

An Historical Election in Context: The 2001 Atlanta Mayoral Election

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On January 7, 2002, Shirley M. Franklin was inaugurated as the mayor of Atlanta, Georgia. Her election to the mayorship was an historic milestone in a number of respects. First, Franklin is the first woman to be elected as the mayor of Atlanta. Second, Franklin is the first African American woman to become mayor of a major Southeastern city. Alone, Shirley Franklin's accomplishments are impressive. We believe, however, that her candidacy and election are monumental given the historical context in which she was elected. In this paper, we illustrate the historical factors that served as the backdrop of Franklin's election. We then demonstrate how Franklin's candidacy served as a source of empowerment for African American women in light of (and despite) these historical factors.

Coming to power in a city whose motto is "Too Busy to Hate" took African Americans much, much longer than would be expected. Atlanta elected its first African American mayor, Maynard Jackson, in 1973. The election had to take place in a two-step process. Attorney Jackson had to first run and win the vice mayoralty post in the 1969 election, four years after the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act (Rooks 1970, 333). The next step that Vice Mayor Jackson had to take was to run against the incumbent Mayor Sam Massell in 1973. Mayor Massell was just completing his first term as mayor and like the white mayors before him, William B. Hartsfield and Ivan Allen, Massell had expected to win reelection to City Hall. William B. Hartsfield held City Hall for twenty-three years. Thus, when Massell ran for reelection, he felt it was unfair and non-traditional behavior for his vice mayor, Jackson to challenge him. Mayor Massell simply let it be known during the 1973 campaign that Vice Mayor Jackson was not waiting his turn. Hence, he vigorously opposed Vice Mayor Jackson's efforts to empower blacks in the city. Nevertheless, Vice Mayor Jackson, with a vigorous registration and turnout effort, overcame the determined and strenuous opposition of the incumbent mayor and won.

In the thirty years since 1973, African American males have won all seven mayoral elections in the city. Following Jackson, civil rights leader, Congressman, and United Nations Ambassador Andrew Young was mayor from 1981 to 1989. In 1989, William

Campbell held the top position in Atlanta's city politics. The male dominance in Atlanta politics, however, ended in 2001 when Shirley Franklin was elected mayor. Franklin captured the election when a recount of the municipal election on November 13, 2001 confirmed the outcome of the initial election held on November 6, 2001.

The Historic Milestones in Atlanta Politics

African American historian and electoral activist in the Atlanta community, Clarence Bacote, offers in a series of perspective and analytical articles solid insights into black Atlanta politics over time. His work is literally unsurpassed and has provided the foundation for all subsequent students of race and politics in urban areas. In 1955, Bacote chronicled the life of William Finch's one-year tenure on Atlanta's City Council as well as Finch's pre- and post-council years. On December 7, 1870, William Finch became one of the first blacks (and last until 1953) to be elected to Atlanta's City Council. Of this pioneering African American city legislator, Bacote found that Finch was extremely conscientious, not just of his work but in his role as an African American leader. Bacote explains that "as a councilman, Finch was an active participant in the discussion and had a perfect attendance record during his one-year term" (Bacote 1955b, 354). Bacote argues the Finch "more than held his own in debate with his colleagues and was not afraid to advocate and support measures which he considered beneficial to the people of Atlanta" (Bacote 1955b, 354). At the same time,

Being a Negro, Finch realized that his actions in Council were under constant scrutiny and he was determined to conduct himself in such a manner as to reflect no discredit upon his race. Once he asked the members of Council if they had heard of any charges that had been made against the Negro members. He was assured that as far as they know, the Negro members were beyond reproach. (Bacote 1955b, 356)

During the single year of his term, the Democrats retook control of the State Legislature and passed a law requiring that all city elections in Atlanta be held on a city-wide, rather than on a district-wide basis. In addition, the City Council divided the Fourth Ward (Finch's ward) into two separate wards. Therefore, when Councilman Finch ran for reelection, "it was a forgone conclusion that he would suffer defeat" (Bacote 1955b, 359). And with Finch's defeat Bacote tells the reader that no other African American would get reelected to Atlanta's city government until 1953.

