

# One Nation INDIVISIBLE

Stories From the Field

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March 2012

## Same New Struggle

### *Building a Better Southern Strategy in Multiracial Mississippi*

SUSAN EATON

To find the new Mississippi, drive north from ghostly gorgeous downtown Jackson, exit off the interstate and enter a maze of suburban cul-de-sacs. Pass the seemingly limitless numbers of brand new and still-emerging identical brick single-family houses budding from ground where crops used to grow. Slosh through copper colored mud. Walk under tarps and into the home in progress. There, Julio Gomez balances expertly on red metal stilts. He grips the edges of a section of drywall and positions it over a wood frame. His screw gun buzzes the 30-pound slab into place. Below, Pablo Cruz, who, like Gomez, left his native Veracruz, Mexico and hiked through Arizona desert for this job, slices through another piece of drywall. He hoists the unwieldy rectangle to Cruz, who clomps over the concrete floor to cover the next spot.

In the home-to-be next door, Miguel Garcia spreads white glop over the minute vertical spaces between drywall sections the men had hung a week before.



After the mixture dries, Garcia will sand it and in time, paint over it. Everything will look seamless then. Potential buyers will see no spaces between the slabs, no screws, no sanded sections. All that work, suddenly invisible.

### **"A Whole New World Here"**

Just about anyone buying one of the newly constructed homes off Mississippi's main highways, or a new dining room table for it built in one of the state's several surviving furniture factories, or a chicken slaughtered and cleaned in one of the poultry processing plants here, purchases embodied Latino labor. But even after well more than a decade of steady immigration to cities, suburbs and rural townships throughout the Deep South, Latino immigrants often remain underappreciated, ignored or worse.

Last year, a virus of draconian anti-immigrant legislation spread through the southeastern United States, finding eager hosts in South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama. But it met a surprising death upon reaching

Mississippi. It was killed by a multiracial political coalition nurtured by diverse membership and led largely by African American legislators who had years ago decided to take on the immigrants' cause as their own. The growing coalition, shaped by civil rights history and human rights values, faces daunting new challenges this year after a Republican landslide reshaped state politics. In January this year, Republican lawmakers introduced three bills that, together, create more powerful roles for local police to identify and deport immigrants who don't have authorization to be in the country, and prohibit state colleges and universities from providing financial aid or scholarships to students without authorization to be in the country. (As of this writing, in March 2012, Mississippi legislators were still deliberating over immigration-related bills.)

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But even as members of the multiracial political coalition brace for a tough legislative year, the alliance between African American lawmakers and civil rights activists, white progressives, and immigrants and their supporters, persists as a hopeful model for other states where African American elected leaders have increasingly taken leading roles in opposing anti-immigrant proposals. Punitive immigration legislation did pass in some southern states last year, but it also seems to have engendered and strengthened alliances between African Americans and immigrants and their supporters in those places.

“The Black Caucus knows its history—many of our members lived that civil rights history—and we vowed to never sit still when human beings are being treated as less than human,” says James Evans, who began his sixth term in



Mississippi's state legislature this January. In the late 1950s and early 1960s Evans' father had worked side by side with Medgar Evers, the civil rights activist and NAACP field secretary who was assassinated by a white supremacist in Jackson in 1963. Mourned nationally and immortalized in poetry, books and films, Medgar Evers' spirit haunts this state and Jackson in particular, where city fathers transformed Evers' modest home into a museum.

"You can still see the bullet holes in that house," says Marcia Weaver, a former Jackson city councilor and local historian who welcomes tourists to her small bed and breakfast in the city.

"That struggle lives in our air here."

Civil rights still commands moral authority in what might be considered its epicenter, Mississippi, just as it does in its neighboring Southern states.

Alabama's white state legislators may have overlooked this, just as they failed to appreciate the profound interdependence between immigrants and the native born. Alabama's legislators who had supported recent anti-immigrant legislation seemed unprepared for the anger directed at them not merely from national human rights groups, but from local watermelon and catfish farmers and building contractors who had lost their workforce and their profits. Perhaps more damning, though, is that supporters of this legislation are now cast as new villains in a familiar Southern struggle.

"One of my concerns is that this bill opened up some old wounds that it didn't need to open," Alabama

State Senator Gerald Dial, who now says he regrets voting for the law, told the *Bloomberg* newspapers.

