



Press Packet Overview: Racial Exclusion in Moore County, NC

In the years since Ida May Murchison began working at the Carolina Hotel, the center of the Pinehurst resort, much has changed in Moore County, North Carolina. In the forty-eight years she drove from her home in the African-American community of Jackson Hamlet to her job two miles away at the Carolina, Mrs. Murchison watched this sleepy, rustic golfing community slowly grow into a bustling, rapidly expanding hub for a multi-million dollar industry. However, as she drove back home each evening from 1945 to 1995 it was also apparent to Mrs. Murchison that much had remained the same. "Things have not changed here [in Jackson Hamlet] a lot... not for the benefit of us and I don't know why," Mrs. Murchison reflects. Despite their contribution to the growth of the Pinehurst resort, the residents of black communities like Jackson Hamlet continue to lack essential services enjoyed by those living mere feet from their neighborhoods. Now, at the age of eighty-four, Mrs. Murchison is involved in an effort to begin bridging the gap between communities like Jackson Hamlet and the rest of Moore County.

In a time of great hardship for many North Carolina rural and small town communities Moore County has experienced a unique measure of prosperity. While other similarly sized areas have suffered through textile and manufacturing job losses, this county of 79,267 people has realized great economic growth in the past decade. During this period, the county's property tax base has doubled. Economic expansion has lifted many within the county to new levels of prosperity. By 1999 the median household income of Moore County was well beyond the average for the state, an impressive fact given the rural and small town settings that typify the county.

One of the key factors lifting Moore County to prosperity is the explosion of its golfing industry. In recent years Pinehurst golf courses have hosted the 1991 and 1992 Tour Championship, the 1994 U.S. Senior Open, the 1996 U.S. Women's Open, the 1999 U.S. Open, and the 2001 U.S. Women's Open. If anything the list of high profile golfing events visiting the area will increase in the coming years; the U.S. Open will return in June of this year while Pinehurst will host the 2007 U.S. Women's Open and the 2008 U.S. Men's Amateur Championship as well. These events have pumped a great deal of money into the community both directly and indirectly. While the direct impact is staggering (it is estimated that the 1999 U.S. Open brought \$75 million into the Moore County while the 2001 U.S. Women's Open generated \$50 million for the state and local economies) the increased exposure from these events has even greater value: each year \$170 million are spent on Moore County golf courses. Today the area is a full fledged resort destination. Before golfing in Pinehurst, visitors can enjoy one of the 28 deluxe spa treatment rooms at the resort or perhaps discuss business in the 55,000 square foot Conference Center and Exhibit Hall added to the Carolina Hotel in 1990.

This opulence masks the fact that Moore County remains a divided community: one portion disproportionately white and wealthy, one portion largely black and poor. For example, the center of Moore County's growth, Pinehurst is exceptionally white. While the county as a whole is nearly 16% black barely more than 3% of Pinehurst's residents are African-American. Black communities are often outside of the confines of cities such as Pinehurst. But the separation is more than just physical as evidenced by comments made by Dan Galligan, president of the homeowner's association for Pinehurst No. 6 golf course. When asked about the adjacent black community of Monroe Town by a local reporter Galligan

said, "I know what you are talking about. I didn't even know it had a name. I don't ever go in that way. I go in the South gate."

This division tangibly impacts the quality of life in black communities around Pinehurst. There are five unincorporated African-American communities, Monroe Town, Jackson Hamlet, Midway, Waynor Road, and Lost City, in this general vicinity, which includes the towns of Pinehurst, Aberdeen, and Southern Pines. None of these neighborhoods has been annexed by the adjacent or surrounding municipality. The significance of this fact cannot be overstated. North Carolina law requires a city to provide services on an equal basis to all its members; by failing to include these communities within their boundaries these cities are able to exclude them from their services. The result is that the residents of these communities lack the basic services their neighbors within municipal boundaries have access to; Jackson Hamlet, Lost City, and Midway (a sewer line actually runs through this community but the residences have not been linked to it) all lack sewer services while Waynor Road has neither water nor sewer. Recently, Monroe Town received both of these services.

Compounding these problems, each of these communities has decisions made for them by outsiders. While none of these neighborhoods has been annexed, each falls with the extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) of an adjacent or surrounding municipality. By classifying a community as an ETJ the nearby municipality may exercise a modicum of control over these neighborhoods, in particular in regards to zoning and land use decisions. Already locked out of essential services, members of communities like Midway are also shut out of the political process.

There is evidence this pattern of exclusion is not mere happenstance. As is seen in many venues throughout the country, the towns of Pinehurst, Aberdeen, and Southern Pines engaged in a pattern of municipal underbounding whereby they selectively expand around black communities. Maps of each of these towns reveal jagged, arbitrary boundaries, which only make sense when the racial dimensions of the surrounding areas are taken into consideration. Perhaps the best example of black exclusion from Moore County municipalities and services is found in Jackson Hamlet's relationship with the towns of Aberdeen and Pinehurst. This African-American community is home to approximately 600 residents and is surrounded by Pinehurst and Aberdeen. Its border is irregular with a white enclave, Abingdon Square Condominiums, jutting into the middle of the neighborhood. Aberdeen has annexed and provided city services up to its southern border while Pinehurst has done the same for residents to its north, including those who live in Abingdon Square. Though sewer lines are less than fifty feet from its border the residents of Jackson cannot compel their extension. As it stands today Jackson Hamlet and similarly situated communities remain islands unto themselves, excluded from the surrounding services and from the growth in prosperity.

Despite their exclusion from the political process and lack of economic wherewithal, these communities have refused to roll over. In many instances their options are limited. Residents of Midway and Waynor Road have sought annexation from Aberdeen and Southern Pines, respectively, to receive needed services. However, under North Carolina law they cannot force these cities to take them in as municipalities are vested with the power to annex. Other communities, such as Monroe Town and Jackson Hamlet, are more ambivalent on the prospects of annexation, fearing such action might be the precursor to the buy-out and destruction of their communities. Between the rock of exclusion from municipal services and the hard place of potentially watching their storied community overrun by outside developers, Jackson Hamlet residents recently took their case for sewer services to their elected representatives on the Moore County Board of Commissioners. In response, Moore County governmental officials focused on the competing funding priorities they must balance. The county, however, held over \$9 million in unreserved funds at the end of the 2004 fiscal year, much more than the estimated \$56,000 it would cost annually to provide sewer to Jackson Hamlet.

As the 2005 U.S. Open tees off, Moore County residents less than two miles from Pinehurst No. 2 still must contend with failing septic systems and potential health risks. Excluded from the political process, adjacent municipalities, and the millions of dollars golf brings into their county, these African-American communities face an uphill fight. This is best captured by the words of Beth Kochner, executive vice president of Pinehurst, Inc., who when recently asked by a local reporter about Monroe Town responded, "It's really been a nonentity to us. It's there and, gosh, I probably couldn't find it." Until attitudes like this change within Moore County it seems unlikely that Jackson Hamlet residents like Ida May

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Murchison will enjoy a level playing field with their municipal neighbors. Still when asked she expresses optimism chuckling “I hope I live to see things change.”