

A Mix of Motives: The Georgia Delegate Challenge to the 1968 Democratic Convention and the Dynamics of Intraparty Conflict*

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Abstract

Scholarly debates over the nature of political parties and the identity of their principal actors have been hampered by relative inattention to the historical processes of internal party change. This study, drawing on archival sources, interviews, and one of the co-author's personal experiences, analyzes the Georgia delegate challenge to the 1968 Democratic Convention as a case of internal party conflict generating lasting institutional reform, with implications for existing theories of party development, nominating politics, and democratic representation. In a convention marked by an unusually large number of challenges to state party delegations, the Georgia delegate challenge was unique. There, a conflict between the segregationist regulars and the moderate and liberal Democrats was complicated by an internal division in the latter camp between Hubert Humphrey and Eugene McCarthy supporters. The McCarthy forces' success in garnering a dominant position within the challenge delegation alienated many of the Georgia movement's organizers and leaders. The McCarthy campaign's takeover also linked this southern challenge both to the antiwar politics coloring the national nomination fight and to a particular conception of representation that would influence subsequent party reform efforts. In tracing the origins, dynamics, and aftermath of Georgia's delegate challenge, we show both that group- and candidate-driven efforts together shape party development over time, and that normative ideas concerning representation can play causal roles in party development.

At a Democratic Party Credentials Committee hearing on August 21, 1968, Julian Bond—a 27-year-old Georgia state legislator, civil rights advocate, and outspoken Vietnam War critic—testified on behalf of the challenge delegation he had been recruited to co-chair. Georgia's regular Democratic slate, Bond said, not only reflected blatant "racial exclusion" in the selection process, which was under the control of Georgia's segregationist governor Lester Maddox. It also comprised a group of people opposed to the "principles" of the national Democratic Party. By contrast, the challenge delegates, calling themselves the Georgia Loyal National Democrats (GLND), were committed both to the principle of nondiscrimination (they consisted of 22 black and 22 white delegates) and to the substantive agenda of the national party.¹ Such arguments

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¹ *The Presidential Nominating Conventions 1968* (Washington DC: Congressional Quarterly Service, 1968), 109.

were why the insurgent presidential contender Eugene McCarthy declared the Georgia challenge to be “the most important credentials fight in the history of Democratic conventions.”²

But Bond was not the only one to testify that day before the credentials committee in opposition to seating the Georgia regulars. Following the testimony of several challenge delegation members, Joseph Jacobs, the former secretary of a biracial Democratic reform coalition in Georgia that had been the organizational precursor to GLND, shared his thoughts while submitting a separate legal brief. Jacobs echoed the challengers’ case concerning the regulars’ discriminatory practices and national party disloyalty. But he also advised the committee, in one reporter’s paraphrase, “to check carefully before seating either group.”³ Because “outside partisan political workers” had managed to hijack the August 10 convention that selected the challenge delegates, Jacobs said, that delegation too failed to offer “true representation” for Georgia voters.⁴ Jacobs’ comments were widely, and rightly, interpreted as expressing Hubert Humphrey supporters’ belief that the McCarthy campaign had mounted a takeover of that challenge delegate convention, in the process destroying what had been a state-level civil rights and party-building effort of long standing to serve narrow campaign purposes.

The intra-progressive quarrel on display at that hearing in Chicago does more than lend nuance to the prevailing story of civil rights activists battling segregationist regulars found in many accounts of southern challenges in the 1960s.⁵ The tensions among the Georgia challengers also provide a window into broader processes of party development. Because the 1968 convention triggered a subsequent process of sweeping party reform, close attention to its dynamics can help scholars identify forces that drive institutional changes within parties over time. Such attention compels us to consider party change as a *process*, something that party scholarship, including the literature on party reform, has often neglected to do. The Georgia conflict suggests two points about such processes. First, the interpenetration of both group- and candidate-driven dynamics shapes party development over time. And secondly, normative ideas concerning voice and representation can play causal roles in such development.

The 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago, infamous for the violence on display outside the convention hall, exerted its larger impact on American party politics through the reform project it generated. The tumultuous three-way battle between the antiwar insurgent candidates, Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy, and Vice President Hubert Humphrey culminated in conflicts before and during the convention over the nomination itself and the substance of the party platform. The antiwar insurgents lost both fights definitively. But, as numerous chronicles have detailed, they managed ultimately to win an institutional battle over the party’s structure and procedures. The path from Chicago to the Commission on Party Structure and Delegate Selection (commonly known, and henceforth referred to here, as the

² Homer Bigart, “McCarthy Terms Delegate Test in Georgia Crucial to his Bid,” *The New York Times*, August 17, 1968.

³ Richard T. Cooper, “Floor Fight Threatens on Georgia Delegation,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 22, 1968.

⁴ *Presidential Nominating Conventions*, 109.

⁵ This story was echoed in several of the obituaries of Bond in the wake of his death in 2015. See, e.g., Roy Reed, “Julian Bond, Charismatic Civil Rights Leader, Dies at 75,” *The New York Times*, August 16, 2015.

McGovern-Fraser Commission), which would transform the presidential nominating process in both parties, was partly paved by the record number of credentials challenges filed in 1968.

Georgia was one of six southern states that saw credentials challenges that year, and one of only two (along with Mississippi) where some challengers won seats in Chicago. Georgia also shared with another southern state, Alabama, the experience of internal tension among anti-regular forces resulting in a three-way party split in the state. But Georgia was unique in the extent to which a particular candidate campaign intervened in the state delegate selection process.

The conflicts among Georgia reformers broke out in the open at the August 10 convention in Macon to select challenge delegates. The convention was organized by the Georgia Democratic Forum, a biracial and loyalist group that stemmed from a working alliance between labor and religious officials. Macon also included individuals who were engaged in anti-Vietnam War efforts as well as support for McCarthy's presidential bid. Many of these latter participants advanced a particular conception of intraparty democracy, in which delegates would be bound to the preferences of their voters, that would ultimately prove central to the McGovern-Fraser Commission's participatory reform project.

At a moment of renewed attention to questions of party procedure and legitimacy, Georgia's 1968 delegate challenge speaks to ongoing debates over the nature of parties and the dynamics of partisan change—over which actors are the principals and which are the agents in carrying out party activity. Two contending theories posit that parties should be understood, respectively, as teams of politicians seeking office or as coalitions of organized groups seeking particular policies from the state.⁶ The nomination process has served as an arena for testing whether ambitious office-seekers or policy-demanding groups occupy the driver's seat.⁷ Differing views on the identity of parties' principals, moreover, produce differing accounts of party change over time. In candidate-centered accounts, changes in the demographic characteristics and issue opinions of voters generate shifts in party position and behavior, as politicians adjust to sustain their electoral appeal.⁸ In group theories, changes in the identity, influence, and allegiances of interest groups, movements, and activists explain those same changes in party behavior, as the balance of factional power within each party shifts.⁹

⁶ See, respectively, John Aldrich, *Why Parties? A Second Look* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); and Kathleen Bawn et al, "A Theory of Parties: Groups, Policy Demanders, and Nominations in American Politics," *Perspectives on Politics* 10 (September 2012): 571-597.

