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# The Climate Issue

How Atlanta and Georgia Tech students are taking action on the climate crisis

# 34 84

## Magazine

FALL 2021



@3484mag

## What is 3484?

3484 Magazine is a news magazine focusing primarily on politics and social issues in the Atlanta area. We dive deeply into policies in Atlanta and Georgia to investigate how they impact Georgia Tech students.

34° N, 84° W are the geographic coordinates of the City of Atlanta, rounded. We picked this name because of our focus on the Atlanta area.

When we're not working on publishing a magazine we cover events, like presidential debates and protests, on our social media accounts, @3484mag.

In the future, we will continue to cover issues that impact Atlanta and Tech students. You can expect to see a lot more on elections, healthcare, climate policy, and city planning, as we continue to explore ways policy shapes Georgia Tech students' lives.

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# Skyline

A look at Atlanta's planned and under-construction buildings

SAM BASKIN, creative director



Image courtesy of Interlock

## 1 The Interlock West Midtown

New mixed-use development in West Midtown that recently finished its first phase of construction.



Image Courtesy of Greenstone

## 2 14th & Spring Midtown

12-story mixed used development in midtown



Image courtesy of Hines

## 2 Atlantic Yards West Midtown

New office development at Atlantic Station which will be used by Microsoft.



Image courtesy of Cooper Carry

## 3 Midtown Union Midtown

Midtown union is a multi-tower mixed-use development currently under construction in midtown.

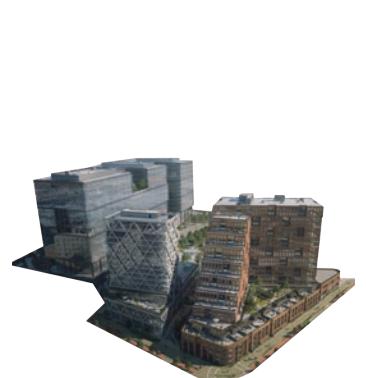


Image courtesy of New City Properties

## 4 Fourth Ward Old Fourth Ward

Mixed-use project under construction on the Eastside Beltline, consisting of three adjacent buildings.



Image courtesy of Rita World

## 5 One Tower Downtown

Proposed mixed-use tower in very early talks. At appox. 1,500 ft, it would be Atlanta's tallest building.



Image courtesy of Toll Brothers

## 6 Toll Brothers Midtown

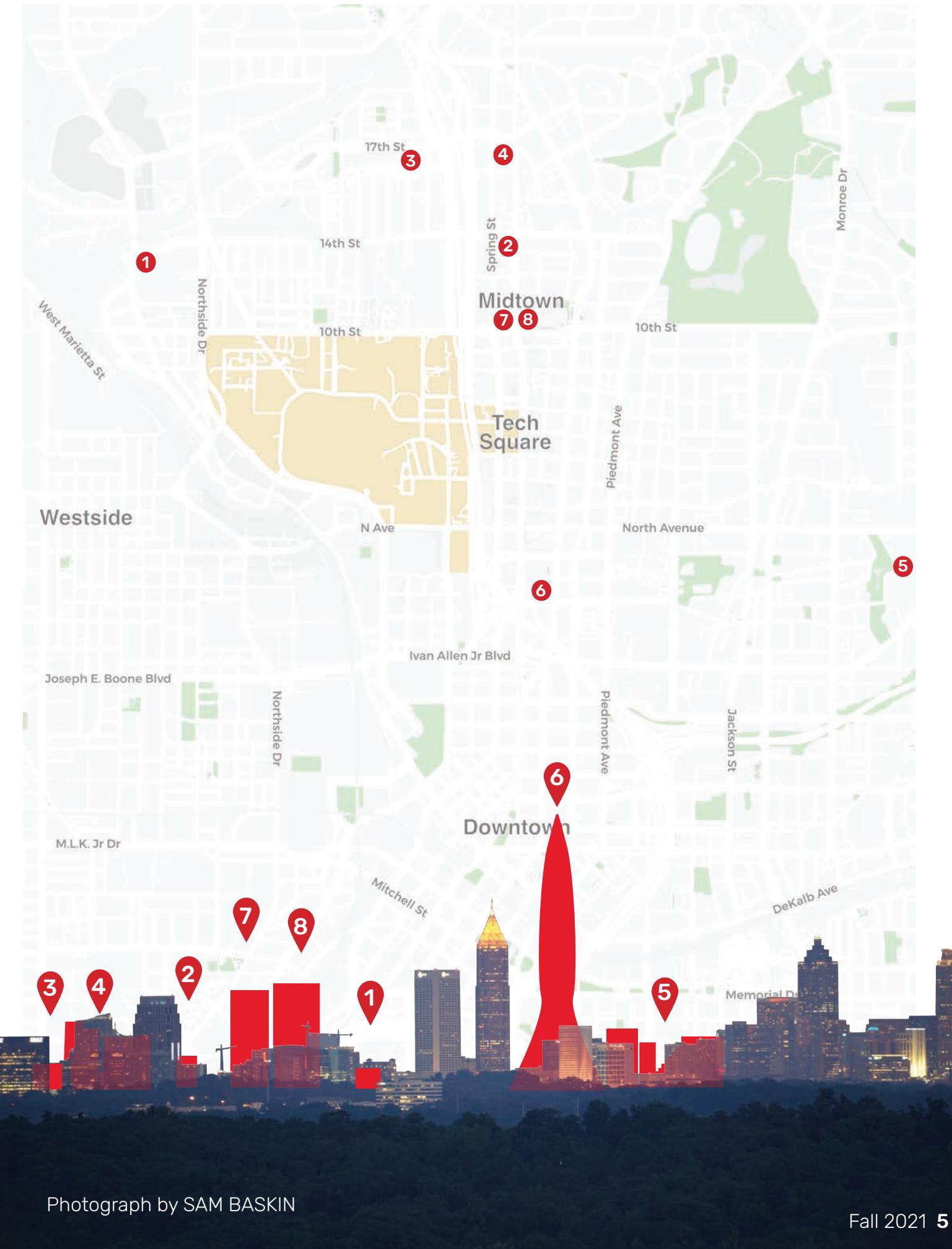
37-story mixed-use building in Midtown.



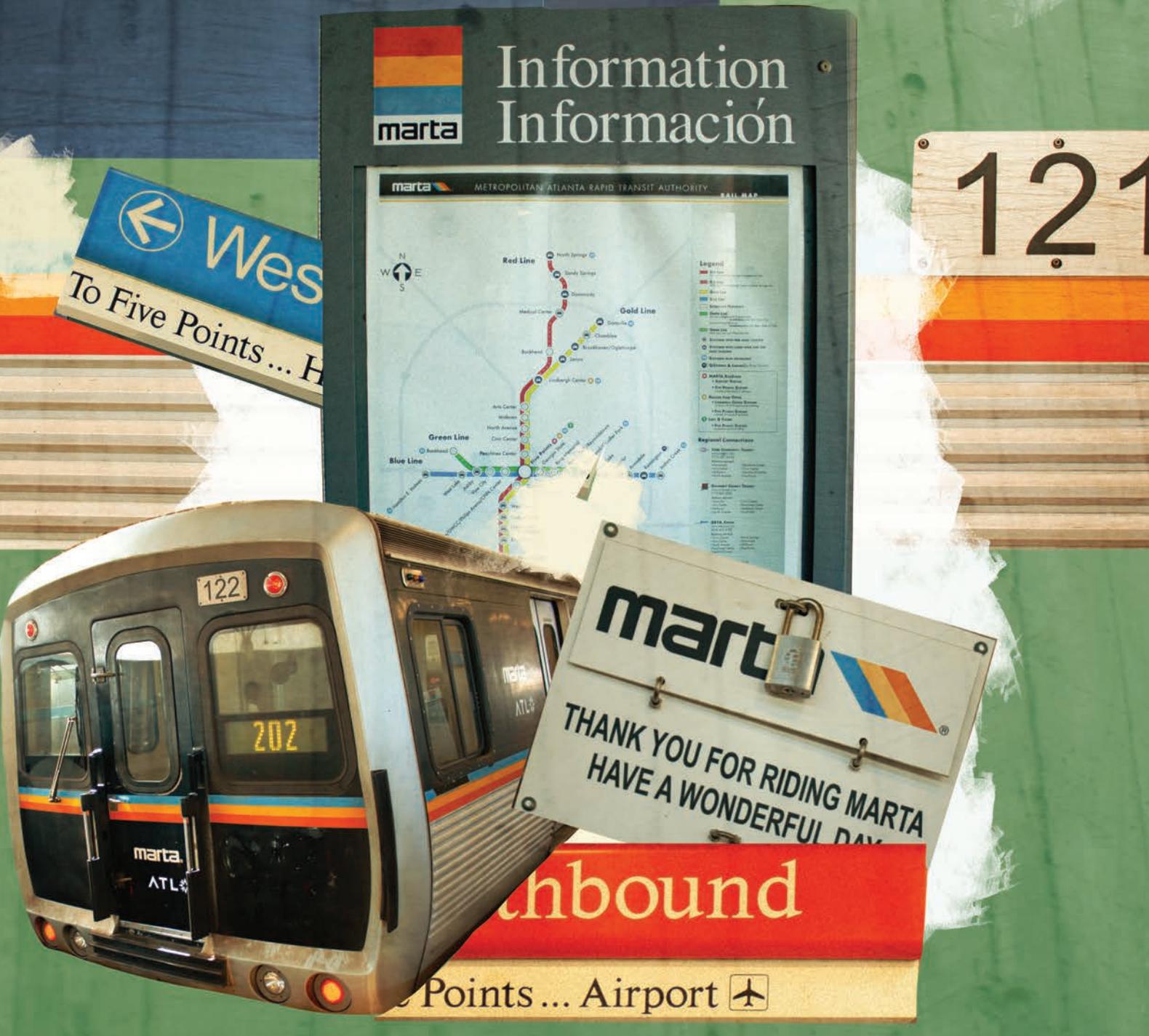
Image courtesy of Hanover Company

## 7 W Peachtree Midtown

40-story mixed-use building net to the Arts Center MARTA Station.



