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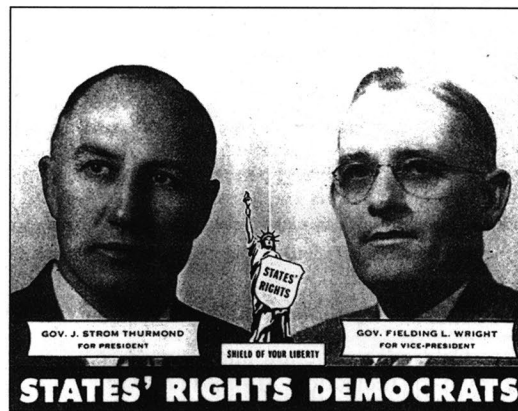
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Contested Ground: The 1948 Presidential Election in Tampa, Florida

Jared G. Toney

On a brisk evening in Tampa, Florida in February of 1948, an integrated crowd of nearly 2500 gathered at Plant Field to hear Henry Agard Wallace articulate his progressive vision for the future of the nation. Wallace had formally emerged only months before as a vociferous challenger to many conservative American political and social traditions, and had become a champion of radical leftist interests throughout the country. Dissatisfied with the increasing conservatism of both of the “old parties,” Wallace had accepted nomination by the newly formed Progressive Party in hopes of reorienting the U.S. political system towards FDR’s contested New Deal legacy. In the tradition of Roosevelt’s reforms, he espoused the empowerment of the working class through unions, an end to discrimination, and an improvement in relations with the rising Soviet power in the East. The trail that brought him to central Florida that February evening had been full of controversy, opposition, and physical danger. The South was particularly unwelcoming to Wallace, though his convictions and perseverance inspired him to push on into hostile regions where politics were a matter of life and death. Nevertheless, his reception in Tampa was a warm one. When he emerged before the crowd at Plant Field, he was greeted by enthusiastic applause and cheers of *Viva Wallace!* from his Latin supporters, to which the appreciative candidate genially responded, *“Amigos mios”* – my friends!¹

Despite its enormous appeal among



Campaign flyer for the States' Rights Party.
(Reprinted from Kari Frederickson, *“The Dixiecrat Revolt and the End of the Solid South.”*)

transnational working-class populations in cities like Tampa, the Progressive Party campaign failed to garner significant national support. Considering only the tallied votes, the traditional American party structure remained firmly entrenched, and the public demonstrated a reluctance to abandon party affiliations or “throw away” their votes on third-party challengers. Although Wallace was to suffer an embarrassing defeat at the polls that year, his campaign was not without isolated successes. As his visit to Tampa in 1948 demonstrates, he found a strong following within the Latin communities of Ybor City and West Tampa, where a rich cultural tradition of political radicalism and social activism had thrived since the late nineteenth century. Second only to his success in Manhattan, Wallace won seven precincts from the immigrant enclaves of Tampa, an otherwise conservative Southern town a world away from the cosmopolitan atmosphere of New York City (Figure 1.1.)²

HE WON'T BOLT



Gov. Caldwell's reluctant endorsement of Truman for reelection. (*Tampa Morning Tribune*, October 30, 1948.)

The population of Ybor City was somewhat of a regional anomaly in its progressive character. While the early years of the community were notable for frequent labor strikes, such activity had largely subsided by the Forties. The radicalizing tradition of *el lector* had been eliminated in the early years of the Great Depression, union activity decreased with the decline of a once-flourishing cigar industry, and many Latins had begun assimilation into the mainstream Anglo-Tampan population. Historians have concluded that by 1948 the last "dying breath of radicalism" in Ybor City had been expelled as residents adjusted to the increasing conservatism and exclusivity of American life. The presidential election of 1948, however, suggests a continuity of radicalism which, while altered, was never entirely squelched.³

At the other end of the political spectrum, Senator Strom Thurmond (D, SC) ignited Southern resistance to desegregation and rose to lead a third party initiative of his own: the States' Rights Party. Popularly

known as the Dixiecrats, the party found considerable support throughout the Southern states, particularly among Anglo-Americans, who united in their defense against the perceived liberal encroachment upon [white] Southern autonomy. Florida Governor Millard F. Caldwell formally declared his support for Harry Truman and the Democratic Party in February of 1948, "even though he disagree[d] with some of the President's civil rights proposals," but the Dixiecrats effectively fostered a hostile environment of racial exclusivity, social intimidation, and political repression throughout the South, including Florida.⁴