(All except one of Dial's fellow Republicans voted for the Alabama law, known as HB56.) "All of that stuff from the 50s and 60s – Alabama is not like that anymore." Alabama's law represents by far the most drastic of all the recent legislation aimed at immigrants without documents. As passed, it requires educators to verify a student's immigration status before the child can register for public school. It even makes it a crime to give an immigrant without "papers" a ride in a car.

Texas Congress-woman Sheila Jackson Lee, who is African American, recently

said the law in Alabama has created a "civil rights crisis." In December, civil rights activists and immigration advocates gathered in Birmingham to revisit Alabama's segregationist history,

to decry its contemporary immigration legislation and to develop ways to join forces to counteract those impulses.

Historians and scholars, too, draw attention to the stark similarities between the "states' rights" argument that shored up segregationists in the South in the 60s and justifications for immigration legislation today.

"Alabama now risks going down in history for its intolerance toward undocumented immigrants and Latinos as well as African Americans," writes UC Davis Law Professor Kevin Johnson, in the *Stanford Law Review*.

*"The Black Caucus knows its history, many of our members lived that civil rights history, and we vowed to never sit still when human beings are being treated as less than human."*

—Mississippi State Rep. James Evans



Shortly after the law passed in Alabama, Latino immigrants began to flee the state. According to immigration lawyers, and to immigrants in Mississippi, many Alabama escapees sought work and sanctuary in Mississippi.

“It is not an easy life here either,” says Juan Carlos Cook, a 31-year-old Ivy League educated Mississippi native who took over his Mexican friend’s small construction business after his friend was deported. “Everything is relative. People are afraid to go out of their house here too and for good reason. But you have people literally running from Alabama. I hope they can find safety here. There seems maybe a little more hope in Mississippi, at least for now.”

As a child, Cook had endured the sparsely attended Spanish Mass at the Cathedral of St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church in downtown Jackson. His mother, Martha Cook, had grown up in the northern Mexican city of Juarez. She immigrated to Mississippi in 1979 to marry Cook’s father, a Mississippi native who traveled regularly to Mexico on business. Martha Cook still attends the Spanish Mass every Sunday. These days, though, she has to arrive early to get a good seat in crowded pews. She no longer lacks volunteers to organize the traditional Mexican Our Lady of Guadalupe procession each winter either.

“It’s become a whole new world here,” Martha Cook says. “I love to see it happening. I know not everyone

in Mississippi loves these changes. I have lived here for many years so yes, yes, I know that.”

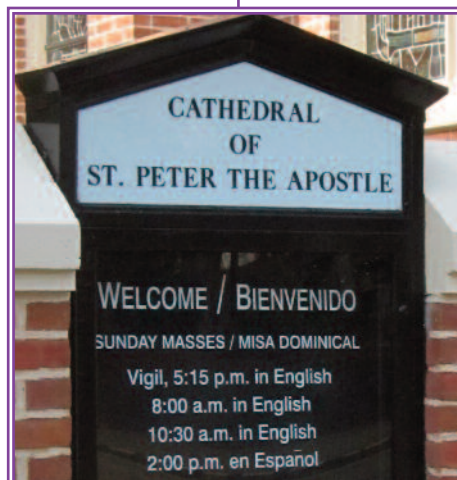
## The New Southern Strategy

The Latino population is growing faster in the South than in any other region of the United States. Between 2000 and 2010, Latinos accounted for about 45 percent of the region’s population growth. This is far more than the growth attributed to whites (22 percent) and African Americans (19 percent). Among southern states, Mississippi still has one of the smallest immigrant populations, with an estimated 2 percent of the population foreign born and about 3 percent Latino, according to the U.S. Census. (Comparably, about 8 percent of North Carolina’s population is Latino. In Georgia, about 9 percent is.) Advocates in Mississippi insist those numbers vastly undercount the immigrant population. Even assuming the numbers are accurate, the Latino population in Mississippi has increased 106 percent since 2000, making it one of the states with the fastest growing Latino populations.

Long before Latinos made much of a showing in the Census numbers or at the Cathedral of St. Peter in downtown Jackson, a white labor organizer named Bill Chandler began laying the groundwork for a multiracial, multiethnic

coalition in support of immigrants, who were both legally present and not. In the late 1990s, Chandler had been working as a union organizer throughout the South. He had met Latinos, mostly from south-

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ern Mexico, who had come for work in the state's burgeoning chicken processing industry. Soon after the Legislature permitted casino gambling throughout the state in the early 1990s, the corporate owners hired cheap Latino "guest" labor first to build gigantic hotels and later, after their visas had expired, to work under contract cleaning the hotels and casinos. Given Mississippi's famously scarce resources, Chandler feared that tensions between Latinos and African Americans over jobs would develop and quickly be exploited by cynical politicians. Chandler, who had grown up in racially diverse Los Angeles and worked alongside César Chávez for the United Farm Workers, figured the best way to dissipate that tension was to bring both groups together in strong alliance as organized workers so that "everyone would benefit" from fair wages and safe working conditions.

