
America, The Melting Pot with Only One Ingredient: Why Are So Few African-Americans Elected as U.S. Senators or Governors?

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For centuries, African-Americans have been affected by politicians and their legislation. Jim Crow laws and gerrymandering are two prime examples of discriminatory legislation implemented by politicians aiming to gain reelection in the past. For the minority in the U.S. to have a voice, they must gain election and speak for the masses who do not have a voice. However, this is not possible if the candidates who are running for office fail to win their elections. Nine African-Americans have served as US Senators and only two African-Americans have ever served as a US Governor since Reconstruction. During the 2018 elections, America had a chance to change this. African-American candidates Stacey Abrams, Ben Jealous, and Andrew Gillum all ran for governor in their respective states. However, all three candidates lost. This research examines these three candidates as well as all African-American candidates who ran for governor or senator from 1966-2018. This research seeks to determine the amount of experience an African-American must possess in order to gain election, questions whether African-Americans only vote for other African-Americans and challenges the myth that African-Americans must move to liberal states in order to have success. There is no better time than the present, to make a better future for our children, and to elect officials that represent the population that they serve.

For centuries African-Americans have been affected by politicians and their legislation. Jim Crow laws and gerrymandering are two prime examples of discriminatory legislation implemented by politicians aiming to gain reelection in the past. Even more frightening are iconic amendments passed in our Constitution which have indirectly harmed the African American community throughout the United States for generations to come. Acts of legislation have taken countless fathers out of the household, disproportionately affected minority school districts, and attempted to weaken the African-American vote.

This country has been made for the majority race of America's population to thrive, and in order for minorities in the United States to have a voice they must gain election and speak for the masses who do not have a voice. However, this is not realistically feasible if the candidates who are running for office fail to win these elections. Throughout United States history there have only been 3 African-American governors to be elected, and 10 total African American senators.

In fact, the first African-American governor was elected during the reconstruction era in 1872, Pinckney Benton Stewart Pinchback (Gates 2013). As this paper will show us the next African-American governor would not become elected until 1989, with Douglas Wilder of Virginia winning nearly a century later. In this paper we will seek to shed light on this matter and determine why there have been so few African-American governors and senators throughout United States history.

Why Does Diversity Matter?

The Congressional Black Caucus, also referred to as the CBC, states that, "a diverse institution is a strong institution. Unfortunately, American institutions, from Corporate America to Capitol Hill, are weakened for want of diverse perspectives and inclusive environments." In addition, "diversity gives you access to a greater range of talent, not just the talent that belongs to a particular world-view or ethnicity or some other restricting definition. It helps provide insight into the needs and motivations of all of your client or customer base, rather than just a small part of it" (Shemla 2018).

Despite the exponential growth of minorities here in America, who make up, "almost 40 percent of the U.S. population, yet they fill less than a quarter of congressional and state offices" (Phillips 2016); Congress today is still not representative of the population it serves. In fact, in a report conducted in 2015 by the New American Leaders, the data revealed that, not a single state accurately represented its Asian American and Latino populations.

As for African-Americans, this political power struggle is something they are accustomed to. African-Americans have been fighting for over a century and a half to gain political power. The graph below shows the number of African-American members elected to Congress, in both the House of Representatives and Senate, since 1870 (around the middle of the reconstruction era in the United States). The data was gathered prior to 2017 when Senator Kamala Harris was sworn in after her election in California in 2016.

Table 2. African American Members of Congress by Type of Service and Party: Summary Statistics, 1870-Present

Including any Members who served only a portion of the Congress

	Total	African Americans who have Served in Both Chambers	Senate Service Only	House Service Only (Representatives)	House Service Only (Delegates)	House Service Only (Subtotal)
Total	153 ^a	1	9	137	6 ^a	143 ^a
Democrats	122 ^b	0	6	111	5 ^b	116
Republicans	31	1	3	26	1	27

Source: U.S. Congress, House, Office of the Historian and Office of Art and Archives, "Black Americans in Congress," <http://history.house.gov/Exhibitions-and-Publications/BAIC/Black-Americans-in-Congress/>.

Dating back to 1870, only 143 African-Americans have served in the House of Representatives. To put this into perspective, House of Representative members are elected every 2 years with a total of 435 members. The total number of elected African-American House of Representative members dating back to 1870 is significantly less than 'one' full House of Representative class for the 2-year election cycle. That number gets even smaller when the graph shifts focus to Senate members. Since 1870, there have only been 9 total African-Americans to ever serve in the Senate. That is not a typo; nine the number learned by children when they are in head start. These statistics inspired the theory, hypotheses, and tests constructed in this paper.

Literature Review: A Discriminatory Legislative Agenda

Reconstruction and Jim Crow Laws

Jim Crow laws were an institutionalized form of racial segregation intended for African-Americans. Similar to apartheid in South Africa, this was a political and social system created to encourage the repression of the African race. Jim Crow laws lasted from the 1880s into the 1960s. "From Delaware to California, and from North Dakota to Texas, many states (and cities, too) could impose legal punishments on people for consorting with members of another race" (National Park Service).

Jim Crow laws were used primarily in the South, although "the exact origin of the name is not known" (Tafari 2002). "Of the three branches of the federal government, the legislative was most effective in enacting and maintaining discriminatory laws that kept Jim Crow alive well into the 1960s" (Tafari 2002). The legislative branch has had a long history of discriminating against African-Americans in this country, forcefully using the constitution to defend their actions. While discriminatory legislative acts such as Jim Crow laws are no longer present, the legislative branch of government still lacks inclusivity in the House of Representatives and Senate.

Delving further into the Jim Crow laws era, African-Americans were practically treated like a disease. For example, in Georgia it was, "unlawful for any amateur white baseball team to play baseball on any vacant lot or baseball diamond within two blocks of a playground devoted to the Negro race" and vice versa (National Park Service). These were legitimate laws, African-Americans were labeled inferior in every form of the word even after death. Another example of a discriminatory law created by the legislative branch during the Jim Crow era, in Georgia during the burial process, "the officer in charge was not allowed to bury, or allow to be buried, any colored persons upon ground set apart or used for the burial of white persons" (National Park Service).

Acts of legislature such as these, were common and routinely produced by the United States legislature. Other examples of where discriminatory legislature were fabricated in American society included: barbershops, bathroom facilities, burial practices, buses, and education to name a few. In addition to bias legislation, such as the examples given, African-Americans also began becoming less politically involved and this was not voluntary on their behalf. The alarming fact is, “many southern blacks had become politically active after the Civil War, but after 1877, most lost the right to vote or to hold government positions” (Tafari 2002). What caused this change?