In spite of Thurmond's defiant challenge, most Floridians remained loyal to Truman and the Democratic Party. One native Tampan, Braulio Alonso, remembers feeling favorable towards Henry Wallace on his visit to Tampa in 1948, but his allegiance remained with the party that he felt best represented his interests. "I went to listen to [Wallace]," Alonso recalls. "But ... I wouldn't abandon the Democratic Party ... [I] had grown up with the Party ... and [I] wasn't ready to abandon it." A local newspaper editorial also qualified Wallace's popularity, asserting that, despite good attendance and high praise, his speech in Tampa "had little positive averment." Such statements accurately reflect the sentiments of the majority voters around the state who, while not entirely satisfied with Truman's domestic platform, remained loyal to the party of their fathers. Despite that loyalty, many of the accounts in local papers indicate that there was substantial (and potentially threatening) dissatisfaction with the Party.⁵

Newspapers across the state were divided in their endorsements of the presidential candidates. Those endorsing Truman included the *Miami Daily News*, the *Orlando Sentinel-Star*, the *Daytona Beach News-Journal*, and the *St. Petersburg Times*. An African-American newspaper, the *Miami Tropical Dispatch*, announced its support for Truman, illustrating the success of his controversial civil rights platform among disenfranchised minority populations. Thomas Dewey's following was by no means insignificant; he found support from sources such as the *St. Petersburg Independent*, the *Sanford Herald*, and the *Ft. Lauderdale News*, among others. While there was little mention of Progressive candidate Henry Wal-

lace, a number of papers – including the *Ft. Myers News Press* and the *Gainesville Sun* – endorsed the Dixiecrat representative Strom Thurmond. While endorsements varied by region, many Florida newspapers predicted that ultimately the Republican challenger Dewey would carry the state. Although the *Tampa Times* declined to make a prediction at all, the *Tampa Morning Tribune* declared the fight to be between Truman and Thurmond, while the *St. Petersburg Times* expected a battle between Truman and Dewey. Clearly, there was little consensus in the press regarding the potential outcome of the election.⁶

. . . .

The presidential election of 1948 provides an interesting opportunity in U.S. history to analyze diverging and converging perspectives: domestic and international, ideological and political, social and economic. Following the end of the Second World War, the threat of a rising Soviet power reinvigorated anti-Communist rhetoric and fueled strong nationalist sentiments in the United States and abroad. With Churchill's articulation of the Iron Curtain and the U.S. adoption of the Truman doctrine, the world was divided into two ideological camps. These presented an uncompromising "us versus them" mentality that fueled both foreign and domestic policies for years. Belonging to one ideological camp required specific identifications, and allegiances had to be demonstrated. Competing voices clamored to advance their respective visions for the future of the nation. From Hollywood to New York City, South America to Southeast Asia, nations and individuals clashed in a global discourse on freedom and national allegiance. Within the context of polarized international politics, individuals faced important challenges within the context of U.S. society. Viewed as a matter of national security, conservative conformity (manifest most clearly in the campaign against communism) became synonymous with patriotism. Political and social conservatism became a litmus test for determining "Americanness."

While the House Committee on Un-American Activities, led by Senator Joseph McCarthy, enforced exclusive notions of Americanism, other voices challenged the contradictions of social, racial, and eco-

HAVING A LITTLE REAR END TROUBLE



Truman's attempt to maintain control of the fractious Democratic Party. (*Tampa Morning Tribune*, February 21, 1948.)

nomic exploitation within a nation that professed commitment to the values of freedom and equality. Such was the atmosphere in 1948 when four presidential candidates ran for the nation's highest office, expressing radically different visions of the world and the position of the U.S. within it.⁷ These four candidates – Truman, Dewey, Thurmond, and Wallace – represented four streams of political thought and political action.

After three years in office, President Truman and his administration were under attack from both the left and right. Reliant upon a loosely constructed coalition of New Deal Democrats, Truman struggled to reconcile demands for reform with a renewed and increasingly vigorous Cold War conservatism. While striving to appease disillusioned liberals and critical conservatives, President Truman waged a war against domestic Communists and fellow travelers through such organizations as the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) and the



Wallace's supposed link to the Communist Party. (*Tampa Sunday Tribune*, February 15, 1948.)

FBI, hugely expanded under the direction of J. Edgar Hoover.

