

The Delray Democrat

The New Political Geography: It's Whole Foods Against Cracker Barrel!¹

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Way back in 2011, political analyst Dave Wasserman coined this cute metaphor for America's growing red v. blue political migration. He and others tracked the point gap between Democratic and Republican candidates starting with President Obama's 2008 election onward and found Whole Foods and Cracker Barrel establishments to be significant markers in political clustering. "Fact: Biden won the presidency winning 85% of counties with a Whole Foods and 32% of counties with a Cracker Barrel - the widest gap ever."

He was onto something. Many Americans, especially Republicans, are relocating, not for the traditional reasons of weather, taxes, or jobs but to places where they feel more culturally and politically comfortable. It will take more time to realize the full impact of the migration, but signs in Florida, for example, cash real estate deals, demonstrate a strong trend.

[The Washington Post](#) reported that, "In the last six years, South Florida has consistently been one of the top places for homes bought with cash. The state's tax incentives, *permissive response to the pandemic and political culture* have accelerated the rush of home buyers who can afford to purchase property without a mortgage" (author's italics).

Translation: Many people, especially the very rich, are moving to Florida specifically because they like Governor DeSantis's overweight conservative politics, including his irresponsible handling of a lethal virus in the guise of personal freedom and his racist, xenophobic policies.

Are we headed toward single-party states? And closer to two Americas?

As CNN's Ronald Brownstein put it: "Red states are building a nation within a nation."

NPR calls it "The Big Sort, Americans fleeing blue state liberalism for "Don't Mask Me" states.

In "Vote with your feet: Post-pandemic Florida transplants are twice as likely to be Rs as Ds," [Renzo Downey](#) put it: "In November 2021, Republicans overtook Democrats in active registered voters in Florida, accomplishing the feat for the first time in Sunshine State history." floridapolitics.com/archives

"It's become MAGA in exile," says [Fernand Amandi](#), a consultant who worked on President Obama's Florida campaigns in 2008 and 2011. "Florida is now the cradle for the MAGA movement. The sentiment is if you believe in the MAGA philosophy, Florida is where you want

¹ *The Delray Democrat*, March 2023, page 4.

to be.”

[CNN's autopsy](#): “When Barack Obama won Florida in 2008, his historic campaign brought a wave of new Democratic voters. Registered Democrats outnumbered Republicans in Florida by nearly 700,000, their largest advantage since 1990... But after the 2020 election, the reversal has accelerated. Republicans grew their numbers in 52 of the state’s 67 counties. Meanwhile, there are fewer registered Democrats in all but one county than there were two years ago — a net loss of 331,000 voters overall.”

There’s a funnel cloud on the horizon. Republicans talk about overturning the federal government. (January 6th was close.) And secession. And they’re wresting election authority from the federal government for the states. We could devolve into a federal government so impotent it cannot make or enforce laws for the common good.

Yesterday’s political climate has no familial relationship to today’s America. Who could dream that Republicans would support a president who commits treason? Or a governor so blatantly racist that he eliminates Black history from the school curriculum?

Or Republican officials faking prowess by battling non-existent antagonists? Remember DeSantis boasting that he banned teaching CRT in Florida schools—when it wasn’t being taught at the public school level anywhere in the United States? Easy to declare a KO when you punch at thin air.

And why is the Democrats’ exemplary history of lifting minorities and the underserved losing impact? “Republicans have picked up where Trump left off,” said [CNN](#). “More than half of their gains in registered voters can be attributed to the 58,000 new Hispanic voters who checked “Republican” on their forms. Democrats, though, are bleeding support from these communities. The party saw a net loss of more than 46,000 Hispanic voters.” This, despite having Karla Hernandez, daughter of Honduran immigrants, as Charlie Crist’s running mate.

And President Biden pulled the Black vote by less than 80 points – the worst margin since 1996.

True, the Republicans had more money. Our national party left us at the altar. And Florida suffered a kneecapping when DeSantis overruled his own Republican legislature and ignored laws to fracture heavily Black congressional districts and move the pieces into Republican zones. It worked. They grabbed 20 out of 28 congressional seats.

And his messaging works as well, conflating the true meaning of “freedom” with his irresponsible negation of life-saving restrictions in a pandemic.

Fact is, no one knows more about true freedom than the Democrats. Let’s remind voters, loud and clear, of our unparalleled contributions to American liberties and equality. And tell them, by the way, that Democrats enjoy Whole Foods, McDonald’s, bodegas, soul food, and Cracker Barrel restaurants and just about everything in between.