Prior to reconstruction and Jim Crow laws, “more than a half-million black men became voters in the South during the 1870s;” with the infant African-American voters a large majority casting, “their ballots solidly for the Republican Party, the party of the Great Emancipator, Abraham Lincoln” (Constitutional Rights Foundation). As can be seen in this research, after the Civil War the freed slaves were eager to cast their ballots and become active citizens, “but white state governments steadily reconstituted themselves. By the eighteen-nineties they were passing laws that, piece by piece, reclaimed the right to vote for whites alone” (Gopnik 2019).

The South gained this power because of President Lincoln’s whole idea and argument for unison, that despite the South’s claim of “secession” it was unconstitutional for a state to secede on its own (Gopnik 2019). Lincoln also felt the South was never an enemy of the North, he felt the same way a parent feels when their child is upset and is being a brat, “they were just a mob with a flag waiting to be policed, and the Union Army was the policeman” (Gopnik 2019). The issue with this idea sprang forward quickly after Reconstruction, as “this same idea implied that, since the state governments had never gone out of existence, their reborn legislatures could instantly reclaim all the rights enjoyed by states, including deciding who could vote and when” (Gopnik 2019).

As the reader can imagine, this did not go well for African-Americans. Reconstruction gave way to Jim Crow laws, and racist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan made sure these laws were being followed. It would be over 100 years before another African-American would even be bold enough to run for a senate position.

Jim Crow laws were merely the beginning of white America’s attempt to legislatively enforce the separation of whites and blacks. The laws lasted for more than half a century, but it would not be long before civil rights voices would cry out for justice. It would not be long before Dr. King’s saccharine voice moved the masses throughout every American radio. It would not be long before Malcolm X and Martin Luther King would both share the same fate.

They both had a dream, but it was a separate dream from the white American dream. Though many white Americans were moved by these civil rights activists’ charisma, vigor, and tenacity racism would still exist but instead of overt racist laws such as Jim Crow, which catered directly towards separating blacks and whites during their daily lives; the next form of discriminatory legislature directly affected African-Americans during elections for decades and still to this day influences politics and the legislative agenda but in a more subtle way.

Gerrymandering and Voter Suppression

Gerrymandering is a hot topic in the political arena today. With racial political battles still being fought, some feel as if Gerrymandering has evolved from Jim Crow laws themselves. However, Justin Levitt, a professor at Loyola University, argues against this belief stating that, “American attempts to tailor district lines for political gain stretch back to the country’s very origin” (Levitt 2018).

Levitt contests that Gerrymandering was inspired by Elbridge Gerry, James Madison’s vice president (Levitt 2018). Although Gerry created the idea of gerrymandering himself it was ironically first used against James Madison by Patrick Henry. “Henry ensured that Madison’s district was drawn to include counties politically opposed to Madison” (Levitt 2018). Despite this failed attempt by Henry, gerrymandering as a result was released from its Pandora’s Box.

Ballotpedia describes gerrymandering as a “practice of drawing electoral district lines to favor one political party, individual, or constituency over another” (Ballotpedia 2018). Despite this fact, “when used in a rhetorical manner by opponents of a particular district map, the term has a negative connotation but does not necessarily address the legality of a challenged map” (Ballotpedia 2018).

There are two types of gerrymandering: racial gerrymandering and partisan gerrymandering. According to section 2 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, racial gerrymandering should not be taking place, however, that is not the case as the reader can see below. These are some of the cases that have made it to the Supreme Court regarding gerrymandering.

Gerrymandering court cases		
Case name	Year	Outcome
<i>Thomberg v. Gingles</i>	1986	The Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) established three criteria to prove claims of the vote dilution (e.g., racial gerrymandering) under Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act
<i>Vieth v. Jebliner</i>	2004	SCOTUS issued a split decision, declining to intervene in a case involving the question of illegal partisan gerrymandering. A plurality of the court’s members argued that partisan gerrymandering is not justiciable under the United States Constitution.
<i>Harris v. Arizona Independent Redistricting Commission</i>	2016	SCOTUS ruled that opponents of Arizona’s state legislative district map had failed to prove that an illegal partisan gerrymander had occurred.
<i>Cooper v. Harris</i>	2017	SCOTUS affirmed a district court decision finding that two of North Carolina's congressional district maps had been subject to an illegal partisan gerrymander. The majority opinion noted the correlation between racial and partisan gerrymandering, suggesting that a map is illegal if race is used to benefit or harm one party over another.
<i>Gill v. Whitford</i>	2017	SCOTUS heard oral argument in this case, which deals with partisan gerrymandering, in October 2017. A ruling is expected in 2018.

(Source: Ballotpedia. 2018. Gerrymandering. <https://ballotpedia.org/Gerrymandering>)

At this point the reader may have grasped the concept of gerrymandering; however, may still be confused as to how African-Americans are directly affected by this practice and rightfully so. The issue with gerrymandering in terms of African-Americans is it, “spreads minorities across voting districts, leaving them too few in number in any given district to elect their preferred candidate.” If this seems unfair that is because it is (Soffen 2016). This process has limited the over all impact of black influence for decades and is still a prevalent issue in American politics today.

Jim Crow laws and gerrymandering are two prime examples of legal legislature which have negatively impacted African-Americans participation as well as their success in politics but they are not the only forms of legislature created to set African-Americans back. For years, legislation has been created to disenfranchise African-American voters. Most recently in the past 2018 gubernatorial election, current governor Brian Kemp of Georgia was found guilty of purging over 50,000 voter registrations, “in limbo because on their applications appeared different from government records” (Casiano 2018).

This legislative measurement has been effective since July 2017 in the state of Georgia and many other states across the nation. It has been found by many to, “aim at disenfranchising racial minorities” (Enamorado 2018). The “exact match” law, “requires registration application information to match driver’s license, state ID card or Social Security

records. Registration can be stalled for several reasons, including a missing hyphen in a last name, a discrepancy between a maiden name and a married name, or a misspelling in government records” (Niese 2018).

As the reader ask yourself, “is missing a hyphen, an initial instead of a complete middle name, or just having a discrepancy in one letter in a voter’s name good evidence that the voter is not who they say they are” (Enamorado 2018)? Whether it is intended to suppress minority voters or not this law will do just that for years to come because as silly as it sounds, typically minorities have more complicated names than their white counterparts and this is the harsh reality.

Research conducted by, the National Bureau of Economic Research, can help us understand this more. While the “exact match” law may be a piece of legislation written in regards to voting a good comparison can be drawn from employers and their reaction to African-American names. In their research, the National Bureau of Economic Research found that, “a job applicant with a name that sounds like it might belong to an African-American – say, Lakisha Washington or Jamal Jones – can find it harder to get a job. Despite laws against discrimination, affirmative action, a degree of the employer enlightenment, and the desire by some businesses to enhance profits by hiring those most qualified regardless of race, African-Americans are twice as likely as white to be unemployed and they earn nearly 25 percent less when they are employed” (The National Bureau of Economic Research).