Blamed for the Depression and criticized for its isolationist policies, the Republican Party maintained an peripheral role throughout much of the 1930s. By the mid 1940s, while Truman struggled to unite increasingly disjointed interests on the left, the Grand Ole Party capitalized on the return of post-war economic prosperity to gain renewed support from a growing middle class. One Tampan editorialized that, despite a Republican split over foreign policy issues, the Party maintained a united front with an eye towards the approaching election. "With the apparent certainty that the GOP will win in November, it isn't likely that party leaders will indulge in any break-up of party unity." Still, the nomination of Thomas Dewey, a moderate Republican, first in 1944 and again in 1948, illustrated the GOP's acknowledgement of the more liberal character of the U.S. politics at mid-century. As one Tampa newspaper columnist summed up the situation, "[It's]

all liberals now. It's different now. Today nobody is a 'conservative' – for the present anyway." With the fragmentation of the Democratic Party and the overwhelming Republican victory in the mid-term congressional elections of 1946, many predicted that the GOP party convention in 1948 was in fact nominating the next president of the United States.⁸

Situated on the outskirts of mainstream U.S. politics were third-party challengers Wallace and Thurmond. In early 1948, a cadre of Southern representatives walked out of the Democratic Party convention in protest of Truman's concessions to African-Americans. To them, the civil rights platform had carried the Democratic Party much too far to the left. White Southerners felt betrayed by the party of their fathers and grandfathers, and many were convinced that representatives of both parties had subordinated the interests of their Southern constituents to other programs and ideals. One historian observes that fears of racial integration created personal and political animosity toward Truman, "who had become something of a Judas figure overnight," embedded in a Democratic Party that no longer represented Southern interests.⁹

As a result, a coalition of governors from the Deep South, led by Strom Thurmond, formed the independent States' Rights Party to "emphasize the broader issue of centralization and federal paternalism of which civil rights was only one, albeit the most objectionable, offshoot." Rallying around Thurmond's commitment to the historical principles of the Democratic Party, Southerners grew increasingly critical of the perceived "liberalization" of mainstream U.S. politics. As such, the Dixiecrat cause became a defense of Southern convictions regarding the social, economic, and political organization of the region. Though couched in the rhetoric of rights and regionalism, race was the paramount issue around which disparate groups of Southerners united to endorse Thurmond's bid for the presidency. "It was impossible to create a mood of solidarity and defiance without emphasizing the very issue that had sparked off the issue in the first place – that is, race." Determined to halt increasing concessions to minority constituents and the "socialization" of big government, the Dixiecrats hoped that the Solid South would win enough elec-

toral votes to swing the November elections to their favor.¹⁰

Contrary to Thurmond's States' Rights Party, the Progressives believed that the Democratic Party had swung too far to the conservative right. After an unsuccessful attempt to work within the Democratic Party, Henry Wallace, former Secretary of Agriculture and third term Vice-President under Franklin Delano Roosevelt, was nominated to run for president on the Progressive Party ticket in early 1948. Though expressing a reluctance to leave his old party behind, Wallace concluded that his liberal vision was incompatible with the conservatism of both traditional parties, and believed that only through a new political organization could his programs be successfully advanced. While Wallace championed a domestic platform committed to a continuation of the principles of FDR's New Deal, his foreign policy programs generated vociferous opposition from Democrats and Republicans alike. Pointing to his entrenched criticism of Truman's Marshall Plan and his unpopular espousal of favorable relations with the Soviet Union, opponents labeled Wallace a political radical and Communist dupe, with questionable allegiances and suspicious intentions.¹¹

Recognizing the appeal of Wallace's civil rights program among African-Americans, President Truman's Democratic administration underwent a controversial political realignment in order to accommodate minority demographics, thereby securing their votes. As the black musician and activist Paul Robeson asserted, "strong pressure" from the Wallace campaign, in addition to international pressure from the United Nations, stood as the "two prominent reasons for Mr. Truman's stand in the civil rights battle." Truman recognized the progressive threat from the left and, at the advice of his chief aide Clark Clifford, sought to counter Wallace's support by making concessions – albeit superficial ones – towards labor, civil rights, and social welfare.¹²

In February 1948, the *Tampa Tribune* reported that Truman had petitioned Congress to pass federal laws against discrimination "in voting or employment" on the grounds of race or ethnicity. Rejecting Southern claims of state-level autonomy, Truman asserted that, "The Federal Government has a clear duty to see that constitutional guarantees of individual liberties



"Not a third party, or even a second party, but the real first party," Wallace emphasized.