⁷ Marty Cohen, David Karol, Hans Noel, and John Zaller, *The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

⁸ Within the vast literature assessing partisan change over time chiefly as responses to electoral and demographic shifts, a minority of works take care to include factional conflicts and disagreement over strategy as important components of that process. See, e.g. Mark D. Brewer and Jeffrey M. Stonecash, *Dynamics of American Political Parties* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); and Robert Mason, *The Republican Party and American Politics From Hoover to Reagan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁹ David Karol, *Party Position Change in American Politics: Coalition Management* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Hans Noel, *Political Ideologies and Political Parties in America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Chris Baylor, *First to the Party: The Group Origins of Political Transformation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).

The party change that both theories seek to explain relates chiefly to party formation and agenda development, however, and only secondarily to the kinds of structural changes in the internal workings of parties exemplified by the McGovern-Fraser reforms. When candidate-centered and group-centered theorists do attend to parties' institutional reforms, they depict them as the byproduct of their respective principals' pursuit of existing goals (elective office in the first case, policy outcomes in the second) under changed circumstances. And so John Aldrich interprets the McGovern-Fraser reforms as a belated institutional adaptation to the rise of candidate-centered electoral politics, while the so-called "UCLA school" of group-oriented party theorists argue (though only implicitly) that ascendant groups in the Democratic coalition seized on the popular illegitimacy of the old practices to implement reforms beneficial to them.¹⁰ Missing from such accounts is the contested process by which such change is brought about, and the role played by normative arguments over democracy and representation in such struggles. While party theorists largely neglect to explain the occurrence or dynamics of internally generated party reform, moreover, the scholarship assessing the McGovern-Fraser reforms specifically has neglected to ground their analyses in broader theories of party and party development. Scholarly engagement with those reforms has consisted largely of critical assessments of their impact rather than general explanations for when and why parties undergo such reform processes.¹¹ The need remains for a developmental account of party reform.

The particular dynamics of Georgia's delegate challenge in 1968 are what make the event useful for theory-building. Candidate- and group-centered theories might distinctly explain the emergence of a participatory party reform project in 1968 as the byproduct, respectively, of either candidate campaigns' frustrations with procedural obstacles to the nomination or a powerful antiwar social movement pressing for procedural reforms that would strengthen their position within the party. But the conflict among anti-regular forces in Georgia reveals the presence of both strategic candidate interests *and* group dynamics. Social movements jostling over party direction via nomination politics in Georgia coincided and interacted with the opportunistic tactics of campaign operations, much to the chagrin of some of those participants. Individuals acted out of diverse motivations. Their behavior shows not only that the effects of group politics

¹⁰ Aldrich, *Why Parties?*, 266-287; Cohen, Karol, Noel, and Zaller, *The Party Decides*, 157-161.

¹¹ Leading examples of this critical literature include Jeane Kirkpatrick, *Dismantling the Parties: Reflections on Party Reform and Party Decomposition* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute, 1978); Byron E. Shafer, *Quiet Revolution: The Struggle for the Democratic Party and the Shaping of Post-Reform Politics* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1983); and Nelson Polsby, *Consequences of Party Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983). Two works in this tradition that do engage broader questions concerning the structural conditions and intellectual contexts that generate processes of party reform over time are Austin Ranney, *Curing the Mischief of Faction: Party Reform in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); and James W. Ceaser, *Presidential Selection: Theory and Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979). More sympathetic evaluations of McGovern-Fraser can be found in William J. Crotty, *Decision for the Democrats: Reforming the Party Structure* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); David Plotke, "Party Reform as Failed Democratic Renewal in the United States, 1968-1972," *Studies in American Political Development* 10 (1996): 223-288; and Adam Hilton, "The Politics Insurgents Make: Reconstructive Reformers in U.S. and U.K. Postwar Party Development," *Polity* 51.3 (2019): 559-596.

and candidate ambition on party dynamics are hardly mutually exclusive, and often inextricably linked. It also shows that those interactions can drive party development over time, generating meaningful institutional reforms and shifting the durable balance of authority among partisan actors.¹²

Taking the internal dynamics of party development seriously also means taking the normative ideas used by the participants in that development seriously.¹³ As suggested in the talk about “true representation” during the Georgia challengers’ Credentials Committee hearing in Chicago, debates over party procedures and decision-making usually involve claims about whose voice should count and with what kinds of influence on party behavior.¹⁴ A commitment to a “delegate” or “mandate” conception of representation—in which national convention participants would be bound to honor the candidate preferences of the ordinary party voters who selected them—powerfully colored the McGovern-Fraser project. Georgia’s experience sheds light on how the factional dynamics of the 1968 nomination fight helped ensure the triumph of that conception over rival views, with important long-term implications for party politics. The candidate-specific interests of the McCarthy campaign, seeking delegates in Chicago who would support his nomination, inclined activists working on his behalf in Georgia to support making candidate preference an explicit component of the delegate selection process. Other longstanding activists in the homegrown movement to challenge the state party’s segregationist regulars, for their part, resisted the intrusion of candidate politics into the process and advocated a “trustee” conception of representation. These debates over rival theories of representation and their place in internal party politics continue to resonate to the present day, heard, for example, in the contemporary Democratic conflict over so-called “superdelegates” and their legitimacy.

All told, the distinctive dynamics of the Georgia case in 1968 provide a useful site for bridging party theory and historical analysis. Actors associated with numerous movements—labor, civil rights, and antiwar—operated simultaneously and in conjunction with specific candidates’ campaign efforts in Georgia, and their interactions helped to shape the trajectory of party developments at both the state and national levels. Georgia’s 1968 delegation challenge demonstrates the churn, factional strife, and mix of instrumental and ideational motivations and of candidate-centered and movement-driven agendas that can shape party development.¹⁵

The rest of the article tracks intraparty developments in Georgia before, during, and after 1968, attending both to the key actors driving the developments and the implications of their normative debate over party representation. One of the authors, Nancy Schwartz, participated

¹² Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek define political development writ large as a durable shift in governing authority, in *The Search for American Political Development* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹³ For an argument for the causal importance of ideas in analyses of party development, see Daniel Schlozman and Sam Rosenfeld, “Prophets of Party in American Political History,” *The Forum* 15.4 (2017): 685-709, esp. 690-691.

¹⁴ For discussions of the role played by normative views of political procedure—and representation in particular—in party reform efforts, see Ranney, *Curing the Mischiefs of Faction*; Ceaser, *Presidential Selection*; and William J. Crotty, “The Philosophies of Party Reform,” in *Party Renewal in America: Theory and Practice*, ed. Gerald Pomper (Praeger: New York, 1980), 31-50.