# The Past, Present and Future of Public Transit in Atlanta



# Who Transit Forgets



The past, present and future of public transit in Atlanta

KIRAN GAREWAL, author

MEGAN MINNEAR, designer

Just 3% of commuters in the Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell Metropolitan Area commute by public transit. In comparison, 33% of New York-Newark-Jersey City Metropolitan Area commuters use public transit.

A large part of the reason behind this difference is accessibility. Just 3% of Atlantans live near (within  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile of) daytime high-frequency transit, compared with 47% of New Yorkers. In fact, Atlanta has lower transit accessibility than all but three of the largest metropolitan areas in the US, according to data compiled by the Center for Neighborhood Technology.

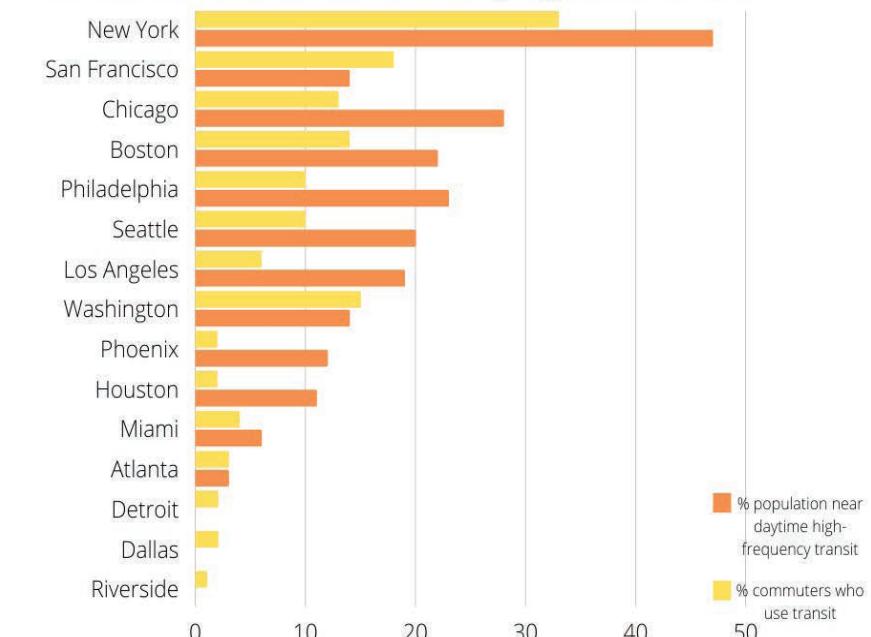
Primarily as a result of decisions made over half a century ago, MARTA's service is limited to the most central areas of Atlanta. Even though the majority of the area's population lives "outside the perimeter" (on the opposite side of Interstate-285 from central Atlanta), MARTA rail doesn't reach more than three miles past the freeway. Few high-frequency bus routes run much farther. Let's take a look at how this came to be.

**Primarily as a result of decisions made over half a century ago, MARTA's service is limited to the most central areas of Atlanta.**

A city built by railroad, Atlanta was once a compact, transit-centric community. A streetcar network served downtown and surrounding areas—where most Atlantans lived and worked—and was heavily utilized for about 70 to 80 years before cars began to gain favor. It was then dismantled toward the middle of the 20th century.

As Atlantans began to move farther from the city center in the second half of the 20th century,

## Transit Use and Accessibility by Metro Area



Data from AllTransit

highways followed. But public transit, for the most part, did not.

The creation of MARTA was kicked off by the Georgia General Assembly in 1965 but required ratification by the counties in which the service was to operate. Voters in the city of Atlanta as well as Clayton, DeKalb, Fulton, and Gwinnett counties supported the authority's creation, while Cobb County voters opposed the initiative. Funding the service was even more difficult. The first proposal, considered in 1968, failed to gain the support of most of the area's newly enfranchised Black voters.

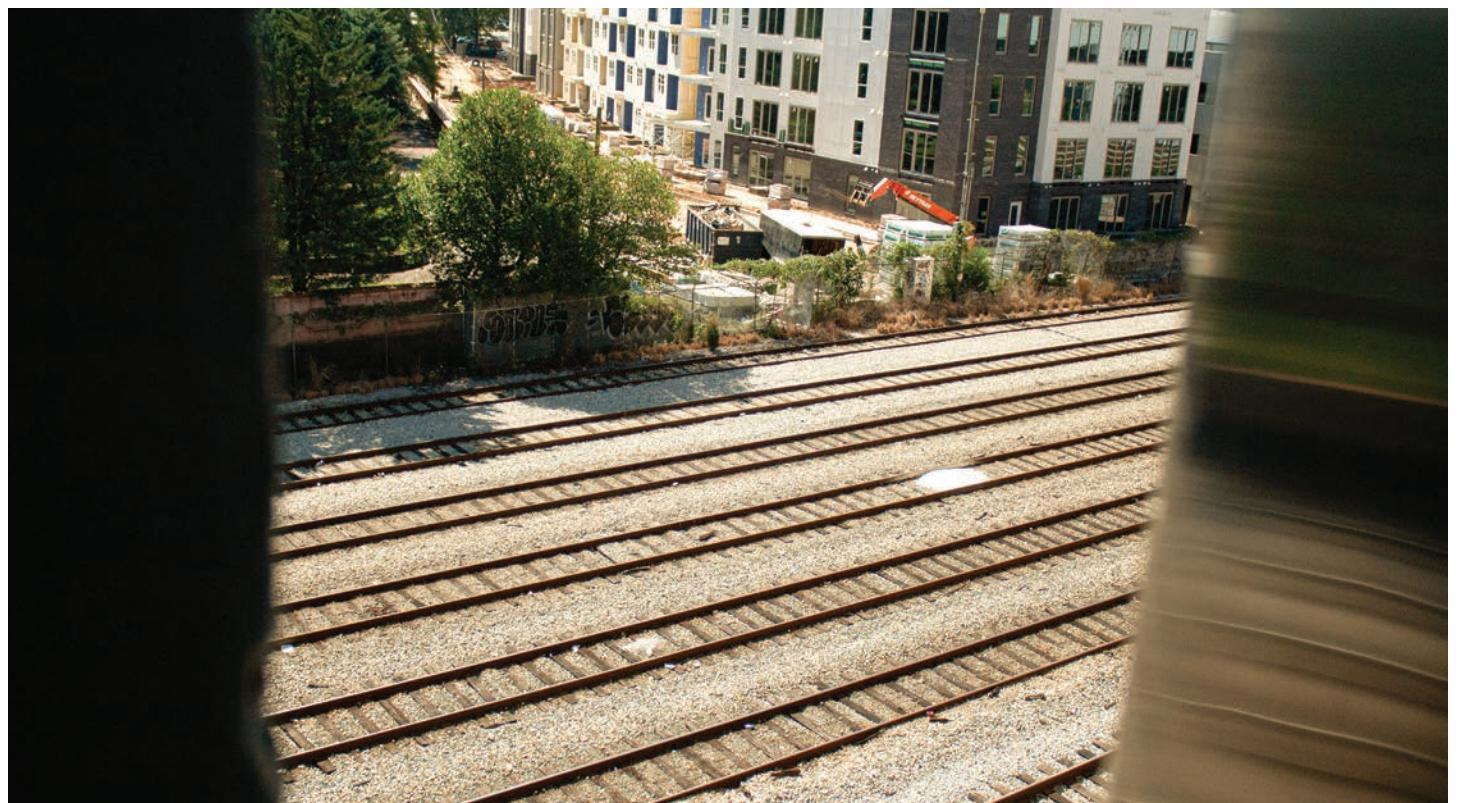
Dr. Ronald Bayor, a professor emeritus at Georgia Tech's School of History and Sociology and the author of *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta*, said that the 1968 referendum failed in part because "it did not plan for the Black population of the city at all."