In *The Negro in Atlanta Politics* that appeared in 1955, Bacote provides a detailed analysis of African American electoral politics, covering voter registration, voter turnout, and elected officials in Atlanta in the years leading up to the return of blacks to city government (Bacote 1955a). In his work, Professor Bacote shows that in the eighty-six years of political participation in city politics, African Americans went through three major states of evolution. Stage one, according to Bacote, lasted from 1869 to 1908 and was characterized by male voting, Republican Party partisanship and the election of "two Negroes, George Graham and William Finch...to the Atlanta City Council on December 7, 1870 from the Third and Fourth Wards respectively" (Bacote 1955a, 333; see also Watts 1973; Watts 1978). This lasted, however, for only a couple of years. "After 1872, the Republican Party's influence began to wane, and as a consequence, Negro participation thereafter in the political life of the City of Atlanta could only take place within the framework of the Democratic Party" (Bacote 1955a, 333).

The coming of the Democrats to power meant the disappearance of African American-elected officials, appeals to the African American electorate to vote Democratic, and the

eventual appearance of (1) a culminate poll tax, (2) a white primary, and (3) the at-large election of city councilmen. Finally, in 1908 (although not effective until January 1, 1909) Georgia Democrats disenfranchised African Americans. Unable to prevent it, the first stage ended with African Americans out of power (Bacote 1955a).

Stage two started in the aftermath of 1908 and left African Americans with few suffrage rights. Bacote notes, however, that "the disenfranchisement measure of 1908...did not prevent the Negro from voting in general, open and special elections; and when the opportunity presented itself, the Negro took advantage of it" (Bacote 1955a, 342). It was in these arenas that the limited African American electorate stepped forward to gain some semblance of influence and impact. Bacote's article illustrates that the first opposition to present itself in 1921 occurred when the city proposed a \$4 million bond for school construction. Blacks, dissatisfied with the bond issue, registered in sufficient numbers to defeat it twice in an open election. Seeing the power of the rising African American electorate in city politics, the city earmarked part of the bond issue to assist the African American public schools in the city. The bond issue later passed (Bacote 1955a, 342).

Ten years later, in 1932, there was a recall election for Mayor James L. Key. The rising African American electorate had gravitated toward Key because he demanded fair treatment for the city's African Americans. Moreover, during his two previous mayoral administrations, he had given the African American community a fair share of city services (Bayer 1996). The African American voter defeated the recall effort and Key remained in office.

Although no other political event arose that permitted the African American electorate to demonstrate its power, leaders within the African American community set up citizenship schools to further increase their numbers on the voting rolls (Bacote 1955a, 342-343). Moreover, John Wesley Dobbs organized the Atlanta Civic and Political League in 1934 to increase political consciousness among blacks. This organization held "mass meetings throughout the city" to mobilize the community to register and to ensure effective voter turnout (Bacote 1955a, 343).

But even with this organizational thrust, the segregated political context and its candidates who used race baiting to win office depressed the slowly evolving African American electorate. Hence, Bacote tells us that the period "from 1908 to 1943 can well be called the 'Dark Ages' as far as Negro political participation in Atlanta is concerned. Registration reached an all time low" (Bacote 1955a, 343). Stage two ended with a few more registered voter than stage one.

Stage three began on January 12, 1943 when a liberal, Ellis Arnall, became governor by defeating the state's leading racial demagogue, Eugene Talmadge, in the Democratic primary. "Under [Arnall's] leadership, the legislature, on February 5, 1945, repealed the poll tax and on August 15 of the same year lowered the voting age from twenty-one years to eighteen" (Bacote 1955a, 343). Although these state forces were reshaping the segregation context at the local level, the national government changed the context nationally when the Supreme Court in *Smith v. Allwright* in 1944, declared the white primaries to be unconstitutional. Atlanta, as well as the State of Georgia in general, ignored the decision and failed to comply despite the Arnall administration's refusal to call a special session of the State legislature to find ways to circumvent the Supreme Court's decision (Bacote 1955a, 344).