In 2000, Chandler was meeting with a social worker in her office about reports of Latino workers who had confronted their bosses about working conditions on the Gulf Coast and who were now being threatened with deportation. During the conversation, a Methodist minister named Mary Stewart called in tears looking for Chandler, who just happened to be in the social worker's office. She explained that educators in Laurel, about 90 miles southeast of Jackson in the Pine Belt, were refusing to enroll the children of Latino poultry workers. The school administrators insisted that the children needed social security numbers to be enrolled. Stewart told Chandler of the overwhelming number of complaints she'd received from desperate and frightened parents. Chandler of course knew that in 1982, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Plyer v. Doe* ruled that children cannot be denied an education because of their immigration status. Chandler set out to address the immediate constitutional violation in

Laurel. (With Chandler's urging, African American State Senator and former teacher Alice Harden would introduce a bill which passed in 2002 and, based on *Plyer v. Doe*, established a process for education officials to register and enroll children who are undocumented immigrants.) That day, Chandler also realized that in addition to moving him to help those particular immigrant families, the story was screaming at him to start an organization devoted specifically to protecting immigrant rights.



Bill Chandler

"If you look at the issues that immigrants are concerned about—jobs, work conditions, access to a good public education—they are not that far from the same issues that African Americans have been talking about," Chandler, who is now 70 years old, says. "So, it was an idea that began developing very rapidly."

Chandler and his growing collection of allies calculated that with the continuing growth of the Latino community in Mississippi, an active alliance with African Americans represented "an opportunity for serious political change" that would benefit people of color and working class white people. As more Latinos became integrated into their new communities, and perhaps earned green cards and later citizenship, Chandler and his African American allies saw that "voting patterns would also shift, bringing a possible transformation to this state over the next 10 or 20 years."

One of the first decisions made by Chandler and the small staff at the newly developed Mississippi Immigrant Rights Alliance (MIRA) was that they would never ask a white ally to introduce pro-immigrant legislation. Instead, MIRA turned to well-respected black leaders with a strong standing in the civil rights community. This included Rep. James Evans, a union organizer and ordained Presbyterian

minister; Rep. Willie Bailey, a well-known defense attorney in the city of Greenville; Sen. Alice Harden, of Jackson, the former public school teacher who also had been a union leader; and Rep. Edward Blackmon Jr., a defense attorney in suburban Canton, where increasing numbers of Latinos were coming for work in the town's chicken processing plants. In deeply red Mississippi, the alliance nearly got a bill passed in 2001 that would have issued driver's licenses to undocumented people. African American civil rights advocates sit on MIRA's board. Those board members, along with African American legislators, regularly march and speak and recruit people to join in MIRA's rallies. African American legislators even take to the airwaves to counteract what Rep. Evans calls "hate radio" and to dispel negative myths about immigrants. Over time, the widely read Spanish-language newspaper, *La Noticia*, prominently placed photos of African Americans standing up for immigrant rights at rallies and demonstrations. Patricia Ice, an African American MIRA staff attorney, who is also married to Chandler, writes a weekly column in *La Noticia* on a variety of legal issues such as racial profiling, or ensuring care of minor children in the case of deportation. Ice also writes a column for the *Jackson Advocate*, the paper that serves the city's African American community.

"We made sure Patricia's picture was right there at the top of her [*Noticia*] column, too," Chandler says. "It's important for immigrants to see this, to see African Americans taking on these causes, to understand who their true friends are."

*Alongside the still-blooming multiracial alliance, another Mississippi clings to symbols of oppression and a tradition of resistance to civil rights. Mississippi is the only state that still incorporates elements of the Confederate "Stars and Bars" in the official state flag.*



African American legislators, including Evans, Blackmon and Bailey, won appointments to important committee chairmanships in part because they had supported a white Democrat, Rep. Billy McCoy, in his hotly contested 2008 campaign to become Speaker of the House. McCoy, a worm farmer from a small town on the Tennessee border, had faced a tough challenge against a conservative Democrat, Jeff Smith, who has since become a Republican. The more moderate McCoy evolved as a strong supporter of immigrant rights, along with other measures, such as adequate public education

funding, environmental protection and provision of adequate benefits for the poor, all of which had traditionally been supported by members of the Black Caucus.

