

A Rural Georgia for White Men, Like Brian Kemp: The Midcentury Films and Nontheatrical Legacy of Georgia Agricultural Extension

ABSTRACT

During the civil rights era, Georgia's Cooperative Agricultural Extension Service produced local nontheatrical films that imagined the state as rural, masculine, and white. Omitting segregation from direct view, these productions emphasized white men demonstrating respectable masculinity on rural land at a time when many southerners normalized Jim Crow as common sense for southern families and communities. These images still resonate in Georgia's divided political climate, particularly in the 2018 campaign of Governor Brian Kemp. The racial implications of the extension service's gendered vision of Georgia become clear in Kemp's ads, which appeal to similar rural images to mask racist policies and voter suppression.

As the fight to end segregation in the US South gained national coverage in the 1950s and 1960s, Georgia's Cooperative Agricultural Extension Service

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(henceforth Georgia Agricultural Extension) fine-tuned a cinematic vision of Georgia that idealized white men and rurality.¹ J. Aubrey Smith, head of visual education for the University of Georgia (UGA)–housed service from 1944 to 1971, made a range of instructional and promotional films during this period, each filmed with local residents in rural areas of the state. Smith’s films depicted rural land, family farms, and small communities in Georgia as the economic and social domain of white men who demonstrate protective and self-reliant masculinity for the next generation. The filmmaker also helped the extension service to expand film distribution and exhibition across the state, enabling audiences for the unit’s instructional fare. During the civil rights era, Georgia Agricultural Extension built a nontheatrical cinematic image of the state that imagined land and rural livelihood as white and masculine.

Decades later, in 2018, Brian Kemp campaigned for Georgia’s gubernatorial seat with similar imagery of white, masculine rurality. Kemp released a series of popular yet controversial advertisements on television and YouTube, in which he stated “politically incorrect” positions in scenes around a rural Georgia farm presented as his own.² Clad in a tucked-in, button-down shirt in “So Conservative,” he cranks a chainsaw, drives a large pickup truck, and cleans a shotgun in the company of his daughter’s suitor to explain his stances on “government spending,” “criminal illegals,” and “the Second Amendment.”³ While these ads mimic the brash demeanor of then president

1 I use lowercase *white* with awareness of recent debate about the capitalization of *white* as a racial identifier. The widespread move to capitalize *Black* by the Associated Press, the *New York Times*, and others in the wake of George Floyd’s murder in 2020 raised questions about whether to also capitalize *white* (and *brown*). Most outlets maintained lowercase *white*; as the *New York Times* editors argued, the historical capitalization of the term by hate groups and white supremacists “is reason to avoid it.” Moreover, they claimed “there is less of a sense that ‘white’ describes a shared culture and history.” In contrast, the National Association of Black Journalists decided on parallel capitalization of *Black*, *White*, and *Brown*. The *Washington Post* took a similar stance but noted they would limit use of *Brown* and retain lowercase for “political terms used to promote racist ideologies or to advocate ethnic superiority or separation . . . (i.e. white supremacist, black nationalist).” In conversation with these changes, scholars Nell Irvin Painter and Kwame Anthony Appiah argued in op-eds in summer 2020 that capitalizing *White* draws necessary attention to Whiteness as a powerful racial identity rather than allowing it to remain neutral and vague while *Black* is hypervisible. Resolving debate about the impact of lower- or uppercase *white* is much larger than the scope of this article; central to its aims, however, is the position that *white* is a racial identity that must be made visible as historically created and ideological. See Dean Banquet and Phil Corbett, “Uppercasing ‘Black,’” *New York Times*, June 30, 2020, <https://www.nytc.com/press/uppercasing-black/>; Jesse Lewis, Courtney Rukan, and Brian Cleveland, “The Washington Post Announces Writing Style Changes for Racial and Ethnic Identifiers,” *Washington Post*, July 29, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/pr/2020/07/29/washington-post-announces-writing-style-changes-racial-ethnic-identifiers/>; Nell Irvin Painter, “Why ‘White’ Should Be Capitalized, Too,” *Washington Post*, July 22, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/07/22/why-white-should-be-capitalized/>; and Kwame Anthony Appiah, “The Case for Capitalizing the *B* in *Black*,” *The Atlantic*, June 18, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/06/time-to-capitalize-blackand-white/613159/>.

2 Kemp for Governor, “Warm,” YouTube, June 22, 2018, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y6htgrVPi7A>; Kemp for Governor, “Jake,” YouTube, April 27, 2018, video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ABRz_epvic; and Kemp for Governor, “Offends,” YouTube, July 16, 2018, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-3irfSQZyww>.

3 Kemp for Governor, “So Conservative,” *Washington Post*, July 25, 2018, video, <https://wapo.st/2mlWBV6>. “So Conservative” was initially posted to YouTube on

Donald Trump, they also recall the depiction of masculinity and whiteness in the midcentury films produced by Georgia Agricultural Extension. In 2018, Kemp played to the institutional conflation of rural Georgia with white men that had been promoted historically by the organization and depicted via its film production during massive resistance to integration. His campaign reinvigorated the extension service's midcentury vision of Georgia and adapted it to an unfiltered defense of white, rural masculinity that trended with contemporary audiences.⁴

The resonance of Georgia Agricultural Extension's films in Kemp's campaign speaks to the insidious ways that nontheatrical films—the diverse body of films produced outside of entertainment fare—have conveyed and constructed racist ideologies. As Allyson Nadia Field and Marsha Gordon argue, “nontheatrical screens exhibited their own perspectives on race” and “provided wildly different visions, showing other subjects, addressing other audiences, and asserting other perspectives” than those offered by Hollywood.⁵ Throughout the twentieth century, many nontheatrical productions represented whiteness in localized ways that furthered its assumption as an unseen, default racial category. Films often did so by appealing to racial ideologies in local and regional cultures and their intersections with ideologies of gender, class, and place. In midcentury Georgia, while the federal government was striking down Jim Crow laws that enforced the privileged status of whiteness in the South, Georgia Agricultural Extension made a range of films depicting young white men learning to display self-reliance on actual farms and rural landscapes across the state. Beyond the screen, Georgia's segregationist politicians rallied around the notions of idyllic communities and local autonomy concerning Jim Crow. Whether intentional or not, Georgia Agricultural Extension negotiated and adapted notions of whiteness and masculinity via nontheatrical film as political resistance to southern segregation intensified. These local productions offered white audiences a recognizable, state-backed vision of race and gender in Georgia and a palatable counter to national press images of racial strife and brutality in the South during the late 1950s.

Using a transhistorical perspective, this article analyzes race and gender in Georgia Agricultural Extension's midcentury films as part of an evolving institutional context rooted historically in legalized racism. Nontheatrical film histories, according to Greg Waller, often de-emphasize textual interpretations of individual films and account for cinema via phenomena and experiences beyond the image.⁶ Text and context are difficult to separate in the

May 9, 2018, by Kemp for Governor. The video is currently listed as unavailable there.

4 For analysis of Kemp's success with voters and his controversial ads, see Jennifer Brett, “‘Solid’: Republican Brian Kemp Plays up Rural Roots, Business Bonafides,” *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, October 12, 2018, <https://www.ajc.com/news/solid-republican-brian-kemp-plays-rural-roots-business-bonafides/OTAHo7LgnwgnnWKQG2CyFI/>; and Ryan Bort, “These Georgia Republican Campaign Ads Are Somehow Not Fake,” *Rolling Stone*, July 20, 2018, <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/brian-kemp-ads-701456/>.

5 Allyson Nadia Field and Marsha Gordon, eds., *Screening Race in American Non-theatrical Film* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 9.