The all-white planning commission that put forward the proposal had designed the system focusing on white neighborhoods and had not included any rail lines running to the majority-

**The all-white planning commission that put forward the proposal had designed the system focusing on white neighborhoods**

Black western neighborhoods.

A second plan was proposed in 1972, this time including a line connecting the western neighborhoods with Downtown. This measure to fund MARTA with a 1% sales tax was narrowly approved in DeKalb and Fulton counties but decisively defeated in Clayton and Gwinnett counties. At the time, Clayton and Gwinnett were both majority-White suburban to rural



View of adjacent rail at the MLK Jr. MARTA Station // Photo by MEGAN MINNEAR

## The Cobb and Gwinnett Counties of today are vastly different politically and demographically than the Cobb and Gwinnett Counties of 1971.

counties, unlike the more urbanized and racially diverse DeKalb and Fulton counties. “Race played a very big role [in the vote] because Whites in the suburbs did not want MARTA bringing Blacks into their areas,” Bayor explained.

In 2014, Clayton County (by this time majority Black) joined DeKalb and Fulton Counties in MARTA’s service area by passing a similar 1% sales tax. Other nearby counties like Cobb and Gwinnett still have not voted to join the authority and are not served by its routes.

The Cobb and Gwinnett Counties of today are vastly different politically and demographically than the Cobb and Gwinnett Counties of 1971.

In the last few years, both counties have trended Democratic, voting for Stacey Abrams, Joe Biden, Jon Ossoff, and Raphael Warnock. At least in terms of party strength, these suburban counties are beginning to look more like Atlanta’s city center than the surrounding rural areas.

At a local level, however, these counties’ politics have striking similarities to those of the decades past. Gwinnett County voters rejected a 2019 referendum to join and fund MARTA with a 1% sales tax, and Cobb County has not held a vote on the issue since 1971.

Referring to the racial animosity that fueled anti-MARTA sentiment in the 1960s and 70s, Bayor said “nobody says it anymore, of course. They’ll talk about tax burden, talk about crime... nobody talks about race outright anymore... but it’s very much still there.”

Jennifer Larosa is a government relations consultant and the president of Advance Atlanta, an advocacy organization focused around increasing transit coverage in Atlanta’s suburbs. Larosa explained that transit politics at the local and state levels often transcends party lines.

In addition to suburban Democrats like those in Gwinnett County sometimes opposing transit expansion and operations funding, Republicans sometimes support increasing such funding.

Larosa cited the example of a bipartisan 50-cent tax on rideshare trips to fund transit projects, which passed the Georgia General Assembly and was signed by Governor Brian Kemp last year.

Efforts to expand transit in suburbs where the majority of residents commute by car also calls into question the best use of resources. Even within the city of Atlanta, only 32% of people

## Even within the city of Atlanta, only 32% of people live near daytime high-frequency transit.

live near daytime high-frequency transit.

Binh Dam is a Georgia Tech electrical engineering graduate and a co-founder of the advocacy group MARTA Army. His organization focuses on what he calls “tactical urbanism,” which involves focusing on smaller-scale changes to make transit more appealing to potential riders, like putting trash cans and bus schedules at bus stops. The organization’s volunteers have surveyed thousands of MARTA bus stops to determine the most needed improvements.

Dam stressed that “the problem with the current service is there’s just not enough of it to begin with.” He explained that current funding doesn’t allow for high frequency service on all of MARTA’s bus and rail routes, and increasing frequency would mean decreasing geographic coverage. “You have to... compromise between frequency and coverage,” he said.

Despite these compromises, both Larosa and Dam stressed that their organizations work with each other to further their shared goal of improving the region’s public transit services within and outside Atlanta’s city limits.

Lastly, transit accessibility inherently relies on a built environment that is conducive to transit use.

Today’s Atlanta suburbs extend well past the originally planned extent of MARTA, even if Cobb and Gwinnett had joined in 1971. In the 1980s and 90s, the Atlanta area expanded along highways Interstate 75, State Route 400, and Interstate 85, primarily through low-density suburbs filled with cul-de-sacs far from commercial development.

According to Darin Givens, a Georgia Tech web developer and the founder of urbanism advocacy organization ThreadATL, “we ended up with a situation where most of the Atlanta region was embedded in these car-dependent places... the entire built environment of the region is one that is highly supportive of car travel for most every trip and unsupportive of transit use.”

In an environment fundamentally built for cars, where people live far from each other and from the places they want to go, transit can only be so good.



MARTA Train // Photo by MEGAN MINNEAR

**Today’s Atlanta suburbs extend well past the originally planned extent of MARTA, even if Cobb and Gwinnett had joined in 1971.**

Expanding transit into the suburbs and making the suburbs more conducive to transit must work in tandem, explained Givens: “We need to think in terms of expanding transit and improving pedestrian facilities and improving the way we use land by way of more compact infill development and mixed-use development that really supports transit and supports walking and supports biking.”

Givens pointed to downtown Woodstock and Marietta Square as examples of newer walkable density in Atlanta’s suburbs where the environment’s urban design nudges people to walk places rather than drive.



# Vegan Food Truck



**Mark Sloan's WTF! is shaking up Atlanta's street food scene**

AMY KIM, writer

SONYA YUEN, designer

**W**hen you step off of West Whitehall Street in Atlanta's West End neighborhood, you leave the busy cityscape and enter an idyllic outdoor market. Called MET Atlanta, the lot boasts artisan shops, murals from local artists, and creative spaces, but the real eye-catcher is the shiny black truck parked in the center with a crowd of patrons circling around.

**When I first became vegan, I didn't think a food truck was possible.**

The truck is Wonderful Tasting Food, cleverly abbreviated WTF!. It's Mark Sloan's take on Americana dining, and it's now one of the rising names in Atlanta's vegan fast food scene, standing amongst area natives like Westview's Slutty Vegan and the cannabis-themed GAS Food Truck. But, Sloan isn't fazed by the growing competition. He's more concerned with the act of communion that WTF! creates.

"I wasn't afraid to introduce a concept that was different. [But] if you draw something, you want people to like it. It's the same thing with cooking," he says. The satisfaction part is no problem—that Saturday afternoon, the line stretched far across the lot. But, the seemingly simple fast-food operation is a journey years in the making.

**I wasn't afraid to introduce a concept that was different.**

After positive reception from an event in his home state of South Carolina five years ago, Sloan brought his project to his Atlanta residence. As WTF! grew in popularity, Sloan brought his business from his home kitchen to the Atlanta Food Truck Park to a temporary car wash lot in Kirkwood, constantly seeking areas that could serve



WTF's unchicken strips and fries // Photo by SONYA YUEN



WTF's classic chili cheez fries // Photo by SONYA YUEN



more patrons. In 2018, Sloan took WTF! to a physical truck and has been operating there with his family ever since.

Even with WTF!'s successful social media presence—over 20,000 Instagram followers, Sloan is still humbled by each big step he takes. Wherever he goes, the community follows.

"Even at the grand opening, there was actually a line. It was 20, 30 people, maybe even more. I didn't know how to work commercial equipment or anything like that. The first day was stressful." Sloan has seemingly mastered operations since then, keeping up with his growing customer base. One thing, however, remains constant. A family friend takes orders from a fold-out table in front, the same serving stand from Sloan's front lawn in WTF!'s first year, an homage to his original passion project.

But, even after all his commercial success with WTF!, Sloan's mission remains with his commitment to veganism. He recalls the period he transitioned to a vegan lifestyle in 2016, joking that the "moment" occurred while eating scrambled eggs, which he suddenly "just felt really bad about." Since then, Sloan has been experimenting with his

definition of a "balanced diet" and now cites environmental and sustainability issues as the reason he keeps going.

"When I first became vegan, I didn't think a food truck was possible," he says, reflecting on the days before WTF!. "I was eating chickpeas and lentils and rice."

Now, WTF! boasts an extensive menu of burgers, fried chicken, and loaded fries,

**It's still surreal to see the people who come here...**

all imagined by Sloan himself in his home kitchen, and he tells us there's more in the works—all organic and natural, of course, he says. He wouldn't tell exactly what his "magic ingredient" that makes his meatless products is, but the bright orange words written along the truck's side just about sums it up.

"No soy. No eggs. No BS."

Sloan hopes WTF! will be an easy first step for those exploring new plant-based diets, providing an avenue to enjoy staple

street foods in a reimagined, sustainable way. At the core of WTF! is community, and Sloan makes sure to make his presence known, striking up a conversation with each customer coming up to the ordering window. Communion is what Sloan values most.

"[Food] brings people together," he says. "It's still surreal to see the people who come here, especially families." Surely enough, as he finishes his sentence, a family of four makes their way across the MET lot to the truck, and Sloan stands to head back. He's the one handing out each order, an act he plans to continue as WTF! follows on its path of exponential growth; he's got a business-oriented vision, but he remains grounded by his family's values of persistence and service.