¹⁵ In this sense our account resonates with the ecumenical approach to conceptualizing party activity offered by Marjorie Randon Hershey and Edward M. Burmila, “Introduction,” in *Guide to U.S. Parties*, ed. Marjorie Randon Hershey (Washington DC: CQ Press, 2014), especially 5-6.

in McCarthy campaign efforts in Georgia in the summer of 1968. This account draws on Schwartz's personal papers,¹⁶ archival collections housed in repositories in Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, Texas, and Washington, DC, an interview with a fellow participant in the McCarthy effort in Georgia, contemporaneous journalistic accounts, and secondary sources. The article first details pre-1968 party-building efforts among Georgian anti-Maddox forces. It then assesses the state-level challenge convention in Macon as well as the Georgia delegation's experience in Chicago. A concluding discussion surveys the broader legacy of these developments both for party practice and normative views of representation, using the contemporary debate over superdelegates as an entry point for an argument about legitimating modes of representation and intraparty authority that diverge from strict "delegate" conceptions.

The Road to '68

When Bond and Jacobs offered their partially conflicting testimony at that August Credentials Committee hearing in Chicago, their remarks were accompanied by two separate legal briefs filed in challenge of the Maddox-led regular delegation. Both briefs included arguments based on procedural problems with the delegate selection process in Georgia as well as other arguments grounded in the principle of loyalty to the national party and its nominee. The GLND brief endorsed by Bond emphasized the former, however, while that of the activists who had dropped out of the delegation in frustration emphasized the latter.¹⁷ This contrast had a history, stemming from complex political dynamics in both Georgia specifically and the South more broadly. Since the 1940s, an effort led by labor organizers and civic and religious activists had encouraged Democratic party participation that would accommodate the "New South" in Georgia and bridge the programmatic and procedural divide between the state Democratic party and the national one.¹⁸ Such a project had corollaries in several other southern states, and drew on support from liberal Democrats across the country. The struggle against Jim Crow provided the fulcrum for efforts to remake southern parties in the national party's image while challenging that party's highly decentralized structure.

The event that set in motion two decades of sectional conflict at national Democratic conventions came in 1948, when insurgent liberal activists led by Minnesota Senate hopeful Hubert Humphrey succeeded in getting a forceful civil rights plank added to the platform via floor vote. This prompted four southern state delegations to bolt and mount a third-party presidential bid that fall, while provoking a more protracted struggle over the propriety of so-called "loyalty oaths" aimed at southern national committee members and convention delegates in the ensuing years.¹⁹ Such efforts culminated in a dramatic fight over the credentials challenge

¹⁶ Referred to here as Nancy L. Schwartz, "Georgia Papers," author's possession, Middletown, CT.

¹⁷ See Series 2: Box 42, Folder 8 and Box 43, Folder 1, Eliza K. Paschall Papers, 1932-1988, Emory University Rose Library, Atlanta, GA.

¹⁸ Tim S. R. Boyd, *Georgia Democrats, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Shaping of the New South* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2012), esp. 6 and 43-44. See also, C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1951).

¹⁹ For a useful account of the controversy, see Abraham Holtzman, "Party Responsibility and Loyalty: New Rules in the Democratic Party," *Journal of Politics* Vol.22 (1960): 485-501.

launched by the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) at the 1964 Democratic Convention in Atlantic City, which ended in a short-term compromise over delegate seating but a long-term victory for institutional change within the party.²⁰ Delegates in Atlantic City passed a Call to the 1968 Convention that included newly explicit affirmation that state delegations would have to both practice nondiscrimination and “cast their election ballots for the Presidential and Vice Presidential nominees selected by said Convention.”²¹ The convention also voted to establish a Special Equal Rights Committee in the Democratic National Committee (DNC) to study racial discrimination in state parties and make appropriate recommendations for reform.

The postwar party struggles manifested in conflicts like the MFDP challenge recurred in on-the-ground civil rights and party building efforts across the South. In Georgia, the “Old South” was represented by the regular Democrats who had held statewide office for decades, except for two short intervals out of power in the 1940s and 1960s. Upholding racial segregation in law and mores, Eugene Talmadge and his son Herman led a Georgia party machine that elected governors, Senators, members of Congress, mayors, and county officials.²² Drawing its base from rural Georgians, the machine benefitted from the county-unit system of government that overrepresented rural residents.

“Aroused citizens” interrupted the Regulars’ rule by electing the liberal Ellis Arnall for Governor in 1943 and the more centrist Carl Sanders in 1963.²³ Arnall opened the Georgia gubernatorial primary to African-Americans in accordance with the Supreme Court’s 1944 decision in *Smith V. Allwright*, sparking a backlash that helped lose him his renomination in 1946. He stepped back into gubernatorial politics two decades later, running in the 1966 primary once again as the candidate of liberal and moderate, national-party-supporting Democrats (known in the state as Loyalists) against the segregationist restaurateur, Lester Maddox.

With the passage of the federal Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act as well as Barry Goldwater’s victory in Georgia in the 1964 presidential election fresh in memories, questions concerning loyalty to the national party loomed large in this contest. Arnall lost narrowly to Maddox, who went on to win another narrow victory in the general election. Maddox’s state party chairman, James Gray, had supported Republican Dwight Eisenhower for President in 1952 and 1956 and Goldwater in 1964, and in due time would signal that the party he led would back American Independent candidate George Wallace in 1968.²⁴

²⁰ See Lisa Anderson Todd, *For a Voice and the Vote: My Journey with the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2014).

²¹ Reprinted in report by Joe Rauh and Mildred Jeffrey to the Special Equal Rights Committee, February 1, 1967, Box 19, Folder “DNC/Equal Rights Committee—Gov. Hughes,” W. Marvin Watson Office Files, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, TX.

²² V. O. Key, Jr. *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (NY: Vintage, Random House, 1949), 106-120.

²³ Key, *Southern Politics*, 124-129.

²⁴ “Maddox Wearing a Wallace Button,” n.d.; “Secret Wallace Meeting Confirmed by Maddox,” *Atlanta Constitution*, June 17, 1968; “Democrat on List is Working for Wallace,” *Atlanta Journal*, July 5, 1968; Eliza Paschall note, “It is certain that the Dixiecrats aren’t going to support the Democratic party nationally;” Lester Maddox quoted on McCarthy and Humphrey as “the gold dust twins,” in Achsah Nesmith, “Selection of Agnew Declared Pointing Up Sanders,” *Atlanta Constitution*, August 9, 1968; newspaper clippings in Paschall Papers.