6 Gregory A. Waller, “The New Nontheatrical Cinema History?,” in *The Routledge*

films of Georgia Agricultural Extension; their institutional images privileged rural white men in ways that responded to the contentious and shifting ideologies of race and gender in the late Jim Crow South. The overarching modes or genres often employed to analyze nontheatrical films, such as “useful cinema,” “educational cinema,” and “films that work,” offer limited insight into the ideological significance of their filmic engagement with segregated social environments.⁷ As Martin L. Johnson argues, the tendency in nontheatrical film scholarship to categorize films according to broadly described functions “flattens the history of nontheatrical film and its ongoing, and complex, relationship to commercial cinema, civic institutions, and society.”⁸ Textually and contextually, Georgia Agricultural Extension’s nontheatrical films tracked the ideological underpinnings of a state institution organized by Jim Crow laws increasingly under federal scrutiny. Examined from a contemporary vantage point, the films provided an anodyne defense of racial segregation—a filmic visualization of implicit white superiority organized in terms of gender that circulated across the state innocuously and made it out of the civil rights era relatively unscathed.

Drawing from the UGA’s Cooperative Agricultural Extension materials and the J. Aubrey Smith Collection in the Brown Media Archives, the next two sections sketch the operations and instructional culture of Georgia Agricultural Extension prior to and during midcentury, including the role played by Smith’s films.⁹ I focus, in particular, on two robust and well-publicized productions, *4-H and the Insect World* (J. Aubrey Smith, 1958) and *Cotton Pickin’ Money* (J. Aubrey Smith, 1958).¹⁰ Released four years after the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling amid massive resistance to the Supreme Court decision in the South, the films visualized a rural Georgia in which masculine demonstrations of agricultural skills organize and protect white economic and social power. Both films—filmed in rural counties as part of larger extension initiatives—depict young white men learning how to utilize agricultural extension resources to control crop pests and inefficiencies on family farms and in communities where the color line remains largely out of direct view. While segregationists at the time characterized themselves as white men defending idyllic southern families and communities against integration, *4-H and the Insect World* and *Cotton Pickin’ Money* centered young

Companion to New Cinema History, ed. Daniel Biltereyst, Richard Maltby, and Philippe Meers (London: Routledge, 2019), 55–56.

7 See Charles R. Acland and Haidee Wasson, eds., *Useful Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Devin Orgeron, Marsha Orgeron, and Dan Streible, *Learning with the Lights Off: Educational Film in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); and Vinzenz Hediger and Patrick Vonderau, eds., *Films That Work: Industrial Film and the Productivity of Media* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009).

8 Martin L. Johnson, “Motion Pictures: A Problem to Be Solved Co-operatively,” *Film History* 29, no. 4 (2017): 157.

9 Georgia Cooperative Agricultural Extension materials (held by Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library and University Archives) and J. Aubrey Smith Collection (held by Brown Media Archives) are housed in the Richard B. Russell Special Collections Libraries Building, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia.

10 Physical and digital copies of both films are held by Brown Media Archives, Richard B. Russell Special Collections Libraries Building, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia.

white men who learn to create an image of rural self-reliance removed from Jim Crow to better their farms, their futures, and the state.

In a final section, I consider the contemporary significance of Georgia Agricultural Extension's nontheatrical representation of race and gender during midcentury. As part of a state institutional culture that has evolved, the organization's vision of Georgia as white, led by men, and rural has proven malleable as a subtle defense of racism. I analyze the history of Georgia Agricultural Extension featured on the organization's website since 2017 and Kemp's 2018 gubernatorial campaign ads, both of which recollect the service's imagery of rural white masculinity. Georgia Agricultural Extension's contemporary website narrates the service's history from the present with archival imagery and videos that maintain an institutional vantage point oriented toward respectable white men. Taking a more politicized tone, Kemp promoted an unabashed return to an image of Georgia as white, masculine, and rural, which invigorated some voters while drawing sharp criticism from others. His advertising exploited the state's racial diversity and growing division in its electorate to reimagine a Georgia for white men and their future.¹¹

GEORGIA AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION AND A CINEMA OF WHITE DEMONSTRATION

Beginning in the early twentieth century, Georgia Agricultural Extension produced a breadth of educational material for state residents that divided agricultural labor by gender and focused exclusively on white families. In 1914, the Smith–Lever Act established state extension services to facilitate agricultural education in rural communities. The act set up an operational and financial partnership between the United States Department of Agriculture, land-grant universities, state governments, and county institutions and personnel.¹² From the national to the county level, including the youth branch (4-H), state agricultural extension services separated instruction based on gender; the farm was the domain of men and boys, and the home was the domain of women and girls.¹³ Georgia Agricultural Extension was also racially segregated from its inception and run by a central hub of white staff within the UGA College of Agriculture as well as district and county agents stationed in their respective areas, where local governments contributed funding.¹⁴ Within the white-only infrastructure of the UGA-housed

11 For an analysis of the state's shifting electorate from 2012 to 2018, see David Wiegel, "The Six Political States of Georgia," *Washington Post*, September 27, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/politics/georgia-political-geography/>.

12 For historical information on the development of US agricultural extension services, see Willard W. Cochrane, *The Development of American Agriculture: A Historical Analysis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 242–249.

13 For more on gender and extension education, particularly for youth in 4-H clubs, see Gabriel N. Rosenberg, *The 4-H Harvest: Sexuality and the State in Rural America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

14 Agricultural extension for Black Georgians operated out of Georgia State Industrial College in Savannah but was slower to develop as counties refused funding for these efforts and university resources were severely limited compared to white institutions in the state. For more on the segregation of agricultural extension services, see Jeannie Whayne, "'I Have Been through Fire': Black Agricultural Extension Agents and the Politics of Negotiation," in *African American Life in the Rural South*,

service, extension agents modeled crop cultivation, livestock rearing, and technical skills for men and boys, while women home demonstration agents showed women and girls how to preserve and prepare food, refine their wardrobes (and later in the century to enhance their fashion), and maintain domestic spaces.

In the mid-twentieth century, Georgia Agricultural Extension's gendered educational material became increasingly visual and oriented toward film production with the hiring of J. Aubrey Smith in 1944. Smith, or "Smitty" as he was referred to informally, began making informational and promotional films for the service roughly twice a year, often with additional funding from local business sponsors (see Figure 1).¹⁵ His films were shot in Georgia locales and maintained the established focus on gendered agricultural labor and white communities.¹⁶ Structurally, they also rely heavily on demonstration, the instructional mode employed by county extension and home economics agents. Residents in the films, especially young people in 4-H, learn gender-appropriate skills from demonstrations given by extension agents before eventually leading their own. In terms of distribution, Smith facilitated circulation of these productions and other agricultural fare to state, regional, and, on occasion, national audiences by developing a film library and supplying projection equipment to nearly all Georgia counties.¹⁷ According to a 1957 press release, he "broadened the use of films in Extension education to include 155 of 159 counties. Last year in these 155 counties audiences totaling 750,000 persons viewed extension films. Slide sets were used in 132 counties and practically all TV stations in the state used films, shorts and slides produced by, or in cooperation with the Extension visual education office."¹⁸ As Smith integrated nontheatrical film production and distribution into Georgia Agricultural Extension's segregated infrastructure, he and the service rendered gender-based demonstration a local image for consumption by white audiences across the state. His films provided these residents a visual representation of Georgia as rural and white and a gendered mode by which to understand and model this image for themselves.

1900–1950, ed. R. Douglas Hurt (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 154–155; and Joel Schor, "The Black Presence in the U.S. Cooperative Extension Service since 1945: An American Quest for Service and Equity," *Agricultural History* 60, no. 2 (1986): 138–140.

15 M'Nelle Causey, "J. Aubrey Smith Wins Top Award for Farm Films," *Georgia weeklies*, Georgia Agricultural Extension Service, M'Nelle Causey Family Papers, July 18, 1957, box 17, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia, 1–2.

