

OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT
PROCEEDINGS BEFORE
THE SUPREME COURT
OF THE
UNITED STATES

CAPTION: LUCIOUS ABRAMS, JR., G.L. AVERY, WILLIAM
GARY CHAMBERS, SR., AND KAREN WATSON,
Appellants v. DAVIDA JOHNSON, ET AL.; and
UNITED STATES, Appellant v. DAVIDA JOHNSON,
ET AL.

CASE NO: No. 95-1425,95-1460

PLACE: Washington, D.C.

DATE: Monday, December 9, 1996

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1 IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

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3 LUCIOUS ABRAMS, JR., G.L. AVERY, :

4 WILLIAM GARY CHAMBERS, SR., AND :

5 KAREN WATSON, :

6 Appellants :

7 v. : No. 95-1425

8 DAVIDA JOHNSON, ET AL.; :

9 and :

10 UNITED STATES, :

11 Appellant :

12 v. : No. 95-1460

13 DAVIDA JOHNSON, ET AL. :

14 - - - - -X

15 Washington, D.C.

16 Monday, December 9, 1996

17 The above-entitled matters came on for oral
18 argument before the Supreme Court of the United States at
19 10:02 a.m.

20 APPEARANCES:

21 SETH P. WAXMAN, ESQ., Deputy Solicitor General, Department
22 of Justice, Washington, D.C.; on behalf of the
23 Federal Appellant.

24 LAUGHLIN McDONALD, ESQ., Atlanta, Georgia; on behalf of
25 the Appellants Abrams, et al.

1 APPEARANCES:
2 MICHAEL J. BOWERS, ESQ., Attorney General of Georgia,
3 Atlanta, Georgia; on behalf of the Appellees Miller,
4 et al.
5 A. LEE PARKS, ESQ., Atlanta, Georgia; on behalf of the
6 Appellees Johnson, et al.
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1 PROCEEDINGS

2 (10:02 a.m.)

3 CHIEF JUSTICE REHNQUIST: We'll hear argument
4 first this morning in Number 94-1425, Lucious Abrams v.
5 Davida Johnson, and Number 95-1460, United States v.
6 Davida Johnson, consolidated.

7 Mr. Waxman.

8 ORAL ARGUMENT OF SETH P. WAXMAN

9 ON BEHALF OF THE FEDERAL APPELLANT

10 MR. WAXMAN: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it
11 please the Court:

12 On remand from this Court's decision in Miller
13 v. Johnson, the three-judge court, after waiting
14 unsuccessfully for the Georgia legislature to enact a new
15 apportionment plan, created a plan of its own, a plan with
16 one majority-minority district in Metropolitan Atlanta.

17 In its opinion, and this is at page 21a of the
18 jurisdictional statement, the district court concluded
19 that "if Georgia had a concentrated minority population
20 large enough to create a second majority-minority district
21 without subverting traditional districting principles, the
22 court would have included one, since Georgia legislatures
23 probably would have done so."

24 The illustrative plan that we submitted to the
25 district court in November of last year, which is

1 reprinted at page 44a of the jurisdictional statement,
2 demonstrates, in fact, that a reasonably compact majority
3 black district can be drawn in East Central Georgia
4 without neglecting, subverting, or subordinating Georgia's
5 traditional districting principles and, thus, the district
6 court erred in two independent and fundamental respects:

7 First, by failing to respect, as Upham v. Seamon
8 and White v. Weiser require, the Georgia legislature's
9 desire, expressed in word and in deed, for a second
10 majority-minority district in East Central Georgia and,
11 second, regardless of the legislature's intent, by failing
12 to recognize that on the record as it existed before the
13 district court at the time, section 2 of the Voting Rights
14 Act required creation of a second district in East Central
15 Georgia to remedy unlawful vote dilution.

16 Now, the appellants have --

17 QUESTION: Actually, in your brief you said that
18 the question was whether or not it was proper to reduce
19 the majority black districts from three to one, but that
20 begins with a premise based on an unconstitutional plan,
21 does it not?

22 MR. WAXMAN: That would -- that argument
23 would -- would indeed, Justice Kennedy, and I think that
24 where you --

25 QUESTION: Although that's the argument you made

1 in your brief.

2 MR. WAXMAN: Well, in our -- in the section 5
3 portion of our brief, which is not an argument that we had
4 noted in -- a point that we had noted in our
5 jurisdictional statement but since it was raised by the
6 coappellants we addressed it, in the section 5 analysis
7 you would start with the 1992 plan.

8 In the Upham v. Seamon --

9 QUESTION: Why would you begin with an
10 unconstitutional premise? That's the opening statement in
11 your summary of argument. You're contesting a plan that
12 reduces from three to one

13 MR. WAXMAN: Yes --

14 QUESTION: -- but you begin with an
15 unconstitutional premise.

16 MR. WAXMAN: I understand your point.

17 Under Upham v. Seamon and White v. Weiser, a
18 district court, when remedying an unconstitutional plan
19 enacted by the legislature, must make the minimum number
20 of changes to remedy the constitutional violation, but
21 otherwise adhere to the expressed intent and desire and
22 policies of the State legislature.

23 In this case --

24 QUESTION: But the minimum number of changes in
25 the case of three majority black districts in which two

1 are unconstitutional, the minimum number of changes are to
2 eliminate the two that are unconstitutional, I would
3 think.

4 MR. WAXMAN: Well, the issue, I submit, Justice
5 Scalia, is whether it is possible -- given the Georgia
6 legislature's expressed desire for a second majority-
7 minority district if one were possible consistent with
8 traditional districting principles --

9 QUESTION: That expressed desire --

10 MR. WAXMAN: -- whether it is possible to do it.

11 QUESTION: -- the court found was expressed --
12 you might call it an extracted desire. It was expressed
13 because of the Justice Department's insistence --

14 MR. WAXMAN: That is --

15 QUESTION: -- that an additional black district
16 be drawn. It's not as though the Georgia legislature came
17 to this conclusion on its own.

18 MR. WAXMAN: I respectfully disagree with you,
19 Justice Scalia. What the district --

20 QUESTION: Not with me, but with the court.

21 MR. WAXMAN: What the district court found was
22 that the 1992 plan, which is the plan reflecting three
23 districts, was the product of improper and
24 unconstitutional Justice Department pressure.

25 The original plan enacted by the Georgia

1 legislature in 1991, which we refused to preclear, had two
2 majority-minority districts, and when this case was
3 before --

4 QUESTION: And the court did not say that that
5 plan also had been affected by Justice Department
6 pressure?

7 MR. WAXMAN: To the contrary. The court -- I
8 believe the court's opinion makes a point of saying that
9 it was error for us not to have approved that plan because
10 it was proper and not regressive. In fact --

11 QUESTION: That's a different point from whether
12 the Justice Department, pressure from the Justice
13 Department had induced the legislature to include the
14 second.

15 MR. WAXMAN: Let me, if I may, Justice Scalia,
16 repeat for you what counsel for the State of Georgia told
17 this Court at the outset of his argument in Miller v.
18 Johnson:

19 "There was a consensus politically before the
20 Department of Justice ever got involved in the State of
21 Georgia to try and draw a majority-minority district in
22 East Central Georgia, no question about that fact." Page
23 3 of the transcript in Miller v. Johnson.

24 And there is extensive evidence in the record to
25 support that conclusion.

1 QUESTION: That proves nothing, Mr. Waxman. It
2 just proves -- I mean, the political consensus could have
3 been a consensus, look, if we don't put in at least one
4 more majority-minority district, this thing will never be
5 precleared by the Justice Department.

