

## **Municipal Annexations and the Changing Color Line After *Shelby v. Holder***

### **Abstract**

Municipal annexations can weaken political representation of racial minority communities already residing within the municipality if their relative population shares decrease after annexation, but little is known about the extent to which municipalities shape their racial composition through annexation, especially after more than 3,500 municipalities were released from seeking federal approval prior to conducting annexations in the 2013 Supreme Court case *Shelby v. Holder*. Using a difference-in-differences design, I analyze annexations for places in continued existence from 2000-2020 across all 41 U.S. states with annexable land. I find no evidence that *Shelby* caused municipalities to annex more or that annexations resulted in more dilution of Black and minority residents, but patterns of municipal annexation pre-*Shelby* provide evidence of an enduring Black/non-Black racial boundary. These findings highlight the role of municipal boundaries in perpetuating racial inequality and the limitations of this landmark piece of voting rights legislation in preventing it.