Maddox's primary victory compelled Loyalists to organize a write-in campaign for Arnall in the general election as well as found an alternative party forum to the regular state party. In 1966, Write-In Georgia (WIG) was conceived by three women to put Arnall back on the ballot. At least 50,000 valid write-in votes were cast, a significant showing of 5.5% of the total votes, with perhaps another 18,000 deemed invalid.²⁵

Two men who had participated in the WIG effort, Edward Thomas (Al) Kehrer and the Rev. John B. Morris, were key founders of the Georgia Democratic Forum (GDF) the following year.²⁶ Since Georgia did not have a presidential nominating primary, the GDF called for a convention, open to rank-and-file Democrats, to choose a slate of delegates to the national convention in 1968. Declaring themselves Loyalists to the national Democratic Party, willing to follow its choice of a candidate, they issued a call for a statewide convention in Macon for August 10, 1968.²⁷ Leaflets and ads in the media invited individuals from all walks of life to attend. Some prominent African American organizations, including the Georgia Voters League and the Georgia Association of Citizens' Democratic Clubs, also endorsed the GDF.²⁸

GDF co-founders Kehrer and Morris came to hold contrasting views of trustee and delegate representation. Al Kehrer had worked in the South as a labor organizer since the 1950s, initially as the Southeastern Regional Director of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union. In 1965 he became the Southern Director of the AFL-CIO's Civil Rights Department in Atlanta. Originally from Michigan, he played a steadfast role in Georgia's labor and civil rights movements.²⁹ John B. Morris, minister of an Atlanta church, founded the Episcopal Society for Cultural and Racial Unity to promote civil rights in the South.³⁰ Born in Brunswick, Georgia, Morris's work spanned several southern and border states. Kehrer and Morris came eventually to be at odds in 1968 about their candidate preferences and their normative outlooks on party nominating procedures.

Kehrer's participation in GDF embodied alliances between organized labor and civil rights activism in the state. The labor movement in which Kehrer and other GDF organizers worked had long been a progressive force in Georgia politics, just as the populist farmers alliances had been a century before.³¹ The labor movement did not act on the Democratic Party solely as an organized interest group making particularistic demands.³² Nor did labor concentrate on distributional benefits rather than broader social justice issues, despite being an older

²⁵ Boyd, *Georgia Democrats*, 178.

²⁶ Boyd, *Georgia Democrats*, 172-183.

²⁷ Leaflet, "Attend. Participate. Georgia Convention of Loyal National Democrats. Dempsey Hotel, Macon, Ga. 10 a.m., August 10, 1968," in Paschall Papers.

²⁸ Boyd, *Georgia Democrats*, 176.

²⁹ E. T. Kehrer, Biography, A Guide to His Papers, Georgia State University Library, Atlanta, GA <http://digitalcollections.library.gsu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/findingaids/id/1955>

³⁰ John B. Morris Papers, Biographical Note, Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies, University of Georgia Libraries, Athens, GA <http://russelldoc.galib.uga.edu/russell/view?docId=ead/RBRL126JBM-ead.xml>

³¹ Laurence Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

³² Cf. Bawn et al, "A Theory of Parties."

movement.³³ Rather, labor worked alongside non-unionized individuals in political alliances that lasted beyond 1968.

Civil rights-related conflicts like the MFDP dispute were a precursor to more potent intraparty tumult later in the 1960s. Lyndon Johnson's military escalation in Vietnam damaged his authority over the Great Society's congressional coalitions and sparked a mass antiwar movement that gravitated to the New Left's critical analysis of elite institutional power in society. For those not radicalized to the point of rejecting party politics altogether, the movement prompted a series of tumultuous intraparty conflicts. A "Dump Johnson" effort targeting the 1968 election gained strength throughout 1966 and 1967, and McCarthy entered the race in November. McCarthy's showing in the New Hampshire primary, followed by Kennedy's entrance into the race, prompted Johnson's stunning decision to drop out. Vice President Humphrey quickly emerged as the candidate of continuity for the administration. The ensuing Democratic turmoil helped generate a long-term process of institutional change in the party system.

From Macon to Chicago

The way that this process unfolded in Georgia involved not only the civil rights and labor movements, but also the anti-war movement, national candidate campaigns, *and* state-level factional dynamics. Actors working in these five contexts did not carry out their efforts in isolation or exclusion of each other. Intra-party alliances, cross-pressures, and conflicts abounded, even as numerous individuals largely unaffiliated with any of these sets of actors also went to the Macon convention and then to Chicago as challenge delegates.

Civil rights activists and anti-war figures both played roles in the Macon convention and subsequent challenge delegation. Georgia, and especially Atlanta, was a mecca of the national civil rights movement. The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. had his church there, and both the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) were founded in Georgia. African-American activists attending the GDF convention at Macon would include SNCC's John Lewis and Benjamin D. Brown, a state representative whose lifelong political home would be the Democratic Party. State-wide, future leaders included the Rev. Charles Sherrod of the movement to desegregate Albany, the lawyer Jack Ruffin who integrated the Augusta Bar Association, and state representative and later state senator Julian Bond, another SNCC co-founder.³⁴ (Brown, at Clark College, and Bond, at Morehouse State, had both taken leading roles in Atlanta's student sit-ins and demonstrations starting in 1960). Embodying the growing links between civil rights and anti-war advocacy, Bond gained notoriety in 1966 by being stripped of his Georgia House seat due to critical remarks about the Vietnam War, and had his position reinstated by the United States Supreme Court. The movement against American involvement in Vietnam had been building nationally in the later 1960s, and key figures such as Curtis Gans, co-organizer of the Dump Johnson movement,

³³ Cf. Bruce Miroff, "Movement Activists and Partisan Insurgents," *Studies in American Political Development* 21.7 (2007): 92-109.

³⁴ "The Georgia Delegation of Loyal National Democrats to the 1968 Democratic National Convention," August 1968, delegate list, in Schwartz, "Georgia Papers;" Boyd, *Georgia Democrats*, 123.

and Sam Brown, a National Student Association leader from Iowa, would come to Georgia just prior to the Macon convention.³⁵

In the spring, Humphrey tried and failed to win the support of the Regulars in Georgia, meeting with James Gray and Phil Campbell, the state party chairman and the commissioner of agriculture. During subsequent months of the presidential nominating season, Humphrey did not come to Georgia to campaign, partly because the delegate selection process was a closed and governor-dominated affair, and also perhaps because he did not want to get involved in the developing intraparty fight.³⁶

By contrast, the McCarthy for President campaign saw in the efforts of the GDF and in the activity leading up to the Macon convention a rich opportunity to build delegate support for their bid in Chicago. The campaign sent a paid organizer, Charles Negaro, to Georgia for the summer. The Connecticut native had worked for McCarthy in five state primaries.³⁷ From Atlanta, Negaro now formed “Georgians for McCarthy,” issued press releases on the candidate’s activities, and raised funds for media coverage.³⁸ Upon learning of the upcoming Macon convention called by the GDF, he focused on it. Meanwhile, in the northeast of the state, University of Georgia professors Phinizy Spalding and Robert Griffith founded a Clarke County McCarthy for President Organization, opening a storefront in Athens.³⁹ From the state’s southeast, the Rev. James Hooten of Savannah stopped by the Atlanta headquarters in early August, later to become co-chair of the challenge delegation.⁴⁰ Local support for McCarthy came at first from professionals, some college administrators, a few college students, and clergy.