Around the same time, another political event enlarged the rising African American electorate. In 1946, "Congressman Robert Ramspeck of the Fifth District (Atlanta) resigned and a special election was called for February 12, 1946 in order to fill his unexpired term" (Bacote 1955a, 344). African American leaders, including the Atlanta Civic

and Political League, the NAACP, and the *Atlanta Daily Word*, organized a campaign that resulted in the registration of 6,878 African Americans (Bacote 1955a; see also Davis and Willingham 1986).

But an even greater boost to African American power came at the end of the election. Among the nineteen candidates running for the congressional seat was Mrs. Helen Douglas Mankin whose "record as a state legislator and willingness to seek the Negro vote virtually won her the Negro support" (Bacote 1955a, 344). In the end, Mrs. Mankin won by more than 800 votes as a result of the black electorate (Bacote 1955a, 344). Because of the black margin of victory afforded to Mrs. Mankin, the election attracted national attention. The African American electorate, though small in number, had made a major public relations breakthrough. There was more to come.

On April 1, 1946, "the United States Supreme Court in the case of Chapman versus King invalidated the white primary in the state" and therefore the city (Bacote 1955a, 345). At the same time,

The late ex-Governor Eugene Talmadge, who had lost to Governor Arnall in 1942, decided to run again on a white supremacy platform. Since Governor Arnall was ineligible to succeed himself, the anti-Talmadge group endorsed James Carmichael. Talmadge's anti-Negro rantings in the past as well as the anti-Negro policy he threatened to pursue if elected left no choice for the Negro as far as the two candidates were concerned. (Bacote 1955a, 345)

As a result, a massive voter registration drive was undertaken as a collaborative effort between the NAACP, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, the Atlanta Urban League, and other community organizations. Forming the All-Citizens Registration Committee, this collaboration resulted in the registration of almost 18,000 blacks in a fifty-one day period (Bacote 1955a). Moreover, to ensure the newly enlisted voters were knowledgeable, the various voting leagues formed in 1949, the Atlanta Negro Voters League.

Learning from the Mankin victory, Mayor Hartsfield, in his 1949 reelection bid, "vigorously sought the black vote in the primary" (Bayer 1996, 25). When the results came in "Hartsfield secured a majority over his three opponents by only 102 votes" (Bayer 1996, 27). In two predominately black precincts, Hartsfield received 82.5 percent of the vote. Therefore, for Bacote and most subsequent Atlanta scholars, "the 1949 election was a turning point, as blacks and Northside whites became part of a biracial political coalition that controlled city politics over the next twenty years" (Bayer 1996, 27). Bacote argues, however, that

The climax of Negro political activity occurred in the city election of May 13, 1953, when Dr. Rufus E. Clement, President of Atlanta University, was nominated in a city-wide primary to the Board of Education as the representative from the Third Ward. That Dr. Clement was able to defeat his white opponent by a margin of ten thousand votes reflects credit on the thousands of fair-minded white citizens who cast aside the question of race and voted for whom they regarded as best qualified. In this same election, Attorney [A.T.] Walden and Dr. Miles Amos were elected from the Third Ward as members of the City Democratic Executive Committee. This marked the first time since December 7, 1870, that Atlanta had elected Negroes to a municipal office. (Bacote 1955a, 349)