WTF! is more than a dining experience—it's a story of community, those innate and those created, and it's here to stay.



Picture of the WTF food truck // Photo by SONYA YUEN

## UNCHICKN STRIPS & FRIES



Photo by SONYA YUEN

## CHILI CHEEZBURGER



Photo from @wonderfultastingfood on Instagram

## UNCHICKN SLIDERS



Photo from @wonderfultastingfood on Instagram

## WANZAMP BURGER



Photo from @wonderfultastingfood on Instagram

# The Student Activism Behind the Fight Against Cop City

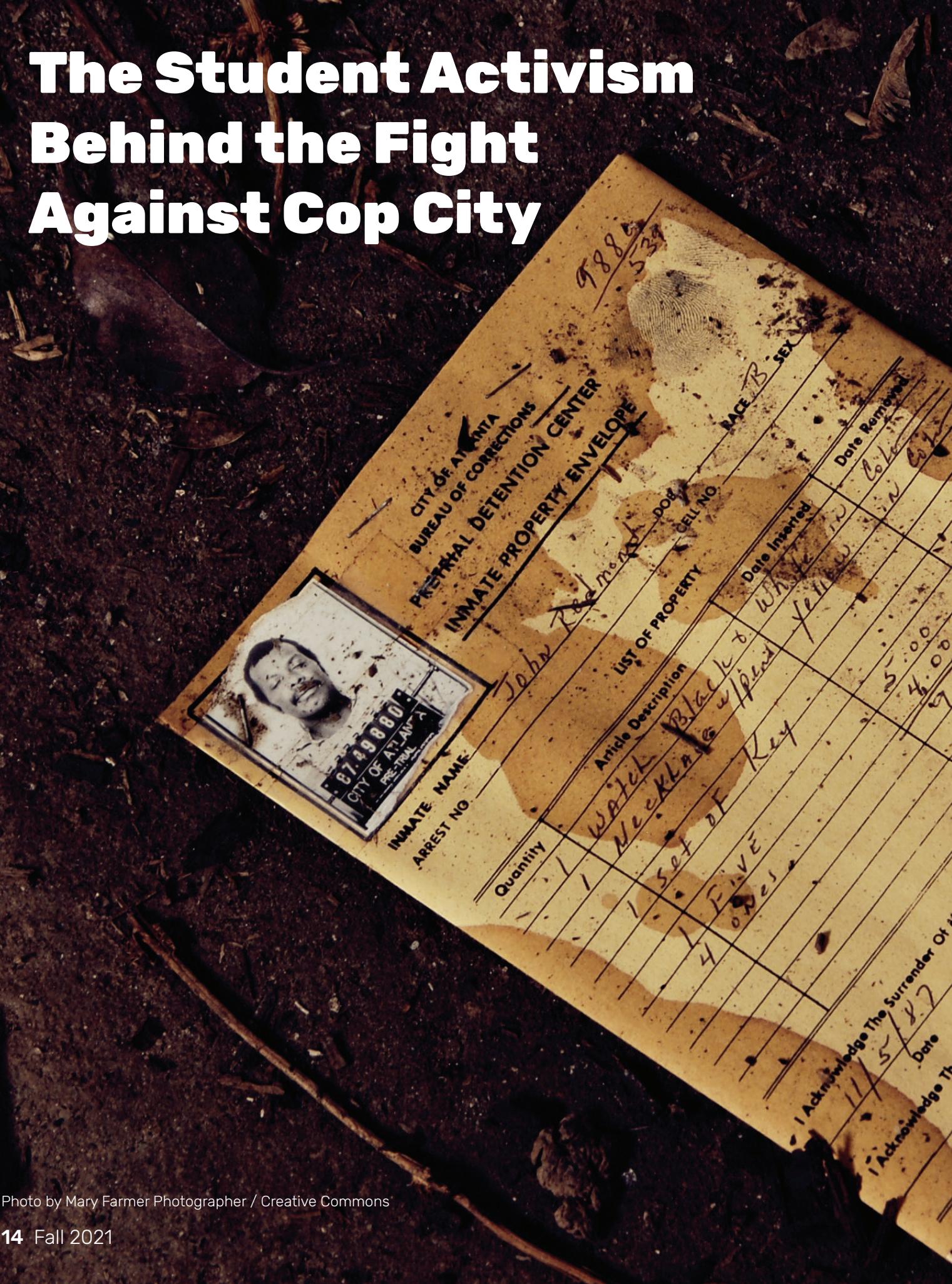


Photo by Mary Farmer Photographer / Creative Commons

# Cop City



Atlanta's largest forest is being converted into a police training facility

SARAH KALLIS, editor-in-chief

JEMMA SIEGEL, designer

Georgia's largest forest in an urban area sprawls over hundreds of acres, with trees and vines intertwining with ruins of old buildings. But, in the coming years, 80 acres of the forest will be torn down to make way for a new police and fire training facility for the city of Atlanta.

The new police training facility, dubbed "cop city" by activists is politically divisive and could potentially negatively impact one of the largest forests in a US city. The Georgia Tech community is making their voices heard.

**In the coming years, 80 acres of the forest will be torn down to make way for a new police and fire training facility for the city of Atlanta**

Shehza Anjum, a second year Public Policy student and organizer, was active in the fight to prevent the training facility. She said she was interested in the movement because of its intersectionality.

"It's very interestingly at the intersection of racial justice, environmental justice, economic justice. And that was how I think so many people like saw something in the issue. We mobilized a lot of people who knocked on a lot of doors and made a lot of phone calls," she said.

Anjum is an organizer with the Sunrise Movement, which is a political action organization that advocates for action on climate change. She first learned about the fight against Cop City during a community teach-in. From there, she informed the



The Old Atlanta Prison Farm, as seen from above // Image from Google Earth

community about the new training facility, and found that many people were opposed to it.

"Fundamentally, it wasn't incredibly difficult to try to convince people that this was something that's a bad thing, because people see that. People who live here, people who are on the ground, people who live in these neighborhoods, people whose input should matter the most, when it comes to making decisions like this one, they knew that it wasn't bad, they just had to be told about it. They just needed to be informed," she said.

The site chosen for the project, the Old Atlanta Prison farm, once housed state prisoners. It is now Atlanta's largest vacant property, spanning over 340 acres.

In August 2021, Atlanta City Council passed a measure to lease the farm from DeKalb county to build a 90 million dollar police training facility. That decision has been met with harsh backlash, from social and environmental activists.

"The South river forest, and which was a land

with a very, with a very scarred history, we should know because it was once the other in a prison farm. And before that, it was key plantation where black people were enslaved. And before that it was Muskogee land that was stolen from the Muskogee people. So it's all been it's a land with a very scarred history," Anjum said about the history of the land.

The prison farm hasn't been in use since the 1970s, and forest has taken over the land. ButterATL reports that the land was used for farming until the 1990s. The land was originally occupied by the Muskogee Creek Nation. Most of the farm is forested, and old farm ponds pepper the landscape. The land has been mostly untouched, according to activists, so plants and animals have been able to thrive. Atlanta Zoo buries its deceased animals on the property as well, according to Saporta Report.

Activists have expressed concern that if this forested land is torn down, it could cause flooding in the area. Trees and soil can slow flooding during periods of heavy rain. The proposed training facility would take up

about 80 acres of the land, and officials say it would leave the rest of the property to nature.

The lot sits just inside interstate 285 in Southwest DeKalb county on the east side of Atlanta, and just behind Starlight Drive-in movie theatre on Moreland Avenue.

Councilwoman Joyce Shepard authored the proposal for DeKalb to lease the land to Atlanta. She is the District 12 councilwoman, however the training center is in District 1. She has faced backlash for being the driving force behind the proposal when she is not the representative for the area. Shepard maintains that the training facility is necessary for the Atlanta Police force.

Anjum and other activists disagree that the facility is necessary. She strongly believes that Atlanta has bigger issues to address.

"You're talking about the talking about a city where, where there are people who struggle out from thing with rent rising and who end up on the streets and who struggle to housing feed themselves into the complete desert. So we want to spend 30 million in taxpayer money funding a project that takes up then in space to allow the Atlanta police department to expand have a training ground and practice

tactics that prove has proven to brutalize black and brown working class residents. So that was kind of our tactic at that point, because it was just like, a really complicated issue with a lot of nuance is something that is very much in clinical management works on environmental justice issues. Specifically, there are groups we work with who are working on policing and incarceration, and the Atlanta police budget increases," she said. The Atlanta Police Budget went up by about 6% in the last year.

The Saporta Report reports that the training center will be used for indoor and outdoor shooting ranges, bomb detonation and explosion tests, burning building for fire training, a road course to practice car chases, pastureland for the city's mounted patrol among other training facilities.