16 Causey, 1–2.

17 Causey, 1–2. See also "Smith Miscellaneous," 1950s–1970s, Brown Media Archives, University of Georgia; and "Plan for Cooperative Home Demonstration Work with Farm Families," 1944–1960, Georgia Cooperative Extension, box 2, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia. Each annual volume of "Plan for Cooperative Home Demonstration Work with Farm Families" includes a "Visual Aids" section that lists the values and guidelines for utilizing visual instruction. The size and scope of the section increases throughout the postwar years, and the language used to describe the purpose of using film, photography, slides, flannel boards, and illustrations reveals a continued attention to the importance of visual media. Various volumes also feature the film holdings of the Extension Service and references to holdings in other educational and sponsored film archives.

18 Causey, "Smith Wins Top Award," 1–2.



Figure 1. An example of credits included in a Georgia Agricultural Extension Service film.
J. Aubrey Smith Collection, Walter J. Brown Media Archives and Peabody Awards Collection,
University of Georgia Libraries.

4-H AND THE INSECT WORLD (1958)

In Smith's *4-H and the Insect World*, an emphasis on gender-based demonstration reveals how the service's vision of white rural masculinity became an image for statewide consumption. The film premiered on March 6, 1958, in Tift County as part of National 4-H Club Week.¹⁹ Produced with a local cast, its instructional narrative focuses on a young man and his 4-H club entomology project. With guidance from his father and Georgia Agricultural Extension, the teen builds an insect-killing jar and collection box and prepares his own demonstration on insecticide. As he practices insect control with these resources, he models an image of white, masculine authority over rural land, family, and community. This image, which the teen learns to reproduce in private and public, at home and beyond, and in his 4-H record book, proves the most valuable component of his insecticide demonstration and agricultural education.

Beginning early in the film, demonstration is a visual mode by which the nameless teen learns how to model white masculinity according to Georgia Agricultural Extension guidelines. As the young man walks through one of the family's fields, he finds plants damaged by insects and quickly flags down his father from atop a tractor (see Figure 2). As they inspect the crop in question, the narrator employs *we* to align the audience with the son's position of instruction: "It's a good thing to check the fields often for insect damage, and that way we can control the pests before they do much harm." The father then employs a skill set unknown to the boy; in close-up, he

19 M'Nelle Causey, "Tifton Premiere Set for Georgia Four-H Club Movie," *Georgia weeklies*, February 27, 1958, Georgia Agricultural Extension Service, M'Nelle Causey Family Papers, box 17, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia, 1.



Figure 2. The father in *4-H and the Insect World* (Georgia Agricultural Extension, 1958) models control of his farmland for his son as the teen seeks help identifying an insect threatening the family crops. J. Aubrey Smith Collection, Walter J. Brown Media Archives and Peabody Awards Collection, University of Georgia Libraries.

inspects the dirt around one of the affected plants. “Dad’s an old hand at finding out what causes trouble,” claims the narrator from the perspective of the teen, “It didn’t take him long to find out cutworms are at work.” The scene depicts the father’s actions as a demonstration to his son and the audience, yet there is no explanation of how he identifies cutworms. Rather, the father displays mobility upon and precise control of his farmland in front of his son and the implied audience. Thus, the scene focuses less on the knowledge of insects that he shares with his son and more on how he acts out a demeanor of control—white, masculine dominion over land, plants, and animals—for his son (and audiences) to emulate.

The son soon learns that Georgia Agricultural Extension fosters and supports the image of rural masculinity demonstrated by his father. After identifying cutworms, dad and son walk back to their large farmhouse to telephone the county extension agent. The call to the local representative justifies their presence in an interior, domestic space typically reserved for women and girls in Georgia Agricultural Extension films and materials. Once on the line, the agent affirms the father’s demeanor of control. The narrator summarizes the call: “Seems that other folks in the county are having the same trouble. The county agent knows what the extension entomologist recommends to control the cutworm, just what is most practical to use. It’s good to have someone you can depend upon, and who has your own interest at heart, to give advice.” The county agent is characterized here as a dependable institutional resource who affirms white farmers and their interest in the local area. Again, practical details about how exactly to handle cutworms are omitted.



Figure 3. The teen in *4-H and the Insect World* (Georgia Agricultural Extension, 1958) performs his own image of masculine authority in his family's home during a practice run of his 4-H club demonstration on insecticide. J. Aubrey Smith Collection, Walter J. Brown Media Archives and Peabody Awards Collection, University of Georgia Libraries.

Instead, the scene promotes Georgia Agricultural Extension's local network of white men and their support of the father's position of autonomy over his land and agricultural livelihood.

Georgia Agricultural Extension ultimately provides the teen with the resources to stage a similar image of white rural masculinity for himself. Later in the film, as he gathers insects from his family's crops for his killing jar and collection box, the narrator explains that his task is "more than just a job, it's studying how nature works—watching the crops grow and protecting the crops so they can grow better." The term *nature* here is linked to the surveillance and protection of land, referring more precisely to a hierarchy of power in which white men occupy a position of authoritative control. As the teen gains an understanding of this presumably natural hierarchy, he learns to perform surveillance and control of his family's farmland. His killing jar and collection box—4-H materials that he constructs as part of his entomology project—display growing control over land. Seemingly more important than the teen's actual autonomy, however, is his ability to reproduce a consumable image of white masculine control via forms of demonstration disseminated by Georgia Agricultural Extension.

As the teen practices a demonstration on insecticide for his mother and sister, the film's emphasis on rural masculinity as image becomes clearer. Dressed in a button-down shirt and khakis, the teen presents himself as an authority on how to read insecticide labels and as visual display for private consumption (see Figure 3). His mother and sister, also dressed neatly, observe the presentation from the sofa as if they are watching television, smiling throughout, and responding to boost his confidence for his final



Figure 4. The teen's sister and mother watch his demonstration from the sofa with camera in hand to take his picture for the 4-H record book in *4-H and the Insect World* (Georgia Agricultural Extension, 1958). J. Aubrey Smith Collection, Walter J. Brown Media Archives and Peabody Awards Collection, University of Georgia Libraries.

run with the 4-H club (see Figure 4).²⁰ The father, however, is not present for the practice session, even though he is prominent in earlier scenes. In his absence, the son acts as man of the house, a status bestowed on him visually as he models an extension-backed image of authority in the family home. Beaming with confidence upon finishing his practice demonstration, he poses for a photograph for his 4-H club record book and documents his demonstration for public consumption.

The scene's emphasis on demonstration as image-making appears in other instructional materials disseminated by Georgia Agricultural Extension. A guide published in 1949, "The 4-H Demonstration Way," advises boys and girls who give demonstrations to "be well groomed" and "dress appropriately for the job" with "neat, clean, well-pressed and attractive" clothes.²¹ During the presentation, they should "be natural, be at ease, smile and be happy" and "talk directly to the audience in a friendly, conversational manner."²² This advice prompts "boys and girls" to facilitate audience consumption of their demonstrations with neat, familiar, and enthusiastic appearances.²³ Doing so benefits the presenters themselves. According to the guide, they "gain poise, confidence and the ability to think and speak clearly before groups"—changes

20 Beyond this scene, women appear minimally in the film beyond a few scenes of girls applying pesticides in kitchens and flowerbeds and sequences in which Jane "annoys" or admires her older brother.

21 "The 4-H Demonstration Way," bulletin 510, 1949, Georgia Agricultural Extension Service, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia.

22 "The 4-H Demonstration Way."