Following Bacote's longitudinal studies, African American historian Alton Hornsby, Jr., continues the story of Atlanta city politics with his recount of the period between 1961 and 1973, when the first African American was elected mayor (Hornsby Jr. 1977). Hornsby found that race, as a variable, was just as important in the 1961, 1965, 1969, and 1973 elections, as Bacote had found it to be in the previous Atlanta city elections. For it was in this twelve-year span that power was hotly contested around race as black political empowerment rose to gradually displace white political power. Crucial in this rise to

empowerment was the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which, in Georgia, led to the eventual white flight to the suburbs. Reactionary white politicians fought using overt and clear-cut racial campaigns to forestall this former confederate county from falling into the hands of their once former slaves. The white backlash was not without its moments of high drama and heated debates that registered itself in the electoral turnout of low-income whites who were most galvanized and mobilized by these racial campaigns. Hornsby's work carefully covers this raging debate and the transformation of mayoral politics that it wrought.

The 1961 election marked the race between an avid segregationist and a race moderate. Lester Maddox, fervent segregationist and former restaurateur—who sold ax handles at his cafeteria—carried the banner of white supremacy and the values of the old confederacy. The retiring mayor, William B. Hartsfield, hand picked his successor—president of Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, Ivan Allen. Allen was the “progressive” candidate. Not only had Allen been a major force working to solve the desegregation demands bought by the student sit-inners from Atlanta University Center in 1960, but in this race, “he also became the first white politician to publicize his meeting with blacks” (Hornsby Jr. 1977). The other two white candidates, Charlie Brown and M. M. “Muggy” Smith found themselves between the two polar opposites, Maddox on the right and Allen left of center, in this desegregation city. While the student sit-inners and SCLC moved to support Smith, the Atlanta Negro Voter League and the NAACP supported Allen. Immediately, local leaders worked hard to repair this split in the black electorate and win a consensus around Allen. They partly succeeded. Allen won more than 70 percent of the African American vote. This support kept both Maddox and Allen from winning the majority of the vote and under Georgia law a run-off election was required.

As Hornsby's article reveals, African American voter turnout increased in the run-off election and Allen won the election. The struggle between the forces of the New South and the Old South had been decided in favor of the former. Out of all of this came a biracial coalition that held together for Allen's reelection in 1965.

Prior to Allen's reelection bid in 1965, African American attorney Leroy Johnson was elected to the Georgia Senate in 1962 when a federal court ended the State's County Unit System and eight African Americans were elected to the State House when the federal court directed Georgia to reapportion its State Assembly (Hornsby Jr. 1977). Then, in 1963, two African Americans were appointed to the party's State Democratic Executive Committee. Hence, Allen's reelection came at a moment of heightened political empowerment.¹ This time, Allen won without a run-off election and his victory to the mayorship carried the first African American, Q. V. Williamson, on to the City Council. Williamson was the first black since William Finch in 1870 to be elected to Atlanta's City Council.

In 1969, Allen did not run for reelection, but supported a white alderman, Rodney Cook. African Americans in the biracial coalition did not agree with this choice. As a result, the coalition, as Hornsby's work demonstrates, fell apart. Eventually, the African American leadership itself split with the old-line leaders giving their support to the Jewish vice mayor, Sam Massell. The SCLC backed Horace Tate for mayor and Maynard Jackson for vice mayor, both of whom announced their candidacy without the old-line leadership approval. Although the old-line leadership would later support Jackson, they did not embrace Tate (Hornsby Jr. 1977).

Nevertheless, in the 1969 election, Tate won nearly 50 percent of the African American vote, which forced a run-off between Cook and Massell. Tate's black voters switched to Massell during the run-off and Massell won the election over Cook with little difficulty. African American voters gave Massell nearly 92 percent of their total vote (Hornsby Jr. 1977).

In the vice mayoral election, Attorney Jackson won over a "highly-respected white Alderman, Milton Farris" (Hornsby Jr. 1977). Even with four candidates in the race, Jackson's vote total (56,369) resulted in 58.2 percent and a victory without a run-off election. African Americans gave Jackson 97.8 percent of their vote, while the white community gave him 27.7 percent of theirs (Hornsby Jr. 1977).