The McCarthy campaign’s decision to divide the state into its ten Congressional Districts was key, ensuring geographic representation of urban and rural areas among their supporters at the Macon convention. The GDF had done this as well, choosing district leaders and asking people to be delegates. Nancy Schwartz, a volunteer from New York who had worked in the Brooklyn primary, telephoned around the state using the names of political friends of early McCarthy supporters. She also drew on her knowledge of some civil rights activists. A map and spiral notebook with each C.D. featured key cities and towns and over 100 contacts.⁴¹ In her calls, Schwartz stressed that people would be involved in something big and exciting, affecting national as well as state politics. People responded to this, wanting to be part of something larger than themselves. The campaign broadened as it planned to assist working people to come to Macon in buses and carpools, offering bus tickets, gas mileage, and a chicken dinner.

In networking the state, Schwartz often relied on advice relayed via Negaro from Eliza Paschall. Paschall was a middle-aged white woman who advocated for dialogue on race and

³⁵ “Macon,” notebook on the Congressional districts and other notes, Schwartz, “Georgia Papers.”

³⁶ Boyd, *Georgia Democrats*, 190-191; James A. Wechsler, “Of HHH, Maddox, and McCarthy,” *New York Post*, August 13, 1968.

³⁷ Authors’ interview with Charles J. Negaro, May 2, 2016, Middletown, CT, recorded by Sam Rosenfeld.

³⁸ Schwartz, “Georgia Papers.”

³⁹ Boyd, *Georgia Democrats*, 191, 195; Clarke County (Ga.) McCarthy for President Records, Richard B. Russell library for Political Research and Studies, University of Georgia
<http://russelldoc.galib.uga.edu/russell/view?docId=ead/RBRL050MPCC-ead.xml;query=:brand=default>

⁴⁰ “Macon, C.D. 1,” Schwartz, “Georgia Papers.”

⁴¹ “Macon,” spiral notebook with 10 C.D.’s, 36 pp., Schwartz, “Georgia Papers.”

human relations in Georgia and was active in civic organizations pushing for the vote, school funding, public housing, integration, and women's issues.⁴² She served on the Greater Atlanta Council on Human Relations, was president of the Georgia League of Women's Voters, and worked as the national secretary of the National Organization of Women (NOW). Her paid job was as a compliance officer on the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in Atlanta. Paschall is an example of an important state and local actor who did not fit discretely into one category of social movements.

In the year preceding the Macon convention, the GDF reached out to Democratic Loyalists in the state. GDF members were motivated to open up the Georgia Democratic Party to new individuals and to fight for civil rights. The GDF recruited people to be district leaders at the Macon convention and possible delegates to the national one. When informed of a possible GDF challenge to the Regular delegation, Richard Hughes, chair of the national DNC Credentials Committee, said they were only considering challenges from Alabama and Mississippi. Morris, and separately Spalding and Griffith, sent letters in protest, and Hughes changed his mind, allowing the Georgia challenge.⁴³

In the weeks immediately preceding Macon, the national McCarthy campaign sent staff to Georgia. They crisscrossed the state, speaking at rallies and radio shows and meeting with local leaders. Field organizer David Mixner visited Albany, Tifton, Waycross, and Alma in South Georgia, and youth coordinator Sam Brown was to visit Savannah and Columbus, among others.⁴⁴ Curt Gans and attorney Stephan A. Mitchell planned strategy for a floor fight at the Macon convention, and Brown mediated staff conflicts in the Atlanta office.

The campaign also sent Ivanhoe Donaldson, a SNCC activist from Washington, DC, to talk with Julian Bond. Donaldson had helped Bond's 1965 election to the Georgia House of Representatives. He now convinced him to participate in the challenge. Earlier in the summer, others had tried to interest Bond, who had declined.⁴⁵ Negaro thinks Donaldson might have made the case to Bond that it would help him politically and build momentum for his career. Bond joined. Others who were active in Georgia politics, such as Jimmy Carter, who wanted to run for Governor, and Maynard Jackson, eyeing a mayoral run in Atlanta, declined, probably not wanting to lose potential white voters in those races.

The 600 to 750 attendees at the Macon convention were white and black, male and female, white-collar teachers, university staff, government workers, laborers and members of unions, Church members and religious leaders, businesspeople, and a few college students. The civil rights movement in Georgia and the anti-war sentiment spreading nationally added focus and intensity to decades of struggle within the state about what it meant to be a loyal Democrat. Some participants like Griffith, who became a floor leader at Macon but would decline to serve on the GDF board, identified themselves as advocates of the "new politics" given their interest in

⁴² Paschall Papers, Biographical Note.

⁴³ Boyd, *Georgia Democrats*, 191.

⁴⁴ David Mixner, "NAACP, Julian Bond, and Me," *Hell's Kitchen Journal*, May 20, 2012, <http://www.davidmixner.com/2012/05/hells-kitchen-journal-naacp-julian-bond-and-me.html>; on Brown's travels, see "Macon," notebook in Schwartz, "Georgia Papers."

⁴⁵ Negaro, interview with authors.

radically opening up party procedures, but most people by contrast wanted to form a strong party organization.⁴⁶

The convention split between McCarthy and Humphrey supporters has been estimated between 60-to-40 and 75-to-25 in favor of McCarthy.⁴⁷ Not all participants were committed to a candidate, and even some people recruited by the McCarthy campaign were for Humphrey or uncommitted. But with skillful floor maneuvers, the McCarthy camp magnified its strength. Members from each of the 10 C.D.'s met and elected 4 proposed delegates and 4 alternates, as well as 5 at-large alternate delegates.⁴⁸ The delegation renamed itself the Georgia Loyal National Democrats and counted a majority in favor of McCarthy on its 12-member executive board.⁴⁹ The overall delegation was evenly divided racially, which contrasted with Governor Maddox's hand-picked slate of 64 + 3 delegates, of whom 3 were black.⁵⁰ But McCarthy supporters' domination of the challenge group left GDF leaders like Kehrer profoundly disturbed. After the convention, he resigned as head of the GLND delegation (although he stayed on as head of the GDF).

The McCarthy campaign's efforts at Macon surprised Kehrer and violated his sense of fair play. Writing to Al Barkan of the national AFL-CIO, he said that up until a week before the convention, the local McCarthy leaders "had agreed, with only one exception I can recall, that the delegation should have a majority of Humphrey delegates, with a good representation of McCarthy and uncommitted; that in this way we would have a better chance to reach the issues before the Credentials Committee of the Convention." But Rauh and Gans arrived in town on August 9, and "by that night all the understandings we had made with the local leadership had evaporated. Rauh told me that night they were going to get just as many McCarthy delegates as they possibly could."⁵¹ For Kehrer, this opening of the party to new actors was also seen as a closing of the party to others, such as workers and unions. This presaged a later trend for the national Democratic Party.

The brief to the credentials committee filed by GLND signaled a shift in emphasis away from discussion of national party loyalty and toward criticisms of the closed nature of the delegation selection process in Georgia and its racial impact. As Bond and his GLND co-chair Hooten put it in a press release following the Macon convention, "the question of loyalty is important, but it is not the primary basis for the challenge... [T]he question of Maddox's loyalty has brought to a head the undemocratic, unjust, and inequitable system by which delegates to the Convention are selected."⁵²

⁴⁶ Boyd, *Georgia Democrats*, 195.