3RD PARTY CANDIDATE GIVES VIEWS IN GREAT DEBATE OF '48

Wallace at a luncheon in St. Petersburg.
(*St. Petersburg Times*, February 18, 1948.)

and of equal protection under the laws are not denied or abridged anywhere in our Union." Southern leaders reacted quickly to such pronouncements. That same month, Governor Wright of Mississippi organized a meeting of five thousand members of the Democratic Party to "[blast] the leadership of Northern Democrats in backing so-called 'anti-Southern' legislation." Said Wright, "They have stolen from us the Democratic Party, and we are going to run those scalawags out and keep them out." Perhaps a Tampa reporter was correct in declaring that, as a result of his civil rights agenda, Truman risked the wrath of the South.¹³

While candidates campaigned with varying degrees of success around the country, the U.S. South proved to be an exceptionally hostile region, unwelcoming to political interlopers and social reformers committed to change. If Southerners saw Harry Truman as betraying the true ideals of the Democratic Party, Henry Wallace's campaign

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PLANT FIELD (Fairgrounds)
TAMPA, FLA.

ADMISSION 50c

HENRY A. WALLACE
LUNCHEON
TODAY AT 1 P. M. AT
DETROIT HOTEL
TICKETS \$2.00

Reservations Not Necessary But Available Through
 Robert H. Chapman, Phone 7-9846



This advertisement sponsored by friends of Henry A. Wallace

Newspaper ad for Wallace's appearance in Tampa. (*St. Petersburg Times*, February 17, 1948.)

was viewed as downright treasonous. Nevertheless, Wallace embarked on tours into the Deep South, first late in 1947 to advance the progressive spirit, then again in the fall of 1948 as a third-party presidential candidate. The campaign clearly challenged white hegemony in the region, but also sought to undermine the traditional economic structure through the propagation of unionism and racial empowerment. In August of 1948, just months before the election, Wallace followed the campaign trail into the ideologically conservative and racially polarized states of the American South. Racist whites turned out in droves to protest Wallace's speaking engagements, at which he insisted on integrated audiences. In many towns, the police force, if one existed, afforded little protection to the traveling campaigners. Wallace and his entourage were greeted by a particularly hostile mob in Burlington, North Carolina, where protestors far outnumbered his own supporters. "Each time he started to speak," one eyewitness recalled, "the crowd shouted him down. But he remained physically fearless as he stood in a sea of angry ... workers, any one of whom ... could have pulled a knife and slit his gut open." On a

number of occasions, hecklers pelted Wallace with eggs and rotten fruit as he gave speeches. Aside from Wallace and Senator Thurmond, neither Dewey nor Truman dared venture into the hostile southern states.¹⁴

While each of the four candidates in 1948 appealed to particular demographics, all found audiences within the eclectic multi-ethnic atmosphere of Tampa, Florida. An isolated military outpost during the early 1800s, the town's late nineteenth century cigar industry propelled Tampa into regional prominence. The area continued to grow and prosper in the early twentieth century, and by 1940 Tampa was home to over 100,000 residents. Just ten years later that number had climbed to nearly 125,000 within the city limits and 250,000 in Hillsborough County (Figure 1.3), making the city the third largest in the state of Florida.¹⁵

Historians generally agree that World War II was tremendously beneficial to industry and economic growth in Tampa. Utilizing the G.I. Bill, returning servicemen and women advanced their educations in ways they would not otherwise have been able to do. Veterans also took advantage of federal subsidies to abandon old neighborhoods and purchase homes in rapidly expanding suburbs. As one historian aptly observes, "The G.I. Bill rewrote the American dream."¹⁶

By the late-1940's, America's "Cigar City" was no longer defined exclusively in terms of its relation to the tobacco industry. Instead, central Florida became increasingly reliant on burgeoning phosphate and shipping industries. Additionally, a revived local economy in Tampa depended upon "military defense spending, small-scale manufacturing, retail-service spending, agricultural products, and the housing-construction business."¹⁷

For many years Tampa's immigrant enclave Ybor City had operated as a self-contained immigrant community autonomous from the explicit influence of mainstream Southern and Anglo institutions. By the 1940s the enclave's character began to change considerably as residents moved out into the surrounding neighborhoods. The collective experience of World War II facilitated a common American identity that softened the more pronounced ethnic divisions between Anglos and Latinos and al-

lowed for the gradual integration of communities. Post-war federal incentives empowered veterans and their families to settle in new areas and take advantage of educational and employment opportunities beyond the parameters of the immigrant enclave. Additionally, with the influx of African-Americans into the neighborhoods around Ybor City, upwardly mobile second- and third-generation immigrants abandoned historically Latin areas. In large numbers, Latins moved into the already established community of West Tampa, which served as Ybor City's "halfway house" to suburbia. "It was like a mass migration from the inner cities to the suburbs of Tampa," recalled long-time resident Jorge Garcia. "It was the thing to do among members of my generation." While these demographic shifts picked up momentum in the immediate post-war years (aided by urban renewal programs), the Ybor City enclave retained much of its Latin character and influence into the 1950s.¹⁸

As Election Day, 1948 approached, Tampa became a battleground for a variety of disparate interests. From staunch States' Rights supporters advocating racial segregation to progressive "radicals" campaigning for Henry Wallace, citizens battled over definitions of Americanism and democratic principles. Although Truman and the Democratic Party carried Florida, the relative successes of the three challengers for the Oval Office are indicative of widely contrasting perspectives and agendas within a fairly concentrated demographic.