Hornsby's work followed Jackson's election to the Atlanta mayorship in 1973, when Jackson became the first of his race to hold this post (Hornsby Jr. 1977, 27-33). During his campaign, Massell used the slogan "Atlanta's Too Young to Die," which made the race issue a front and center matter. African American State Senator Johnson also entered the race. This forced Jackson and the incumbent mayor, Massell, into a run-off election. Jackson won the run-off and retired the incumbent mayor. Power in Atlanta had now come full circle and blacks captured more of the eighteen seats on the City Council. This was an increase of four African Americans, moving black representation from five to nine.

When Mayor Jackson ran for reelection in 1977, some of the strengths and weaknesses of African American political empowerment were starting to show in the city. African American political scientists, Mack Jones, Adolph Reed, Jr., and Claude Barnes, Jr., highlighted and laid bare the "Neoprogressive" Administrations of this first wave of African American male mayors (see Jones 1978; Reed Jr. 1988; Barnes Jr. 1994). Clearly, the lack of economic resources under city control began to show as did the problems arising out of years of neglect during the segregation era. Many of these problems needed economic infusion to be seriously addressed. The Jackson administration tried with the Hartsfield Airport expansion and the Andrew Young administration tried to address the problem by bringing the Olympics to the city. None of these single, one-time economic infusion projects could alone and/or in combination deal with the nearly century-old problem of neglect.

The Prelude Election: The 1997 Mayoral Contest

By the 1993 mayoral election, the three mayoral administrations of Jackson (1973-1981 and 1989-1993) as well as the two terms of the Andrew Young administration (1981-1989) were over. Therefore, the city elected in 1993 Bill Campbell and barely reelected him in 1997 in a bitter and personal rivalry between him and the president of the Atlanta City Council, Attorney Marvin Arrington (Holmes 1999, 2-5). Arrington had been elected to City Council in 1969 and had served continuously since then, making him a veteran office holder of twenty-eight years. He had been in city politics since the initial days of empowerment and was part of that initial wave of newcomers. But he lost to the incumbent mayor in 1997 (Holmes 1994; Holmes 1998). With this being the last election of an African American male before the rise of a female mayor, it is to the electoral coalition in that election that we now turn.

Table 1 provides us with the number and percentage of registered voters in the city of Atlanta broken down by gender. African American females comprise one-third of the voters in the city while African American males are nearly one-fourth of the registered voters in the city. Combined, African Americans were nearly 59 percent of all the voters in the city on the eve of the 1997 election.

On the other hand, white registered voters have an almost identical breakdown by gender. White females and white males each constitute one-fifth of the registered voters. Combined, whites make up nearly 40 percent of the total voters in the city. Other racial and ethnic groups are a little over 1 percent of the city's total electorate.

Nevertheless, on November 4, 1997, only 31 percent of these registered voters went to the polls to reelect then incumbent mayor Bill Campbell over challenger Marvin

Table 1
The Number and Percentage of Registered Voters in the City of Atlanta, by Race and Gender 1997 Election

<i>Types of Voters</i>	<i>Total Number of Registered Voters</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>African American Voters</i>		
Black Female	85,102	34.8
Black Male	58,606	24.0
Total	143,708	58.8
<i>White Voters</i>		
White Female	48,692	19.9
White Male	48,194	19.7
Total	96,883	39.6
<i>Other Race Voters</i>		
Other Female	1,494	0.6
Other Male	1,704	0.7
Total	3,198	1.3
Unknown	739	0.3
Grand Total	244,528	100.00

Source: Adopted from "Fulton County Voter Registration Count by Precinct and District Code" as of 10/20/97

Arrington, a long-time councilmember who was then president of the City Council. In that election with nine candidates running, two females and seven males, there were 75,198 ballots cast from within the city. Table 2 orders the outcome of that election.

In Table 2, one can see that the incumbent mayor, Bill Campbell, captured enough votes to win without the necessity of a run-off election. His closest competition ran nearly 10 percentage-points behind him, which translated into more than a seven thousand-vote deficit.

