

Alabama's Black Belt Counties

Alabama's Black Belt area is part of a larger, national Black Belt region that stretches from Texas to Virginia. This region has historically been home to "the richest soil and the poorest people" in the United States. Originally, the term referred to the exceptionally fertile black soil that encouraged early pioneers in the 1820s and 1830s to settle Alabama and construct a network of cotton plantations that supported half of Alabama's enslaved population.

During this time, the Black Belt was one of the wealthiest and most politically powerful regions in the United States, and its commerce elevated Montgomery, Selma, and Demopolis into some of the most affluent towns in the nation. As the Civil War began in the early 1860s, Montgomery was chosen as the first capital of the Confederacy. In recent decades, the region has been known for the birth of the Civil Rights Movement initiated by the high population of African American residents in the region.

The legacy of this plantation culture has left the region in a state of economic depression, underemployment, and poor social services. Once sought after for its rich soils, the Black Belt has become a region defined by its dire socioeconomic situation. Nine out of the 10 poorest counties in Alabama are in the Black Belt.

The area is typified by declining populations, a primarily agricultural landscape with low-density settlement, high unemployment, poor access to education and medical care, substandard housing and high rates of crime.

Counties Served by the Books for the Black Belt Campaign

Bullock	Choctaw
Dallas	Greene
Hale	Lowndes
Macon	Marengo
Pickens	Perry
Sumter	Wilcox

Traditional Counties of the Alabama Black Belt

