Demographic Investigation of the Mississippi Delta and Blackbelt

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The Mississippi Delta is a distinctive region located in Northwestern Mississippi. Typically, it makes up the area between Memphis, in the extreme south-western part of Tennessee and the city of Vicksburg, Mississippi to the south. The Blackbelt is an area extending from the Delta of Mississippi through Alabama and into Georgia. The region as a whole is marked by many physical and cultural characteristics that make it exceptional. The goal of this project was to use census data to identify some of those characteristics. Many factors could have been used besides the ones here, however, these characteristics seemed to show the great contrast that exists between the Delta/Blackbelt and the rest of the U.S.

The map below from the Census Bureau shows poverty in the U.S. by county in 2000. The map shows that the Delta/Blackbelt faces. Home values in the Delta/Blackbelt are visibly lower than those in the urban suburbs of cities like Atlanta (Georgia), Montgomery (Alabama), Jackson (Mississippi) and the corresponding rural areas that weave their way around the urban centers, roughly following the line of the Blackbelt. Most striking are the median home value differences in the Delta/Blackbelt region. This map may be unconvincing as to the relative poverty of this region because as a whole it is rather impoverished, but nationwide in 2000 the median home value was approaching 120,000; Significantly higher than the Delta/Blackbelt.

Abandoned homes are one of the most stunning cultural features of this landscape. Though the actual percentage of renter occupied homes doesn't seem extreme, you need only to look at the areas corresponding to the Delta/Blackbelt to see the contrast in non-owner occupied homes. In fact, this region, even today is dotted with homes which were probably made for sharecroppers so that their homes close to the crops which they once tended. From the Delta in Mississippi on through Alabama and into Georgia the line of subservience; the land. Like the Atlanta region in Northern Georgia.

The map below showing the percentage of renter occupied homes or non-owner occupied homes gives some indication of what the Delta/Blackbelt looks like from a homeowner standpoint. This once plantation dominated landscape and the sharecropping that followed have left their mark on the land. Though the actual percentage of renter occupied homes doesn't seem extreme, you need only to look at the areas corresponding to the Delta/Blackbelt to the north and south to see the sharp contrast in non-owner occupied homes. This region, even today is dotted with homes which were probably made for sharecroppers so that their homes close to the crops which they once tended.

The population change from 1990 to 2000 in the map above probably gives the best indication of where the Delta/Blackbelt is located. The rich soils of the Delta and corresponding Blackbelt once made this region the center of cotton production and plantation agriculture, however, starting as early as the 1880's the cotton production centers shifted westward thus taking the wealth that cotton produced for the region. These initial losses of agricultural all with several other factors would set the stage for the great migrations out of the area. As the map shows the region continues to change, as the darker colors usually indicate great population losses and the lighter areas indicate areas of population gain. Like the Atlanta region in Northern Georgia.

The map above showing the percentage of the population that is African American in the Delta/Blackbelt gives an indication to the legacy of slavery and cotton production in this region. This map, as well as any other, exemplifies where the Delta/Blackbelt is and how it differs from the area's surrounding rural areas that weave their way around the urban centers, roughly following the line of the Blackbelt. This map may be unconvincing as to the relative poverty of this region because this area as a whole is rather impoverished, but nationwide in 2000 the median home value was approaching 120,000; Significantly higher than the Delta/Blackbelt.