In this same manner, one can expect that somewhere along the line because of an African-American’s unique name, that their name will be misspelled. Is it right to disqualify them or make it harder for them to vote simply because of this human error? Voter suppression is another legal maneuver by politicians aimed at weakening the African-American vote and has been practiced for generations just with different titles.

African American Governors throughout History: Comparing the Past to the Present

Republican Rep. Ron Desantis in his GOP victory nomination for Florida Governor, stated in August of 2018 during his victory speech that, “the last thing we need to do is ‘monkey’ this up by trying to embrace a socialist agenda with huge tax increases and bankrupting the state” (Rodriguez 2018). This statement made national headlines, with many accusing Rep. Ron Desantis of dog-whistling to gain the attention of racist supporters.

The slur made in this statement is the obvious attempt by Mr. Desantis to link his opponent, Andrew Gillum an African-American candidate, with a monkey. “Since slavery, blacks were seen as not human or less than human” (Capehart 2018). Statements such as these are considered code words. Instead of using overt appeals, which can harm a candidate’s chances of winning gravely, they have reverted to a more subtle way of attacking. Code words, “are designed to employ racial cues on how to vote, without explicitly attacking one’s skin color” (Tures 2014).

Gillum was one of three African-Americans running for governor in the United States in 2018. The other two nominees were Stacey Abrams (Georgia) and Ben Jealous (Maryland). While the statement was not only racist, it summarizes the current political state African-American politicians still find themselves in today. To make matters worse history has never been on these candidates’ side.

Since Reconstruction in the 1870s, “only two African-American men have ever been elected governor” (Khalid 2018). The two former governors are Lawrence Douglas Wilder of Virginia (1989) and Deval Patrick of Massachusetts (2007). Currently, “not a single sitting governor in any of the 50 states is black” (Rodriguez 2018). Both Ben Jealous and Andrew Gillum find themselves still paving the way for African-Americans; nearly 150 years after Reconstruction ended.

When it comes to Stacey Abrams, she finds herself in even more unfamiliar territory; not only has there never been an African-American female elected governor in United States history but there has never been a Georgia woman ever elected governor. These three candidates will be compared based on experience, how liberal or conservative their state is, and the total African-American population in the state. This data will then be used to draw a further comparison to determine whether there is a relationship between African-American candidate experience and whether they are elected; with data dating back to 1966.

What is a theory and hypothesis?

Before proceeding we must first diagnose what a theory and hypothesis is; as both play a heavy role in the research conducted not only throughout this paper but in social science research as a whole. A theory is developed before the hypothesis can be created, it is defined as, “a set of empirical generalizations about a topic” (Monroe 2000). These theories are very general and abstract; thus, cannot be tested. Instead they are used to help generate hypotheses.

The theory created in this paper is: whether or not race impacts election results (whether the candidate wins or loses). As the theory is stated two variables present themselves. Those are the research processes independent and dependent variables. Monroe states that, “independent variables are those presumed in the theory underlying the hypothesis to be the cause, and the dependent variables are the effects of the consequences.” In this case our independent variable is race, and our dependent variable is whether or not the candidate wins the election.

However, the hypothesis defers from a theory in the sense that, although it is still a connection between two variables, it is a lot more specific. Monroe says, “a hypothesis is simply an empirical statement derived from a theory.” Similar to a theory, the hypothesis has an independent as well as a dependent variable. In this paper, three hypotheses have been derived.

Hypothesis #1

The first hypothesis in this paper will challenge the common belief that African-Americans only vote for other African-Americans. Testing this will attempt to answer the question: Do African-Americans win elections because only African-Americans vote for African-Americans? The independent variable is the percentage of voters that voted in favor of the African-American candidate in comparison to the white candidate, while the dependent variable is the election results.

Hypothesis #2

The second hypothesis in this paper will attempt to understand the qualifications African-American candidates have to possess in order to become elected. We will look at which candidates were elected and whether or not those candidates held any previous experience before being elected. The hypothesis itself is: the more experience an African-American candidate possesses, the higher their voting percentage will be. The independent variable is the prior experience held by the candidates before their election; meanwhile the dependent variable will be the candidate's election results.

Hypothesis #3

The third and final hypothesis of this paper will examine if liberal states elect African-Americans at higher rates than conservative states. Liberal state in this paper refers to the states that voted 50% or more in favor of Hillary Clinton in the 2016 Presidential election. This hypothesis test will seek to answer whether or not African-Americans should move to more liberal states in order to gain election. The independent variable will focus on whether the state is liberal or conservative (state ideology), while the dependent variable like the other two hypotheses is the election results.

Research Design

Next, “once we have selected a research question and set forth one or more testable hypotheses, the next step is to formulate a research design” (Monroe 2000). A paper's research design is one of the most important steps during the research process. The research design not only creates a blue print for how the paper will be written, but a paper's research design, also “refers to the logical method by which we propose to test a hypothesis” (Monroe 2000).

There are three types of research designs: ‘True’ Experimental Design, Quasi Experiment, and Correlational Design. Throughout this paper the correlational design is used as it, “does not require any repeated measurements of a variable over time” (Monroe 2000). This form of research design is said by Monroe to be the “bare minimum to require only collecting data on an independent and a dependent variable and determining whether there is a pattern of relationship.”

In this paper, as stated previously, three hypotheses will be tested to determine whether a correlation exists between the independent and dependent variables. Each hypothesis will be tested using some form of qualitative and quantitative data to depict if any correlation is present. In scenarios there may be a correlation, despite this possible correlation other factors may be present. Therefore, regardless of the findings the research throughout this paper will not ‘prove’ anything but instead will support the argument being made in this paper.

After the three hypotheses have been tested, a larger test will take place. During this larger test, we will look at every senate/gubernatorial election since 1966 in which a major African-American candidate participated. The definition of ‘experience’ will be constricted. Throughout the next three hypothesis's tests ‘experience’ will be referred to as, any form of political experience before running for office.

However, in this final section, experience will be limited to previous statewide office experience. This data will reveal whether it is helpful for an African-American to hold statewide office experience over just any form of political experience such as mayor for example. Variables in this final test will include: election year, state, region (south or non-south), candidate name, party (Democrat or Republican), opponent, total vote percentage, elected (yes or no), elected office sought (governor or senate), before 1989 or after, incumbent opponent (yes or no), and state percentage of African-Americans. This section will reveal the most information about the disparities in African-American politics and hopefully will display whether or not there is a correlation between experience and the success of African-American candidates.