23 "The 4-H Demonstration Way."

in appearance that denote they have learned to embody an idyllic vision of Georgia as white, rural minded, and respectably gendered.²⁴

Later in the film, the teenage boy embodies the image of white rurality promoted by Georgia Agricultural Extension in his final demonstration at a county 4-H club meeting. The American flag and the 4-H flag mark the edges of the stage where he, again dressed cleanly, presents adjacent to extension staff. Onlooking 4-H members fill the foreground of the frame. The focus is the teen's appearance rather than the oral content of his presentation, which cannot be heard on the soundtrack. Visual consumption of his insecticide lesson proves paramount; his demonstration itself is brief, but the scenes that follow contextualize the image he models for the exclusively white group. The young man remains in focus as the local club arrives at the state's Rock Eagle 4-H Center, a segregated park with extensive lodging, meeting, and recreation areas that Georgia Agricultural Extension opened in 1955.²⁵ In montage, he and the group settle into their lodging, walk along a lakeshore, eat in the cafeteria, relax at a pool, and attend an entomology lesson. Voicing over the images, the narrator appeals to the teen's experience in general terms: "One of the best things a person can learn in these modern times is how to live, work, and play with his neighbors, whether they be in the next community, another county, another state, or another nation. . . . A beautiful lakeshore, woods, and friends really inspire a person to do his best and to make the best better." The narrator describes a person living alongside "neighbors" near and far and finding encouragement to do "his best," yet the images show only white boys and girls at the segregated site in rural Georgia, a state facility filled with amenities and promoted heavily by the extension service. The Rock Eagle sequence thus locates the teenage boy, now skilled in demonstration, as part of a larger vision of Georgia that is respectably gendered and racially exclusive.

Now part of Georgia Agricultural Extension's vision for the state, the teen is inspired to do his best in the film's closing moments. He is selected as a state representative for the national 4-H club congress based on his 4-H record book, a collection of photographs of his projects and awards, newspaper pieces on the local 4-H club, and tidbits from instructional materials and demonstrations. This record book reproduces the teen's display of rural masculinity to family and the 4-H club as an archive of images that can be consumed again as a personal and public model of individual success. Having proven himself via his record book, the teen will represent Georgia Agricultural Extension's vision of rural Georgia beyond his local community as he competes for a college scholarship at the national 4-H congress. As he boards a train and waves goodbye to his family, the narrator summarizes his preparation for the task in first person using language that recalls the 4-H club pledge and concluding with "My body has health, vigor, and strength."

24 "The 4-H Demonstration Way."

25 For more on Rock Eagle 4-H Center, see University of Georgia Extension, "Timeline," accessed January 3, 2023, <https://extension.uga.edu/about/our-history/timeline.html>; and "4-H Center Awaits Opening of 1955 Camping Season," *Georgia Cloverleaf* 9, no. 5 (April 1955), M'Nelle Causey Family Papers, box 17, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia, front page.

I will keep it so.” These final moments imply that the teenage boy will gain national recognition as he dedicates himself to embodying Georgia Agricultural Extension’s vision of respectable and autonomous rural masculinity. Doing so betters the future for Georgia and the white men who cultivate its rural land, even if in image only.

THE RACIAL POLITICS OF DEMONSTRATION IMAGES

By centering gendered agricultural demonstration in 1958, *4-H and the Insect World* envisioned a rural Georgia organized around white masculinity. The racial ideology underlying the film’s emphasis on gender becomes apparent when considering how gender served as a political tool in the battle over segregation taking place at the time. Civil rights activists utilized gendered respectability to facilitate successful protests of segregated services and establishments. Women such as Elizabeth Eckford, who attempted to attend Little Rock Central High School in 1957, and Rosa Parks, who helmed the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955, performed a lady-like femininity that eased concerns about radical activism, exposed white vitriol, and appealed broadly to Black communities.²⁶ In the 1950s and early 1960s, according to Marisa Chappell, Jenny Hutchinson, and Brian Ward, the southern civil rights movement fine-tuned its engagement with “pervasive ideas of respectability to gain moral and political leverage within the system.”²⁷ This strategy garnered media coverage outside the South, as images featured in *Time* and other outlets “juxtaposed perfectly coiffured, immaculately dressed, quietly dignified, and stoically nonviolent black demonstrators with violent, foul-mouthed unkempt and hysterical white mobs.”²⁸ Activist appeals to gendered respectability helped to portray the fight for integration in national media as “a clash between accepted notions of decency” and “vulgarity and barbarism,” which proved crucial to the midcentury civil rights movement.²⁹

As activists performed gender strategically to expose the violence of segregation, southern politicians responded by downplaying the realities of Jim Crow and emphasizing an amiable image of white southern families that countered national images of virulent segregationists. In 1956, the writers of the “Southern Manifesto,” Georgia senator Richard B. Russell Jr. and South Carolina senator Strom Thurmond, appealed to the respectable gender and reproductive futures of white southerners to denounce *Brown v. Board of Education*. In the manifesto, signed by Georgia’s senators and ninety-nine other congressmen, Russell and Thurmond frame themselves as masculine protectors of “separate but equal” as “common sense” that ensures the right of parents to “direct the lives and education of their children.”³⁰ The court’s

26 Marisa Chappell, Jenny Hutchinson, and Brian Ward, ““Dress modestly, neatly . . . as if you were going to church”: Respectability, Class, and Gender in the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Early Civil Rights Movement,” in *Gender and the Civil Rights Movement*, ed. Peter J. Ling and Sharon Montieth (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 77–88.

27 Chappell, Hutchinson, and Ward, 73.

28 Chappell, Hutchinson, and Ward, 69.

29 Chappell, Hutchinson, and Ward, 69.

30 John Kyle Day, *The Southern Manifesto: Massive Resistance and the Fight to Preserve Segregation* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014), Appendix 2, 161.

decision to integrate schools, they claim, denies the “confirmed habits, customs, and traditions and way of life” in the South, creating “chaos and confusion” and “destroying the amicable relationships between the white and Negro races that have been created through 90 years of patient effort by good people of both races.”³¹ While civil rights activists used gendered respectability to assert Black visibility and resistance to white supremacy in southern society, segregationists envisioned white men protecting the region’s families and communities to minimize Black perspectives and experiences from imaginings of the region.

The “Southern Manifesto” was not an isolated document but a statement that appealed to a popular vision of the South built on decades of institutional work. Since 1914, agricultural extension services in the South had invested in the rural white family as a civic entity via gender-based instruction for nonurban populations. The decentralized infrastructure of federally established agricultural education intersected ideologically and practically with the segregation of Black communities in the region. Beginning in the early twentieth century, southern agricultural extension services developed state and local networks that excluded and separated rural Black residents; white county agents and home demonstration agents “worked in the white community, and were indeed selected within state and local political systems.”³² Thus, white agricultural extension in the South, Joan Malczewski argues, was “largely successful in reproducing a caste system in vocational education, and federal legislation provided the means to reinforce established patterns with regard to class, gender, and race.”³³ This continued in the midcentury South. With over half of the nation’s rural farm population still living in the region in 1950, segregated agricultural extension services continued to privilege white communities and to mask the reality that one in every four of these farm residents was nonwhite.³⁴ In Georgia, as the political battle over Jim Crow laws gained national attention, J. Aubrey Smith brought the established patterns of segregated state extension programs to the screen for local audiences. Georgia Agricultural Extension constructed a cinematic field of vision in which white families, headed by men, demonstrate state-sponsored gender repeatedly on their rural land, in their rural homes, and in their rural communities. In these films, Black Georgians—who numbered over a million residents and nearly 30 percent of the state’s population at the time—are erased from view.³⁵

In 1958, *4-H and the Insect World* provided a visual defense of the south-

31 Day, 161.

32 Joan Malczewski, “Philanthropy and Progressive Era State Building through Agricultural Extension Work in the Jim Crow South,” *History of Education Quarterly* 53, no. 4 (2013): 384.

33 Malczewski, 372.

34 US Bureau of the Census, “Preliminary Reports,” in *1950 Census of Population*, released April 30, 1951, 2, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1950/pc-07/pc-7-03.pdf>.