Some residents of DeKalb county expressed that they did not want to have a training complex near their homes, citing noise as a major concern during public comment.

Anjum is also concerned that similar training facilities will pop up around the US.

"You're talking about a model that can be

## **The measure to lease land for a police training center passed 10-4 by the city council after 17 hours of public comment, mostly opposing the measure.**

replicated in other cities," she said. She also emphasized that the significant public pushback against the training center also has implications.

"You have Police Foundations, and you have the mayor and you have these corporations coming in and developing and doing things with land without the consent of the people who live there. And that affects everybody," she said.

The measure to lease land for a police training center passed 10-4 by the city council after 17 hours of public comment, mostly

opposing the measure. Antonio Brown was the only mayoral candidate who chose to vote against it. The other candidates either voted for the proposal, or were not on the committee reviewing the proposal. Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms also supported the proposal.

Anjum was disappointed over the decision. "It was really disappointing, because you're talking about elected officials, who said, at the end of the day, I'm going to listen to what my community has to say, kind of blatantly," she said.

However, she is hopeful for the future of her movement, and the progress they have made thus far.

"I also think that it was strengthened all of our results in a way because when that leg of the campaign was over, nobody was quitting. Now, we have a big national organization, Color of Change is heavily involved in the fight. They just released a report talking about the funding of Police Foundations and how corporations fund these foundations and as a result of that report being released Coca Cola pulled out of the Atlanta police Foundation," she said.

Anjum also said she is seeing increased student interest at Georgia Tech about movements to divest in police.

"[Students at] Tech and Emory are kind of getting worked up and looking into what student mobilization could look like. We're recognizing that the institutions that we ourselves are a part of also have a stake in funding and supporting the police. And through divestment campaigns, that's something that a lot of students are looking into and wanting to change," she continued, "there's lots of other ways that we can agitate and educate, organized and continue to flip the script to fight for the Atlanta that we deserve."



Photo by Eric Shoemaker / Creative Commons

# **Cop City by the Numbers**

**70%**

**1965**

**\$30m**

of speakers were opposed to the development during the 17+ hours of public comment before the vote.

was the last year the Atlanta Prison Farm housed inmates before being converted to a commercial farm.

is the amount of the \$90m bill that the city of Atlanta is responsible for, the rest being donated by corporate partners.



**85 ac.**

is the portion of the 350 acre plot of the prison farm that the new police training center will sit on, having been reduced from 100 acres



# Climate Anxiety

Student shares how the climate crisis impacts their mental health

SARAH KALLIS, editor-in-chief

DAVE MENEZES, designer

75% of young people are afraid of the future of the climate, according to a study by the University of Bath.

Young people are faced with an looming climate crisis that they didn't create, and it's negatively impacting their mental health. Students at Georgia Tech are feeling the heat as well.

The Earth has already warmed about 1.1 degrees Celsius since the 19th century. While the increase may seem small, it can have a monumental impact, leading to rising sea levels and other environmental concerns. Some climate scientists warn that we may not be able to reverse damage already done to the environment, but we can prevent future damage. According to a 2021 United Nations Climate report, we are locked into 30 years of worsening climate regardless of action that the world takes.

Vanna Scott, a 4th year Aerospace Engineering major, said anxiety about climate change is a large presence in her life.



Climate Emergency - Families facing Climate Change // Photo JOHN ENGLART

"At this point, to fully revert and how there's things that we can do but it won't fix all of the problems, but we're not doing them anyways. So that's where my anxiety comes from is that we're at that point where there's no return. However there's stuff that we can be doing to slowly try and bring it back but

We're at that point where there's no return.

we're just not," she said. She added that thinking about climate change can "keep her





Rainforest fire caused by deforestation // Photo by Kahunapule Johnson

up at night."

Scott is far from alone, as 45% of survey respondents said that worry about climate change is affecting their daily lives. The survey was over 10,000 people in 10 countries including United States.

She is primarily concerned about impending worsening climate crisis due to global warming.

The UN Climate Report noted that ice sheets in Greenland and West Antarctica will likely continue to melt through the end of the century regardless of government action

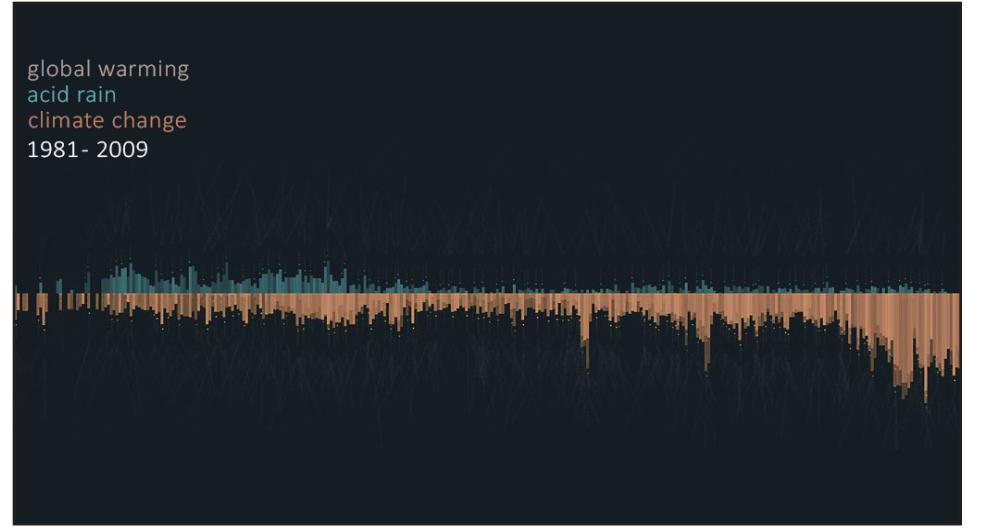
**When I fully like got actually really stressed out about it was when I went vegetarian.**

because of damage already done to the environment. Global sea levels will rise somewhat for the next 2,000 years.

"I'm feeling hopeless about it," she said.

However, she chose to take action.

"When I fully like got actually really stressed out about it it was when I went vegetarian.



it," she said.

However, she and many other young people don't think governments are doing enough to protect the environment. 33% of survey respondents asserted that the response from governments was "not protecting me, the planet, future generations."

Scott is particularly frustrated with the political holdup in US Congress over the infrastructure bill. The bipartisan deal would dedicate tens of millions of dollars to increase climate resiliency.

The money would be dedicated to protect against flooding, find new sources of drinking water, and even relocate some communities, according to the New York Times. It also included non-climate action like increasing access to internet in rural areas. The bill passed in early October, 2021, but the debate still disheartened Scott.

She also feels like solutions for environmental crises are being ignored by lawmakers.

"When I drove across the country. This year I saw so many wind farms and they were in the same fields that livestock and the cows were in so I'm just like, we have plenty of farms that we could throw these on probably like, why aren't we doing more of this? There were some areas in California that my dad was telling me that they usually have to turn them off because it overpowers too much. There's our answer more of these," she said.

The Biden Administration announced in October 2021 that it plans to install offshore wind farms along most of the eastern coast of the United States.

However, she has not fully lost hope.

"I wouldn't say it feels totally hopeless because we're talking about it more now, and it's at least on the bill, but within like the next few years, 10 years I feel pretty helpless about. But, I feel like once more of our younger like this generation gets into politics. It will hopefully start to see a change them. But that's what also stresses me out because again, at that point, kind of too late," she said. She is concerned that by the time her generation is able to hold office, climate change will be past the point of help. Time Magazine estimates that the Earth will be 3 degrees warmer by 2100 if nothing is done to reduce global emissions. AP estimates that as many as 200 million people could be displaced by climate change in the next 30 years.

So, for Scott, the pressure is on to do her part to reduce climate change. "I feel a little bit of pressure, but I also like it feels good knowing that I do these things as well, like I'm doing it like for myself and hopefully to have a better, greener future," she continued, adding that she would like to see people do more to reduce their impact, "I think nobody has to go vegan or vegetarian because it's a big step but doing things like meatless Mondays

are like buying organic meat instead of meat that's the process from the store like buying it from an actual butcher shop," she said. However, she wishes that it were easier to make more eco-friendly choices. She points out that fast-fashion is often cheaper and more accessible than sustainable clothing, and McDonalds is often less expensive than a local, sustainable restaurant.

"I feel like if there was more access to information and also more options to be able

**She is concerned that by the time her generation is able to hold office, climate change will be past the point of help.**

to make the kind of green swaps that we need to like make as individuals ourselves, that would really help," she said.

She has also found that shopping at thrift



stores is also a sustainable swap she can make, calling it "good cost and the good impact on the environment."

Scott says her friends share the same anxieties about the environment, and the often talk about it and what they are doing to reduce their impact. "We go thrifting together and we also talk about our stresses," she said.

In overwhelming times, she chooses to think about what she can do to control her impact, and not get lost in the big picture.