Experiment 1

Testing Hypothesis 1:

The first hypothesis made in this paper presented the question of whether or not, ‘African-Americans only voted for African-Americans during elections.’ In this section of the paper we will seek to test this by analyzing current results from the 2018 election in comparison to similar election years. Andrew Gillum and Stacey Abrams will be compared to previous Democrats running for governor in their respective states.

This test was conducted with the assumption that voters filled out the entire ballot. This means that each voter whether their ballot was filled out for Republicans, Democrats, or mixed candidates was filled to the max. An example ballot can be seen below:

The common assumption around media is that African-Americans only vote for other African-Americans. This test will seek to answer this general assumption. As stated previously, African-Americans during this test, whether they voted Democrat or Republican filled out the entire ballot to the max. This means their ballot records they voted for other candidates who were not African-American, unless they voted for Stacey Abrams and left the rest on the ballot blank. This action is highly unlikely but is nonetheless a possibility.

We will begin with Stacey Abrams:

Democratic Candidate Running for Office/Year:	Voting % :
Mark Taylor (2006)	38.2%
Roy E. Barnes (2010)	43%
Jason Carter (2014)	44.9%
Stacey Abrams (2018)	48.8%

(Source: Ballotpedia)

This table is interesting, despite Stacey Abrams being the first African-American female candidate to ever represent a major party in the country; notice during this election she garnered a larger percentage of votes than the previous 3 candidates running for governor! In fact, Stacey Abrams reeled in more white votes than former President Jimmy Carter’s grandson, Jason Carter in 2014 according to an AJC poll.

In the first test we compared Stacey Abrams to the previous three Democratic candidates running for governor in the state of Georgia. This first test rejected the hypothesis created. Our results showed that African-Americans do not always simply vote for African-American candidates.

During this next test, Mayor Andrew Gillum (African-American) will be compared to his own running mate Bill Nelson (White). Before this general election, while Andrew Gillum may have never run in a general election before, Gillum served 4 years as Tallahassee’s mayor and 11 as a member of Tallahassee’s city council. His running mate, Bill Nelson, previously ran in 6 general elections before this. The test below measures each candidate’s total voting percentage as well as the total number of votes the candidate received.

Democratic Candidate Running for Office	Voting %	Total # of Voters
Bill Nelson (D): Attorney General	49.9%	4,079,692
Andrew Gillum (D): Governor	49.2%	4,036,706

Although Andrew Gillum lacked the general election experience of his running mate Bill Nelson their voting percentage and total number of voters is very similar. The results from this test show that Bill Nelson likely gained just as much African-American support as Andrew Gillum therefore rejecting the first hypothesis in this paper.

Testing Hypothesis #2:

The second hypothesis developed involves each candidate’s political experience. During this test we will look at each candidate’s political experience prior to running for governor and determine if there was a correlation to the percentage of votes they received in the 2018 general election.

Candidate #1: Andrew Gillum:

Andrew Gillum was born in Miami, Florida to average working Americans. His mother drove school buses while his dad worked in construction (Andrew Gillum for Governor). Coming from humble beginnings, Andrew Gillum was motivated to improve his parents' circumstances. He would later receive his BA from Florida A&M University in Tallahassee, and upon graduation decided to stay in his alma mater's city (Williams 2018).

The decision paid off, "at the age of 23, Gillum became the youngest person elected to the city commission. In 2014, he was elected mayor" (Williams 2018). Gillum would serve as Tallahassee's governor for the next 4 years until recently deciding to run for governor in the Sunshine State; the United States' 3rd largest state. "Gillum, who is married with three children, said that Trump's election pushed him to run for governor this year" (Williams 2018). Including his tenure on the city commission and mayor of Tallahassee, Gillum has 15 years' worth of public service.

Candidate #2: Stacey Abrams:

Despite Stacey Abrams' run to be governor of Georgia, she was not originally born in the Peach State. "Stacey Abrams and her five siblings grew up in Gulfport, Mississippi" (Stacey Abrams for Governor). Her parents, like many families throughout the United States, struggled to provide the means to make ends meet. However, regardless of this fact, "her parents made service a way of life for their children—if someone was less fortunate, it was their job to serve that person" (Stacey Abrams for Governor). Her family would later move to Georgia.

Abrams would go on to attend the DeKalb County Schools, graduating from Avondale High School as valedictorian. After high school, "Stacey received degrees from Spelman College, the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas, and Yale Law School" (Stacey Abrams for Governor). After graduation, she began impacting lives through government, nonprofit, and throughout the business sector.

Her previous background and numerous degrees would come in handy in 2010. She would proceed to become, "the first woman to lead either party in the Georgia General Assembly and the first African American to lead in the House of Representatives" male or female (Stacey Abrams for Governor). Stacey Abrams served as a house of representative member from 2007-2017, as she positioned herself to run for the vacant governor position in Georgia (Georgia House of Representatives).

Candidate #3: Ben Jealous:

Ben Jealous, is "the child of an interracial couple who left Maryland for California because they couldn't be married in their home state" (Wiggins 2018). Due to this experience he has devoted his life to social justice and all forms of social issues. In addition, Jealous served as the NAACP's (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) youngest president at age 35 from 2008-2013 (Ben Jealous for Governor).

Jealous received his education from Columbia University and the University of Oxford. Ben Jealous, "is a civil rights leader, community organizer, investor in startups for good, educator, former investigative journalist and a Rhodes Scholar who has spent his life bringing people together to get things done" (Ben Jealous for Governor). Although, Jealous has done a ton of good in his life the candidate lacks experience; as he has never held political office in his life. In the results section the reader will see that this correlates to the total percent of votes Jealous received.

In the graph to the right candidate 1 is Andrew Gillum, former Mayor of Tallahassee. Candidate 2 is Stacey Abrams, the first African-American female running for governor in United States history. Candidate 3 is the former NAACP president and CEO Ben Jealous from Maryland.

The graph completely supports the second hypothesis created. Andrew Gillum had the most political experience heading into the general elections with 15 years' worth of political experience under his belt. This showed as the Democratic candidate captured 49.2% of the Florida vote; the most by any of the three candidates. Stacey Abrams, the former minority leader for the Democrats of Georgia, trailed close behind



capturing 48.8% of the vote in a rather conservative state. Ben Jealous, however, did not compete as well. The Democrat from Maryland had no previous political experience and this showed in the election results. While this test does not account for all factors, it does support the idea that the more political experience an African-American candidate has the better he/she will do in their respective state; regardless of state ideology.

Testing Hypothesis #3:

Hypothesis #3 states that African-Americans should move to more liberal states in order to have success in their elections. This section will seek to challenge that hypothesis by using the 2016 presidential election data. During the entirety of this section we will compare the 2016 presidential election to the recent 2018 general election. Hillary Clinton’s voting percentage results from each of these candidate’s states (Georgia, Florida, and Maryland) will be the guide lines. If their state is over the 50% threshold then that state is considered to be liberal in this test, if the state is under the 50% threshold then that state is considered conservative; hence meaning President Donald Trump won the state.