6 The issue is not whether there is a consensus.
7 The issue is whether, as you portray it, the uncoerced
8 desire of the Georgia legislatures was to have this second
9 district.

10 MR. WAXMAN: Well, I would respectfully submit,
11 Justice Scalia, that the district court found as fact,
12 based on the evidence before it, that the Georgia
13 legislature would have wanted to create a second majority-
14 minority district in East Central Georgia if to do so
15 would not subvert traditional districting principles --

16 QUESTION: Mr. --

17 MR. WAXMAN: -- and I respectfully suggest that
18 the court erred in enacting its plan because the
19 illustrative plan we've provided to the Court demonstrates
20 that that can be done.

21 The district court's finding in that regard,
22 Justice Scalia, I think is entitled to review under the
23 clear error standard.

24 QUESTION: Mr. Waxman, is it your position now
25 that the 1991 plan which had the two districts was

1 unconstitutional at least with respect to one of those
2 districts, and therefore it's the illustrative plan that
3 has two districts that should have been the one adopted?

4 MR. WAXMAN: Yes. I believe that in light of
5 this Court's decision, subsequent decision in Miller v.
6 Johnson and its decisions thereafter in Bush v. Vera and
7 Shaw v. Hunt, the legislature's 1991 plan, although
8 clearly expressing the legislature's intent for a second
9 district in this area, would violate this Court's
10 decisions because it is an extremely irregular, bizarre
11 district.

12 The district that we have drawn in this case has
13 no arms, no tentacles, no claws, no land bridges; it
14 doesn't reflect any effort to go around certain racial
15 populations to reach others.

16 QUESTION: Mr. Waxman --

17 QUESTION: Well, on that point, I believe it's
18 district 2 -- is it Muscogee County? Is that the way you
19 pronounce it.

20 MR. WAXMAN: I believe it is. Muscogee County
21 is --

22 QUESTION: Which side of that map are you
23 reading from, Justice Kennedy?

24 QUESTION: This would be the illustrative
25 plan --

1 MR. WAXMAN: I can point to it if I --

2 QUESTION: The illustrative plan, and Bibb
3 County is toward the north of section 2, and you split
4 Columbus in order to make up section 2, and that's to pick
5 up black population, and in Bibb County, which is number
6 11, you split Macon --

7 MR. WAXMAN: Yes.

8 QUESTION: -- in order to get a black
9 population.

10 MR. WAXMAN: It is correct that in our plan we
11 retain completely intact 148 out of the 150 counties of
12 Georgia outside --

13 QUESTION: And it just so happens that the
14 counties you split are split along white-black lines.

15 MR. WAXMAN: Well, there is -- Justice Kennedy,
16 there is actually nothing in the record that reflects why
17 or precisely how our illustrative plan divides it, except
18 to --

19 QUESTION: It just happened that way?

20 MR. WAXMAN: Well, if I may finish, Your Honor,
21 what -- the only thing the record itself reflects is that
22 we divided those same jurisdictions as did the legislature
23 in its original 1991 plan.

24 Now, if I may go further, because -- I think
25 because the district court drew its own plan, even though

1 it's not in the record it would be appropriate for me to
2 answer Your Honor's question about why we divided the
3 counties the way we did and how we divided it, because I
4 think it really does go to the question of whether, under
5 this Court's opinion in Miller v. Johnson, race was the
6 predominant reason.

7 So let me go forward, because I think the
8 district court, in drawing its own plan, took this into
9 account and answered that question.

10 Muscogee County was divided for three reasons.
11 Number 1, to keep Fort Benning, which splits -- which is
12 in Muscogee County, intact in one district. The 1991 plan
13 did that, too, and also to comply with one-person one-
14 vote requirements and lower the overall deviation between
15 the second district and the other districts.

16 Bibb and Macon -- Bibb County and Macon was
17 divided both in order to achieve population equality
18 under one-person one-vote, and to include as much of it as
19 possible --

20 QUESTION: Macon is the county seat of Bibb
21 County?

22 MR. WAXMAN: Yes -- and to include as much of it
23 as possible with the rest of the African American
24 concentration in the region and to be consistent with the
25 1991 plan.

1 In point of fact, the area included in our
2 illustrative district is 80 percent of all the population
3 in Macon and includes substantial areas that are almost
4 entirely white, and in point of further fact, the mayor
5 and the city council of Macon unanimously supported
6 division of the county and city into more than one
7 district.

8 QUESTION: Counsel, one question I had about the
9 DOJ illustrative plan is that apparently it was not ever
10 put on computer to show precincts and rather, it used,
11 what, census tracts or something?

12 MR. WAXMAN: Yes, Your Honor.

13 QUESTION: And so how did the district court
14 know that if it had been put on computer for precincts
15 that those numbers would have panned out? It perhaps
16 could have required a lot more adjusting and splitting to
17 do the job ultimately.

18 MR. WAXMAN: Justice O'Connor, the district
19 court didn't -- we submitted the plan using precincts
20 because that was what was on our computer at the time.
21 The --

22 QUESTION: You mean census tracts, not
23 precincts, I think.

24 MR. WAXMAN: Using census tracts.

25 We subsequently obtained the precinct data both

1 for 1992 and now in 1996, and the plan is almost exactly
2 the same, because the precinct lines in Georgia very
3 carefully follow census tracts, and --

4 QUESTION: But it wasn't ever given to the
5 district court, and I guess we have to ask whether it
6 abused its discretion, and I just wasn't really sure --

7 MR. WAXMAN: Well --

8 QUESTION: -- whether it would be an abuse of
9 discretion to not consider or adopt an illustrative plan
10 that didn't have those closer figures in --

11 MR. WAXMAN: Well, I would respectfully suggest,
12 Justice O'Connor, that it was an abuse of discretion at
13 least not to wait for it and give us the opportunity, or
14 try and find out whether a plan that was submitted only
15 for illustrative purposes could, in fact, be drawn in that
16 fashion using precincts.

17 The district court did not hold a hearing after
18 we submitted our illustrative plan. Instead, it just
19 ruled. We have since done the work with the State's
20 computer and, on remand, will be able to demonstrate that
21 this --

22 QUESTION: If there is a remand.

23 MR. WAXMAN: Of course. Of course, Chief
24 Justice.

25 QUESTION: Mr. Waxman, may I ask a more basic

1 question?

2 All of this would be irrelevant if the district
3 judge was right when he said creating a second majority-
4 minority district -- this is 21a of your appendix -- would
5 require the court to engage in the unconstitutional -- in
6 unconstitutional racial gerrymandering.

7 That sentence seems to be saying, if you start
8 out with the purpose of creating a majority-minority
9 district, then no matter how neat and tidy it is, it's no
10 good.

11 MR. WAXMAN: Well, if that conclusion were a
12 correct conclusion of law, that's right, but that is --
13 that test which the court applied is not, in fact, the
14 test that this Court has adopted in Miller v. Johnson and
15 Bush v. Vera, which is that it is -- this Court has stated
16 that a legislature may take race into account, and may
17 create, intentionally create majority-minority districts
18 without incurring strict scrutiny if race was not the
19 predominant reason, which is to say that the plaintiff
20 must prove -- if the plaintiff can prove that the
21 legislature subordinated, substantially disregarded, or
22 neglected traditional race-neutral districting principles.

23 And what we have here, with respect to the
24 eleventh district in our illustrative plan, is a district
25 which on five of the six traditional principles that the

1 court enumerated in its opinion our plan does as well as
2 or better than the court's plan.