However, in this prelude election there are a few modest signs that a political transference might be taking place. First, there is in the registration data as seen in Table 1 that African American women have out-registered their male counterparts by a clear-cut 11 percent. Thus, they represent a dominant force at least on the rolls in the city of Atlanta. And in sheer volume of numbers, they are nearly equal to all of white voters and they have 26,000 more voters registered than African American males.

Finally, the number of black female registered voters constituted enough voters to give a candidate the number of votes needed to defeat Campbell's reelection bid. With 85,102 registered voters and Mayor Campbell getting 33,251, it is clear that these female voters could put one of their own in office.

An interesting addition to this prelude election is the appearance of two female candidates in the 1997 mayoral race. The voter support for these candidates gives us a further clue that the African American female voters might exercise greater influence and clout in the upcoming race in 2001.

Table 3 illustrates the total number of votes and percentages given to the female candidates in the 1997 mayoral contest. Combined, these two African American women

Table 2
The 1997 Mayoral Votes in Atlanta: Votes and Percentages

<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Total Votes</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Bill Campbell	33,251	44.2%
Marvin Arrington	26,077	34.7
Gloria Bromell-Tinubu	9,679	12.9
Louise Thornton Hornsby	1,690	2.3
J. "Alley Pat" Patrick	325	0.4
Jack Jersawitz	250	0.3
John	198	0.3
G.B. Osborne	132	0.3
Doug Nelson	83	0.2
Spoil Ballots	3,513	4.7
Total	75,198	100.3

Source: Adopted from "Statement of Vote" Fulton County Municipal General Elections City of Atlanta (November 4, 1997), page 4.

Table 3
**The Number and Percentage of Votes in 1997 Mayoral Contest Given to
 Female and Male Candidates: A Comparison**

<i>Types of Candidates</i>	<i>Total Votes</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
Female Candidates	11,369	15.2
Male Candidates	60,316	80.2

Source: Adopted from Table 2

with poorly funded campaigns attracted 15 percent of the total vote and Spelman College professor, Gloria Bromell-Tinubu, came in third in a nine-candidate race. For a candidate without experience in public office, this was quite an effective rally of the gender vote in the city. Hence, in this prelude election, there were signs and rumblings that the female voter was beginning to show modest signs of female empowerment. Thus, the stage was set for the next mayoral election in 2001.

The Election of Atlanta's First Female Mayor: The 2001 Election

In 2001, the Atlanta electorate turned to an African American female mayor to address the city's lingering economic problems and some of the scandal that had emerged out of the male-led administrations that lasted for twenty-eight years and covered some seven mayoral elections. When an African American female mayor took office on January 2, 2002, she discovered within a week that the city had more than a \$70 million deficit going back to previous African American male mayoral administrations. Immediately when this revelation was revealed by the news media, Georgia's Governor Roy Barnes let it be known that the State of Georgia would not bail the city out of this shortfall. Hence, the immediate budget crisis would be the main challenge of the new female mayor and that the first economic priority would take precedence over the long-standing economic crises that were slowly dragging down the severely impacted low-income communities in the city. The outcome of this new economic initiative is beyond the scope of this article. But the electoral coalition that placed a woman instead of a man in the mayorship will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Table 4 reveals the total number of registered voters in the city by race and gender on the eve of the 2001 election. Again, one sees that African American female voters are still one-third of the voters in the city, but the African American male voters have declined to little more than one-fifth of all voters. Still, when combined, African Americans remain in the majority. Note, however, that the majority is less than in 1997.

White registered voters increased their percentage from 1997. White voters now constitute fully one-fifth of the voters in the city for a total of 41 percent of the total registered voters. However, the largest increase is in the unknown category, which is now almost 3 percent of the total electorate. Overall, however, there is a significant decline in the total number of registered voters in the city of Atlanta since the last mayoral election despite the fact that there are three female candidates among the five candidates running for mayor.