She said, "I just tried to think of like the little things that I do and I'm like, well at least I'm doing it, and it seems like other people in my generation are starting to do it. And I've seen like, you know, like with more vegan options and restaurants and stores like over the years, it's growing so I just try and think of the positives right now."

**In overwhelming times, she chooses to think about what she can do to control her impact, and not get lost in the big picture.**

## In 2021...

- 75% of young people are afraid of the future world climate
- 45% of people worry about how climate change will affect their daily lives
- 58% of people state that they feel "betrayed by their government"
- 50% of people feel "anxious, helpless, angry and guilty" about climate change

Data from 2021 study by University of Bath that surveyed over 10,000 people in ten countries.



# NORTH and SOUTH

**Atlanta's Income Inequality**

## North and South



### Atlanta's geographic income inequality

DANIEL LEE, writer

TIA VAISH, designer

It's a beautiful summer morning in Atlanta. The streets bustle with activity as civilians carry out their daily routines. In the center of the city lies the Coca-Cola headquarters, a symbol highlighting the significance of Atlanta as an American icon and a pillar to the Southern economy. Between the \$420 billion Atlanta generates towards the United States economy and the numerous tech titan headquarters and offices located in the city, it's no surprise many see Atlanta as the shining jewel of the south and the capital of the southern United States. However, beneath its extravagant skylines and bustling economy lies something that is often overlooked. In the many ways Atlanta is the beacon of the Southern economy, Atlanta is also a shining beacon of income inequality. In fact, a report conducted by the Brookings Institute has found that Atlanta has the greatest income disparity of the United States' 100 largest metropolitan areas when comparing household income between the 20th percentile and the 95th percentile. When the income inequality is inspected at an even further level, an alarming racial trend emerges. A study conducted by Deloitte has found that out of the 20.4% of Atlanta individuals living in poverty in Atlanta, 74.2% consists of black residents. Additionally, a study conducted by the Atlanta Wealth Building Initiative has found that the median income of white households is \$83,722 compared to a median income of \$28,105 for black households. With these alarming statistics, there lies a fundamental question: how did this trend develop and how can it be explained?

#### Urban Planning:

The trend behind income inequality between races can be traced back to the era of Jim Crow and, subsequently, to the Federal Highway Act of 1956 and urban planning practices. Approved by Dwight D. Eisenhower, the nationwide program sought to improve the infrastructure of the United States through building 41,000 miles of

interstate highways. With Jim Crow Laws being in effect at time, local politicians in Atlanta conspired to deliberately construct interstate highways passing through Atlanta that created a divide between the northern and southern part of Atlanta. The Federal Highway Act resulted in a highway that separated black communities, which were concentrated mostly in the southern part of Atlanta, from white communities, which were concentrated in the northern part of Atlanta. As a result of this development, the majority of wealth and urban development in the latter half of the 20th century became concentrated in the northern part of Atlanta, meaning that economic resources were strained from the southern part of Atlanta. This led to a disparity between the urban development and the magnitude of the job market of the northern and southern part of Atlanta, exacerbating the income inequality between races. The continuation of these trends, stemming from the systemic racism that has infiltrated even governmental infrastructure, means that wealth in modern day Atlanta is still concentrated in about the same regions. This historic disparity combined with contemporary trends in gentrification explain persisting income disparity and explain why Atlanta is at the top of the list for American regions of wealth inequality.

#### Urban Sprawl:

The city of Atlanta has been growing at a rapid pace. With these developments, many individuals in the northern part of Atlanta have been moving out of the city of Atlanta to the suburbs since the 1990s to avoid crime and the rising cost of living. These developments have exacerbated income inequality in a multitudes of ways. From an economic standpoint and the perspective of the job market, this has led to a shift in the job market towards the northern part of Atlanta and into the suburbs of Atlanta. Consequently, the accessibility of these jobs have been reduced for minority communities in southern Atlanta due

to the limited public transit options to commute to these jobs. Additionally, the shift in capital has led to a reduction in funds available to local governments of the city of Atlanta resulting in the reduction of the quality of the city's public education system. These reductions in quality have been particularly consequential to distressed neighborhoods of southern Atlanta due to making the young adult population ill-equipped to compete for skilled jobs. The fact that most poor schools are disproportionately black increase the likelihood of African American youths facing economic challenges in the future. It's clear that education, living situation, career competitiveness, and race all remain connected in Atlanta today.

Atlanta's Lowest and Highest Income Neighborhoods



- 80th percentile median household income
- 20th percentile median household income

Data from WABE // Graphic by Tia Vaish



# Trumpism in 2021

**How Trump's presidency impacts policy, politics and society today**

CAROLINE BREWER, writer

SAM BASKIN, creative director

American history scholars generally bifurcate the nation's timeline in 1877. The Compromise of 1877 removed all U.S. forces from the southern states and, at least in name, offered a glittering promise for a bright future for all American men. In 1877, we marked the end of Reconstruction and sought to satisfy the ideals the framers of our nation outlined for us. Using this year to distinguish events in American history from one another has been beyond useful in looking to the actions of our predecessors for answers to modern solutions, in comparing events to glean universal truths regarding the American experience, and in simply serving as an endpoint for survey-level college courses. However, 1877 will not be relevant

**After Donald Trump won the 2016 Presidential election, likening everyday government doings to The Twilight Zone became commonplace.**

forever. Late-nineteenth century Americans have little in common with the modern man. Only recently has there been a contender for a year in which the events preceding and following it are so stark in contrast: 2016.

After Donald Trump won the 2016 Presidential election, likening everyday government doings to The Twilight Zone became commonplace. The line between news and satire became obscure. Usually, elements of both reared their heads. When the Associated Press called the election for Joe Biden after five grueling days of tallying votes, there was an assumption that life would soon return to normal. After all, it was 2020, not 1877. No one event could alter the



The U.S. Capitol Building on January 6, 2021 // © LEAH MILLIS / REUTERS

course of American history as Reconstruction did. As it happened, this assumption has proven untrue. Trump's reign as number forty five might be over, but the implications of his administration will extend far beyond

**The implications of his administration will extend far beyond his four years.**

his four years.

Trump has no comparable predecessors. We could not look to actions of the past to gain any sort of insight or familiarity with a President taking to Twitter as his first line of defense. Both major parties fundamentally disagreed how to diffuse the situation of having an impulsive reality television star behind the big red button. Coupled with preexisting infighting among Democrats and Republicans, the gradual tension buildup from those fundamental disagreements has caused substantial schisms in both parties.

The Republican ideals of populism and truth, justice, and the American way are long gone. Senators Liz Cheney and Mitt Romney might try to fight the good fight, but Trump established a new status quo within the GOP. GOP voters, especially those who have felt alienated from traditional Ivy-league educated politicians, like leaders with grit. However, not in the Teddy Roosevelt, Wild West, "me and mine will be fine" sort of grit. Instead, voters feel most compelled to support those who will sponsor a bill turning Texas citizens into bona fide bounty hunters hunting women who have received abortions or those who will offer a financial incentive for unvaccinated police officers to move to Florida. While these radical Republicans have existed for a few election cycles, they have been the exception to the party rather than the rule. Those on the fringe have become the norm which, in turn, pushes the fringe even farther away from the ideological middle. Traditionally moderate candidates have become discouraged because they feel as though they will not receive support from the party on the national stage, and thus, the cycle perpetuates itself. If only radical



The U.S. Capitol Building is stormed by a pro-Trump mob on January 6, 2021 // © LEAH MILLIS / REUTERS

politicians run for office, we will only elect radical politicians. In correcting for this ideological shift, we also lose a great deal of hope for any collaboration across the aisle. As the left moves more to the left and the right moves farther right, any chances of ideological intersection decrease exponentially.

This increased polarization impacts more than the talking heads of both parties. Though Trump undoubtedly changed the status quo to embrace extremism, the Moderate American is not dead yet; however, if this cycle of increased polarization and radicalism on both sides of the aisle, they will be soon. Voter turnout rates in America are already abysmal. Constituents want politicians that reflect their wishes. When there are only candidates on either side of the fringe in the race, moderate voters will feel equally detached from both options and will likely stay home on Election Day. To them, it does not matter who wins on a Tuesday in November because they cannot connect to either option.

In addition to the rise of politicians on the fringe, Trump's actions following the 2020 Presidential election will inform the American rules for order for the foreseeable

future. In calling into question the results of the election, Trump fostered feelings of governmental distrust among his followers which eventually culminated in the events of the January 6th insurrection.

By providing only a half-hearted attempt to

## If only radical politicians run for office, we will only elect radical politicians.

discourage his disciples from attacking the Capitol building, he delegitimized the federal government by implying that attacking the National Mall would yield positive results for the outcome of the election. Since an insurrection now lives within the realm of possibility in the matter of expressing political malcontent, the propensity for a similar act of domestic terrorism to occur has skyrocketed.