3 With respect to one factor -- that is, splitting
4 county lines -- in one little portion of this district we
5 split one county line in order to include as much of Bibb
6 County as Macon as possible with the rest of the
7 concentrated African American population in East Central
8 Georgia, and we submit --

9 QUESTION: But the district judge seemed to
10 think that if race is the driving force, then it is the
11 predominant force, even if other factors are accommodated.

12 MR. WAXMAN: Well, I can't speak beyond what the
13 court's opinion was, what the district court thought. I
14 cannot reconcile the district court's conclusion in this
15 case with the articulation of the law that this Court has
16 set forth in Miller v. Johnson and Bush v. Vera.

17 May I reserve the balance of my time?

18 QUESTION: Very well, Mr. Waxman.

19 Mr. McDonald, we'll hear from you.

20 ORAL ARGUMENT OF LAUGHLIN McDONALD

21 ON BEHALF OF APPELLANTS ABRAMS, ET AL.

22 MR. McDONALD: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it
23 please the Court:

24 One of the fundamental errors of the district
25 court in this case was in thinking that every aspect of

1 the 1992 plan was unconstitutional and that, accordingly,
2 the court could proceed in drawing a remedy plan and
3 ignore the least change principle of Upham v. Seamon.

4 The court adopted a plan that was maximally
5 disruptive. It totally ignored the policy choice of the
6 general assembly about where to place the eleventh
7 congressional district, and also as to what the racial
8 composition of that district should be, and it also failed
9 to apply the standards of section 2.

10 The court completely relocated the eleventh
11 congressional district from that southeastern corridor of
12 the State where the --

13 QUESTION: Well, if what you say is true,
14 Mr. McDonald, I would think that the State in the person
15 of the attorney general would be here arguing what you're
16 arguing, but the State appears to be on the other side.

17 MR. McDONALD: Well, Your Honor, the litigants
18 before this Court are seeking an end to the litigation, I
19 assume, and they are asking for an affirmance, but the
20 general assembly itself clearly articulated what the State
21 policy was in 1991, when it enacted the first plan.

22 QUESTION: So we should accept your version of
23 what the general assembly wanted rather than the
24 representatives of the State?

25 MR. McDONALD: Well, Your Honor, I think it's

1 instructive to see what these litigants said on page 2 of
2 their brief.

3 They explained during the remedy phase of the
4 case they had elected not to submit a proposed
5 redistricting plan to the district court, and the reason
6 that they took that position was, they were not
7 authorized, they said, to state what the legislature's
8 policy was, so these litigants don't pretend to be
9 surrogates for the general assembly. They've disavowed,
10 in fact, that they have that authority.

11 QUESTION: Well, the problem is, I guess, that
12 the district court found as a factual matter here that the
13 plan passed by the Georgia legislature in '91 and then
14 their efforts after that did not represent State policy,
15 that they were the result of coercion by the Department of
16 Justice, and we would have to find that's clearly
17 erroneous, wouldn't we --

18 MR. McDONALD: Well --

19 QUESTION: -- to ignore that district court
20 finding --

21 MR. McDONALD: Well, Your Honor --

22 QUESTION: -- to support your view?

23 MR. McDONALD: Your Honor, I would submit that
24 that's not what the district court in fact found.

25 The plaintiffs, for example, never contended

1 that the 1991 plan was unconstitutional. There was no
2 evidence whatever presented which would support such a
3 finding, and the --

4 QUESTION: And the district court in your view
5 made no such finding?

6 MR. McDONALD: That is correct, Your Honor. I
7 don't believe there's any finding that the 199 --

8 QUESTION: Well, I thought they did, and found
9 that it was obtained -- that it was the product of
10 coercion when the attorney general refused to preclear.

11 MR. McDONALD: That was the second and the third
12 plan, Your Honor, but there was no such finding with
13 respect to the first plan.

14 QUESTION: Well, the first plan that I guess
15 this Court reviewed and found one district
16 unconstitutional.

17 MR. McDONALD: Your Honor, as I recall this
18 Court's opinion, this Court said that the eleventh
19 congressional district under the first plan did not
20 violate the retrogression principle of section 5.

21 QUESTION: Just to get our plans clear, the
22 first plan was not precleared, am I correct about that?

23 MR. McDONALD: That's correct, Your Honor.

24 QUESTION: All right. So the first plan was not
25 precleared.

1 MR. McDONALD: That's correct.

2 QUESTION: And it's interesting, you want us to
3 go back to a presumed legislative intent that did not
4 obtain preclearance and there was a second legislative
5 plan after that was declared unconstitutional. Then the
6 district court tells the legislature, give us a plan,
7 please, and the legislature says well, we can't.

8 MR. McDONALD: The first plan was objected to,
9 but it was not objected to, Your Honor, on the grounds
10 that it contained two majority black districts, so the
11 Department of Justice has not objected to that feature of
12 it, and this Court expressly found that that feature of it
13 would not violate the retrogression principle a second
14 time.

15 As a practical matter the court -- the litigants
16 in this case want to say that John Dunne was a bad guy and
17 that he had coerced and terrified the State, but in point
18 of fact, Your Honor, the reason the State made a
19 conscious, deliberate decision to adopt two majority black
20 districts is based on a myriad of facts and circumstances.

21 I mean, one has to remember that there's a very
22 large black membership in the general assembly, and those
23 legislators were urging the State to adopt an additional
24 majority-minority congressional district, so that was part
25 of what was going on in the general assembly.

1 But one also has to see what sort of trauma the
2 State went through in 1970 and in 1982 when it was
3 attempting to preclear this congressional plan, because
4 the 1972 plan was an open racial gerrymander. It was
5 objected to by the Department of Justice because the State
6 had fragmented the concentration of minority population in
7 the Atlanta area.

8 They had deliberately drawn Andy Young and
9 Maynard Jackson into a district that went almost down to
10 Augusta because they knew that they would be potential
11 candidates, and if the 1972 plan was bad enough, the 1982
12 congressional redistricting plan in Georgia was an
13 absolute total embarrassment and humiliation for the State
14 of Georgia.

15 It had nothing to do with John Dunne or the
16 Department of Justice, but the D.C. court denied
17 preclearance to the 1982 plan because they said the State
18 had deliberately fragmented the concentration of the
19 minority population in the Atlanta area and it accused
20 Ladle, the person in the general assembly, in the House,
21 who was chair of the redistricting committee, who was the
22 chief architect of the plan, and said he was a "racist",
23 and there was all the findings about the N word that he
24 used, and the contempt that he held the legislature.

25 The State was absolutely determined to avoid at

1 all costs that kind of public humiliation and they wanted
2 to do what they thought was "the right thing," and not
3 only that, that State has been plagued with section 2 vote
4 dilution litigation. Since 1970 forty-six cities in the
5 State of Georgia and 56 counties have been sued under
6 section 2 on vote dilution grounds, and almost every one
7 of those cases resulted in the adoption of remedial plans.

8 The State was just -- sort of not acting in a
9 vacuum, of course, but --

10 QUESTION: Well, it's so difficult to know how
11 to analyze this because there really isn't a clear plan
12 that we can look back to as the base, that didn't have
13 problems.

14 MR. McDONALD: Well, I --

15 QUESTION: And the district court made a number
16 of findings here, and I assume that to support your view
17 we have to find some of those clearly erroneous, and I'm
18 just not sure how we do that, or which ones would lend
19 themselves to being a clearly erroneous finding.