⁴⁷ Homer Bigart, "McCarthy Terms Delegate Test in Georgia Crucial to His Bid," *New York Times*, August 17, 1968, citing McCarthy.

⁴⁸ "The Georgia Delegation of Loyal National Democrats to the 1968 Democratic National Convention," mimeo., 4 pp., Schwartz, "Georgia Papers."

⁴⁹ Two lists of the Executive Board members, Paschall Papers.

⁵⁰ "Georgia's Delegates to the Democratic National Convention," mimeo., 2 pp., in Schwartz, "Georgia Papers."

⁵¹ Al Kehrer, Memo to Al Barkan, AFL-CIO, August 12, 1968, Box 44, Folder "Political 1968 Democratic National Convention Credentials Committee," James O'Hara Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

⁵² Julian Bond and James Hooten statement, August 12, 1968, Paschall Papers.

This rhetoric connected the Georgia challengers to a set of critiques flowing from both the McCarthy campaign and the movement activists it attracted in the spring and summer of 1968. In state after state, activists working for the insurgent candidacies of McCarthy and Kennedy encountered obstacles in the form of closed, impermeable state party procedures—not only procedural irregularities and arbitrary actions by local officials, but the impenetrable quality of the system itself. Frustration over such obstacles drove an effort by McCarthy activists in Connecticut to launch a national ad hoc commission of Democratic officials that catalogued inequities and inadequacies in delegate selection procedures throughout the country. Julian Bond was a member of this commission, whose report, entitled *The Democratic Choice*, presaged much of the argument laid out eventually by McGovern-Fraser.⁵³ Simultaneously, those same frustrations resulted in a record number of credentials challenges brought to Chicago in August—seventeen in total, covering fifteen states.⁵⁴

Most Deep South states faced challenges over alleged violations of the Call to the Convention's strong provisions on racial discrimination. The drama of the MFDP fight four years earlier and the subsequent work of the Special Equal Rights Committee helped ensure that both McCarthy and Humphrey endorsed the 1968 challenge of the Mississippi regulars.⁵⁵ The Credentials Committee upheld the Mississippi challenge and meted out partial victories to challengers from Alabama and Georgia.⁵⁶ The Alabama regulars were seated, but only on condition of signing a loyalty oath. The Georgia delegation's seats were split evenly between the Maddox regulars and the GLND—prompting the bulk of the Maddox forces to walk out of the convention in protest. The Credentials Committee rejected all of the challenges from non-southern states, but passed a resolution calling for the DNC to establish a new commission to study delegate selection practices and recommend improvements based on participatory principles.⁵⁷

Those principles were connected to a normative view of representation and intraparty democracy that led ultimately to the delegitimization of a contrasting view. This debate was already at work in Georgia's intra-Loyalist conflicts in 1968. During the Macon convention, Al Kehrer applied a trustee view of representation, wanting the attendees to be loyal to the national

⁵³ Commission on the Democratic Selection of Presidential Nominees, *The Democratic Choice* (New York, 1968).

⁵⁴ *The Presidential Nominating Conventions, 1968*, 88, 96–131.

⁵⁵ Aaron Henry, letter to John Bailey, July 17, 1968, Box 29, Folder “Democratic Party: Democratic Convention, 1968: Credentials Contest: Mississippi,” Joseph L. Rauh, Jr., Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

⁵⁶ One other southern state challenge, in Alabama, resembled Georgia in its experience of three-way factionalization. Three full Alabama delegations vied for recognition before the Credentials Committee: so-called regulars, who supported George Wallace; a group of moderate white Wallace critics who actually controlled the formal state party; and a predominantly African-American independent group called the National Democratic Party of Alabama (NDPA). Although endorsed at the Chicago convention by the McCarthy campaign and dismissed by the Alabama regulars and moderates alike as a “McCarthy front group,” the NDPA had roots in Black Power-influenced political organizing that predated the 1968 campaign and lasted several years beyond it. The McCarthy campaign appears to have been less directly involved in building the NDPA's challenge delegation than it had been in Georgia, and thus Alabama does not present the same case of candidate- and movement-centered tactics interacting. See Steven F. Lawson, *In Pursuit of Power: Southern Blacks and Electoral Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press), 115–117; and *The Presidential Nominating Conventions*, 120.

⁵⁷ *The Presidential Nominating Conventions*, 199–200.

party and open to the deliberations of the national convention in order to act in the interests of the constituents.⁵⁸ Many but not all of the initial GDF members were for Humphrey, who was expected to be nominated. Kehrer saw the actions of the McCarthy campaign at Macon as a hostile “partisan takeover” in part because he believed that delegates should be free to act and vote according to their own political judgment.⁵⁹ He thus believed in an interactive model of representation, one that echoes scholarly arguments against direct democracy and emphasizes the time and space allowed by representative systems for officials and constituents to get to know each other and develop shared judgments.⁶⁰ Kehrer did not want the representatives to be bound as delegates to a one-time choice of constituents.

Kehrer’s fellow GDF founder John Morris held a more delegate or mandate view of representation.⁶¹ In this view, specific people coming to the Macon convention could demand that their preferred candidate be represented. (Morris stayed on the Executive Committee of the delegation as its majority went for McCarthy, and his wife sent a contribution to the local campaign for McCarthy).⁶² Morris’s logic was echoed by Bond, Hooten, and the other GLND leaders. As a GLND press release put it in the aftermath of Kehrer’s and other critics’ resignations, “once the grounds for challenge had been fulfilled,” participants in the Macon convention had “rightfully proceeded to elect its delegates to the Democratic National Convention, who are to help choose the nominee of the Democratic Party for President of the United States.” Given such weighty responsibility, it is “no surprise that there was interest in the political nature of the delegation by those who supported the challenge at Macon.”⁶³ An expression of actual preferences for specific presidential candidates was, in this line of thinking, intrinsic to meaningful participation. That logic exerted a powerful hold on those laying the groundwork in Chicago for long-term procedural reform—unsurprisingly so, since this reform agenda emerged out of the experience of actors working on behalf of specific candidate campaigns.

One last maneuver at the convention to secure a commitment to reforms backed by the full force of party law took place at the Rules Committee, where McCarthy-supporting delegates drafted a minority report resolving that the Call to the 1972 Democratic Convention would include language requiring state parties to make “all feasible efforts” to adopt delegate selection procedures that allow for full and timely public participation.⁶⁴ The convention’s narrow vote in

⁵⁸ Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967), Chs. 7-9.

⁵⁹ Al Kehrer, memo to Don Slaiman, AFL-CIO, August 19, 1968, p. 2, in RG9-003 Box 44, Folder “Democratic National Convention, 1968,” George Meany Memorial Archives, International Labor Center, Silver Spring, MD. (Since our research in these archives, the collection has moved to the University of Maryland, College Park.)

⁶⁰ Nadia Urbinati, *Representative Democracy. Principles and Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), Intro., Ch. 1.