35 US Bureau of the Census, “Negro Population, by County: 1960 and 1950,” Supplementary Reports Series PC (S1-52), in *1960 Census of Population*, issued March 1966, table 1, “Total and Nonwhite Population, 1960, and Negro Population, 1960 and 1950, by State,” 2, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1960/pc-s1-supplementary-reports/pc-s1-52.pdf>.

ern status quo. The film shares with the “Southern Manifesto” an appeal to protective masculinity but does not mention or explicitly resist integration; Black people are never visible on-screen. Nonetheless, the instructional representation of white masculinity reinforces an institutional racial hierarchy. The young man at the center of the film confronts a far less controversial foe than *Brown v. Board of Education*: insects with the potential to thwart crops, livelihoods, and communities in Georgia. To protect the family farm and ensure his individual success in the future, he learns to control these threats by demonstrating an image of white authority and autonomy affirmed by Georgia Agricultural Extension. Thus, *4-H and the Insect World* visualized segregated state values and institutions as commonsensical by framing rural Georgia as white and masculine and removing Black Georgians from view. White men are represented as inherent owners and protectors of state land and agricultural yields, and their sons—supported by women in the home—are responsible for cultivating this status for the future. This institutional lie surfaced again in the 1958 *Cotton Pickin’ Money*, in images of cotton that framed the exploitation of Jim Crow.

COTTON PICKIN’ MONEY (1958)

Georgia Agricultural Extension’s *Cotton Pickin’ Money* focuses again on youth self-reliance as teenage Jim grows cotton and learns to demonstrate an image of rural masculinity that idealizes white supremacy and the legacy of slavery and segregation in Georgia. The focus on cotton was not exclusive to the film—a January 1957 circular published by the service announced the “Production of a New Cotton Movie” as part of an “overall cotton program,” one of ten projects intended “to keep farmers informed on the best practices for growing large yields of cotton at minimum costs.”³⁶ This larger extension campaign lent institutional and commercial support to the film’s instructional focus on growing cotton efficiently. Touting Arcadian nitrogen fertilizer as a sponsor, scenes focus on the application of nitrogen to crops, which corresponded with extension’s Intensified Fertility Program in six Georgia counties.³⁷ The program, which included visual and other media, informed farmers about soil testing and the use of “lime, mixed fertilizer, and nitrogen.”³⁸ When it premiered on May 7, 1958—in Cedartown, Georgia, where it was filmed—*Cotton Pickin’ Money* kicked off the governor’s “Soil Stewardship Week.”³⁹

In the film, Jim embodies an image of self-reliance built from institutional and commercial resources and exploited, dehumanized Black labor.

36 “Growing Cotton,” circular 403, revised January 1957, Georgia Agricultural Extension Service, McBay Science Library, University of Georgia, back cover.

37 William Horace Sell, “A Study of an Intensive Educational Program Conducted in Six Georgia Counties by the Georgia Cooperative Extension Service” (diss., Cornell University, 1969), 3–4.

38 Sell, 3–4.

39 “Exclusive to United Press,” radio press release, April 25, 1958, Agricultural Extension Service, M’Nelle Causey Family Papers, box 17, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia, 1; and M’Nelle Causey, “May 7 Premiere of Cotton Movie Set at Cedartown,” Georgia weeklies, May 1, 1958, Georgia Agricultural Extension Service, M’Nelle Causey Family Papers, box 17, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia, 1.



Figure 5. Jim's ride home from school with friends links a southern agricultural landscape to icons of 1950s prosperity and respectability in *Cotton Pickin' Money* (Georgia Agricultural Extension, 1958). Inspired by his amiable community, Jim decides to grow cotton to save money for his own car. J. Aubrey Smith Collection, Walter J. Brown Media Archives and Peabody Awards Collection, University of Georgia Libraries.

His independence is relative as he relies on a small plot of land given to him by his father, various chemical controls that reduce manual labor, and a detailed growing plan from Georgia Agricultural Extension. Yet, according to the film's instruction and imagery, Jim "can hold his own" picking cotton alongside the Black "hand labor" he utilizes for harvesting to keep costs low. By the final scene, he reproduces and invests in the fantasy of white rural autonomy for the future by making enough "cotton pickin' money" for a car, college savings, and next year's crop.

The opening moments of *Cotton Pickin' Money* frame the origin of Jim's journey to self-reliance as a desire for individual purchasing power. Standing in the local schoolyard, he looks longingly at a friend's convertible parked out front. Public schools and busing were controversial scenes of integration in the South, yet here, school is a social space that fosters Jim's dream of owning his own car. He simply wants to fit in with his friends, explains the narrator. The friends pile into the convertible and drive along rural roads to Jim's house (see Figure 5); the car connects the school to the surrounding farmland and homes. With a vehicle, the teens travel quickly and performatively between these spaces with a carefree attitude, displaying 1950s-styled white masculinity (and femininity, for the girls riding in the backseat) and class mobility. As Jim smiles, sitting in the backseat with a girl, the narrator reminds us that "[i]t's good to grow up in a community where there are so many friends looking toward the future and at the same time enjoying life today." This narrated bit has a promotional rather than instructive tone that emphasizes the happy and ambitious demeanor of Jim's rural community

and its potential for modern prosperity in 1958. Excited, Jim hops out of the car when they reach his house, intent on asking his father for some of his cotton land. His ride home takes him from schoolyard to cotton fields, linking contemporary and historical sites of racial hierarchy, a journey he wants to imitate himself by driving his own car bought with his own “cotton pickin’ money.”

As Jim sets out to grow his own cotton, the self-reliance he learns is more gendered posturing in a shifting agricultural economy than reality. After Jim’s dad gives him the go-ahead to use a small field, the teen plans his crop with efficiency considered at every step, echoing the “Can You Make Cotton Pay?” circular from Georgia Agricultural Extension and its subtle warning that making money on cotton in the late 1950s requires increasing efficiency and yields, presumably to keep up with corporate growing.⁴⁰ Self-reliance in this context is merely trying to stay alive in a market that is moving away from small farms, and since Jim’s father has many crops, the teen already has a leg up on small-scale farmers. Moreover, Jim relies throughout on guidance from the county extension agent and extension resources. Visually, however, Jim works his small plot of land alone with chemicals and mechanical equipment; his display of masculinity appears modern and individual. In contrast, his father follows a hands-on approach learned from years of experience; he manages his larger crops from atop his tractor and on foot and oversees other white men and Black laborers who clear rows of young plants. Jim creates a better image of modern self-reliance but one that is only possible because he borrows his father’s land and relies heavily on commercial resources and the guidance of Georgia Agricultural Extension.

In a climactic sequence, Jim’s well-planned use of chemicals allows him to build a fantasy of control over cotton that eases historical white fears of losing economic power wrought by racial exploitation. The boll weevil, an insect often blamed for the economic collapse of the cotton industry in the southeastern US during the early twentieth century, soon appears on the family’s crops.⁴¹ As the narrator explains the need to control boll weevils to protect cotton, extreme close-ups exaggerate the size of the dark insect, and ominous music heightens the sense of unease as it eats the white plant. Jim follows the guidance of the county agent and pre-treats his crop with insecticide early in the growing process, which allows him to contain the threat in a cost-efficient manner. His father, in contrast, has a nightmare about a boll weevil infestation after not applying insecticide to his crop. Simulating his dream on-screen, extreme close-ups again depict the insects as they feed on cotton. The weevils are “monstrous” in size, “huge creatures with an evil eye and a hungry appetite,” according to the narrator, who claims that “when they dig in, they dig in dad’s pocket, take all his cotton pickin’ money. They might as well dig in dad’s head. Dad can’t stand it any longer.” With an identifiable southern accent on the film’s title line, the narrator emphasizes how boll weevils threaten dad’s profit and thus affect his masculine composure in

40 “Can You Make Cotton Pay?,” circular 437, February 1958, Georgia Agricultural Extension Service, McBay Science Library, University of Georgia.

41 The arrival of the boll weevil is also noted on the historical timeline featured on the UGA Extension website. See University of Georgia Extension, “Timeline.”



