Racism has long been common in Texas, just as it has been common across the South, common throughout the nation, and common in various ways all over the world.

In Texas, the struggle for civil rights was somewhat unique in that it unfolded not with the context of a black/white binary, but along far more diverse lines, particularly among the state’s Mexican-American community.

The fight for civil rights and political equality accelerated in Texas during the years immediately following World War II. The first major front was fought in the realm of school desegregation, but extended to other areas during the 1960s and 1970s.
Rise of the Republican Right
1932

ELECTORAL VOTE
TOTAL: 531

POPULAR VOTE
TOTAL: 39,744,313

Democratic
(F. D. Roosevelt)

Republican (Hoover)
Congressional Delegations

- **1961:**
  - **House:** 21-1 (Democratic)
  - **Senate:** 1-1 (Democratic/Republican)

- **1981:**
  - **House:** 19-5 (Democratic)
  - **Senate:** 1-1 (Democratic/Republican)

- **2001:**
  - **House:** 17-13 (Democratic)
  - **Senate:** 2-0 (Republican)

- **2021:**
  - **House:** 23-13 (Republican)
  - **Senate:** 2-0 (Republican)
State Legislature

- **1961:**
  - House: 148-2 (Democratic)
  - Senate: 31-0 (Democratic)

- **1981:**
  - House: 113-37 (Democratic)
  - Senate: 24-7 (Democratic)

- **2001:**
  - House: 78-72 (Democratic)
  - Senate: 16-15 (Republican)

- **2021:**
  - House: 82-67 (Republican)
  - Senate: 18-13 (Republican)
How did we get here?

- **1932-1964:**
  - Democrats win White House 7/9

- **1968-2004:**
  - Republicans win White House 7/10

- **1964-1984:**
  - Rise of...
    - “Modern Conservatism”
    - “Republican Right”
    - “Two-Party Texas”
Overview: Conservatism

- reverence for the past, preference for status quo
- commitment to traditional values, including religious values
- support for free-market capitalism
  - low taxes
  - national and international competition
  - private property rights
  - distrust of government intervention, regulation
- vigorous national defense + patriotism

*all points debatable*
Overview: Liberalism

- focus on the future, preference for progress
- commitment to individual civil liberties and political rights
  - use of the State to protect and guarantee those rights
- support for regulatory capitalism
  - graduated tax system
  - government oversight to protect against corporate abuses
  - protectionism and labor rights
- cynical of nationalism, exclusionary “hyper-patriotism”

*all points debatable*
Overview: Texas

Basic Chronology:

- 1846 – c. 1938:
  - Texas dominated by Democratic Party
    - liberals vs. conservatives

- c. 1938 – 1994:
  - transitional period

- 1994 – Present:
  - Texas dominated by Republican Party

How and Why?
Overview: Texas

- **Standard Thesis =**
  - Texas (and Southern) Democrats have always been conservative.
  - All Democrats used to be conservative, but over time, northern Democrats became more liberal.
    - major issue = civil rights + growth of government
  - At some point, Texas (and Southern) Democrats “switched” parties.
Overview: Texas

- In reality ...

- Texas politics has long been multifaceted, multi-ideological, and very complicated.

- The importance of certain issues changed over time, as did generational perspectives about which parties represented certain “values.”
  - (ex: 1930s = economy, 1940s = war, 1950s = communism, etc.)

- Beginning in the 1950s and continuing through the 1980s, the Texas Republican Party actively tried to recruit conservative Democrats.
  - Meanwhile, liberals in the Texas Democratic Party actively recruited liberal Republicans, and also actively supported conservative Republicans in an effort to purge their party of conservatives.
  - This “switch” took decades to complete.
Popular Perceptions*  
in Texas (c. 1960)

- Democratic Party:
  - populist
  - “for the forgotten man”
  - “white supremacy”
  - “God-Fearing”
  - party of “tradition”
    - “Solid South”
    - generational loyalties

- Republican Party:
  - elitist
    - “Eastern Establishment”
    - “Wall Street” / corporate
  - “privileged extremists”
  - anti-GOP tradition
    - “Solid South”
    - generational hostilities

* “popular” = majority of white voters only
John Tower

- 1961: elected to U.S. Senate
  - “a fluke”
  - liberal Democrats: “go fishing”
  - first Texas Republican to win seat in U.S. Senate since Reconstruction

- 1966: re-elected
  - defeats conservative Democrat

- 1972: re-elected
  - wins plurality of Mexican American vote
    - first time for a Republican in Texas history
“The Unraveling of America”

- Political Assassinations
  - 1963: John F. Kennedy
  - 1965: Malcolm X
  - 1968: Martin Luther King, Jr.
  - 1968: Robert F. Kennedy

- Civil Rights Movement(s)
  - “Black Power”

- Vietnam War
  - antiwar movement
  - “counterculture”
“The Unraveling of America”

- Election of 1972:
  - George McGovern:
    - 37% cut to defense budget
    - “unilateral” withdrawal from Vietnam
  - GOP Campaign Strategy:
    - “liberalism = extremism”
    - “Acid, Amnesty, and Abortion”
“The Unraveling of America”

- John Connally
  - 1972: “Democrats for Nixon”
  - 1973: leaves Democratic Party

- 1973-74: Watergate
  - “government corruption”