20 MR. McDONALD: Well, Your Honor, I think the
21 first plan enacted by the State is the best indication of
22 what the State intended to do and would have done, and the
23 three-judge court in fact found that the State would have
24 adopted a second majority black congressional district,
25 but it refused to do so itself because it was of the view

1 that the minority population was not sufficiently compact,
2 and --

3 QUESTION: Someone also I think said something
4 to the effect that it would require joining populations
5 from Atlanta and Macon which the district court found did
6 not share a community of interest, that it wasn't a
7 geographically compact group, so what do we do with that
8 kind of finding?

9 MR. McDONALD: Your Honor, one of the problems
10 in a State like Georgia is that you do have these urban
11 areas, and then you have these rural areas --

12 QUESTION: Wide apart -- wide apart from each
13 other.

14 MR. McDONALD: That is correct --

15 QUESTION: Yes.

16 MR. McDONALD: -- and in the plan adopted by the
17 court you have what I would submit to Your Honor is the
18 best example of yoking together these widely disparate
19 entities.

20 Echols County, which is right on the Florida
21 line, is the smallest county in the State. It's included
22 in the court's eighth congressional district.

23 QUESTION: Was this one of the four corners?

24 MR. McDONALD: No, Your Honor, that's not -- the
25 four corners are -- this might be part of the southwestern

1 corner.

2 QUESTION: I see, number 8.

3 MR. McDONALD: But also Bibb County is included
4 in there. It's one of the largest metropolitan areas in
5 the State, and then that eighth district goes all the way
6 up to these counties that are very near the Metropolitan
7 Atlanta Area, so that's precisely the kind of district --

8 QUESTION: Well, but it was drawn with basically
9 a nonobjectionable clean set of lines compared to the
10 general assembly plan of 1991. I mean, it draws kind of a
11 wide swath from north to south, but nonetheless, pretty
12 clean lines.

13 MR. McDONALD: It aggregates a lot more
14 counties, Your Honor, and you're entirely correct.

15 QUESTION: But Mr. McDonald, may I interrupt you
16 just --

17 MR. McDONALD: Yes, Your Honor.

18 QUESTION: Because there's one thing I may not
19 understand about your answer. You're not necessarily
20 claiming that the 1991 plan should have been adopted by
21 the district court, are you?

22 In other words, I think you're claiming that the
23 feature of the '91 plan of having two majority-minority
24 districts is what the district court should have adopted
25 under Upham and Seamon.

1 MR. McDONALD: That's right.

2 QUESTION: But you're not claiming that the 1991
3 plan as such should have been adopted by the district
4 court.

5 MR. McDONALD: No. We've never taken that
6 position.

7 QUESTION: Do you -- what is your position in
8 relation to the Justice Department's illustrative plan?

9 MR. McDONALD: That would be -- is an example of
10 what the court could do and what it was obligated to do.
11 It shows that you can, in fact, adopt a remedial plan that
12 contains two reasonably compact districts that do not
13 subordinate traditional redistricting --

14 QUESTION: So you'd settle for that.

15 QUESTION: So -- but your assertion is that it
16 is okay to say that the legislature would have set out to
17 create a second majority-minority district, and setting
18 out to do that is okay?

19 MR. McDONALD: It is, Your Honor, as I read the
20 decisions of this Court, so long as you don't subordinate
21 traditional redistricting principles to race, that a State
22 can make a determination that it wants to be inclusive and
23 create two majority-minority districts.

24 Now, what the -- it really -- I did some county
25 counting over the last couple of days, and there is not a

1 single county that was included in the 1991 version of the
2 eleventh congressional district that ends up in the court-
3 ordered eleventh congressional district. Not a single
4 county ends up in the existing eleventh congressional
5 district.

6 QUESTION: What eleventh does not end up, the
7 1991 eleventh?

8 MR. McDONALD: That's correct, Your Honor.
9 Those counties that were in --

10 QUESTION: Was the 1991 eleventh constitutional?

11 MR. McDONALD: No, it was not. It was not, but
12 I think --

13 QUESTION: Well, so what difference does that
14 make? I mean, it was a district that the legislature had
15 carved out to -- you know, to pursue an unconstitutional
16 objective, and that eleventh district touched how many
17 counties? It touched an awful lot of other districts --

18 MR. McDONALD: Yes.

19 QUESTION: -- didn't it?

20 MR. McDONALD: And there were features of that
21 plan that were expressly identified as being
22 unconstitutional, and it's possible to correct those
23 defects and not totally, absolutely ignore the policy
24 choice of the general assembly that, where that district
25 should go.

1 QUESTION: But the policy choice of the general
2 assembly was to create -- specifically to create an
3 unconstitutional district, to specifically create a
4 district just for the sake of, other considerations aside,
5 obtaining a majority-minority district.

6 MR. McDONALD: With all respect, Your Honor, I
7 don't think that their plan was to create an
8 unconstitutional district. They wanted to create one that
9 was constitutional. They failed to do so. But the
10 record clearly indicates that it is possible to create one
11 that is constitutional, that the --

12 QUESTION: What is the record evidence,
13 Mr. McLaughlin? In addition to the illustrative plan,
14 wasn't there a problem that that plan was introduced after
15 the close of the evidence, so there was some question
16 whether it was appropriate for it to be considered?

17 MR. McDONALD: Well, Justice Ginsburg, the
18 district court in fact did consider it, so if there was a
19 problem it did not regard it as an insurmountable one.

20 But there were other plans, Your Honor, that
21 were introduced. The Abrams appellants, whom I represent,
22 introduced four plans, and -- the least change plan, and
23 plan A and B and C -- and those plans all created a second
24 majority black district, and we would contend that it did
25 so in a way that fully complied with Miller v. Johnson.

1 We tried to aggregate as many counties as
2 possible. We read the decision of this Court and the
3 decision of the lower court. We fixed the land bridge in
4 Henry County. We avoided the heroic reach to Savannah.
5 We cured the split in the land bridge in Effingham County.
6 We cured the problems in Richmond County and Augusta,
7 where the Court said the redistricting plan of the State
8 had linked up black neighborhoods.

9 We did a plan which I think was an effort and in
10 good faith and in fact responded to all the concerns which
11 were expressed by this Court and the district court
12 concerning the eleventh congressional district.

13 QUESTION: Mr. McDonald, you have just a moment
14 or two left, and you've not addressed one of your
15 arguments that was one of the issues raised in the
16 petition, which was a violation of the one-person one-
17 vote principles. How would that help you on this other
18 substantive aspect of your case? I mean, to send it back
19 to tinker with minor population deviations doesn't seem to
20 address your main concern at all.

21 MR. McDONALD: It would not address the
22 question --

23 QUESTION: No.

24 MR. McDONALD: -- of the creation of a second --

25 QUESTION: No.

1 MR. McDONALD: -- majority black district, and
2 you're probably right about that, Your Honor.

3 What we think the Court should do and what we
4 request the Court to do is to reverse and remand with
5 instructions to the three-judge court to adopt a new
6 remedial plan that applies the least change standards of
7 Upham v. Seamon and that also complies with section 2 of
8 the Voting Rights Act, and we think that if the Court does
9 that, that such a plan would, in fact, contain two
10 majority black districts.

11 QUESTION: Thank you, Mr. McDonald.

12 General Bowers, we'll hear from you.

13 ORAL ARGUMENT OF MICHAEL J. BOWERS

14 ON BEHALF OF APPELLEES MILLER, ET AL.

15 GENERAL BOWERS: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it
16 please the Court:

17 The issue is whether the district court abused
18 its discretion in redrawing or fixing Georgia's basically
19 unconstitutional congressional districts. I will address
20 Upham v. Seamon and whether the Court adhered to Georgia's
21 traditional districting principles.