The *Tampa Morning Tribune* featured daily questions asked of citizens from the local community. In one survey, when asked what the country's primary objective should be in 1948, all six people polled expressed concerns over taxes and domestic inflation, while five of the six suggested an improvement in relations with the Soviet Union. From salesmen to housewives, the six agreed that, "It is important that we have some understanding with Russia in the near future." Though economic concerns were on the minds of many, such problems were often subordinated to international affairs. "If we don't have an understanding with Russia," asserted one woman, "we will have another war and all these problems will still be here." Clearly, the experiences of the Second World War continued to inform the manner in which people

evaluated and legitimized global affairs.¹⁹

Many residents of Tampa, while committed to the Democratic Party, were resigned to a Republican victory in the upcoming presidential elections. Although "the last sixteen years have been fairly good years under a Democratic president," one Tammpan asserted, "I don't believe Dewey will have any trouble getting elected this time." Another self-proclaimed Democrat conveyed a similar sentiment, noting that, "I'm inclined to believe that Dewey will win the next election and he should be a pretty good president." Still another man expressed concern that Truman no longer represented the New Deal legacy of former president Roosevelt. "Truman has done more good for other countries than he has for our country," he argued. "Most everyone seems to think the Republicans will win the election and I'm inclined to agree with them."²⁰

Meanwhile, African-Americans in Tampa, though responding favorably to Henry Wallace's progressivism, generally united to support Truman's newly introduced civil rights platform (see figure 1.2). Those initially drawn to the Progressive Party's desegregationist platform found a receptive, and more secure, home in the Democratic Party. Empowered by the Supreme Court decision of *Smith v Allwright* (1944), African-American constituents challenged the practice of segregation and lobbied for racial equality throughout the Southern states. As one Tampa historian observed, "[The year] 1948 marked the first time in a half century that African-Americans registered and voted as Democrats." While disparate populations of disenfranchised minorities throughout the South advanced more forthright civil rights legislation, the entrenched Anglo power structure violently resisted such efforts, personalizing the political issues and leading a violent counter-assault against a perceived infringement on regional interests.²¹

Though Thurmond eschewed an exclusively racist platform, many white Southerners united around the States' Rights defense of segregation (and the implicit assertion of Anglo superiority.) Numerous incidents of violent repression marked an atmosphere of racial intimidation, fostered by the acts of racists in the U.S. South. As early as February of 1948, local papers announced a procession of Ku Klux Klan

CALLING HIS SHOTS AS USUAL



Truman's attempt to "bridle" the civil rights issue. (*Tampa Morning Tribune*, February 4, 1948.)

members parading through the small towns of central Florida. On one occasion, a cross was burned near the planned site for the registration of African-American voters. In Pinellas County, a "fiery cross" was found burning in the front yard of a Gulf Beach home – the first reported in that county in nearly seven years. As the elections drew closer, incidents were reported in local newspapers with increasing frequency. "Tonight was the first time in recent years," reported the *Tampa Tribune* on the eve of the election, "that the Klan has attempted to make a show of strength in Florida." The atmosphere was increasingly charged with racial friction and hostilities, evidence of the significance that the upcoming election held for so many varying interests. By late October, many local residents had become fed-up with such behavior. The demonstrations, one columnist wrote, "Can tend only to arouse and inflame racial feeling ... The evident purpose is to deter Negroes from voting in the election – a right granted them by the Constitution of the United States." ²²

As evidenced by his harrowing experi-

ences on the campaign trail, no candidate more explicitly challenged Southern social and racial constructions than Progressive Party nominee Henry Wallace. Though Wallace met fierce resistance throughout the states of the "Solid South," scholars have largely overlooked his experiences in central Florida where he found unprecedented support from Tampa's immigrant enclave.