Florida & Andrew Gillum

Florida can make or break political candidates on the state level and on the national level, “but the difference between winning and losing the Sunshine State is often very small” (Savidge 2016). With “4.4 million registered republicans and nearly 4.6 million Democrats” the state is pretty balanced when it comes to ideology, thus making it a purple state instead of a red or blue state (Savidge 2016). Purple states are often referred to as ‘swing states’ which is defined as a state “decided by less than five percentage points” (McClean 2016). President Obama won Florida in 2008 and 2012, however, “in 2012, Obama won Florida over Romney by just over .9%” (Savidge 2016).

Florida Presidential Election Year	Democrat	Republican
2016	47.8%	49.0%
2012	50.0%	49.1%
2008	51.0%	48.2%
2004	47.1%	52.1%
2000	48.8%	48.8

(Source: [270ToWIN](#))

The table above emphasizes how much of a battle ground state Florida has been for years. Florida typically is a toss-up, which is why candidates do a ton of campaigning in the area. In addition, being the 3rd largest state in the United States (which has its perks), Florida has a total of 29 electoral votes and “is on track to gain two more electoral votes after the 2020 presidential election” (270ToWIN).

Georgia & Abrams

Georgia has not voted in favor of a Democratic governor since the legendary Zell Miller took office in 1992. For this reason, the state is fairly predictable. Whether on the state level or national level Republicans have found comfort in knowing that Republicans are on Georgia’s mind! In fact, “in 2004, George Bush easily defeated John Kerry by 58% to 41%” (270ToWIN).

Georgia Presidential Election Year	Democrat	Republican
2016	45.6%	50.8%
2012	45.4%	53.3%
2008	47.0%	52.2%
2004	41.4%	58.0%
2000	43.0%	54.7%

(Source: [270ToWIN](#))

The table above shows the republican trend in Georgia since the year 2000. Despite the comfortable win’s Republicans have enjoyed over the past two decades, experts suggest Georgia is only four to six years away from being a true swing state due to the demographic shifts in its population (McLean 2016).

Maryland and Jealous

Maryland receives the least number of electoral votes out of the previous two states mentioned, receiving 10 electoral votes. Maryland is similar to Georgia in that the state is relatively predictable when it comes to politics; however, it defers from Georgia in that the state “has been primarily a blue state since the founding of the modern political parties” (270ToWIN). More interestingly, the state of Maryland has only voted Republican three times; “in the landslide wins of Richard Nixon in 1972, Ronald Reagan in 1984 and George H. W. Bush in 1988” (270ToWIN).

Maryland Presidential Election Year	Democrat	Republican
2016	60.3%	33.9%
2012	62.0%	35.9%
2008	61.9%	36.5%
2004	56.0%	43.0%
2000	56.6%	40.2%

(Source: [270ToWIN](#))

As seen in the table the state of Maryland is comfortably Democratic. In 2016, Hillary Clinton had no issue defeating President Trump 60.3% to his underwhelming 33.9%. While this may be the case on a national scale during our general election results, the reader will see this is not always the case.

Hypothesis #3 Results:

Using the information and tables provided above the reader should have developed a general trend for how the gubernatorial elections should develop. For example, although Florida is relatively a toss-up, Georgia is fairly conservative, and Maryland is a Democratic stronghold based on historical election patterns. Based off these facts and correlations one would expect, Democratic African-American candidates, Stacey Abrams not to stand a chance in Georgia and Ben Jealous to win in an overwhelming landslide. However, the 2018 election results show otherwise.

State	Georgia (Stacey Abrams)	Florida (Andrew Gillum)	Maryland (Ben Jealous)
% of Vote for Hillary Clinton	45.89%	47.82%	60.33%
2018 General Election Result	48.8%	49.19%	42.76%

(Source: Ballotpedia)

The results shown above were incredible. We will begin by analyzing Maryland, a Democratic juggernaut throughout history. The reader’s expectations were probably like my very own; expecting Ben Jealous to win by a comfortable margin. However that was not the case, Jealous was defeated soundly by Republican Larry Hogan by a 56.2% to 42.76% margin. A state that has only voted Republican in the presidential election 3 times in history elected a Republican governor.

In Georgia, a fairly conservative state, Hillary Clinton garnered 45.89% of votes respectively. Stacey Abrams, however, an African-American female Democratic candidate gained 3% more votes; collecting 48.8% of the vote in Georgia against former Secretary of State Brian Kemp. This increased competitiveness in the state of Georgia presents more evidence in favor of Georgia possibly becoming a swing state in future elections.

Andrew Gillum turned heads as well scoring 1.37 percentage points higher than Hillary Clinton. The sunshine state, however, is known for being a swing state unlike Georgia and Maryland where results were surprising. Nonetheless, these results ultimately rejected the 3rd hypothesis of this paper.

1966-2018 African-American Senate/Governor Election Results Test

There was another question that alluded to while doing research and testing hypothesis 1-3. Considering all three African-American candidates lost in the 2018 gubernatorial elections, maybe the three candidates experience just simply was not enough. Maybe Andrew Gillum’s 15 years of public service, serving as both the Mayor of Tallahassee as well as on their city council, was not enough. Maybe Stacey Abram’s 10 years of House of Representative experience was not enough. Ben Jealous, did not have the experience the other two candidates possessed. His loss was to an extent expected, however, the question that arose out of this research is: if these two candidates experience was not enough to be victorious then what amount of experience is considered ‘enough’ experience for an African-American to win an election?