Alongside this still-blooming multiracial alliance, another Mississippi clings to its symbols of oppression and its tradition of

resistance to civil rights. Mississippi is the only state that still incorporates elements of the Confederate "Stars and Bars" in the official state flag flying prominently in front of the Statehouse and other government buildings. (In a 2001 referendum, 65

percent of voters said they wanted to keep the flag. The predominantly black Delta region, not surprisingly, wanted it gone.) Marble statues of Confederate soldiers stand outside courthouses here. Jackson's water supply comes from the Ross Barnett Reservoir, named for the staunch segregationist governor and member of the supremacist group, the White Citizens' Council. About 37 percent of Mississippi's residents are African American, the largest share of the total population of any state. In 2010, about 45 percent of the state's African American residents lived in poverty.

In the Legislature, membership of the Black Caucus was never large enough to pass bills that did not also have significant support from white legislators. But members could, through their committee chairmanships and with Speaker Billy McCoy's support, kill what Rep. Evans characterizes as "the really, really bad bills that called out for it, the most morally repugnant, the bottom of the barrel: The immigration bills."

In 2011, Republican lawmakers introduced 33 bills that aimed to either deport more immigrants, to make life and work nearly impossible for them, or to merely exclude them symbolically. One bill would have restricted an immigrant's ability to rent an apartment, even though federal courts have ruled similar bans unconstitutional. Another bill would have denied people without documents access to public benefits, even though this is already prohibited under federal law. Still another would have mandated "English-only" in conducting government business. By spring, all the bills had died. This even included



the harsh SB 2179, an Arizona copycat, which had previously passed both houses and that even the most hopeful observers had assumed would become law. Legislative maneuvering by two Black Caucus members who had the support of McCoy and of

another powerful white Democrat, Rep. Bobby Moak, managed to kill the bill. Similar scenarios had played out in previous years and anti-immigrant bills died in committees.

MIRA and its allies and immigrants are up against more than just unsympathetic state legislators. In some sense, say Chandler, Ice and other immigration attorneys in the area, any legislation

that might pass this year will give official sanction to those county sheriffs and local police who already try to enforce federal immigration law, and may embolden other officials to do the same.

Experienced immigration lawyers in the Jackson area say their clients are frequently victims of roadblocks set up by county sheriffs and local law enforcement, who are ostensibly checking for insurance, seatbelt use and valid drivers' licenses and registrations. The website roadblock.org contains numerous reports of locations in the state where police and sheriff deputies stop drivers and ask them for identification. Attorneys say that local police and county sheriffs routinely stop Latinos for no cause or for what seem like invented reasons—for not wearing a seatbelt, for example, or seeming to drive erratically. In the town of Pearl, just east of Jackson, the local city council in 2010 unanimously passed an ordinance that prohibited more than two people from sleeping in a bedroom. MIRA and other human rights organi-

zations framed the ordinance as a thinly veiled effort to criminalize immigrants who had in recent years moved into apartment complexes in the working class, predominantly white Pearl.

On a winter night in February, Chandler received a desperate phone call from a MIRA organizer telling him of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids in progress at the Colonial Terrace apartment complex in Pearl where many immigrants and their families lived. Chandler rushed over in time to see members of a family up on a balcony, clutching blankets and pillows and clothes. The family joined hands, dashed down the stairs and ran. MIRA staff members later located the family and helped them find a new place to live. It was part of a four-day raid throughout Rankin County, during which officials arrested 58 people.

A small but meaningful counterweight to the ICE raids and the local ordinance in Pearl came from the city of Jackson whose majority black City Council in 2010 passed an anti-racial profiling ordinance that prohibits police from asking people about their immigration status. The legislation, which passed on an 8 to 1 vote, is modeled after a similar ordinance in Detroit. Patricia Ice of MIRA wrote the legislation. Newly elected city councilor Chokwe Lumumba, a prominent African American civil rights lawyer, introduced it.

“To the Latinos who don’t feel welcome elsewhere, I think they should come to Jackson,” Lumumba says. “It’s good for us politically, it’s good for our economy now and into the future.”