22 As a preliminary matter, I would urge the Court
23 to consider that this case may, in fact, be a case about
24 discretion or leeway, and the question initially may be,
25 is there any room for a State between what this Court has

1 said is the limit in congressional district drawing in
2 Johnson v. Miller and what the Justice Department is
3 urging upon this Court as mandated by section 2 of the
4 Voting Rights Act?

5 I think the Justice Department would say no,
6 there's no room. There's a perfect congruence between
7 where this Court has left off in Johnson v. Miller and
8 where the -- section 2 of the Voting Rights Act comes to.

9 We must as closely as possible move toward what
10 this Court has decided in Johnson v. Miller in complying
11 with the Voting Rights Act, section 2. This is nothing
12 but another attempt at maximization, albeit with a
13 grudging admission by the Justice Department that there is
14 some -- there are some limits which did not heretofore
15 exist.

16 QUESTION: Well, general, it seems to me that
17 there's a different argument for maximization here, and
18 it's -- and I think you're going to address it, but it's
19 the Upham and Seamon argument, and the premise of the
20 Upham and Seamon argument is that the -- sort of the
21 latest un -- the latest expression of State intentions,
22 untainted by coercion from the Justice Department, was
23 that there be two majority-minority districts.

24 And that's not maximization. That's kind of the
25 least change principle, and I take it your position is

1 that the '91 plan, with its feature of two such districts,
2 was not a valid -- in effect a valid statement of the
3 State's desires, is that correct?

4 GENERAL BOWERS: It is valid in some respects,
5 Your Honor, but as the district court found in its order,
6 and it's stated in footnote 9, which is at page 13a of the
7 jurisdictional statement, you can't draw the kind of
8 district that existed in the '91 plan for the eleventh
9 district because what you're doing is you're joining
10 disparate and distant minority populations, namely the
11 urban minority population in South De Kalb County, and the
12 rural, primarily rural urban, or primarily rural minority
13 population located in East Central Georgia.

14 QUESTION: Well, as I --

15 GENERAL BOWERS: You can't do that.

16 QUESTION: As I understand the argument that
17 I've just heard, the Abrams least change plan and the
18 Department of Justice's illustrative plan avoided those
19 pitfalls. Is that correct?

20 GENERAL BOWERS: No, sir. I respectfully submit
21 that that is not correct and, as to the illustrative plan,
22 by referring to page 44a of the jurisdictional statement
23 you can see that very closely.

24 Looking at the eleventh district specifically,
25 in the northwest corner, that county, that last county is

1 De Kalb County. That is an urban --

2 QUESTION: The one that's right next to five?

3 GENERAL BOWERS: Right next to what, Your Honor?

4 QUESTION: The one that's --

5 GENERAL BOWERS: Right next to district 5.

6 QUESTION: Five, yes.

7 GENERAL BOWERS: That's correct, Your Honor.

8 That split has never heretofore occurred with
9 respect to De Kalb County in a congressional districting.
10 There is no question whatsoever, although we have not had
11 the chance to litigate the illustrative plan, it being
12 submitted 3 weeks after the Justice Department said on the
13 record at about 400, page 400 of the transcript that they
14 weren't going to submit a plan, but we know the purpose of
15 that can only be said to be race, because you're getting
16 all of the black population, virtually, of De Kalb County,
17 about 212,000 people out of a district requirement of
18 about 589,000.

19 Then you go up, and where else is the minority
20 population, and the only significant minority population
21 in this district is going to Bibb County, where you split
22 Bibb County three ways, which again has never occurred in
23 the history of redistricting in Georgia, you put those two
24 populations together, and they constitute 80 percent of
25 the minority population in this illustrative plan, and if

1 that's not drawing a district with the primary motive
2 being race, I don't know --

3 QUESTION: What about the Abrams least change
4 plan? Has that got the same problem?

5 GENERAL BOWERS: It's substantially the same
6 thing, Your Honor.

7 QUESTION: Did the -- and help me out here. I
8 should know this, but I'm not clear on it. Did the
9 district court here find that, as a blanket matter that it
10 was impossible to come up with a two minority -- majority-
11 minority districts without these features, or did it
12 simply find that the 1991 plan involved such features as
13 this when it came up with two majority-minority districts?

14 GENERAL BOWERS: I think it was the latter, Your
15 Honor. What specifically is in the record is testimony of
16 Ms. Linda Meggers, who is the State's demographer, a
17 recognized expert on this area, as well as the testimony
18 of the demographer that the appellant ACLU used.

19 Ms. Meggers said point blank, it is impossible
20 to draw a second minority population in this area because
21 you don't have a large enough compact minority population.

22 Mr. Carter, at the very best, can be said to say
23 that he doesn't know, so on this record there is nothing
24 whatsoever that would mandate a district court to find
25 that the first Gingles requirement has been satisfied,

1 namely, this compact large minority population.

2 QUESTION: Well, should -- and here's a question
3 I have about the way the standard should be set. If we
4 accept as our starting premise that there should be
5 something like a least change principle, an Upham and
6 Seamon principle, should the burden be on a district court
7 like this to find that it is impossible to draw districts
8 which come any closer to whatever the benchmark is?

9 So that in this case, I take it if that were the
10 principle we would say, the opinion of the three-judge
11 court has a hole in it here, because -- and the hole is,
12 it did not find that it was impossible, consistent with
13 the first Miller case and normal districting principles,
14 to come any closer to a two-district scheme than it did.

15 Would that -- is my principle right about how we
16 should apply Upham and Seamon, and number 2, if that's the
17 way we should apply it, is there a defect in what the
18 district court did here?

19 GENERAL BOWERS: I think the principle you
20 enunciated as to Upham v. Seamon is correct, Your Honor.

21 I think in the application the district court
22 has satisfied Upham v. Seamon by trying to follow
23 Georgia's traditional districting principles using the '91
24 plan, the very first plan that the general assembly passed
25 which was rejected by Justice, except as to the eleventh

1 congressional district and what has to be done there,
2 keeping in mind that the bulk of the population in the
3 eleventh, even in the '91 plan, is located in some
4 appendages which this Court acknowledged in its opinion in
5 Johnson v. Miller had nothing to do with one another.
6 Augusta --

7 QUESTION: Yes, but shouldn't the district court
8 have to conclude that it would be impossible to come up
9 with a two-district plan without these impermissible
10 appendages?

11 GENERAL BOWERS: I would respectfully submit no,
12 Your Honor.

13 QUESTION: Why not?

14 GENERAL BOWERS: It should not have to do that
15 because that is dealing with its discretion or leeway that
16 a legislature --

17 QUESTION: Well, it's got discretion, but it's
18 also got to worry about Upham and Seamon, and how do we
19 know that Upham and Seamon is satisfied unless the court
20 does, in fact, make a finding of impossibility?

21 GENERAL BOWERS: Your Honor, I think if you will
22 allow me to go through what the district court has done in
23 respect to Upham v. Seamon you can -- this Court can see
24 how closely it followed.

25 I would respectfully submit that a finding of

1 impossibility as to that second district is not one of the
2 requirements, but even if it is, this Court in this case
3 on these facts has come pretty close to saying that in
4 footnote 9, which is at page 13a of the jurisdictional
5 statement.

