The Dawning of the Black New South: A Geo-Political, Social, and Cultural History of Black Atlanta, Georgia, 1966-1996

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Description

Title: The Dawning of the Black New South: A Geo-Political, Social, and Cultural History of Black Atlanta, Georgia, 1966-1996

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Located in northwestern Georgia, Atlanta combines the local color of its Southern heritage with the progressive spirit that enabled it to rebuild from the fires of war, triumph over racial intolerance, and become a thriving, cosmopolitan business and cultural center. The railroads were repaired, and new homes, businesses, and cultural and educational institutions sprang up. In 1877 Atlanta became the permanent capital of Georgia; in 1888 it adopted as its official symbol a phoenix rising from the ashes, as the city itself had done. In the last two decades of the twentieth century, the city's population more than doubled, to 90,000. The city's black population grew rapidly, and the early years of the century were marred by the racial intolerance common throughout the South. Atlanta (/ætˈlæntə/) is the capital of, and the most populous city in, the U.S. state of Georgia. With an estimated 2017 population of 486,290, it is also the 38th most-populous city in the United States. The city serves as the cultural and economic center of the Atlanta metropolitan area, home to 5.8 million people and the ninth-largest metropolitan area in the nation. Atlanta is the seat of Fulton County, the most populous county in Georgia. A small portion of the city extends eastward into

This dissertation seeks to provide an intraracial narrative history of African American politics and class tensions in Atlanta, Georgia from 1966, the year when black power movement forces emerged and helped to elect Maynard H. Jackson as Atlanta’s mayor to the 1996 Centennial Olympiad. Also, this study is an ambitious attempt to cultivate a newly emerging field called Black New South Studies, which, in many ways, parallels the field of African American Studies. Its research interests focus on the experiences of African Americans in the South with national and international implications as seen through a post-Civil Rights context. Grounded in primary sources, including extended interviews with black Atlantans and analyses of popular culture texts, this study grapples with the historiography of the new African American Urban History, African American Folk Culture and Resistance, and Hip Hop by charting various manifestations seen through the city’s rise from regional center to global commercial city. Indeed, Atlanta is a City representing the highest educational, political, and economic aspirations and achievements of African Americans over the past century and yet home to some of the roughest and most destitute black ghettos in the South and nation. As such it represents various interconnections and interactions between diverse black populations within the urban New South. The city’s old and powerful black middle class, along with a powerful white business elite, have long shaped New South politics. Yet in the latter half of the Twentieth Century, the majority of Atlanta’s black communities remained in abject poverty and gave way to some of the harshest socio-economic conditions in America at the behest of black city administrators. An important aspect of this dissertation rejects Atlanta’s “black Mecca” status. In doing so, a major dimension of this particular transformation is the role of Hip Hop culture as a counter-narrative to the evolution of Atlanta as a world-class commercial center. Specifically, the Dirty South Hip Hop Movement, manifested in such groups as OutKast and Goodie Mob, cultivated a counter movement that portrayed the experiences of the poor and homeless in Atlanta’s black ghettos as the underbelly of Atlanta’s rise to world fame and fortune. The music and lyrics demonstrate the inherent tensions within Atlanta’s black community as the city rose to newly found prestige and status provided these artists.