- 1976 GOP Primary:
  - Reagan vs. Gerald Ford
    - “conservatives” vs. “establishment moderates”
    - Reagan wins 67% of vote, 100% of delegates
    - substantial Democratic “crossover”
“The Unraveling of America”

- “Culture Wars”
  - “Okie from Muskogee”
  - *Roe v. Wade* (1973)
  - school prayer / private schools
  - Gay Rights Movement

- 1976: Jimmy Carter (D-GA):
  - “peanut farmer”
  - “born-again Christian”
  - “Washington Outsider”
“Malaise”

- **Economic Recessions:**
  - “energy crisis”
  - interest rates: 20%
  - inflation: 18%
  - unemployment: 9%

- **November 1979:**
  - Iran Hostage Crisis

- **December 1979:**
  - Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan
“Malaise”

- Bill Clements
  - 1978: elected Governor of Texas
    - first Republican since Reconstruction
  - campaign strategy:
    - GOP “Fusion”
    - “anti-Jimmy Carter”
Popular Perceptions* in Texas (c. 1980)

- Democratic Party:
  - elitist
  - “ivory tower leftists”
  - secular humanists
  - party of “special interests”
  - minorities
  - “collectivism”
    - “big government”
    - “welfare”

- Republican Party:
  - populist
  - the “Silent Majority”
  - “God-Fearing”
  - party of “American tradition”
    - “colorblind”
    - “individualism”
      - “states’ rights”
      - “merit” / hard work

* “popular” = majority of white voters only
1980

- Reagan defeats Carter
  - carries Texas 55% - 41%
  - Vice President: George H. W. Bush
1984

- Reagan defeats Walter Mondale
  - carries Texas 64% - 36%
- Republican National Convention (Dallas)
1980

ELECTORAL VOTE TOTAL: 538
ANDERSON 0.7%
MINOR 1.6%
790,325

POPULAR VOTE TOTAL: 86,515,221

Republican (Reagan) Red
Democratic (Carter) Blue

1984

ELECTORAL VOTE TOTAL: 538
MINOR .7%
56,000

POPULAR VOTE TOTAL: 92,652,842

Republican (Reagan) Red
Democratic (Mondale) Blue
Populist Conservatism

- Social Conservatives:
  - “evangelicals”
  - anticommunist Catholics

- Libertarians:
  - distrust / oppose “big government”
  - (mixed w/ anticommunism)

- “Reagan Democrats”:
  - “blue-collar” labor
  - rural white South

- “Fighting ...”:
  - “against elitism.”
  - “for the forgotten man.”
COWBOY CONSERVATISM

TEXAS AND THE RISE OF THE MODERN RIGHT

SEAN P. CUNNINGHAM
What happened?

- **1945-1963:**
  - “The Vital Center”
  - “The Liberal Consensus”
  - Foundation = Trust in Government

- **Pew Research Center:**
  - “Do you trust government?”
    - 1964: 77% = “yes”
    - 1980: 27% = “yes”
    - 2011: 15% = “yes”
    - 2021: 24% = “yes”
DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS

WHAT GOVERNOR RICK PERRY'S HARD-RIGHT CREED TELLS US ABOUT AMERICA
BY EVAN THOMAS
AND ARIAN CAMPO-FLORES

PLUS THE TEXAS TEXTBOOK MASSACRE
AND WHY THE GOVERNOR OF TEXAS HATES THE NEW DEAL
BY EWEN SMITH
Red Texas

- 1986: Bill Clements (elected Governor)
- 1988: George H. W. Bush (elected President)
- 1990: Ann Richards vs. Clayton Williams
- 1994 Midterms:
  - George W. Bush (R) – defeats Ann Richards
  - Bob Bullock (D) – last Democrat to win statewide election in Texas
Red Texas

- 1998 Midterms:
  - Republicans win 27 of 27 statewide races
    - (have not lost since)
  - George W. Bush – re-elected with 68%
    - 27% of African American vote
    - 49% of Latino vote
    - becomes leading candidate for GOP presidential nomination
Texas Today

- **2020 Presidential Election:**
  - Trump: 52%
  - Biden: 46%

- **Congressional Delegation:**
  - House: 23-13 (Republican)
  - Senate: 2-0 (Republican)

- **State Legislature:**
  - House: 82-67 (Republican)
  - Senate: 18-13 (Republican)
Summary

Texas became a Republican state for three main reasons:

1. Texas liberals finally stopped supporting conservative Democrats and even worked to elect Republicans. Why? To create a viable second party.

2. A new generation of Texas voters broke with tradition and decided that ideological conviction was more important than partisan loyalty. This generation was motivated by a variety of things, including race and religion.

3. The Republican Party more effectively marketed itself as the anti-establishment, patriotic defender of national security, free-market economics, rugged individualism, and moral tradition.

Today, Texas is a solidly Republican state; but demographics suggest a contested future.
Additional Factors &
Recommended Reading

- Race / Civil Rights:
Additional Factors & Recommended Reading

- **Religion / Culture:**
Additional Factors & Recommended Reading

- Economics / “Rustbelt to Sunbelt”:
  - Michelle Nickerson and Darren Dochuk, eds., *Sunbelt Rising: The Politics of Space, Place, and Region* (Penn, 2011)
Additional Factors & Recommended Reading

- Others:
  - Sean P. Cunningham, *Cowboy Conservatism: Texas and the Rise of the Modern Right* (Kentucky, 2010)