After weeks of exhaustive campaigning through the states of the U.S. South, Henry Wallace found an oasis in Ybor City, where a community of Spaniards, Cubans, and Italians welcomed him with open arms. Rejecting the Cold War rhetoric of intolerance that implied exclusive definitions of citizenship, politically conscious immigrant workers embraced those domestic and international programs perceived as radical and un-American by the overwhelming majority of voters. Following Wallace's speech at Plant Field that February evening, the *Tribune* again polled its readers, this time asking what observers thought of the Progressive Party rally. Not surprisingly, of the six Tampa residents polled, all expressed concern with his "radical policies," his "non-segregation platform," and his perceived connection to Soviet Communism. One woman assessed the success of Wallace's visit in terms of the polling place: "Wallace will get a few votes from his speech in Tampa, but not enough to make a difference." Another suggested that while his policies might be well received in the North, he would find little support among Southerners. One housewife refused to attend the speech in protest of the integration of Wallace's audiences. "I didn't hear [the] speech, but I did not approve of both Negroes and white people sitting together at the rally." Wallace's domestic program faced significant hostility from white Southern audiences, and his foreign policy faced even more opposition. "I believe Wallace is supported by the foreign element all over the country and I don't like him," one man adamantly declared. "I think Wallace is definitely on the Communist side, so I didn't go to the speech or read about it in the paper." ²³

Even Truman, the incumbent, had no easy ride in the presidential election of 1948. Despite, or perhaps because of, sixteen continuous years of Democratic representation in the White House, voters expressed dissatisfaction and disappointment

with many of the Chief Executive's policies and positions. While a growing left forced Truman to adopt a more liberal domestic program, many disillusioned conservatives rallied behind a significant opposition. Not surprisingly, after the pronouncement of President Truman's civil rights platform in early 1948, Southerners abandoned the Democratic Party en masse either for the moderate Republican Dewey, or the more extreme Senator Thurmond.

When Anglo Tampanians were asked their opinions of President Truman, many expressed little confidence in his bid for re-election. Two individuals conveyed vigorous opposition specifically to his position on the civil rights issue. "I am wholly opposed to Mr. Truman's civil rights bill and I am opposed to his nomination," declared one local woman. Another Tampa resident agreed, explaining, "I do not like the stand he has taken on the civil rights program and I believe that will cost him the election." Finally, one male warehouse worker chalked it up as a character flaw on Truman's part, suggesting that, "[He] is easily influenced by what others think." He, too, expressed little hope for re-election.²⁴

Apart from the candidates, a number of other visitors came to the Tampa Bay area during the 1948 presidential campaign. In October, Paul Robeson spoke to an audience of 500 at Plant Field on behalf of Wallace and the Progressive Party. During his speech in Tampa, Robeson raised the issue of U.S. foreign policy, declaring that in the continued fight against oppression and tyranny on behalf of all people, "We have an obligation to see that this nation never recognizes [Francisco] Franco [of Spain.]" Through his allusion to the struggle for democracy in Spain, Robeson sought to capitalize on the internationalist character of the Latin community in Tampa, many of whom adopted such ideological struggles as their own. Robeson also praised Henry Wallace's campaign efforts in the South despite marked opposition, asserting that Truman had "cancelled his trip to the deep South because he couldn't take what Wallace had."²⁵

Also in October, Senator Robert Taft of Ohio campaigned in neighboring Pinellas County on behalf of Dewey. Senator Taft found a receptive audience among Floridians anxious to see a changing of the guard in the nation's highest office. "I like Dewey,"

St. Petersburg

SECTION TWO

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 5, 1948

Paul Robeson Claims Five States for Progressives



PAUL ROBESON, famous singer and national co-chairman of the Progressive Party, and Dr. Clark Foreman (left), national treasurer for the Progressives, talk over political prospects with Dr. William Levine of Indian Rocks, Pinellas County Progressive. Levine introduced Robeson at a reception held here at the Melrose Branch YMCA yesterday, and Foreman introduced him at a Progressive Rally held in Tampa last night.

Paul Robeson and Clark Foreman pictured with a Progressive Party member from Pinellas County. (St. Petersburg Times, October 5, 1948.)

said one local resident, "because I think a president and a congress of the same party could accomplish more than has been accomplished lately." Another agreed, noting that, "Dewey ... is a good administrator and ... will make a good president if he is elected." One woman expressed some dissatisfaction with "politics as usual," and espoused the virtuous character of the Republican challenger. "I think he is honest," she explained. "I don't believe Dewey would tell us one thing and then do another. I believe Dewey will be the next president, and he

should be a much better president than Truman.”²⁶

. . .