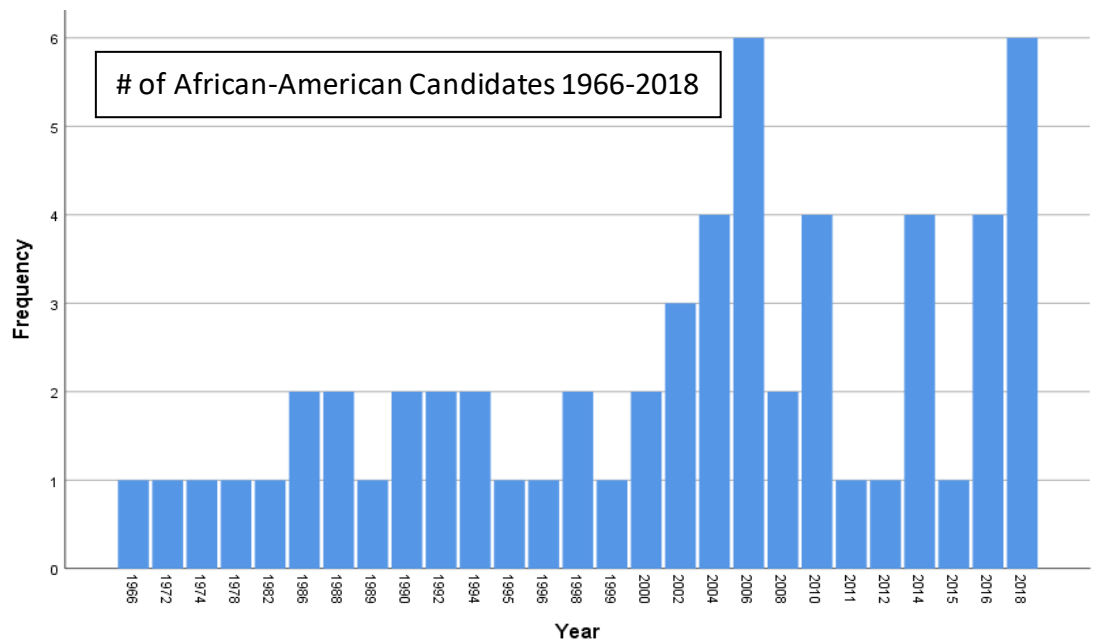
The research in this next section was inspired by a research paper by Dr. Tures in 2014, “Are you Experienced? African American Candidates in Statewide Elections, 1964-2014,” the paper was published in the journal *Questions in Politics*. Dr. Tures and his students conducted research dating back to 1966 up until 2010 when the research was being tested. The professor and his students looked at variables such as the year of the election, state, region, candidate name, affiliated party, opponent, vote percentage garnered, vote category, elected office sought (senator or governor), time period (before 1989 or after), incumbent opponent (yes or no), and the state’s percentage of African-Americans.

Using this information gathered by former undergraduates of LaGrange College, in this paper their research was updated. Data was collected from 2010-2018, looking at all cases of African-American candidates who ran for statewide office. During this interval of time, there were 16 African-American candidates who ran for the US Senate or for a state’s governor position. Of the 16 candidates only 4 won the political office sought (25% victory percentage rate), which is nothing to be ashamed of. Being elected as a state’s governor or as a congressional senator is no small feat by any measure. However, with this abundance of data collected and thanks to research gathered by Dr. Tures and his former undergraduates this allowed for larger tests and correlations to be conducted in order to explain why this percentage of victory was this low.

Experiment 2 (1966-2018)
The “Wilder” Effect

The graph above shows the frequency of African-American candidates who ran for governor or U.S. Senate from 1966-2018. Notice the big change after 1989, in which a significant event took place. Douglas Wilder, African-American candidate for Governor of Virginia was elected in 1989, in a victory which would go down in the history books. As

previously stated, the last elected African-American Governor served during the reconstruction period in 1872. It had been 117 years since an African-American had been a governor of a state. As the reader would imagine this sparked a flame in the African-American youth that they too could serve their nation one day. Despite the low percentage of victory for African-Americans in U.S. Senate and governor elections, African-Americans since 1989 have ran more frequently than before, and this is thanks to Douglas Wilder of Virginia.



Allen R.

The South vs. Non-South (1966-2018)

In this section African-American candidate's success will be tested in the South versus the non-south portions of the United States. The common theory believed is African-Americans do not fare well in the South, but this portion seeks to challenge this age-old belief using a brief cross tabulation analysis. A cross tabulation analysis uses two or more variables that are separated into different categories. In this cross-tabulation analysis, a chi-square test is also utilized allowing us to see what was expected to happen versus what actually happened. Results are shown below.

Notice in the chart to the right the win and lost rows. Under the South column the count represents the actual number that resulted. For example, in the South 25 African-Americans lost and our analysis expected 21.2 African-Americans to lose. This shows us that African-Americans lose at a higher rate in the South than what is expected, this data could suggest a hint of racism still exists in the South. This data also reveals, in the South since 1966, only 3 African-American candidates (whether running for governor or the U.S. Senate) have won their election. The expected number of African-American victories was 4.8. African-Americans do not fare too well in the Dixie belt.

Won * Region Crosstabulation

			Region		
			South	Non-South	Total
Won	Lost	Count	23	25	48
		Expected Count	21.2	26.8	48.0
Total	Won	Count	3	8	11
	Expected Count	4.8	6.2	11.0	
Total	Count		26	33	59
	Expected Count		26.0	33.0	59.0

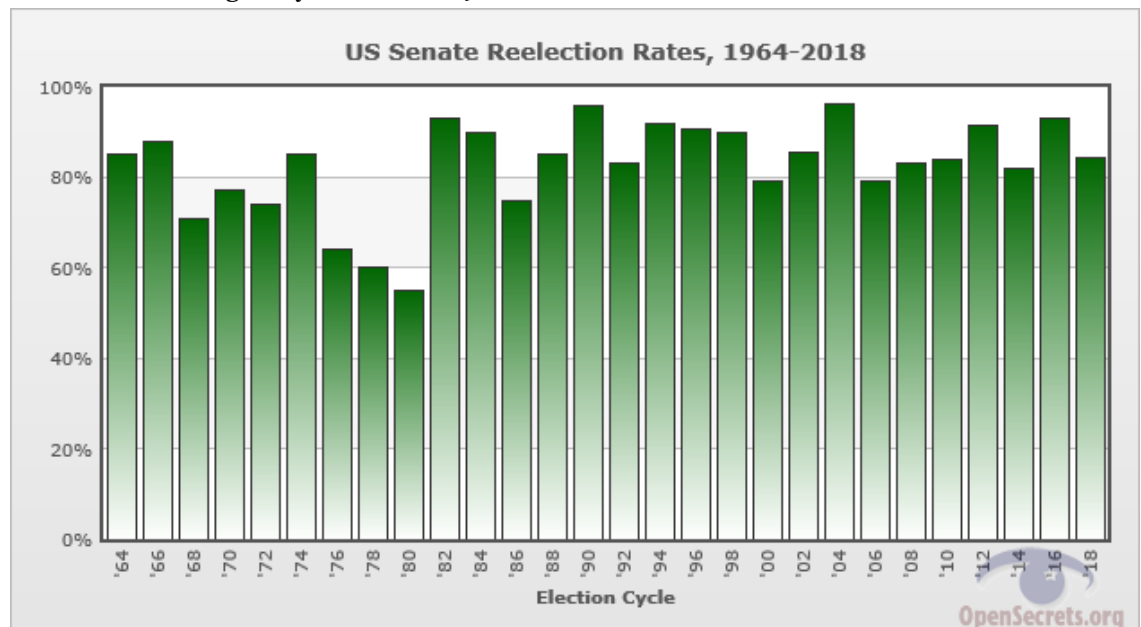
Now let us compare the South's results to the non-south regions of America. In the non-south 25 African-Americans lost, our analysis expected 26.8 African-Americans to lose. This means African-Americans lost at a lower rate than what statistics expected them to lose. Next, 8 African-Americans won their elections; 6.2 were expected to win in the statistical analysis. In short, these results show us that African-Americans running for governor or U.S. Senate have a slight advantage running in the non-South regions of America versus running in the South. Since 1966, African-Americans have had a 19% election rate in non-South regions compared to 12% election rate in the South.