By and large, politics are cyclical. Democrats

and Republicans have played cat-and-mouse in the pursuit of both making a lasting difference and securing a legacy among political giants for ages. However, the implications of the Trump administration are far too large for any idiom to capture. We will grapple with the effects of heightened polarization on our oldest-standing political machines, voter turnout, and overall quality of representation and policy for multiple election cycles to come.

In delegitimizing the efficacy of the federal government in its ability to protect our nation's Capitol and proffering the notion that holding a siege on a federal building could change the outcome of an election, he has encouraged the American people to act on violent, primal instincts as a viable vehicle for change. 2016 marked the beginning of a new era for the nation. Much like 1877.

# Tackling Tenure

## How USG's governing body has reshaped tenure policies

CASEY BARTON, writer

SARAH KALLIS, design

**T**he Board of Regents' (BOR) name has been slanderously thrown around Georgia college campuses and their Twitter-spheres recently in response to their decision not to mandate masks or vaccines across Georgia schools. But you may not have heard about their more recent plan to upend the current tenure system and replace it with one designed to drive professors away from Georgia's university system.

The University System of Georgia is the statewide governing body that oversees Georgia's twenty-six public colleges and universities, including Georgia Tech, as well as the Georgia Archives and the Georgia Public Library Service. It is governed by a board of nineteen regents: one from each of Georgia's fourteen congressional districts, and five at-large members who represent the entire state. Each regent is appointed by the governor and serves a seven year term.

Together, the regents tackle tasks like forming search committees to select new university presidents and creating the policies that govern all twenty-six institutions.

Unlike most governing institutions under our democratic system, the Board of Regents often meets in secret. And, unlike some other colleges and universities which give the president or dean the power to decide the individual school's policies, the Board of Regents speaks for all twenty-six institutions in Georgia. When the Board of Regents decided to forgo a mask mandate, all twenty-six institutions had to comply, despite outcry from students and faculty at multiple schools.

The Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia (BORUSG) has now decided to go after tenure. Tenure is a way to give faculty that meet certain standards a permanent post at a university. By no means does this mean that a tenured professor cannot be fired or otherwise held accountable; rather, tenured professors can be fired only if they violate certain standards. Additionally, tenure is not easy to achieve; professors must undergo a

rigorous review process of their professional and academic achievement and of their service to the university, and must have taught at a full-time capacity for a specified amount of time. To keep tenure, professors undergo a review every five years. Professors can also lose tenure or face other disciplinary action following a peer-led review process.

Since the USG institutions vary greatly across the state in size and degree programs offered, each USG institution also has its own guidelines on how to grant tenure that follow the Board of Regents minimum standards. Across Georgia, nearly 6,000 professors have been granted tenure, as of fall 2020.

Under BORUSG's changes, the process to revoke tenure can avert the peer-led review process. Instead, school administrators could revoke tenure if professors fail two annual reviews or do not complete an improvement plan. The BOR also added an additional variable in evaluating a tenured professor's performance: student success. Student success is not defined anywhere in the USG's policy manual, making it unclear how this variable will be evaluated. BORUSG also eliminated the part of the tenure policy that contains the clauses that are grounds for tenure, leaving the new causes for termination of tenure somewhat ambiguous.

A Georgia Tech professor reported that when asked why these changes were taking place, professors present at the BOR meeting were not given a response.

In the wake of protests and outrage over USG's COVID-19 policies, speculation has arisen that BOR wants to threaten professors who share opinions contrary to the board's beliefs. Without an explanation for these changes, many are viewing it as a way to make tenure a political weapon and force professors to adhere to certain political stances.

BORUSG has also suggested that obtaining tenure is too easy to accomplish and too easy to keep. They claim that the process

does not effectively identify professors who are not contributing to the university, and they cite the infrequent occurrences of professors losing tenure as evidence. They have even suggested they might overtake the entire tenure process and remove individual institutions' leadership from the decision making process.

One Georgia Tech professor conceded that the process for tenure review was far from perfect, but expressed concerns that the BOR was not addressing the issue correctly. By changing tenure policy abruptly and not justifying their position, they have caused speculation and unrest among professors and students across the state.

These changes appear to be contrary to the purpose of tenure. Tenure was designed to encourage professors to contribute to the university both in the lecture halls and in their research, and then reward them for their contributions by protecting them from arbitrarily losing their jobs and permitting them to experiment with new teaching and research methods. No professor would want to put in the work to obtain tenure only to arbitrarily lose it. These changes could drive professors away from teaching in Georgia, especially at top schools like Georgia Tech, where professors could easily obtain jobs with competitive salaries in the private sector. The tenured designation will become meaningless.

Immediately following the October vote, we saw a flurry of activity from universities and on Twitter reacting to the change. Steve McLaughlin, Georgia Tech's provost and Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs, issued a statement stating that the process of changing tenure procedures at Georgia Tech would be as transparent and inclusive as possible and encouraged professors to weigh in during the process. A record number of faculty appeared at the Georgia Tech Faculty Senate meeting following the USG vote. Multiple professors from institutions across

the state chimed in with their opinions. The vast majority raised concerns over the language changes, despite the BOR's claims that this will facilitate professors' career growth and aid student success. Matthew Boedy, a rhetoric professor at the University of North Georgia and the president of the Georgia chapter of the American Association of University Professors, has been vocal about his disapproval. He wrote an opinion piece for the AJC denouncing the changes, and took to Twitter soon after the decision. He also penned an open letter to BOR on tenure that over 1,000 USG faculty signed in support. Tim Quigley, a professor in UGA's Terry College of Business, along with 80% of the Terry faculty, signed an open letter to BORUSG raising concerns about the changes and the lack of faculty involvement in the process.

Like any policy, the policy's interpretation and implementation matters more than the policy's passage. University System of Georgia institutions, students, and faculty will see how these changes impact higher education in the upcoming years. If a high number of faculty begin to lose tenure as a result of this policy, we may see fewer professors come to Georgia to teach, and we may see faculty leave teaching for the private sector. If the policy is rarely implemented and the post tenure review process continues as-is, we may not notice any changes in USG institutions.

The series of decisions made by the Board of Regents seem to be contrary to their goals of promoting student success and improving higher education in the state of Georgia. By putting their personal beliefs or politics in front of student safety and by concentrating power in their own hands, they have removed avenues for faculty and administration to make decisions. These senseless decisions are jeopardizing the future of higher education in Georgia.

## Members of the Board of Regents

### **W. Allen Gudenrath**

**District:** 8th

**Governor appointed by:** Deal  
**Occupation:** wealth management

### **Erin Hames**

**District:** at-large

**Governor appointed by:** Deal  
**Occupation:** Headmaster at Heritage Preparatory School

### **Samuel D. Holmes**

**District:** at-large

**Governor appointed by:** Kemp  
**Occupation:** vice chairman of CBRE, Inc. real estate

### **Bárbara Rivera Holmes**

**District:** 2nd

**Governor appointed by:** Deal  
**Occupation:** CEO of Albany Chamber of Commerce

### **C. Thomas Hopkins, Jr., MD**

**District:** 3rd

**Governor appointed by:** Deal  
**Occupation:** orthopaedic surgeon

### **James M. Hull**

**District:** at-large

**Governor appointed by:** Deal  
**Occupation:** managing principal at Hull Property Group

### **Cade Joiner (Vice Chair)**

**District:** at-large

**Governor appointed by:** Kemp  
**Occupation:** founder of Shred-X secure document destruction

### **C. Everett Kennedy, III**

**District:** 12th

**Governor appointed by:** Kemp  
**Occupation:** CEO at Berkshire Hathaway Kennedy Realty

### **Rachel B. Little**

**District:** 4th

**Governor appointed by:** Kemp  
**Occupation:** paralegal

### **Lowery Houston May**

**District:** 14th

**Governor appointed by:** Kemp  
**Occupation:** land management

### **Jose R. Perez**

**District:** 7th

**Governor appointed by:** Kemp  
**Occupation:** retired

### **Neil L. Pruitt, Jr.**

**District:** 11th

**Governor appointed by:** Deal  
**Occupation:** CEO of PruittHealth

### **Sarah-Elizabeth Langford Reed**

**District:** 5th

**Governor appointed by:** Deal  
**Occupation:** President of Five Points Development

### **Harold Reynolds**

**District:** 10th

**Governor appointed by:** Kemp  
**Occupation:** CEO of BankSouth Holding Company

### **Sachin Shailendra (Chair)**

**District:** 13th

**Governor appointed by:** Kemp  
**Occupation:** President of SG Contracting, Inc.

### **T. Dallas Smith**

**District:** at-large

**Governor appointed by:** Kemp  
**Occupation:** commercial real estate CEO

### **Kessel D. Stelling, Jr.**

**District:** 6th

**Governor appointed by:** Perdue & Deal  
**Occupation:** retired CEO of Synovus

### **Don L. Waters**

**District:** 1st

**Governor appointed by:** Deal  
**Occupation:** CEO of investment company

### **Philip A. Wilheit, Sr.**

**District:** 9th

**Governor appointed by:** Deal  
**Occupation:** president of Wilheit Packaging and Marketing Images



# A Drop on the Scale

# A Drop on the Scale

## Considerations for those dismayed by climate change

ELLA STEWART, writer

BHOOMIKA TANEJA, designer

**A**s I scroll social media, I continuously run into sentiment that individual climate actions are futile when they oppose the few, large companies that account for the majority of industrial greenhouse gas emissions. I've seen this echoed around social media, presumably with the intention of easing people's fret over their individual contributions to the climate crisis. The statistic that is frequently mentioned, or rather misrepresented, comes from the Carbon Majors Report in 2017. The term "industrial" is often omitted. It concluded that 100 companies are responsible for 71% of global industrial GHG emissions. The report finds that only 50 fossil fuel companies contribute half of these emissions. Essentially, the report is saying that polluters do a lot of polluting.