6 QUESTION: Well, and this argument assumes, of
7 course, that that feature of the earlier State plan which
8 must be followed is two majority-minority districts,
9 why -- that that is sacrosanct, that if the other
10 features, such as not splitting precincts and things of
11 that sort, would stand in the way of it, nonetheless, for
12 some reason the two majority-minority feature is a -- an
13 overwhelmingly determinative feature of the earlier plan.

14 GENERAL BOWERS: I agree, Your Honor.

15 QUESTION: And are you prepared to --

16 QUESTION: May I interrupt right there for --
17 just to get the argument in -- it seems to me you can
18 respond to the argument that they had a duty to form two
19 majority-minority districts in two ways. One, they had no
20 such duty, or two, they tried but it wasn't possible or it
21 wasn't feasible without violating all these other
22 principles.

23 It seems to me the district court, and I think
24 your argument also, assumes that it was a permissible
25 objective. In fact, they had some duty to make an effort

1 to try and create two majority-minority districts. I
2 think you agree with the district court on that, don't
3 you?

4 GENERAL BOWERS: If --

5 QUESTION: If it were -- if you could do it
6 without causing these other collateral effects.

7 GENERAL BOWERS: Yes, Your Honor, but --

8 QUESTION: Which is different from the argument
9 that Justice Scalia was suggesting.

10 GENERAL BOWERS: Yes.

11 QUESTION: I would have thought differently from
12 your answer to Justice Scalia, that there are a number of
13 factors, presumably, which make up the 1991 redistricting
14 plan, one of them is two majority-minority districts, and
15 that the district court is obliged to consider that along
16 with all the other factors but it's not obliged to simply
17 take that as a be-all and end-all, that it's got to have
18 that whatever else it sacrifices.

19 GENERAL BOWERS: Correct, Your Honor. Only --
20 it is only required to do so if it meets or can find met
21 in the record the criteria set forth in Gingles, and here
22 the court --

23 QUESTION: But you do agree that if it can meet
24 those criteria it had a duty to do so?

25 GENERAL BOWERS: Yes.

1 QUESTION: Okay. That's --

2 QUESTION: So that Upham basically provides a
3 kind of presumptive principle. This is where you ought
4 to -- this is what you ought to do if you can do it
5 consistently with these other collateral limitations.

6 GENERAL BOWERS: Yes.

7 QUESTION: Okay.

8 GENERAL BOWERS: I agree, Your Honor.

9 Here, what the district court did, it took the
10 '91 plan which we've reflected on the composite map in
11 front of you here in the middle, and you'll note they're
12 almost similar, this '91 plan and what the court
13 ultimately came up with. It preserved the corners. It
14 preserved core districts in the eighth, the tenth, the
15 fourth, also.

16 It drew the best it could what the general
17 assembly had said to draw in the '91 plan, but correcting
18 the unconstitutional defects in the second and in the
19 eleventh, and the second and the eleventh touched all but
20 six of the remaining districts.

21 QUESTION: It just left out Hamlet.

22 GENERAL BOWERS: I beg your pardon?

23 QUESTION: It was without the Hamlet, without
24 the Prince. It simply left out the main point, which was
25 to have the two majority-minority districts.

1 Isn't it -- my question really is, in respect to
2 that, is, isn't it constitutional, or is it, in your
3 opinion, for the legislature directly to draw a line on
4 the basis of race where the legislature reasonably feels
5 that that is necessary to prevent a violation of section 2
6 of the Voting Rights Act?

7 GENERAL BOWERS: If it is -- yes, Your Honor.

8 QUESTION: All right. If the answer to that
9 question is yes, then, if the legislature has tried to do
10 that in 1991, and if you believe people should in fact in
11 courts pay attention to legislatures and give them lots of
12 leeway, then why shouldn't the judge here have tried to
13 carry out that legislature's primary intention, giving it
14 that leeway to draw those two district boundaries in a way
15 that would reasonably have prevented a violation of the
16 Voting Rights Act?

17 GENERAL BOWERS: Because on this record, Your
18 Honor, there is no evidence that that district was
19 required. That is clear.

20 QUESTION: Oh, yes, there --

21 GENERAL BOWERS: There's not --

22 QUESTION: There is lots of evidence. The
23 evidence when you in fact go into the section 2 part of
24 the two -- of the second district. It's a close question,
25 isn't it?

1 GENERAL BOWERS: No, sir. I was --

2 QUESTION: The district judge doesn't think --

3 GENERAL BOWERS: It's not that close.

4 QUESTION: -- that's a close question? All
5 right. So you would say the legislature could not have
6 reasonably thought -- perhaps wrongly, but reasonably,
7 that a second majority-minority district was necessary?

8 GENERAL BOWERS: It was --

9 QUESTION: Is that your -- is that the point?

10 GENERAL BOWERS: It thought a second district
11 was necessary.

12 QUESTION: Did they reasonably think so?

13 GENERAL BOWERS: No, sir.

14 QUESTION: If it was reasonable in their
15 thinking so, then would you agree that the district court
16 should, in fact, have followed their intent?

17 GENERAL BOWERS: If it were reasonable on the
18 factual record, yes, Your Honor, but if it's not --

19 QUESTION: Well then, I think you've changed
20 your argument, haven't you, because I thought your -- you
21 started out arguing saying there is a realm of discretion.
22 What the district court did is within that realm, and
23 therefore no abuse, no reversal.

24 Now I think you're saying that there wasn't
25 discretion, that the district court could not, in fact,

1 have done anything consistent with section 2 except come
2 up with a one-district plan.

3 GENERAL BOWERS: On this record that is my --

4 QUESTION: So it isn't a discretionary matter.

5 You're saying as a matter of law it has to be a -- on this
6 record --

7 GENERAL BOWERS: On this record.

8 QUESTION: -- it has to be a one-district plan.

9 GENERAL BOWERS: It can only be that if you look
10 at what, for example, the Justice Department is putting
11 forth in the illustrative plan.

12 You have to link disparate distant minority
13 populations. That's the only way that you can get that
14 second district in the area of the eleventh, and that can
15 only be for the purpose of drawing lines based upon race,
16 which this Court has condemned as a predominant motive in
17 Johnson v. Miller, but we would urge this Court to affirm,
18 to give a State or a court acting in its place some leeway
19 between what this Court has said --

20 QUESTION: But on your view we don't have to
21 give it leeway. On your view, it would be appropriate to
22 affirm by saying this is the only thing it could have
23 done. As a matter of law, this was required. Isn't that
24 correct?

25 GENERAL BOWERS: Yes, sir, but also, it would

1 then -- that would -- that holding would give us and a
2 court acting in our stead leeway between what the Justice
3 Department is suggesting under section 2 and what this
4 Court has found under the Fourteenth Amendment.

5 Thank you.

6 QUESTION: Thank you, General Bowers.

7 Mr. Parks, we'll hear from you.

8 ORAL ARGUMENT OF A. LEE PARKS

9 ON BEHALF OF THE APPELLEES JOHNSON, ET AL.

10 MR. PARKS: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it please
11 the Court:

12 I want to first address Justice Souter's
13 question with regard to the district court's findings. At
14 page 20a and 21a of the jurisdictional statement, in the
15 opinion of the district court, the district court
16 specifically found that it could not create a second
17 majority-minority district in Georgia without violating
18 the teachings of Miller.

19 It states there, analysis of the racial map in
20 Georgia reveals the State's minority population is widely
21 dispersed. In fashioning a remedy, we considered the
22 possibility of creating a second majority-minority
23 district and concluded that to do so would require us to
24 subordinate Georgia's traditional districting policies and
25 consider race predominantly.

