

Esther's Trumpet  
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## Impact Wilcox

I was amazed when I saw the ad in the *Progressive Era*. A group has formed in Wilcox County, and their mission statement is as follows:

“Impact Wilcox is an organization of concerned citizens who are unwilling to accept corruption and mismanagement in county government. Our objective is to expose misguided, illegal and corrupt activities so that appropriate remedies and actions can be taken”.

They then listed five recent decisions from the Wilcox County Commission that read like a laundry list right out of Lowndes and Perry Counties. While our Blackbelt counties struggle with a small tax base, most commissioners have the luxury of county-provided cars and fuel, cell phones and large travel budgets.

These same three counties suffer from high rates of absentee ballots and voter fraud. It is a situation similar to the old plantations, where a few run the whole county. Indeed, it smacks of the same inequities that the people who are occupying Wall Street complain of. The 1% of this country, the rich and the corporations, are making decisions for the rest of us, the 99%. And those decisions don't help us one bit.

It will be incumbent on Impact Wilcox to monitor elections, and make sure that the local Probate Judge does the job of insuring fair and clean elections. Good luck with that. I haven't seen one public educational piece by any probate judge describing the new Voter ID laws. It is their job to educate the public, and make sure that those who work at the polls are educated and skilled.

I am so proud of these folks in Wilcox who have made this huge commitment. It means they must plan their lives around county commission meetings, learn how to study and understand the budgets, dig for the facts about how the money is being spent, and hold commissioners accountable. They join Impact Perry in that effort. Already, Impact Perry has sued the Perry County Commission and the Water Board for violating the Open Meetings and Open Records Act.

But what is truly needed is interest by the Alabama Attorney General and the Justice Department. There has always been an attitude that our Blackbelt is filled with white racists and ignorant black folk. It is not true. The state takes little interest in what is going on because, “let those people fight it out”. They have unfairly labeled us and turned a blind eye. For years people have made complaints about elections, and they never seem to go anywhere. I understand that it is difficult for some people to take the backlash. Every time an elected official is challenged, it is labeled as racism. Sometimes there may be a grain of truth in the charge. But the real racism is majority black counties that cannot get a fair election, that do not have access to the facts of county government. Just because it is black on black does not make it any better. The truth is many of our leaders have adopted the plantation mentality, the ruling power that dogged us in the past.

Black folk in our Blackbelt are expected to be Democrats. They are expected to be members of Alabama Democratic Conference (ADC) or New South Coalition. There is nowhere else for them to turn; the Republican Party holds little for us. After my run for State Representative and the ugly way I was treated by ADC, I chose to keep my membership with New South. But guess what....in Lowndes County New South refuses to tell me when they hold their meetings. I am an Independent. I don't go along to get along. That's dangerous to the status quo in our Blackbelt. Therefore, I am thrilled that new folk are forming new organizations to deal with the base problems that are the source of many of our troubles.

It's going to take money. It won't hurt folk to tithe to a group that is truly doing God's work. We must remember the old saying that if we make one step, God makes two. I believe Impact Wilcox, with its principled president, is a positive sign of the times. It behooves all of us, black and white, male and female, Democrat and Republican, to join together to change our Blackbelt for the better. Nobody will do it for us; it is on us and the Lord. Congratulations, Impact Wilcox. You are part of a movement. We have to take what we have and make what we need. What we have is people. What we need is true justice. Peace out.

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Editor