The mayoral election in Atlanta was held on November 6, 2001 with 41.4 percent (82,499) of the registered voters turning out to vote in the race. The 2001 mayoral election featured three female candidates, Shirley Franklin, Gloria Bromell-Tinubu, and Trudy Kitchin. Longtime city administrator in the Jackson and Young mayoral administrations, Shirley Franklin won with a slim majority of the votes. The other two female candidates together received 16 percent of the votes. However, the president of the City Council, Robert Pitts, with more than two decades experience on the Council, challenged the vote outcome and demanded a recount. The recount results, announced on November 13, 2001, indicated that four of the five candidate totals rose slightly. The total increase, however, was only twenty-three votes.

Table 5 indicates that the total vote and percentage received by each of the five candidates in the recounted vote. The recounted vote still left mayor-elect Franklin with

Table 4
The Number and Percentage of Registered Voters in the City of Atlanta by Race and Gender: 2001 Election

Type of Voters	Total Number of Registered Voters	Percentage
African American Voters		
Black Female	68,107	34.1
Black Male	44,134	22.1
Total	112,241	56.3
White Voters		
White Female	40,642	20.4
White Male	41,293	20.7
Total	81,935	41.1
Other Race Voters*		
Hispanic	81	0.0
Asian	52	0.0
Unknown	5,162	2.7
Total	5,295	2.7
Grand Total*	199,471	100.1

Source: Adopted from "Fulton County, Georgia Count of Voters by Precinct and District", p. 22.

* The grand total here differs from the source grand total of 199,454 by 17 votes

Table 5
The Number and Percentage of Votes in the 2001 Atlanta Mayoral Election

Candidate	Total Votes	Percentage
Shirley Franklin	40,724	49.4
Robert Pitts	26,856	32.6
Gloria Bromell-Tinubu	12,970	15.7
Trudy Kitchin	295	0.4
G.B. Osborne	225	0.3
Spoil Ballots	1,441	1.8
Total	82,511	100.2

Source: Adopted from Fulton County Municipal General Election City of Atlanta Recount November 13, 2001, p. 4

a slim majority. This was enough under Georgia law to win without a run-off election. Council President Pitts gained only twelve votes in the recount and Franklin received nine additional votes. Thus, Pitts' gain was not enough to offset the victory of the first female candidate in the election.

Collectively, the three African American women captured 65.5 percent of the total vote cast in the 2001 mayoral election in Atlanta. African American males received only 32.9 percent of the vote. African American women increased their share of the vote by nearly 50 percentage points over to 1997 election, while African American candidates lost 47.3 percent of the vote that they captured in 1997. This reversal in gender fortunes meant the transfer of political power from African American males to an African American female.

Summary and Conclusion

In 2001, the twenty-eight-year African American male grip on political power in the City of Atlanta came to an end. African American females empowered themselves and their gender with the election of the first female mayor. This transfer of power in 2001 also enabled history to catch up with and surpass the prediction in Margaret Mitchell's epic novel *Gone with the Wind* where the heroine was white and it was through her courage, activism, and struggle that a new Atlanta and the "New South" was reborn. When Shirley Franklin was inaugurated on January 6, 2002, Mitchell's prophecy was proven wrong and in great error. Here was an unseen Atlanta rising.

Finally, the evolution of African American political empowerment so carefully traced by historians Bacote and Hornsby finally reached its conclusion with the elevation of an African American woman to the top political position in the city. In this long struggle for power, African American heroines like Grace Town Hamilton, do appear occasionally, but they do not appear nearly as much as they should.² But this is the natural progression of things. Surely there will be other triumphs for African American females in the city, but with the election of Shirley Franklin to mayor, a major plateau has been reached.

Notes

1. In this election, Allen beat his earlier opponent, M. M "Muggy" Smith.
2. On her election, see (Spritzer and Bergmark 1997).

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