1 Now, the Solicitor General also referenced the
2 oral argument of the State of Georgia in Miller I, and
3 they did say that it was the legislative policy to create
4 a second majority-minority district, but they also said at
5 page 14, in explaining why that policy was created -- this
6 is page 14 of the oral argument -- that their purpose was
7 this.

8 The facts, in a nutshell, are the reality of
9 having black people elected to office. The general
10 assembly in Georgia, when it did this reapportionment
11 plan, had a simple choice: we will draw districts to have
12 blacks elected.

13 You will recall in Miller I that they made the
14 argument proportionality was a compelling State interest,
15 and they lost that argument. The creation of a second
16 majority-minority district is therefore infected with that
17 belief, that belief borne of what they had been told by
18 the Justice Department before they began their
19 redistricting process in 1990 that all districts that were
20 technically possible were required under the Justice
21 Department's melding of section 5 and section 2.

22 This case boils down to whether or not the
23 eleventh district, as stated by the appellants, is
24 required to be maintained as a majority-minority district.
25 The district court's findings in that regard are not

1 clearly erroneous. The district --

2 QUESTION: Mr. Parks, is there anything in the
3 court's opinion here that reflects what you just said
4 about the Georgia legislature's frame of mind in its 1991
5 apportionment?

6 MR. PARKS: Yes, Your Honor. They specifically
7 cite Linda Meggers' testimony and credit that testimony
8 where she says, I was the reason we drew the first
9 district.

10 QUESTION: Where is that in the court's opinion,
11 do you know?

12 MR. PARKS: I don't have the page number, Your
13 Honor -- perhaps they could find it -- but they
14 specifically cite her testimony to the effect that they
15 believed that Georgia did have that mind set going into
16 the process.

17 The DOJ in their brief pins this case on -- at
18 page 29 of their brief on this contingent. An African
19 American candidate cannot win a congressional election in
20 Georgia without a majority of African American voters
21 being put into the district. They say that that is the
22 standard for section 2 liability. In our view, they have
23 juxtaposed a constitutional violation with a statutory
24 mandate, and whenever that occurs, the constitutional
25 requirements prevail.

1 QUESTION: May I ask you if you think the
2 court's creation of the fifth district was constitutional?

3 MR. PARKS: Your Honor, yes, we do. That was
4 not litigated. The court --

5 QUESTION: But you do accept that as a
6 constitutional --

7 MR. PARKS: We do, Your Honor, because that --
8 we are -- the issue of section 5 retrogression, the
9 constitutional of that is not in this case, and whether or
10 not a district can continue on in perpetuity when there
11 has been an original finding on vote dilution is a
12 question we do not litigate, so we don't take that
13 position.

14 The real world of this case, juxtaposed with the
15 Department of Justice's statement as to what standard the
16 standard of section 2 liability is, is that both minority
17 candidates won. They relied, rather than upon the Justice
18 Department, upon self-help. They found biracial
19 coalitions. They came out with positions that would
20 appeal to both black and white voters, and they won.

21 It seems to me anomalous that we are standing
22 here now --

23 QUESTION: Does the record tell us what
24 percentage of the black voters voted for them and what
25 percentage of the white voters did?

1 MR. PARKS: No, it does not, Your Honor.

2 QUESTION: Isn't it something like 90 percent of
3 the blacks and 30 percent of the whites?

4 MR. PARKS: According to the submission of the
5 ACLU in response to our motion to supplement the record,
6 in the fourth district 39 percent of the whites voted for
7 the minority candidate, but as I read a section 2
8 analysis, for them to be able to come in and show this
9 Court that section 2 required a second majority-minority
10 district as opposed to just a policy decision to create a
11 second majority-minority --

12 QUESTION: But isn't the issue whether, in 1991,
13 the legislature could reasonably have thought that the
14 Constitution -- strike the Constitution -- section 2 of
15 the Voting Rights Act required them to have a second
16 minority district?

17 They would have read Gingles. They would have
18 read this Court's opinions. They would have thought that
19 quite possibly, not definitely, section 2 requires a
20 second majority-minority district.

21 MR. PARKS: The --

22 QUESTION: Is that -- I mean, and if that's so,
23 why shouldn't the district court have to pay attention to
24 that legislative decision when -- instead of just making
25 up its own plan?

1 MR. PARKS: Because the State of Georgia in the
2 entire -- from the beginning to end of Miller v. I never
3 took the position that the Voting Act -- Rights Act
4 required anything more than one majority-minority
5 district. It never accepted the Department of Justice's
6 argument that there was a fair question on that point.

7 It made a separate argument that as long as the
8 district was not bizarre, and as long as they felt that
9 diversity in the delegation was a policy choice the
10 legislature was free to make, that they could draw those
11 districts.

12 That is very different from saying that their
13 decision to draw that district to a two majority-minority
14 plan the first time around was motivated by any believe
15 that section 2 required it.

16 QUESTION: But normally -- normally -- I mean,
17 maybe there's a different rule here, but normally I
18 thought you looked at a legislator's -- legislature's
19 motive by and large by what they do.

20 I mean, legislatures are subject always to
21 people threatening them with all kinds of things, and all
22 kinds of people saying all kinds of things.

23 MR. PARKS: Right.

24 QUESTION: Are we supposed to look to when
25 Congress enacts something as to whether a Congressman or

1 Senator was under threat that large groups of people would
2 vote for someone else, or someone would bring a lawsuit?

3 MR. PARKS: Well --

4 QUESTION: Don't we normally look to what they
5 did?

6 MR. PARKS: Your Honor, you're correct, but
7 however, we have an extraordinary case here where we have
8 the State coming and confessing what happened.

9 But be that as it may, we have a district
10 court's opinion that goes beyond that.

11 QUESTION: But you're willing to accept as the
12 State's policy that a district court must follow the
13 legislature's incorrect --

14 MR. PARKS: No, Your Honor.

15 QUESTION: -- perception of the law? Well, I
16 thought you were in response to Justice Breyer --

17 MR. PARKS: No, Your Honor. I'm saying that --

18 QUESTION: That if the legislature incorrectly
19 believed that it had to adopt a second district --

20 MR. PARKS: It's indefinite --

21 QUESTION: -- the court, knowing now that it
22 didn't have to, must give --

23 MR. PARKS: No.

24 QUESTION: No, then --

25 QUESTION: -- give effect to the legislature's

1 mistaken belief that it had to.

2 MR. PARKS: No, Your Honor. I --

3 QUESTION: No. No. If the answer's no, then
4 you mean that every plan in the United States that any
5 legislature adopted thinking it was necessary under
6 section 2 is open to relitigation on the question of
7 whether or not it really violates section 2, after all, a
8 matter that's very, very hard to know, and what would be
9 left of leaving to legislatures the power to write voting
10 districts if we accepted that argument?

11 MR. PARKS: Your Honor, that argument argues for
12 accepting the district court's opinion. It stands as a
13 surrogate for the legislature. It made a best judgment
14 call that section 2 did not require this. The record does
15 not substantiate a finding that Georgia acted with that
16 intent to adhere to section 2, but for totally different
17 reasons. There --

18 QUESTION: Mr. Parks, could you explain one
19 thing to me that does seem connected to the legislative
20 will? The judge seemed reticent to create a second
21 majority-minority district. I'm looking at 22a, and this
22 is the spillover of footnote 16.