⁶¹ Pitkin, *Concept of Representation*, Chs. 2-3, 7; Heinz Eulau, John C. Wahlke, William Buchanan, and Leroy C. Ferguson, “The Role of the Representative: Some Empirical Observations on the Theory of Edmund Burke,” *American Political Science Review* 53:3 (September 1959): 742-756.

⁶² Patsy Morris, Letter to Judy Besdine, July 30, 1968, in Schwartz, “Georgia Papers.”

⁶³ Georgia Loyal National Democrats press release, August 18, 1968, Paschall Papers.

⁶⁴ *The Presidential Nominating Conventions*, 198.

favor of that resolution proved the only victory for a minority report in 1968. In January of the following year, in the wake of Humphrey's loss to Republican Richard Nixon, the DNC established the Commission on Party Structure and Delegate Selection. The formal drive to inscribe a participatory ethos and delegate vision of representation into the presidential nominating system had commenced.

Party Reform and the Turn to “Mandate” Representation

The reforms that emerged from this process shifted the balance of influence among factions and groups within both parties, while ensuring that debates over the nature of intraparty representation would become a recurring feature of American politics. Following a year of research and public hearings, the McGovern-Fraser Commission published eighteen guidelines for state delegate selection procedures in its 1970 report *Mandate for Reform*. Some required procedures to be transparent, codified, timely, and both logistically and financially accessible to all Democrats wishing to participate. Others prohibited practices that would privilege party officials and public office holders, such as the automatic designation of delegate status to such officials and the use of proxy voting and lax quorum requirements at party meetings. Closely related to such participatory measures would be efforts, like banning the use of the unit rule, to ensure that minority viewpoints on policy and candidate preferences could not be snuffed out by majorities. These measures served effectively to prohibit two systems that as of 1968 were employed, wholly or in part, by twenty-three states and territories: delegate selection by state party committees, and the election of delegates in caucuses and conventions closed to non-officials.⁶⁵

To render participation meaningful in the sense that Bond, Hooten, and other insurgent activists meant, the report included as “Guideline C-1” a requirement that contenders for delegate slots in primary elections list their presidential candidate preference or the word ‘uncommitted’ by their name on the ballot. As Bob Nelson, the McGovern-Fraser commission’s staff director, later recalled, such a direct application of a delegate/mandate concept of representation would have the regrettable effect of “forc[ing] your party leaders out of the process; you were taking flexibility out of the system.” But, he continued, within the commission, and particularly among its staff, “that argument was rejected. The purist theory won out.”⁶⁶ Critics of this theory, warning of the unrepresentative consequences of turning control over both delegate selection and delegate decision-making to engaged activists and the minority of voters who turn out for primaries, made their voices heard during this period.⁶⁷ But as within the McGovern-Fraser Commission, so it went in the broader political world of the early 1970s: a participatory vision of party procedures, linked to the idea of presidential nominations centered around the expressed preferences of ordinary voters, won out.

⁶⁵ This count is derived from the overview of existing state procedures in Commission on Party Structure and Delegate Selection, *Mandate for Reform* (Washington, DC: Democratic National Committee, 1970).

⁶⁶ Shafer, *Quiet Revolution*, 183-184.

⁶⁷ See, e.g., Richard M. Scammon and Ben J. Wattenberg, *The Real Majority: An Extraordinary Examination of the American Electorate* (New York: Coward, McCann, and Geoghegan Inc., 1970), 142-143; and Penn Kemble and Josh Muravchik, “The New Politics & the Democrats,” *Commentary*, December 1, 1972.

The transformations of both parties' nomination procedures, unleashed by McGovern-Fraser, were profound. Candidates now must woo voters, rather than delegates, in a marathon of state-level primaries and caucuses. Party actors lack formal powers over the selection process, with the partial exception of the Democrats' institution of "unpledged party leader and elected official delegates," discussed below.⁶⁸ Meanwhile, insiders (broadly construed) in both party networks have demonstrated an impressive capacity to learn and adapt to the new system and thereby sustain effective *informal* control over the selection of presidential nominees⁶⁹—except for those contests in which, spectacularly, they have failed to do so.⁷⁰

The reforms ushered in new electoral dynamics. The coalitional vision that animated the McCarthy and, later, McGovern supporters' reform efforts involved an alliance of minorities, progressive labor, and educated cultural liberals, supplanting the New Deal coalition as the constituent base of the Democratic party. This approach travelled a four-decade path from electoral catastrophe to viable if fragile majority-making success during the Obama years.⁷¹

McGovern-Fraser also contributed to change in southern Democratic parties.⁷² The longstanding work on the ground of groups like the GDF in Georgia at last met with a receptive national party response. McGovern-Fraser's requirements for openness and participation in state delegate selection procedures provided the leverage for loyalist partisan actors in southern states to consolidate control over their organizations.⁷³ Georgia illustrates this process. It had delivered a plurality to George Wallace on November 5, 1968, but the Wallacite "regulars" soon lost control of the state Democratic Party while Loyalists healed the internal division that had opened in 1968.⁷⁴ When the McGovern-Fraser Commission came to Georgia to hold hearings in 1969, a range of Loyalists testified, including Carl Sanders, Ivan Allen, Julian Bond, and Al Kehrer. New state party rules for choosing delegates by district conventions and a state-level meeting were passed in 1971, and Bond and Jimmy Carter worked together on the composition of the 1972 Georgia delegation.⁷⁵ The shift toward Loyalist control of the Georgia Democratic Party was mirrored in other states in the 1970s. Across the South, Democratic parties opened up institutionally, integrated racially, and liberalized ideologically, increasingly resembling over time the national Democratic Party.

⁶⁸ DNC Office of Party Affairs and Delegate Selections, "Delegate Selection Materials for the 2016 Democratic National Convention," December 15, 2014, 9, accessed at: https://demrulz.org/wp-content/files/12.15.14_2016_Delegate_Selection_Documents_Mailing_-_Rules_Call_Regs_Model_Plan_Checklist_12.15.14.pdf.

⁶⁹ Cohen, Karol, Noel, and Zaller, *The Party Decides*.

⁷⁰ Marty Cohen, David Karol, Hans Noel, and John Zaller, "Party Versus Faction in the Reformed Presidential Nominating System," *PS* (October 2016): 701-708.

⁷¹ John B. Judis and Ruy Teixeira referred to this historical development as "McGovern's revenge" in *The Emerging Democratic Majority* (New York: Scribner, 2002), 37-68.

⁷² Robert Mickey, *Paths Out of Dixie: The Democratization of Authoritarian Enclaves in America's Deep South, 1944-1972* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 277-280.

⁷³ Richard M. Valelly, *The Two Reconstructions: The Struggle for Black Enfranchisement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 173-223.

⁷⁴ Boyd, *Georgia Democrats*, 209-244.

⁷⁵ Boyd, *Georgia Democrats*, 201, 216-217.

