

Federalization of the Mosquito: Malaria and Public Health in the Southern United States, 1900-1945

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Abstract

Malaria was a significant problem in the southern United States during the early decades of the twentieth century. Part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal focused on economic development of the South, with improvement of public health in that region as an integral part. These increased federal public health efforts during the New Deal and World War II eras replaced some traditionally state and local areas of control. Efforts to "federalize" the mosquito encountered significant limitations, and never accomplished primary federal responsibility for the eradication of malaria. One federal agency in particular - the Office of Malaria Control in War Areas - institutionalized the federal response to malaria in the South during World War II. This assertion of wartime jurisdiction maintained only nominally the primacy of state authority.

The New Deal administrative state saw structural experimentation and innovation at a grand level; this study of federal efforts to combat malaria in the southern United States provides a good example. In one decade, federal efforts ranged from Works Progress Administration employment, experiments with scientific expertise within the Tennessee Valley Authority, federal intervention in civilian areas as a war strength rationale, and malaria control by federal appropriation. The most significant step resulted from reorganization of the New Deal administrative state under the Federal Security Agency, an independent agency of the U.S. government established pursuant to the Reorganization Act of 1939.

From a federalization perspective, a critical point is that the federal government initiated a malaria eradication effort with broad jurisdiction that helped reshape public perception of the federal government's responsibilities. It did so under a "national security" mandate that blurred the distinction between domestic and international security, with an effect on the federal government's regulatory power. But the federal government then withdrew from this wartime assertion of jurisdiction, leaving public health federalism largely unchanged.

Racial Equality on Trial in Atlanta during the 1930s

Maryan Soliman

Abstract

The Communist Party's (CP) sustained presence in the South, beginning in 1929, worried officials to no end. Southern states despised the Communists for agitating among workers and African Americans. In Atlanta, city officials used the insurrection statute against individuals found in possession of Communist literature or in attendance at meetings where Communist literature was present. This law, which had not been applied in over sixty years, made "attempting to incite insurrection" against the state of Georgia a capital offense. My paper will focus on the concerns over race that motivated legal actions and found their way into the courtroom. The case most closely associated with this wave of repression is that of Angelo Herndon, which reached the US Supreme Court. Herndon was a nineteen-year-old black Communist who was arrested after helping to organize a demonstration of the unemployed in 1932. Between the time of the first arrests under the insurrection statute in 1930 and the Supreme Court's decision that the law was unconstitutional in 1937, a Red Scare gripped Atlanta involving several raids and arrests. The state placed both the theoretical positions and practical work of the CP on trial. The prosecution's case against Herndon largely rested on citing the CP's black belt thesis, the position that African Americans residing in the black belt counties of the Deep South constituted an oppressed nation with the right to secede from the United States. Another substantial issue raised in Herndon's case and other legal proceedings was the CP's advocacy of racial equality. Atlanta officials and their supporters found thoroughly offensive the interracial meetings held by the CP and the party's slogans for social and political equality. The paper will explore the roots of these fears, as well as the conditions in the 1930s that worked to heighten anxieties.

**Scarlett's Rainbow:
Margaret Mitchell, Anti-Catholicism, & the Ku Klux Klan in Atlanta, 1920-1940**

Anders Walker

Abstract

This paper recovers the rise of the Ku Klux Klan to power on Atlanta's city council in the 1920s, showing how the organization's anti-Catholic platform engendered an unexpected response. Outraged at the Klan's Protestant bias, Margaret Mitchell, a Catholic, penned *Gone With the Wind*, a distorted plantation romance that fractured the ivory pedestal of southern white womanhood, even as it placed a bare-knuckled Catholic heroine at the center of the New South's rise.

Though steeped in tired racial stereotypes, Mitchell's novel nevertheless represented a bold case for "white" diversity, a protest against the Second Klan's claims to Protestant cultural hegemony in Georgia in the 1920s and 30s. Published in 1936, the work coincided with a larger surge of interest in pluralism and diversity in the South generally at the time, pioneered both by southern writers and folklorists. Just as Mitchell penned her book about Scarlett's stormy romance with the "swarthy," culturally ambiguous Rhett Butler, for example, so too did Guy B. Johnston, Howard Odum, and Zora Neale Hurston collect stories of remarkable diversity in the most remote of southern locales.

Though largely ignored by legal historians, southern pluralists like Mitchell, Odum, and Hurston, would come to forge a third way between Myrdalian integrationists and murderous Massive Resisters through the 1950s, ultimately setting the stage for a southern re-writing of constitutional law, forged in the paradigm not of racial equity but diversity, in 1978. Indeed, Supreme Court Justice Lewis F. Powell, Jr. – himself a southerner – would consecrate Mitchell's vision of white diversity in *Regents v. Bakke* by claiming that whites constituted a conglomeration of "various minority groups," including "Austrian resident aliens," "white Anglo-Saxon Protestants," and "Celtic Irishmen" – in short, Scarlett's people – many of whom "can lay claim to a history of prior discrimination at the hands of the State."¹

¹ *Regents v. Bakke*, 438 U.S. at 292, 295-96.