Rep. James Evans is proud that Mississippi has mapped out and nurtures “a new kind of Southern strategy” – one that fosters alliances between people who have similar values but come from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Evans’ purposeful choice of the word “new” reframes the “old” Southern strategy pioneered by Richard Nixon, who exploited white southern racism to win over

Democrats disgruntled and disaffected after desegregation and passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

## Bending Toward Justice 1962-2012

The “new Southern strategy,” though, is now forced to play out on an altered political playing field. In November 2011, for the first time since Reconstruction, Democrats lost control of the Mississippi House of Representatives to Republicans, who already controlled the Senate. Additionally, Speaker Billy McCoy retired and Republicans appointed new chairmen to legislative committees. Voters also elected as Governor the Tea Party favorite Phil Bryant. Bryant had made his opposition to illegal immigration a central talking point during his career as Lieutenant Governor and a centerpiece of his gubernatorial campaign.

“Within 30 days, we’re going to see a radical restructuring of state government like we’ve never seen before,” Mississippi NAACP president Derrick Johnson told audience members at the state’s Black Leadership Summit shortly after the November election. “Within 30 days, it’s going to look like 1962.”

In that infamous year, riots broke out in Oxford, Mississippi over the admission of the first black student, James Meredith, to the University of Mississippi. Two people were killed and at least 75 people injured in the riots. President John F. Kennedy called in federal troops to quell the rioting. Two years later, the United States passed the Civil Rights Act and then in 1965, the Voting Rights Act. It was around this time that a young white man named Rims Barber left his native Chicago to help register black voters in Mississippi during the famous Freedom Summer. The wall of segregation was finally beginning to crumble in Mississippi and Barber felt compelled to be part of this historical moment. But unlike most white northern temporary transplants to



the civil rights movement, Barber never could pull himself away from Mississippi. Barber, who is also a Presbyterian minister, and his wife Judy made Jackson home, sent their kids to the recently desegregated public schools and, in their fashion, carry on the struggle that first moved them to action nearly a half century ago.

“The point is, it’s not about *them*, it’s about all of us together. You cannot hold somebody down without getting dirty yourself,” Barber says. “Not just out of a paternalistic view of wanting to do something for somebody else. I want this to be a better society for me, for my kids and my grandkids...”

Each Monday, Rims and Judy Barber host a meeting at their modest office in downtown Jackson. Organizers, advocates, social workers, health workers, members of public workers’ unions, civil rights lawyers and concerned residents gather to review proposed legislation and to explore and debate strategies for opposing or supporting various bills. At a meeting in December of 2011, despair crept into the room as people discussed the outcome of the most recent election. Quickly, though, group members returned to discussions about child care subsidies, how to best support each other in the fight against imminent anti-immigration bills and strategies to support health care funding for poor children.

At the meeting, Barber also presented his analysis of voting patterns in the November election. His study revealed a sharp racial divide. About 90 percent of white voters, he found, supported the Tea Party candidate Phil Bryant for governor. But 97 percent of black voters had supported the Democratic candidate, the African American mayor of Hattiesburg, Johnny DuPree. Voters had also approved an amendment to the state Constitution requiring people to present photo identification at the voting polls. Among African Americans, 83 percent voted against the amendment. However, 80 percent of whites voted for the amendment. Civil rights groups strongly oppose

this type of legislation since immigrants, the poor, and often students, are least likely to have such identification. Women often are also potentially disenfranchised: A woman may have registered to vote under her maiden name, while her ID may carry her married name. Under the Voting Rights Act, states and localities that have limited voting rights for minorities in the past must get such laws approved by the U.S. Department of Justice. Mississippi is one of eight states subject to this provision.

Barber published his findings in MIRA’s newsletter under the headline: “In Mississippi, We Are Still Divided.”

In spite of a newly bleak political landscape, people such as Barber, who nurture and help sustain Mississippi’s multiracial coalition, believe that especially after Alabama’s debacle, common sense economic arguments related to immigrant contributions just might have a fighting chance in Mississippi. Martin Luther King’s famous paraphrased quote, “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice” has incantation status around here. The words “long haul” pepper sentences. As they continue to strategize in order to stave off anti-immigrant legislation, Bill Chandler and Patricia Ice realize that they must look toward the future, too. They believe that, even if they lose their legislative battle this year and Mississippi goes the way of Alabama and Georgia and South Carolina, they not only have morality and the civil rights narrative on their side; they also have the numbers on their side. This is one reason why, in addition to advocacy and organizing, Ice convenes frequent naturalization workshops around the state for legal immigrants hoping to become citizens. She helps them fill out the voluminous paperwork required for citizenship applications, study for citizenship exams and, if necessary, help bring their English up to the level they need to pass the oral part of the test.