**Climate action is more than just a drop of good in the ocean of environmental wrongdoing - it reminds me of the power in each of us**

Firstly, I'd like to ask, is it surprising that fossil fuel companies account for the majority of these industrial emissions? Who else would this point back to? Industrial civilization has been relying on fossil fuels for a long time, and this sector has quite naturally grown to enormous proportions. Someone with a sense of the scale and order of the industrial world shouldn't be shocked by the results of the Carbon Majors Report. And, someone with a sense of the ecological havoc that results from the sky-high emissions should recognize that the implications of the modern industrial process are grave. It's important to note that the statistic only reflects those emissions produced by industry, so it is not a useful metric for understanding other emissions sources. According to a 2020 paper published in the PNAS journal, household energy use was estimated to contribute a fifth of GHG emissions in the U.S. There is room for improvement in quite a few places.

There's no doubt that these polluters are doing immense harm to the climate system. Greenhouse gas emissions are just one mark, albeit a huge one, of the imbalance between human civilization and the natural world. We've been imposing our unsustainable wills on the environment, failing to take seriously the consequences that these next few generations will inevitably be forced to cope with. It's safe to assume that this adjustment won't be pretty.

We dig our shared ecological grave not only deeper, but sooner, when we let the reality of our current energy systems convince us that we don't matter in the scope of the climate crisis. It's in the polluters' best interest for us to believe that our actions are futile, that it's better not to think about our place in the global environment, that business as usual is the only option. But these are lies, of course. Each of us is an Earthling after all, and our relationship to the Earth matters.

It's also important to remember that we likely can't rely on those top polluters to turn around the crisis for us. Addressing an issue so global in scale will require a more widespread effort than this. Positive, transformative change, I believe, can start with people like you and me. This change should at least come as a shift in attitudes. Leaning on the idea that our actions are insignificant must be the worst place to start when the planet is crying out for our help.

If anyone looks a little deeper at the climate crisis, it becomes evident that it's about more than just major polluters versus individual behaviors. The way humanity regards and interacts with the environment must be the result of our feelings about our place in the natural world and our duties to protect it, or rather, the feeling that we have the right to destroy it. Or maybe instead of feeling one way or another, we simply don't care. Apathy in this respect, to me, reflects a tragic disconnect between Earthlings and the home they share. My guess is that this insistence that our choices are insignificant decreases our collective sensitivity to the climate crisis in general.

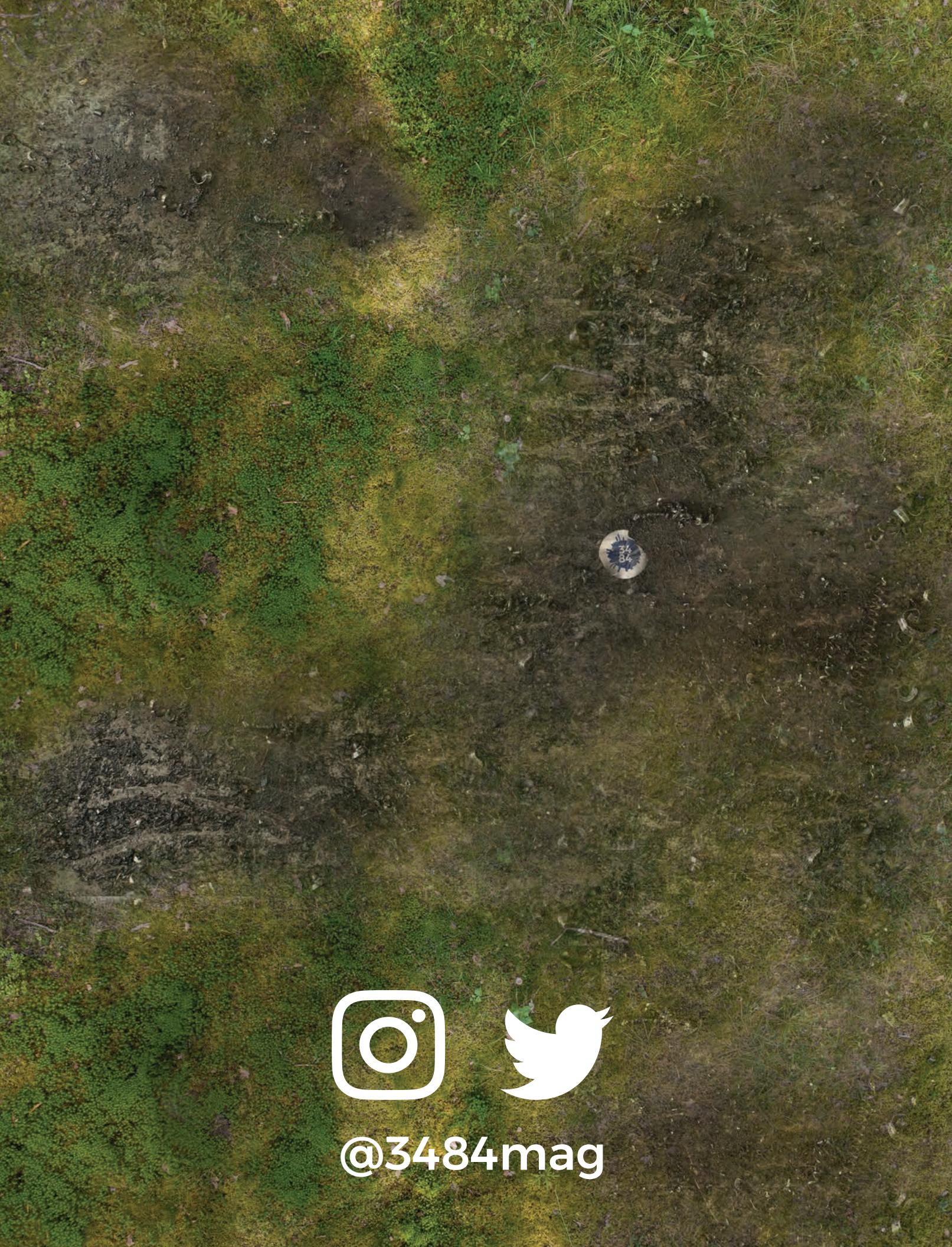
I doubt anybody reading this wants to destroy the environment. I'm also not claiming that your individual actions will make or break our climate system. I think what bothers me about the viral TikToks spouting out that statistic on emissions responsibility is that it might change

the way we think about the climate crisis. I can't help but feel like this sort of rhetoric damages our morale in this respect. We desperately need empowerment (and its forthcoming action). The enormity of climate change is already so intimidating that it discourages people from believing there is anything to be done. But this is another lie. There's plenty to do.

Addressing climate change will not be easy or simple. Ultimately, sweeping, systemic change will be necessary to confront our emissions problem, our waste problem, our land use problem, the list goes on. One can imagine that there are countless actions, ranging from small-scale to large-scale solutions employed in a range of regional contexts that could together redefine our abusive relationship to the environment. Surely we need some collective hope to really get this going.

As someone riddled with climate worries, I am energized by my little commitments to tread more lightly. I know I'm not changing the world single-handedly, but it's comforting to know that my "good" actions will add up over time, and maybe even rub off onto others. Trying to reduce my waste or the emissions attributed to my lifestyle gets me excited to do more ambitious climate advocacy. Climate action is more than just a drop of good in the ocean of environmental wrongdoing, as it reminds me of the power in each of us, and it pulls me a bit closer to my own sense of balance. I imagine that this comfort, the peace that comes with believing I may play a part in a shift to a greener, more just world, is self-sustaining. And gosh, I want the future to be a better place, so I'm going to do my best to live like that.

I can say with certainty that you, reader, did not cause climate change. If climate guilt is holding us back from taking action, we'd better absolve ourselves of it. With that guilt off your shoulders, I'd encourage you to think kindly of our climate and your place within it. Instead of focusing on the environmental abuses that may or may not be within your control, consider all the opportunities to get on the right track. There is so much good work to be done in our homes, communities, and workplaces. A little bit of hope and pep will take us much farther than resignation, and it could feel better, too.



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