Figure 6. Cotton plants are shown in a series of close-ups that frame only the hands of Black laborers as they harvest the crop in *Cotton Pickin' Money* (Georgia Agricultural Extension, 1958). J. Aubrey Smith Collection, Walter J. Brown Media Archives and Peabody Awards Collection, University of Georgia Libraries.

running the farm. The close-ups of dark insects consuming cotton symbolize the historical fear of economic threats to white-owned land and agriculture in the South. Reacting anxiously, Jim's father dusts his crop immediately in windy weather, which fails to stop the infestation. The narrator reprimands the unplanned dusting: "Livestock suffer. People suffer. Dad suffers. For every turn of the tractor wheel costs money." The father's fearful and uncalculated response contrasts with Jim's hands-off, chemical cultivation of cotton, which avoids the optics of the crop's historic failure that ended its industrial reign in Georgia and the South. The teen's display of masculinity proves more efficient and effective at protecting cotton and "cotton pickin' money" for the future.

In growing cotton, Jim learns to demonstrate an image of masculinity much like the nameless teen in *4-H and the Insect World*, yet, at harvest time, the racial exploitation hidden behind the scenes enters the frame. Jim decides to use "hand labor" for picking, the narrator explains, because it is "cleaner and may be cheaper" for the small size of his crop. A series of close-ups of the plants appears on-screen; in each of the last few shots, a Black hand enters the small frame and picks the cotton (see Figure 6). The close framing locates these hands physically within the scene but separates them from the bodies of the laborers. In contrast, the narrator praises Jim, who is shown picking cotton in a shot that captures nearly all of his body. "4-H club work teaches Jim to be self-reliant," he claims, "He learns to manage his crop and do what is needed when it is needed. He is learning by doing, and he can hold his own picking cotton with any of the hands too." This self-reliance is



Figure 7. The Black children who trail behind Jim recall racist “pickaninny” caricatures in *Cotton Pickin’ Money* (Georgia Agricultural Extension, 1958). J. Aubrey Smith Collection, Walter J. Brown Media Archives and Peabody Awards Collection, University of Georgia Libraries.

a deception as others work alongside Jim, their bodies and agency denied stature by the shot composition and the narrator’s focus on the teen’s control of his inherited plot of land.

An editing inconsistency also brings this lie to light. In a shot of Jim making his way down one of the rows, two Black children follow behind him, smiling with cotton in tow (see Figure 7). Yet, in close-ups moments earlier, the hands shown picking cotton are adult hands, which raises the question of why children are shown alongside Jim. Perhaps the teen’s masculinity wouldn’t appear quite so self-reliant if he is younger than the *hands* working in his field. The smiling boys also recall the racist “pickaninny” caricature that incited nostalgia for the plantation South in US literature, film, and advertising in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁴² Ultimately, the boys happily picking cotton and adult Black bodies denied fullness by the camera’s frame are used to construct the appearance of Jim’s autonomy. By growing cotton in this manner, the narrator claims, “there will be money to put in the bank and some left over for the things Jim wants now.” The Black laborers are characterized as part of the teen’s agency and ability to grow cotton for profit, stripped of their humanity and autonomy on-screen and exploited for their labor to visualize Jim’s white rural masculinity as economically valuable.

42 See Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films*, 4th ed. (New York: Continuum, 2003), 7–8, 21–23.

In *Cotton Pickin' Money*'s final sequence, Jim's cotton crop provides him with purchasing power to perform white rural masculinity in the future. After harvest, the teen and his father go into town to visit the local market, bank, and car dealership. As they sell their cotton at the market, the narrator instructs, "a man should know the value of his product and know what the market is bringing. [United States Department of Agriculture], radio, television, and newspapers give accurate market reports. With this information, a man can make a wise decision. It's up to the individual to choose to sell now or hold for a better price." Effective cotton growing, according to the instructional narration, requires masculinity informed by modern mass communication. A man in 1958 should have decisive knowledge of "his product" and its value in a contemporary market. The next scene at the bank illustrates Jim becoming such a man as he deposits savings for college and next year's crop. The teen's modern choices—higher education and financial planning—invest long term in a respectable image of white rural masculinity that orients the racial hierarchy symbolized in cotton toward the future. His last stop visually solidifies this; at a local car dealer, he negotiates the price of a used car and drives it off the lot. He fulfills his initial desire to buy his own car and to perform mobility in rural Georgia. With "cotton pickin' money," he's in the driver's seat, cotton land in the background.

In buying a used car, saving for college, and putting money in the bank for next year's cotton, Jim performs a masculinity that is economically viable in Georgia in 1958. Like *4-H and the Insect World*, the film's focus on gendered demonstration of agricultural autonomy reinforces an image of midcentury Georgia as white, rural, and led by men. Yet the continued exploitation of Black people surfaces in *Cotton Pickin' Money* and exposes the performative whiteness and racial hierarchy at play in Georgia Agricultural Extension's institutional field of vision. In the midst of a growing national civil rights movement, the service promoted white control of property and profit as a youth-oriented display of rural masculinity. The point of view in *Cotton Pickin' Money* validates young white men performing land ownership and economic mobility in rural communities to establish status. White southern dominance remains rural yet modern, respectable, and future oriented on-screen. Resistance never appears beyond insects threatening crop yields and disembodied Black hands picking cotton. Thus, while those rallying behind the "Southern Manifesto" cried foul because they claimed *Brown v. Board of Education* infringed upon states' rights to segregation as long-standing common sense for white southern communities, the films produced by Georgia Agricultural Extension naturalized scenes of forward-looking young white men demonstrating control and authority in the state's rural environments.

AN INSTITUTIONAL TIMELINE

Most Georgians today are not familiar with the films made by Georgia Agricultural Extension during the tenure of J. Aubrey Smith from 1944 until he retired in 1971. The service's midcentury film library is no longer active or fully accessible. The films have been digitized because Smith donated his personal collection of prints, outtakes, and records to UGA's Brown Media Archives in 2010. Rather than signify a lack of value, the relative obscurity of

these institutional films draws attention to their temporal engagement with a localized social context that has evolved over time.

Today, the place of these midcentury films within the larger culture of Georgia Agricultural Extension can be seen in the historical timeline that appears on the current organization's website.⁴³ The timeline—composed of event descriptions accompanied by archival photographs—celebrates “highlights and milestones from the organization's inception through today.”⁴⁴ Digitally rendered, this sketch of the service's history largely reproduces an institutional view of the state that privileges white men and boys depicted in outdoor spaces. The stated origin of agricultural extension work in Georgia is a presumably white-only “corn club for boys” started in 1900, followed by the 1904 establishment of “Negro youth clubs” for “African American sons and fathers.”⁴⁵ A single image represents Black men at a segregated livestock competition, with a caption briefly noting that in 1964 “[t]he Civil Rights Act promotes racial integration of separate Extension programs.”⁴⁶ The first image of a young woman canning vegetables marks the expansion of youth programs to include girls’ “garden, tomato, and canning clubs” in 1906.⁴⁷ Even though a short note names the first woman hired by extension in 1913, images of white women through the 1960s emphasize their roles within domestic and interior spaces; in the few images in which women are pictured outdoors, they pose for co-ed group photos at recreational venues. Events from the 1970s onward nod at historical hierarchies of gender, noting UGA's renaming of the School of Home Economics in 1990 and the first woman to serve as head of the extension in 2007. Visually, white Georgians are still in focus and men and boys positioned in active outdoor roles.

A 2014 video that Georgia Agricultural Extension produced and shared on its “Our History” page to celebrate the organization's one hundredth anniversary reveals a narrower emphasis on successful white men whose rural backgrounds were enriched by Georgia Agricultural Extension.⁴⁸ The video features interviews with then governor Nathan Deal and former president Jimmy Carter on the positive influence of the service in their own lives. The former a Republican and the latter a Democrat, Deal and Carter both link their political careers and values to their upbringing on rural farms supported by agricultural extension resources. Historical cooperation between rural Georgians and the century-old state agricultural service, the interviews imply, provides a foundation of respectable civic leadership in state and federal politics. Georgians are again represented here, via Deal and Carter, as historically rural, white, and masculine led, even as the video appeals to both political parties.