Though the presidential race was largely decided between two candidates, the election is significant for the multiple issues it raised and the contesting voices it displays. With the Second World War in recent popular memory, candidates sought to balance national security and a tenuous foreign policy with their idealistic domestic visions for the future of the United States. Disparate peoples from all corners of the nation found some sense of political representation through which to express their respective opinions and advance collective interests. Because of its geographic context, eclectic racial composition, and vibrant cultural history, Tampa captures the essence of the moment's combative rhetoric and political discourse. At the conservative right, Strom Thurmond found significant support for his States' Rights program, while Henry Wallace on the progressive left united much of the local working-class Latin community. While Truman won the state, Republican challenger Thomas Dewey polled relatively well in the historically Democratic region. African-Americans also exercised a newly invigorated voice in local politics, reviving Truman's campaign in the South.

As Figure 1.4 illustrates, most of the candidates polled well among the Southern states. Henry Wallace's numbers in Florida – far overshadowing those elsewhere in the South – were markers to the substantial (and politically active) immigrant communities that endorsed him in Tampa and throughout the state. Though Truman clearly carried the state, the numbers are indicative of the amount of dissension and socio-political fragmentation among Floridians. It was a time and region of contrasts, and the vote effectively served as the mouthpiece for disparate interests around the state and nationwide.

Most significantly, the 1948 election served as an occasion in which a variety of people and voices, empowered within the institutional parameters of American democracy, projected and contested visions for the future of the nation and their places within it. Ironically for many of the immigrant “radicals” of Ybor City, dissent itself, perceived by many as un-American, became

a sort of vehicle of assimilation. In many ways, the U.S. political system – characterized by open debate – was mirrored and legitimized by the local chorus of voices that rose during the elections of 1948.

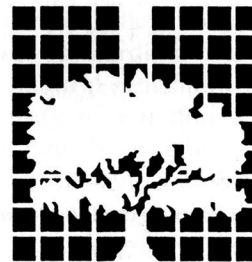
ENDNOTES

1. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 18 February 1948.
2. *Tampa Morning Tribune* and the *New York Times*, November 3, 1948.
3. See Maura Barrios, “Tampa y Cuba: Cien Anos”, Master's Thesis, University of South Florida, 2001. Barrios writes that, in fact, many elderly residents of Ybor City “refer to the major strikes to mark the decades of their past.”
4. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 4 February 1948.
5. Alonso, interview with the author, 22 March 2002; *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 19 February 1948; Because Florida was a “one party” state, if one was not registered with the Democratic Party, they were unable to vote in the primary elections, and were thus deprived of a significant voice in the electoral process.
6. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 29 October 1948; Those papers predicting a victory for Dewey were: the *Bradenton Herald*, *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, *Miami Beach Sun*, *St. Augustine Record*, *Lakeland Ledger*, *Lake Worth Leader*, and the *Winter Haven News Chief*; Interestingly, even the *Clearwater Sun* could “not see Florida going for Truman.”
7. Though in the years following the First World War the U.S. maintained a strict isolationist policy, its involvement in WWII quickly ushered the nation into the international arena and established an important precedent of global containment and preemptive action in the ensuing years; For an insightful discussion of Senator McCarthy and the HUAC campaign against Communist subversion in the U.S., see Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co.), 1998; For a contrasting view on anti-Communism in the Cold War U.S., see John Earl Haynes, *Red Scare or Red Menace? American Communism and Anti-Communism in the Cold War Era* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee), 1996.
8. Gary A. Donaldson, *Truman Defeats Dewey* (Louisville, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 4; the *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 18 June 1948; the *Tampa Sunday Tribune*, 13 June 1948; Donaldson contends that there were, in fact, a succession of “liberal” Republican presidential candidates through the 1930s and 1940s, including Alf Landon in 1936, Wendell Wilkie in 1940, and Thomas Dewey in 1944 and 1948.
9. Robert Garson, *The Democratic Party and the Politics of Sectionalism, 1941 – 1948* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), 235.
10. *Ibid.*, 285, 283; For a comprehensive and effective analysis of Thurmond and the States' Rights Party, see Kari Frederickson, *The Dixiecrat Revolt and the End of the Solid South, 1932 – 1968* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); The formal name for the independent southern party was ‘States' Rights,’ but by mid-1948, the movement was more popularly referred to as the Dixiecrat Party.
11. The Progressive Party also faced vocal opposition from the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA),

