for 46 percent of the drug-trafficking arrests. Mexican gangs fight with each other in turf wars as well as with black gangs. Asian gangs are now appearing. Laotian Hmong gangs are in the forefront of opium smuggling.

The authors argue that it is unlikely that Hispanics and Asians will assimilate. They quote sixties radical Todd Gitlin, who despairs over what many one-time supporters of a sort of "rainbow America" now recognize as "the twilight of common dreams." Instead of a happy multiracial society, mass immigration is leading to demographic Balkanization of a country wrecked by endemic ethnic conflict. Andrews and McDaniel see a bleak future for North Carolina's traditional white and black populations if mass immigration is not soon ended.