Each year, more and more people join MIRA's marches. In March 2012, MIRA will sponsor its 6th annual Unity Conference, which brings together union leaders, immigrants and their supporters, black civil rights leaders and legislators, and progressive white advocates to share strategies and build networks. This year's Unity Conference will focus, as usual, upon challenges related to immigration. For the first time, conference organizers will also bring in representatives from the state's Muslim community to share their concerns, increase coalition membership and, as Chandler puts it, "find common ground."

Chandler and Ice are feeling hopeful, too, about a 25-year-old Latina organizer named Ingrid Cruz who just joined MIRA's staff. Born in El Salvador, Cruz grew up both in Los Angeles and, briefly, in a predominantly white section of northeastern Mississippi. Cruz understands the formidable political challenges MIRA faces in the new legislative session and the challenges that immigrants here face every day. At her previous job as a translator at a furniture factory in northeastern Mississippi, Cruz grew outraged after watching undocumented immigrants suffer abuses and dangerous working conditions as they assembled chairs and couches. She carries few fond memories of her racially divided high school.

"When I came here from California, I saw this line. Blacks were on one side and whites were on the other. And I just didn't know where to go," she recalls. Then, she quickly brightens. "So, I just made friends with the German exchange students and a couple of other Latino students. We all got along really well because we liked soccer."

Cruz is optimistic about reaching young people in high schools across Mississippi, who she believes are far more comfortable with cultural and racial diversity than their parents' generation might be. In between raising awareness about marches and teaching "Know Your Rights" workshops to immigrants, Cruz thinks about ways to use the visual arts, music, and even food to engage young people from different racial

and cultural backgrounds in the job of building a more inclusive multiracial Mississippi. In imagining a model for the future, Cruz thinks back longingly to her childhood in Los Angeles, and to the richness of living and learning amid "abundant" cultural and linguistic diversity. It is an America she imagines could come to Mississippi one day. She hopes to play a role in ushering it in.

"The real America, to me, is in L.A. You see the Mexican-Indian taco truck? That, to me, is America," Cruz says. "And here, you know, it always makes me feel good when I meet someone who is not Latino, but who is black or who is white and who wants to hear stories about immigrants and their experiences and wants to learn and then is willing to help."

**Photos:**

Page 1 – Mural, downtown Jackson, MS. By Gina Chirichigno.

Page 2 – MIRA’s multiracial coalition protesting at the Mississippi State Capitol. February, 2012.  
Photo courtesy of Mississippi Public Broadcasting.

Page 3 – Immigrants and supporters cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma Alabama, the site of the historic civil rights march of 1965. Photo courtesy of the Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice.

Page 4 – St. Peter of the Apostle Church has long welcomed the growing Latino population in and around Jackson, MS. By Gina Chirichigno.

Page 5 – Bill Chandler, executive director, MIRA. Photo courtesy of MIRA.

Page 6 – Mississippi’s State Flag. By Gina Chirichigno.

Page 7 – Construction worker. By David Bacon.

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## Resources

### MISSISSIPPI

#### Mississippi Immigrant Rights Alliance

www.yourmira.org  
Central Office  
Jackson, MS  
601-968-5182  
Contact: Patricia Ice  
p.ice@yourmira.org

Gulf Coast Office  
Biloxi, MS  
228-386-5164  
Contact: Sally Bevill  
s.bevill@yourmira.org

### ALABAMA

#### Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice

<http://acij.net/>  
Montgomery, AL  
334-263-0086  
Contact: Zayne Smith  
Zayne.smith@alabamaappleseed.org

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**Susan Eaton** is co-director of the documentation and mobilization project, One Nation Indivisible [www.onenationindivisible.org](http://www.onenationindivisible.org) and research director at the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice at Harvard Law School. This article draws, in part, from research she first conducted while on assignment for the *Nation* magazine. A related article by Susan Eaton appeared in the August 10th, 2011 edition of the *Nation*: <http://www.thenation.com/article/162694/new-kind-southern-strategy>

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*“Stories from the Field” is an occasional publication of One Nation Indivisible. To share a story from the field about efforts to create, sustain or improve racially, culturally or linguistically integrated schools, communities or social institutions, please write to Susan Eaton: [seaton@law.harvard.edu](mailto:seaton@law.harvard.edu)*

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Thanks to Kelly Garvin from the Houston Institute for her editorial assistance on this story. Also, thanks to Gina Chirichigno, ONI co-director, whose ideas and insights helped shape this story.

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The names of the Latino workers introduced in the opening of this story have been changed.

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