- an organization that espoused a more liberal alternative to the Democratic Party's domestic platform. The ADA was highly critical of Henry Wallace's foreign policy programs and his purported links to the Communist Party. Wallace defended communist support as a matter of principle, declaring, "I will not repudiate any support which comes to me on the basis of interest in peace. If you accept the idea that communists have no right to express their opinions, than you don't believe in democracy." From Guenter Lewy, *The Cause that Failed: Communism in American Political Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 207.
12. Philip S. Foner, ed., *Paul Robeson Speaks, 1918-1974* (New York: Brunner/Mazel Publishers, 1978), 182
 13. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 3 February 1948; *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 13 February 1948.
 14. Patricia Sullivan, *Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 261; Sullivan provides a particularly insightful analysis of New Deal reform in the twentieth-century U.S. South; A number of excellent monographs have been devoted to Henry Wallace and his progressive campaign, see Graham White and John Maze, *Henry A. Wallace: His Search for a New World Order* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Also selections from John C. Culver and John Hyde, *American Dreamer: The Life and Times of Henry A. Wallace* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000).
 15. Statistics adapted from Robert Kerstein, *Politics and Growth in Twentieth-Century Tampa* (Tampa: University Press of Florida, 2001).
 16. Gary R. Mormino, *Hillsborough County Goes to War: The Home Front, 1940-1950* (Tampa: Tampa Bay History Center, 2001), 131; Historian Lizabeth Cohen disputes the effectiveness of the G.I. Bill among African American veterans in her book, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003).
 17. *Ibid.*, 134.
 18. Gary R. Mormino and George E. Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City: Italians and Their Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885-1985* (Tampa: University Press of Florida, 1987), 300.
 19. "Tribune Talkies" in the *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 7 February 1948.
 20. "Tribune Talkies" in the *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 30 September 1948. Residents were asked by the *Tribune*, "Do you think times are better during a Republican or Democratic presidential administration?" Only one of the six polled answered Republican, explaining that, "I don't believe we had particularly good times during the long stretch of Democratic presidents."
 21. Gary R. Mormino, "Tampa at 1948", in the *Sunland Tribune* (25/1 1999), 121; The Supreme Court decision of *Smith v Allwright* (321 US 649; 12 January 1944) overruled it's previous declaration (*Grovey v Townsend*, 1935), and guaranteed the rights of African Americans to vote in state primaries.
 22. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 14 February 1948 – this incident occurred in Ft. Myers, and is indicative of the racially charged atmosphere that characterized many of the outlying areas; *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 1 June 1948; *Tampa Morning Tribune*,

28 October 1948.

23. "Tribune Talkies" in the *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 21 February 1948.
24. "Tribune Talkies" in the *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 17 June 1948.
25. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 5 October 1948.
26. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 7 October 1948.



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APPENDIX

Figure 1.1

Winning precincts for Wallace

Precinct	Location	Wallace votes	Total Votes	Percent
9	Main & Albany	255	502	51
10	3109 Armenia	367	695	53
18	1801 9th Avenue	178	431	41
22	1709 26th Avenue	359	705	51
24	1822 12th Avenue	264	430	61
25	2507 16th Street	357	549	65
26	Columbus & 12th	215	385	56

Figure 1.2

Registered votes in predominantly African American areas

Precinct	Dewey	Truman	Wallace	Thurmond
1	121	143	9	34
13	114	476	28	32
14	96	147	19	27
15	145	256	16	58

(Votes for Thurmond in these areas may illustrate the presence of working-class Anglos within predominant African-American neighborhoods.)

Figure 1.3

Population Growth in Florida, 1880-1950

Year	Florida	Hillsborough County	Tampa
1880	269,493	5,814	720
1890	391,422	14,941	5,532
1900	528,542	36,013	15,839
1910	752,619	78,354	37,782
1920	968,470	88,257	51,608
1930	1,468,211	153,519	101,161
1940	1,897,414	180,148	108,391
1950	2,771,305	249,894	124,681

Figure 1.4

Votes by Party in the U.S. South

State	Republican	Democrat	States' Rights	Progressive
Alabama	20,570	-	104,321	1,019
Arkansas	20,748	64,115	21,595	319
Florida	160,481	215,337	66,250	10,293
Georgia	51,670	170,776	66,644	1,576
Louisiana	43,199	62,601	87,770	2,905
Mississippi	2,356	9,291	84,594	3,207
North Carolina	213,648	418,368	61,073	2,843
South Carolina	5,101	30,498	89,440	178
Tennessee	155,326	215,014	59,813	1,162

Figure 1.5

Votes by Party in Hillsborough County

Democrat:	18,602
Republican:	13,356
States' Rights:	4,702
Progressive:	3,778 (Highest recorded in the state.)