Drawing on archival photographs, the digital historical timeline on

43 University of Georgia Extension, “Timeline.”

44 University of Georgia Extension.

45 University of Georgia Extension.

46 University of Georgia Extension.

47 University of Georgia Extension.

48 University of Georgia Extension, “UGA Extension 100-Year Anniversary,” YouTube, May 19, 2014, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=azuzhb1BF78>. Video is linked on University of Georgia Extension, “Our History,” accessed January 3, 2023, <https://extension.uga.edu/about/our-history.html>.

the UGA Extension website subtly tracks the organization's focus on white men since its early days, with the implication that its institutional purview expanded to include African Americans and women.⁴⁹ The 2014 video celebrating one hundred years of Georgia Agricultural Extension upholds this historical emphasis with interviews from former governor Deal and former president Carter, influential state figures from both sides of the political aisle.⁵⁰ In both, the image of white masculine rurality fostered by the service from its inception and rendered vividly in Smith's midcentury films remains prominent and supplemented by highlights of growing inclusivity. In 2018, Brian Kemp revealed that this institutional vision of rural white men is also a malleable and recognizable means of communicating a social and political vision of Georgia rooted in implicit racial hierarchy.

A CANDIDATE FOR RURAL GEORGIA

The midcentury nontheatrical films made by Georgia Agricultural Extension are not likely what came to mind when encountering Brian Kemp's persona as a gubernatorial candidate. His thirty-second ads that trended in the lead-up to the 2018 midterm elections bear obvious connections to the brash, anti-establishment rhetoric of President Trump. Released to YouTube and aired on local television, the ads frame the candidate as a "politically incorrect conservative" who is not afraid to speak up for controversial positions.⁵¹ The ads played to a polarized electorate and gained attention from both sides of the political spectrum, a move that aligned Kemp with Trump's base and created buzz around his campaign in a large field of Republican candidates. Less obvious is the local context of Kemp's rural imagery and why it was well received by a significant portion of Georgians.

The setup of Kemp's most controversial ads recalls the gender-based demonstrations at the center of films such as *4-H and the Insect World* and *Cotton Pickin' Money*. Demonstration—the well-established instructional mode utilized in agricultural extension programs across the nation—was an integral feature of films made by Georgia Agricultural Extension in the 1950s and 1960s. These on-screen demonstrations promoted idealized images of white rural masculinity (and femininity) for earnest consumption. In contrast, Kemp's video ads utilized gendered demonstration in rural settings ironically, to signal the candidate's conservative values as politically incorrect yet straightforward and familiar to Georgians. In nearly every ad, Kemp stands front and center against the backdrop of a rural scene, dressed in a tucked-in button-down shirt. He addresses the camera with a slow-paced, southern accent and asserts frank common sense, presumably absent from contemporary politics, while performing a simple action intended to display rural masculinity.

In "So Conservative," for example, the candidate appears on rural property to explain his "politically incorrect" policies.⁵² In front of a barn, he revs

49 University of Georgia Extension, "Timeline."

50 University of Georgia Extension, "UGA Extension 100-Year Anniversary."

51 Kemp's 2018 campaign ads can be found on the YouTube channel Kemp for Governor, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC10Zbue6-tnDSrHzDGOvXA/videos>.

52 Kemp for Governor, "So Conservative."



Figure 8. In the political advertisement “So Conservative,” Brian Kemp appears in staged rural scenes and demonstrates masculine gestures to signify his conservative political positions.

a chainsaw and tells the audience that “my chainsaw is ready to rip up some regulations” (see Figure 8). Seated in a large pickup truck, he claims, “I got a big truck, just in case I need to round up criminal illegals and take ‘em home myself. . . . Yep, I just said that” as he closes the driver door and cranks the truck’s diesel engine. These scenes demonstrate an irreverent white rural masculinity to signify Kemp’s political resistance to government presumably out of touch with folks like him, not unlike the position taken against the Supreme Court by the segregationists who penned the “Southern Manifesto.” A large state flag hanging on the side of a barn reminds viewers that this is Georgia, a state better served by a rural white man who bucks the political system.

“Jake,” an ad set inside a rural home, is structured similarly around a demonstration of gender, one that adapts the self-reliant masculinity emphasized in Georgia Agricultural Extension’s midcentury films for today’s racial climate.⁵³ In a staged living room, Kemp sits in a chair with a shotgun in hand and several guns of various sizes propped nearby; the firearms justify his masculine presence in a domestic scene. Jake, “a young man interested in one of [Kemp’s] daughters,” sits nervously next to him, with two framed photographs of the girls positioned between them in the background. Kemp explains that Jake has asked why he is running for governor, which prompts him to lead the young man in call and response. As Jake parrots the candidate’s three reasons, graphic wording on the screen echoes his responses, inviting the audience into the instruction. Kemp then plays the end of the ad for humor by revealing what he seeks to protect in intimidating Jake. In his final call, he asks, “And two things if you’re gonna date one of my daughters?” Jake affirms, “Respect and a healthy appreciation for the Second Amendment, sir.” Kemp concludes, “We’re gonna get along just fine” as he cocks the gun with the barrel pointed near the young man. Here, the

53 Kemp for Governor, “Jake.”

reference to the Second Amendment nods to Kemp's voting base but also exposes a defensive and controlling posture underlying the performance of respectable rural masculinity. In *4-H and the Insect World* and *Cotton Pickin' Money*, young men demonstrate respectable authority in a field of vision that idealizes the state's history of racial segregation and exploitation; they assert autonomy by defending land and livelihoods from insects, inefficiency, and the optics of Jim Crow with the help of modern institutional and commercial resources. Kemp, however, displays masculine autonomy by demanding compliance to his authority over his presumed property with firearms, a posture framed as comedic when directed at a young white man seeking to date Kemp's daughter. The ad's exaggerated tone surfaces the white aggression underlying respectable rural masculinity for humor.

The racial implications of Kemp's performance of gender become more explicit in "Brian Kemp's Story of Fighting—and Winning—for Georgia," a six-minute campaign ad with a sincere tone.⁵⁴ Opening scenes, narrated by Kemp's wife, frame the candidate as a hardworking man from rural origins who loves to hunt, fish, farm, and play sports. This background prefaces Kemp's desire for the governor's seat, which he explains in a closely shot interview: "I've really been frustrated for a long time with government and thought we really needed a leader that would just simply bring common-sense ideas." Kemp's vague appeal to "commonsense ideas" here recalls the language of the "Southern Manifesto" and, alongside the characterization of his personal background, plays into a larger vision of Georgia as authentically rural and white but undervalued as such. On-location interviews with the candidate's supporters affirm this vision of the state. Two white men, one framed next to a tractor and another at work in an auto shop, describe the need for a familiar candidate like Kemp (see Figure 9). For the owner of the auto shop, Georgia is "like two different states": Atlanta and "the rest of the state." Kemp, he implies, represents rural areas of the state distinct from Atlanta and underacknowledged in state politics. His description downplays the sprawling and amorphous growth within and beyond the twenty-nine counties in Atlanta's metropolitan statistical area, where over six million people reside.⁵⁵ He separates the capital territorially, presumably as more urban, too liberal, and less white than the rest of the state, an implication that ignores racial and political diversity across the state.⁵⁶ The

54 Kemp for Governor, "Brian Kemp's Story."

55 For the list of counties included in the Atlanta metropolitan statistical area, see US Office of Management and Budget, bulletin no. 20-01, "Revised Delineations of Metropolitan Statistical Areas, Micropolitan Statistical Areas, and Combined Statistical Areas, and Guidance on Uses of the Delineations of These Areas," March 6, 2020, 42, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Bulletin-20-01.pdf>. For the population estimate of the metropolitan statistical area in 2019, see US Census Bureau, "Annual Estimates of the Resident Population: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2019," in *Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Areas Totals: 2010–2019*, Excel table, <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2010s-total-metro-and-micro-statistical-areas.html>. For an accessible breakdown of US Census data on the area, see US Census Bureau, *American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates*, retrieved from *Census Reporter*, <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/31000US12060-atlanta-sandy-springs-alpharetta-ga-metro-area/>.