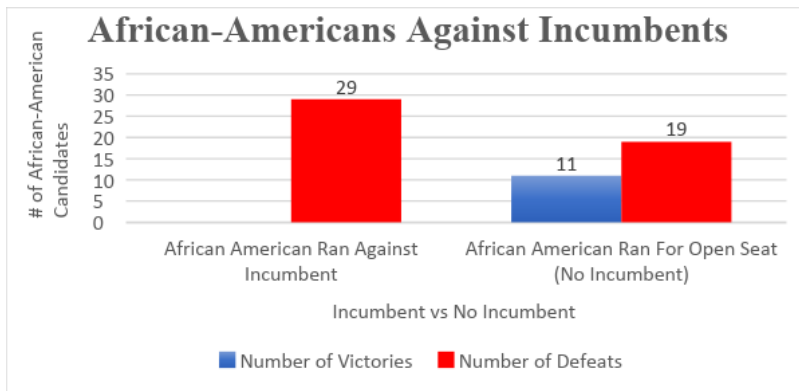
African-Americans vs. Incumbents

Regardless of race beating an incumbent is tough to do. In the chart below, courtesy of the Center for Responsive Politics, the U.S. Senate Reelection Rates from 1964-2018 are listed.

U.S. Senate reelection rates on average vary between 80-90% as seen in this chart. This means whether the

challenger is Caucasian, African-American, Asian-American, or Mexican-American the chances of them beating an incumbent is difficult to do. Caucasian candidates have done it before, but for African-American candidates running for governor or the U.S. Senate this task has proven in fact to be impossible. Up until this year there has never been an African-American candidate to defeat an incumbent candidate running for





reelection. The research done in the paper shown below supports this.

What about Experienced African-American Candidates? (1966-2018)

Previously in this paper experience was defined as having any previous political experience. For example, Andrew Gillum served 11 years as a city commissioner and 4 years as the Mayor of Tallahassee but in this section these years of service will not count as experience. In this section the definition for experience has been constrained to only include African-American candidates who held

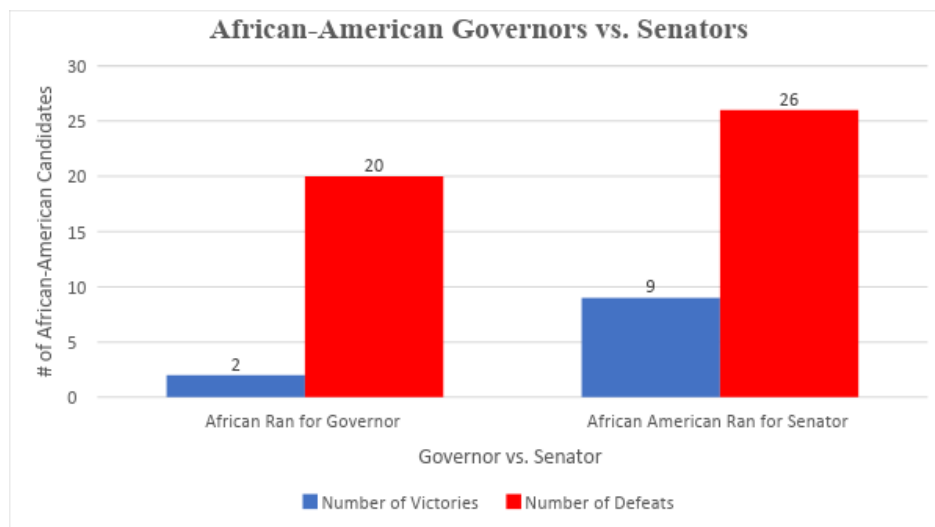
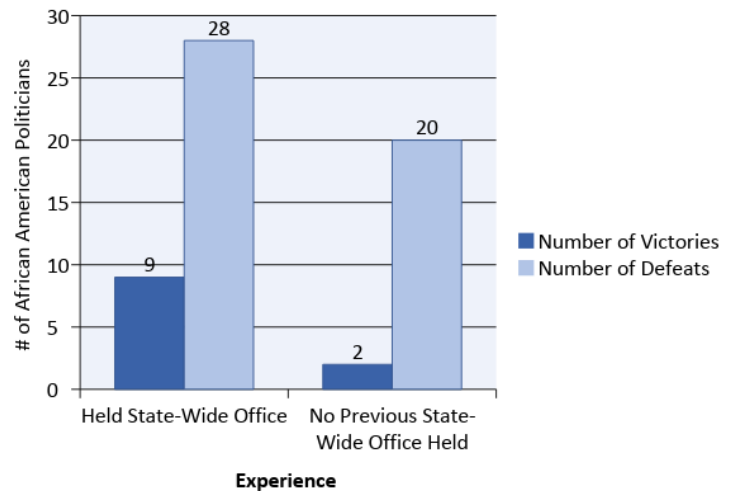
statewide elected office positions. This includes governors, lieutenant governor, attorney general, commissioner of agriculture, and many more.

In the bar graph to the left, African-American candidates who held a state-wide elected office before running for governor or U.S. Senate, were over 2 times more likely to win their election. African-Americans who held state-wide office prior to their election had a 24% election rate while, their counterparts who held no previous state-wide office experience, had a 9% election rate. African-Americans looking to garner success in politics, especially as senators or governor, must pay their dues if they wish to have any success in the general elections.

Governor vs Senate, Which Do African-Americans Have a Better shot at? (1966-2018)

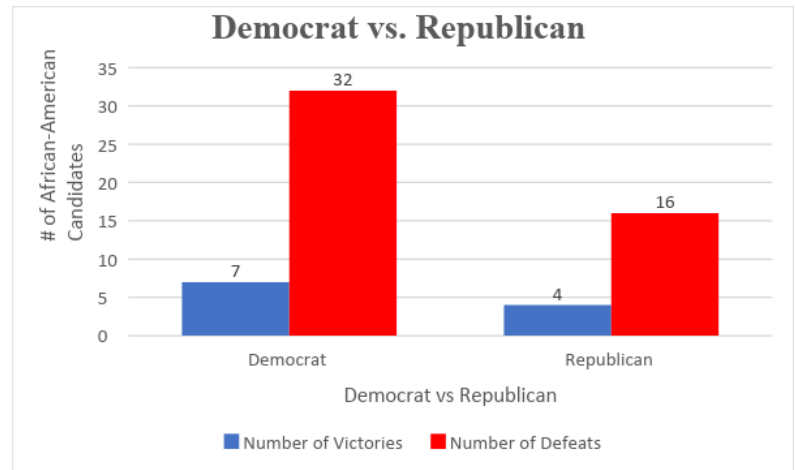
This section will determine whether it is statistically better for an African-American to run for governor or to the U.S. Senate. From previous statement we understand only two African-Americans have served as governors of a state and nine have served on the U.S. senate. The graph below compares the margin of victory to defeat of each category.