23 The judge said that the counsel for the Speaker
24 of the Georgia House of Representatives said that if the
25 court included a second majority-minority district it

1 would be set in stone. What was the fear that the
2 district judge --

3 MR. PARKS: Retrogression, Your Honor, that if
4 the district court acted here without a firm belief that
5 the Voting Rights Act required a second majority-minority
6 district, that retrogression would basically create that
7 district eternally, that it would be forever saddled with
8 it.

9 QUESTION: The legislature couldn't change it
10 and eliminate it.

11 MR. PARKS: Could never change --

12 QUESTION: Whereas if the legislature wants an
13 additional one, there's no problem --

14 MR. PARKS: Absolutely not, Your Honor.

15 QUESTION: -- with the legislature altering the
16 district court's plan.

17 MR. PARKS: Right, and towards the end of the
18 opinion, Justice Ginsburg, the court makes, I think, a
19 critical point that ties in with the importance of State
20 sovereignty in this area.

21 It said, were we to do this, were we to take a
22 step that we do not find authorized or justified by the
23 Voting Rights Act, we leave a political footprint on the
24 State of Georgia that will never be washed away. That, in
25 their view, was a decision that the Georgia legislature

1 could make.

2 When we talk about intent, let's remember the
3 1995 special session. The Georgia legislature could not
4 agree on this issue because of the difficulties the
5 constitutional -- this constitutional area of the law
6 presented, so it did not act, and it deferred back to the
7 legislature the opportunity to create that district.

8 QUESTION: -- back to the court.

9 MR. PARKS: Back to the court, yes, Your Honor.

10 But it said also this plan is a caretaker plan.
11 We do no harm with it. We do only what we were required
12 to do to remedy the constitutional defects and we leave it
13 to the legislature to change that plan should it no desire
14 the next time it comes into session, or it can wait till
15 the next millennium.

16 Now, that, to me, is giving everybody a little
17 bit of what they want. It respects State sovereignty.
18 Seven years of litigation over this plan, three to go
19 before the --

20 QUESTION: Isn't it correct -- isn't it correct,
21 if the district court's analysis of the demographics here
22 is correct the legislature could not create a second
23 majority-minority district?

24 MR. PARKS: Well, the legislature can do
25 whatever it chooses. It will have to --

1 QUESTION: Well, but not -- it can't violate the
2 Constitution --

3 MR. PARKS: That's right.

4 QUESTION: -- as construed by a majority of this
5 Court.

6 MR. PARKS: That's correct, but --

7 QUESTION: So that then under the demographics,
8 under the findings, they just simply couldn't create a
9 second one, as I understand it.

10 MR. PARKS: They could not --

11 QUESTION: Isn't that right? If the findings
12 are all correct --

13 MR. PARKS: They would face a Miller challenge.

14 QUESTION: Sure, and they would lose on the
15 Miller challenge.

16 MR. PARKS: That's right, but that --

17 QUESTION: They could bring it to court anyway.

18 MR. PARKS: They --

19 QUESTION: Whereas if it came out the other way
20 they couldn't even get to court. It's just --

21 MR. PARKS: That's correct, Your Honor.

22 QUESTION: Retrogression, period.

23 QUESTION: Is there --

24 QUESTION: It's the end of the case.

25 QUESTION: I'm sorry. Were you through? Yes?

1 Is there evidence in the record that shows the
2 racial distribution in relation to these lines at all?

3 MR. PARKS: Yes, Your Honor, there is. I don't
4 have -- but the --

5 QUESTION: Where would we find that?

6 MR. PARKS: That is in the record that shows --
7 you're talking about the -- each plan, each district and
8 each plan?

9 QUESTION: That shows us on any kind of map
10 where the --

11 MR. PARKS: The racial concentrations are?

12 QUESTION: The racial concentrations are in
13 Georgia.

14 MR. PARKS: The record -- each map that was put
15 in has a, right next to it a racial map, a racial
16 composition map of those districts, and through the
17 colorations of red, yellow, orange, and green will show
18 you that.

19 QUESTION: We would find it in the record.

20 MR. PARKS: It's in the record.

21 QUESTION: But not in the appendix or anything.

22 MR. PARKS: That's right, Your Honor. That's
23 right, Your Honor.

24 QUESTION: Did you want to comment on the
25 percentage of deviation in the plan that was adopted?

1 MR. PARKS: I will briefly, Your Honor. I think
2 that the appellants really are foreclosed from that
3 argument. Their plan, with the exception of the
4 illustrative plan offered to the district court, had
5 deviations far in excess of what the court plan offered.

6 I think that the concurring opinion in White v.
7 Weiser, which Mr. Chief Justice Rehnquist joined in back
8 in 1973, really says it all. We cannot put this down to a
9 question of slide rule precision. We have an average
10 deviation here of 328 people in districts that total
11 589,000.

12 The deviation argument here --

13 QUESTION: Isn't that the deviation between the
14 two plans, the Abrams plan and your plan?

15 MR. PARKS: The illustrative plan --

16 QUESTION: That's not the absolute --

17 MR. PARKS: That's the difference between the
18 illustrative plan, which was their best deviation plan,
19 and the court's plan.

20 QUESTION: Yes, but that -- it's about 3,000 --
21 the court's plan is about 3,000 from a zero variation, is
22 it not?

23 MR. PARKS: If you added all eleven districts
24 up, the court's plan is better in four districts, the
25 DOJ's plan is better in five districts, and they tied on

1 two. It came down to a .11 variation for the court's plan
2 average for the districts, .07 for the DOJ's plan, 328
3 people.

4 What's happening here, and this speaks to 2000,
5 the deviation argument has nothing to do with the
6 invidious devaluation of a person's vote any more. It is
7 a way to get in the door to gerrymander. They didn't
8 divide Muscogee County to reduce the variation. They
9 divided it to defectively create a majority-minority
10 district in the second congressional district.

11 That district, when you take out Fort Benning's
12 population -- the other reason they gave -- which is a
13 nonvoting population, effectively becomes a majority-
14 minority district, and the appellants achieved --

15 QUESTION: Well, can't people in the military
16 claim residence in Georgia and vote

17 MR. PARKS: Your Honor, they --

18 QUESTION: -- while living in Fort Benning?

19 MR. PARKS: They do, but as a --

20 QUESTION: And some probably do.

21 MR. PARKS: That's correct, Your Honor, but as a
22 districting principle, when they design these districts
23 they generally consider military population to be
24 generally nonvoting. The effect of it is to accentuate
25 the minority vote.

1 So the deviation issue, in my answer to your
2 question, I think we have de minimis deviation here, and
3 the court more than justified the 328 people by --

4 CHIEF JUSTICE REHNQUIST: Thank you, Mr. Parks.
5 The case is submitted.

6 Your time expired as you were leaving the
7 lectern.

8 MR. WAXMAN: I'm sorry, Your Honor.

9 CHIEF JUSTICE REHNQUIST: The case is submitted.

10 (Whereupon, at 11:02 a.m., the case in the
11 above-entitled matters was submitted.)

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CERTIFICATION

Alderson Reporting Company, Inc., hereby certifies that the attached pages represents an accurate transcription of electronic sound recording of the oral argument before the Supreme Court of The United States in the Matter of:

LUCIOUS ABRAMS, JR., G.L. AVERY, WILLIAM GARY CHAMBERS, SR., AND KAREN WATSON, Appellants v. DAVIDA JOHNSON, ET AL.; and UNITED STATES, Appellant v. DAVIDA JOHNSON, ET AL.

CASE NO. 95-1425,95-1460

and that these attached pages constitutes the original transcript of the proceedings for the records of the court.

BY Donn Marie Federico

(REPORTER)