56 See US Census Bureau, Georgia data and maps, "Race and Ethnicity," accessed August 24, 2021, <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?g=0400000US13>.



Figure 9. The campaign ad “Brian Kemp’s Story of Fighting—and Winning—for Georgia” features an interview with a white rural supporter, a tractor included prominently in the frame.

ad further suggests that governmental bias toward Atlanta leaves rural white businesses and family leaders struggling for autonomy without state support. Another interviewee explains how he and his father work hard to run their small business, but they would like to “cut some of the red tape” to “eke out a better living.” Georgia politics, Kemp’s campaign implies, decenters and devalues white rural masculinity.

At the level of form, the ad reinforces Kemp’s attempt to reenvision a Georgia for rural white men. As the candidate claims he has visited with Georgians in every county in the state, people of color are seen only on the periphery of a few frames as they work as cooks or servers at the Varsity, Atlanta’s iconic fast-food restaurant (see Figure 10). The city—referenced earlier as distinct from the rest of the (presumably rural) state—contrasts visually with the rest of the ad; faster-paced movement and editing captures Black low-wage workers for a few moments compared with the close-up interviews of white men intercut throughout. The brief representation of people of color providing food service does little to diversify Kemp’s campaign and instead locates the opposite side of a division between urban and rural, Black and white, us and them—positions the candidate seeks to control and use to his advantage. This racial logic surfaces in Kemp’s own words later in the ad as he touts the “citizenship checks” he imposed on voter registrations as Georgia’s secretary of state.⁵⁷ As he tells it, many Georgians he spoke with are frustrated by “people who are here illegally, who can go to a medical facility and get free health care, while our own people are being priced out of the system.” The “many” that make up “our own people” are, more accurately, the rural white men, families, and communities in Kemp’s advertised view

57 “Hearing on ‘Voter Suppression in Minority Communities: Learning from Our Past to Protect Our Future,’” memorandum to Committee on Oversight and Reform, 116th US Congress, House of Representatives, Washington, DC, February 25, 2020, 4–8.



Figure 10. “Brian Kemp’s Story of Fighting—and Winning—for Georgia” interviews Kemp and a few of his white supporters at length, featuring only brief and obscured shots of Black workers at the Varsity fast-food restaurant in Atlanta.

of the state peddled throughout his campaign. He will “push and fight for whatever he can” to uphold this vision of Georgia or, as one of his supporters says in the final line, “to help the people that need it.”

Kemp’s campaign for governor reinvigorated a white, masculine-oriented image of rural Georgia that Georgia Agricultural Extension adopted in the early twentieth century and fine-tuned using nontheatrical film during the civil rights movement. In ads played for humor, Kemp weaponized demonstrations of rural autonomy to signify his commitment to politically incorrect plans for the state. In more serious ads, he elaborated his vision for Georgia—to support rural white men, their families, and their businesses and to protect their interests from racial and political outsiders. Taken together, these ads show a fantasy of white masculine rurality rooted in notions of control over property, business, and government that has evolved since its representation by Georgia Agricultural Extension. Kemp’s campaign reminds us that rural images of Georgia and the South remain ideologically contested representational territories that mediate white supremacy alongside and often via ideas about gender.

Kemp brashly but sincerely marketed a commonsense view of the state that reasserted institutional white supremacy as the historical norm in response to growing racial and political diversity. His ethically questionable politics behind the scenes of his rural imagery and persona attest to this. As secretary of state from 2010–2018, Kemp’s office declined federal aid in securing voting machines, closed over two hundred voting precincts, canceled 1.4 million “inactive” voter registrations, and put over fifty thousand registrations on hold with “exact match” requirements.⁵⁸ Then, as his

58 Mark Niesse, “U.S. House Investigation Targets Kemp and Georgia Voting Problems,” *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, March 1, 2020, <https://www.ajc.com/news/state>

controversial ads generated news headlines and helped him to unexpectedly secure the Republican nomination for governor, he refused to resign his post as head elections official.⁵⁹ On Election Day in November 2018, crowded precincts, voting machine malfunctions, and purged voter rolls hindered voting in numerous locations. Several civil rights groups filed lawsuits, and the US House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Reform investigated Kemp's office for voter suppression.⁶⁰ Yet the frenzied political climate across the nation and state muddled the severity of his actions as Kemp claimed a narrow, contentious win over Stacey Abrams, who vied to take office as the first Black woman elected governor in the United States. Kemp's near loss showed instability in Georgia's status as a solid red state and the future of his rural vision of the state.

CONCLUSION

Robert Allen argues that "understanding the experience of cinema at any point in the past in any place also entails understanding the spatiality of the experience of cinema."⁶¹ For the midcentury films of Georgia Agricultural Extension, the spatiality of their nontheatrical production and exhibition is intertwined with the rural, segregated Georgia they represented on-screen. In the late 1950s and 1960s, the fight to end Jim Crow was a struggle to imagine space in the South differently, and, to do so, notions of gender were appealed to alongside deeply rooted ideas about race. Alternative racial visions of the South were being staged, demonstrated, and documented in physical spaces with a legally enforced color line. Approaching the Georgia Agricultural Extension films as useful or educational misses the dynamic way in which the service fostered the consumption and reproduction of an institutional image of Georgia as white, masculine, and rural. What viewers saw on-screen as visual agricultural education reinforced white supremacy locally as the civil rights movement pressured the federal government to confront segregation laws.

Yet Georgia Agricultural Extension's vision of midcentury Georgia was not original or static. The films grew out of a well-developed institutional culture of gender-based agricultural instruction and a decentralized network of governance. Nontheatrical filmmaking was integrated into the segregated

--regional-govt--politics/house-investigation-targets-kemp-and-georgia-voting-problems/QQJtuikd0ttnQJl61qjK8H/.

59 Kemp's campaign went to great lengths to promote his identification with and support for white rural voters compared with his runoff opponent, (former) Republican lieutenant governor Casey Cagle. See Richard Fausset, "Georgia Governor Candidate Caught Saying He's in Race to Be the 'Craziest,'" *New York Times*, July 15, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/15/us/georgia-governor-cagle-kemp.html>.

60 See Michael King, "Brian Kemp's Office to Be Sued for Purging 700,000 Voters from Georgia Rolls," *11 Alive*, WXIA-TV, Atlanta, Georgia, updated October 7, 2018, <https://www.11alive.com/article/news/politics/elections/brian-kemps-office-to-be-sued-for-purging-700000-voters-from-georgia-rolls/85-600064018>; and Mark Niesse, "Fairness of Georgia Elections Challenged by Far-Reaching Lawsuit," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, November 27, 2018, <https://www.ajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/federal-lawsuit-challenges-fairness-georgia-elections/ZAfqZVmxHmXbAdfgc85TzL/>.

61 Robert C. Allen, "Getting to 'Going to the Show,'" in *Locating the Moving Image: New Approaches to Film and Place*, ed. Julia Hallam and Les Roberts (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 35–36.

organization to address local residents and communities practically and ideologically. The films track a southern institutional perspective in the latter years of Jim Crow and illuminate the complex ways nontheatrical productions engaged social environments on smaller yet influential scales. Even as Georgia Agricultural Extension has waned and changed in influence, and the film experiences fostered by Smith's visual education unit no longer exist, the rural, gendered Georgia of the organization's midcentury films carries on as a malleable image shaped by white supremacist values and politics. Linkages between the form and context of the films and Brian Kemp's 2018 gubernatorial campaign reveal an adaptive and powerful representation of whiteness and masculinity—a vision of race, gender, and rurality that reverberates today precisely because of its localization and fluidity. In Georgia and elsewhere, institutional, and nontheatrical films more broadly, envisioned minute social worlds from vantage points anchored in white supremacy and a host of dominant ideologies that have restricted and harmed people. Across a nation where discrimination and hate persist socially and politically beyond fixed locations, these moving images speak as much to the present as to the past.

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