In the wake of these post-McGovern-Fraser developments, questions of representation and voice have continued to figure in intraparty debate. Although a mandate view of internal party decision-making dominates both party practice and contemporary American political culture, alternative visions live on in specific practices—most notably the Democratic institution of unpledged “superdelegates.” Adopted prior to the 1984 election by a successor commission to McGovern-Fraser, appointed superdelegates embody the party as an institution and can claim distinct expertise drawn from their service and experience with the party. The potential of such figures to act deliberatively and autonomously stands as a remnant of Al Kehrers’ “trustee” outlook on the proper role of convention delegates. But superdelegates, who have never served as a decisive force in presidential nomination votes at party conventions, have struggled from the beginning to garner legitimacy and respect from other participants. The institution served as a *bête noire* for the Bernie Sanders campaign during the 2016 primaries. In a sign that those critiques have come to prevail in the party writ large, the DNC voted in August 2018 to bar superdelegates from voting on the first ballot in future conventions under most circumstances.⁷⁶

The conflict over superdelegates points to the difficulty of justifying trustee representation in current politics, which is itself a legacy of battles waged in places like Macon in 1968. We thus end by briefly discussing the theoretical and normative case for trustee forms of representation. As a participant observer in Georgia 1968, one of the authors, Schwartz, was excited about McCarthy’s victory at Macon. In retrospect, however, it is hard to countenance Joe Rauh’s breaking his word to Al Kehrers, since the challenge delegation might have been partially seated anyway. At the time, Schwartz had never met nor heard of Kehrers. But his work—founding the GDF and remaining loyal to the labor and civil rights movements as well as the Democratic Party—has inspired in both authors the following observation: It is hard to justify trustee representation in democratic theory and practice, yet it is necessary.

It is hard because democratic theory values people acting for themselves and not having someone act on their behalf. In a democracy, people may act autonomously, passing laws for the self and others, or they can act on a whim. To be fully democratic, then, decision-makers would have to be chosen by lot, where all are considered equally qualified and only chance or fate singles out some to hold office.⁷⁷ Democratic city-states in the classical, and medieval, and early renaissance periods used the lottery for this purpose.⁷⁸ The goal was wide citizen rotation in office; citizens would participate in power rather than consent to it.⁷⁹

By contrast, the very idea of representation, of standing and acting for others who are not present, involves a “principle of distinction.”⁸⁰ The formal act of an individual authorizing someone to be one’s agent might be egalitarian. But once a group of people gives an agent the

⁷⁶ Adam Levy, “DNC changes superdelegate rules in presidential nomination process,” CNN.com, August 25, 2018.

⁷⁷ Bernard Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Chs. 1-2.

⁷⁸ Nancy L. Schwartz, *The Blue Guitar. Political Representation and Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), Ch. 7.

⁷⁹ Manin, *Principles of Representative Government*, 79-93.

⁸⁰ Manin, *Principles of Representative Government*, Ch. 3.

substantive authority to make decisions, a temporary willed inequality enters.⁸¹ An election seeks what is “best” in a candidate. It need not be older aristocratic distinctions, like noble birth or inherited wealth. It could be any trait that sets a candidate apart from some others, such as political ideas, virtues of character, or practical judgment. Thus, the criterion of distinction can be democratically chosen by the voters, but it is still an aristocratic principle. Although even delegate or mandate representation has a small aristocratic element, in choosing who can best carry out our will, trustee representation has it more. Once granted authority as the people’s choice, the trustee representative has leeway and obligation to act in their interest. To democratic eyes and ears, this seems paternalistic.

Yet the trustee role, alongside mandate representation, is needed in political life. Politics involves “any kind of independent leadership in action,” where a person tries to amass power by recruiting a following.⁸² Insurgent leaders tend to focus on fewer issues, while an “attentive statesman” listens to all the demands and tries to come up with a generally accepted decision.⁸³ Politics involves some gifts and skills developed through experience—an ability to size up and interact with people, and judgment about when to compromise one’s principles and when not. For some people, “politics [is] a calling” or vocation, and in this sense, the activity can use some professionals, who make it their career.⁸⁴

The trustee role of the statesman is harder to celebrate than that of the activist, because the trustee is less charismatic. Without this figure, however, “the centre cannot hold.”⁸⁵ It is on this point that the original impetus for the Democrats’ adoption of superdelegates in 1984 holds continuing relevance. Worried that the proliferation of direct primaries had “devalue[d] party conventions and caucuses by removing decision-making power from them,” the DNC’s Commission on Presidential Nominations called for the introduction of unpledged at-large delegates to “increase the representativeness of mainstream Democratic constituencies ... [to] help restore peer review to the process, subjecting candidates to scrutiny by those who know them best,” and to “return decision-making discretion and flexibility to the Convention.”⁸⁶ Not all

⁸¹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “To the Republic of Geneva,” dedication to “Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men,” in *The First and Second Discourses*, ed. Roger D. Masters (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1964), 83-88, esp. 85 and 87.

⁸² Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation,” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 77-78.

⁸³ Bertrand de Jouvenel, *The Pure Theory of Politics* (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1963), 219; see also 130-31, 134, 138, 140, 219-241.

⁸⁴ Weber, “Politics as a Vocation,” 80, 83, 84.

⁸⁵ William Butler Yeats, “The Second Coming,” (1921) in *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry*, ed. Richard Ellman and Robert O’Clair (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973), p. 131. In his analysis of the Democratic party and its political culture, David Plotke points out that by 1972, there were three, not two, forms of representation at stake in Democratic Party politics: mandate, descriptive, and trustee. The trustee tended, ideologically, to be a moderate centrist. Descriptive representatives, standing for ascriptive or acquired characteristics like race, age, and gender—had a left-wing bent, but later identity politics on the right, as in white ethno-nationalism, was also grounded in descriptive representation. This development is beyond the ken of this article. Plotke, “Party Reform and Democratic Renewal,” pp. 269-276, esp. Table 4.

⁸⁶ Commission on Presidential Nominations, *The Report of the Commission on Presidential Nominations*, pp. 10, 17, Box 1073, Folder unlabeled, Democratic National Committee Records, National Archives, Washington, DC.

superdelegates rise to the level of skillful statesmen, of course, and state parties both North and South had compelling reasons to move away from the “smoke-filled rooms” of old. But as new passions and interests mobilize and politicians maneuver to use or defeat them, there is still a role for experienced party people. And because ideas about democracy matter for the development of democratic practice, democratic theory needs to incorporate an aristocratic element. The Georgia 1968 case shows that trustee as well as mandate representatives have moral claims and a political role.

The Georgia delegate challenge of 1968 served as a small battle in a larger process of party development that had even larger consequences for the political system as a whole. It thus holds lessons for party scholarship. In the American system, presidential nomination contests are a key arena in which organized interests, movements, and factions fight and bargain over national party policy. But nomination contests are also about nominees, and nominees are people. The inevitable personalization of such conflicts, given the strategic needs and incentives of office-seekers and their campaigns, means that the process of party development is the product of both candidate- and group-driven dynamics. Those dynamics both shape and in turn are shaped by normative struggles over representation and other democratic values. Half a century after the Chicago convention, this remains both the promise and the burden of party politics.

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