Since 1966 African-Americans have had a 9% success rate in terms of running for governor of a state. In comparison they have had a 32% success rate running for the U.S. Senate. These numbers reveal that an African-American candidate is more than three times likely to become a U.S. senator than they are to serve as a state's governor.



Democrat vs. Republican

For years it has been known that minorities support democrats more than Republicans, and this data supports this statement. African-American candidates, running for governor or U.S. Senate from 1966-2018, ran nearly twice as much as a Democrat (39) than they did as a Republican (20). However, what these statistics also show is African-Americans fare slightly better when they run as a Republican. African-American republican candidates since 1966 have had a 20% success rate while African-American Democrats have had an 18% success rate in the general elections. Examples of African-American Republican candidates to become elected are Tim Scott of South Carolina and Edward Brooke Massachusetts.



Conclusion

This paper used quantitative and qualitative measures in order to conduct the two experiments created. The first experiment focused on the 2018 general election results, focusing on the three African-American candidates running for governor; Andrew Gillum (FL), Stacey Abrams (GA), and Ben Jealous (MD).

The first hypothesis developed in the first experiment questioned the common belief that African-Americans always vote for other African-Americans. During this test Stacey Abrams, Democratic candidate for governor in Georgia, election results were compared to three of her Democratic predecessors: Mark Taylor, Roy E. Barnes, and Jason Carter. Results showed that despite, Stacey Abrams being the first African-American female in America's history to run for governor and the first female (African-American or white) in Georgia's history, the young star captured a higher voting percentage with 48.7% of votes than all three of her predecessors.

In addition, Florida democrat Andrew Gillum's (African-American) election results were also compared to his running mate, Bill Nelson (white), during this first experiment. Despite Gillum's lack of general election experience their voting percentage and total number of votes came back very similar. This finding rejected the hypothesis of African-American voters only voting for African-American candidates. Due to their similar election results it is very likely that African-American voters also voted for Gillum's running mate Bill Nelson. Thus, the first hypothesis established in this paper was rejected. This was a huge finding because it shows us that African-Americans do not always vote for other African-Americans!

The 2nd hypothesis created suggested that the more experience an African-American candidate possessed the higher their voting percentage would be. This hypothesis was tested by comparing each candidate's previous political experience. For example, Andrew Gillum served 4 years as Tallahassee's mayor and 11 years as a member of the City Council for Tallahassee. This equates to a total of 15 years' worth of political experience. Our findings defended the hypothesis. Andrew Gillum had the most political experience of the three candidates receiving the highest percentage of votes, followed by Stacey Abrams, and then last but certainly not least Ben Jealous who had zero years' worth of previous political experience and his election results depicted this lack of experience. The second hypothesis established in this paper was supported by the test in this paper.

The 3rd hypothesis created sought to test liberal and conservative states. In this test, Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential election results were used in comparison to the general election results of Abrams, Gillum, and Jealous. Each state's election history was discussed in detail. Florida was determined to be a flip-state, Georgia a conservative state, and Maryland a heavy Democratic state. The results of this test rejected the hypothesis stated. Despite Democrat Jealous, running in a state who has only elected a Republican president 3 time in its recent history, Jealous captured the least percentage of votes out of the three candidates. Other factors obviously could have played a factor in determining whether Jealous was elected, such as his lack of political experience, however, for the purpose of this test the hypothesis was rejected.

As for Andrew Gillum, he outperformed Hillary Clinton by 1.73 percentage points, taking home 49.2% of the Florida vote! Abrams, despite competing in an area as red as the red sea, held her ground and surpassed all expectations. She captured 48.8% of the vote in Georgia 2.91 percentage points better than Hillary Clinton. All three examples show us

that it is possible for an African-American to have success in a conservative state, and vice versa; just because an African-American runs as a Democrat in a liberal state does not mean he or she will be elected.

In the second experiment data was collected from 1966-2018. Variables such as year, state, region, party, vote percentage, experience, and many more were gathered to determine specific questions concerning African-Americans. The first experiment was an example of a small sample research project, this second experiment was conducted on a larger scale in order to look more in-depth as to why African-Americans have struggled to become elected to the U.S. Senate and governor.

Results were tremendous, the data collected, and test ran displayed that the "Wilder" effect was in fact a real thing. After Douglas Wilder was elected in 1989, more African-American candidates ran for office than ever before. Despite this, African-American election results still measured poorly with only 8 African-American candidates winning election from 1989-2018; 16% election success.

In addition, research in this paper shows political candidates, regardless of race, running for U.S. Senate and governor do not perform well against incumbents. African-American candidates are at worse odds than any race when it comes to facing an incumbent. Never in history has an African-American candidate running for U.S. Senate or governor defeated an incumbent. African-Americans hold an embarrassing 0-29 record during the 1966-2018 period this research was conducted.

Experiment two also displayed African-Americans slightly come out better running in non-South regions than in the Southern region with a seven percentage point difference separating the two. African-Americans also fare better running for U.S. Senate versus as a governor of a state. In fact, African-Americans are three times as likely to win election running as a U.S. Senator than as governor.

In conclusion, since Reconstruction there have only been 9 African-American U.S. Senators and 2 African-American governors to serve our nation. African-Americans make up 14.6% of the United States population yet represent only 8% of the members of Congress. African-Americans cannot depend on fame and money, but experience. African-American candidates that hold a state-wide elected position prior to running for the U.S. Senate or governor are more than two times as likely to win an election as those candidates who do not.

America has had a history of racial disparity in minority elected officials and it is a long and painful history. Strategic legislation such as Jim Crow laws, gerrymandering, and purposeful voter suppression acts were created to take away and weaken the African-Americans voice. Despite this, young stars like Andrew Gillum, Stacey Abrams, and Ben Jealous give many African-Americans hope that they too can represent and speak up about issues that matter in the United States. There is no better time than the present, to make history, to create a better future for our children, and to elect officials that are representative of the population that they serve.

While doing research for this topic, another area of political disparity reveal itself. This group of people make up 17% of the United States population, yet, represent only 6% of the members of Congress today. Latinos have faced their fair share of voter suppression and discrimination in the United States. This area is a huge concern in politics and would be a great topic to research.

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