



MDC Releases 2025 State of the South Report: Realizing Meaning, Dignity, and Community in the South

DURHAM, NC—MDC is proud to announce the release of its *2025 State of the South Report*, a landmark publication that has informed and shaped equity and economic strategies since 1996. The 2025 report, “Realizing Meaning, Dignity, and Community in the South,” centers the voices and experiences of Southern leaders, artists, and community members. It reflects our region’s current challenges and opportunities and boldly reimagines our future.

This year’s report emerges from deep conversations MDC had in the communities of Atlanta, GA; Berea, KY; Birmingham, AL; Charleston, SC; and Durham, NC. Through these dialogues, MDC explored what it means to build a truly equitable South—one where economic security, safety, and shared prosperity are realities for all.

A distinctive feature of the *2025 State of the South Report* is its integration of art as a means of storytelling, healing, and envisioning the future. MDC incorporated art into in-person convenings and throughout the report to elevate creative voices and showcase the transformative power of artistic expression. Artists featured at the convenings included Johnny Lee Chapman III (NC), Antonio Alanis (NC), Jenny Fine (AL), Frank X. Walker (KY), Cornbread & Tortillas (KY), Harlem Farr (SC), Marcus Amaker (SC), A\$iahMae (SC), Demetria Adriane McNeil (SC), PoorRichKollective (SC), Giwayen Mata (GA), Soul Food Cypher (GA), and Kemi Bennings (GA).

"The *State of the South* report is more than a publication; it’s a clear-eyed assessment of the work that lies ahead and a powerful reminder that the South’s true strength comes from its people," said John Simpkins, President and CEO at MDC. "Over the past 2 years, we’ve listened intently to those closest to the challenges and solutions shaping our region. Their insights, leadership, and artistic expressions illuminate a just, inclusive future filled with opportunity."

The full report is available at: www.report.stateofthesouth.org

Report Release Event: March 7 in Durham, NC

Please join us for an evening of **arts, food, and conversation** to celebrate the release of MDC’s *2025 State of the South Report*! We’ll hear from the *State of the South* team about developing the report, spend time connecting with friends old and new, and celebrate the work of the local artists. Durham-based songwriter and multidisciplinary storyteller Kamara Thomas will perform and lead attendees in singing a freedom song that she has been spotlighting for her project Country Soul Songbook. NC native storyteller Johnny Lee Chapman III will also perform an original poem at the event.

This event will uplift the themes of the **2022-2024 State of the South convenings** while also envisioning an equitable future for the South.

- **Date:** Friday, March 7, 2025
- **Time:** 5:30 - 8:00 PM EST (Doors open at 5:00 PM)
- **Location:** Ella West Gallery, 104 West Parrish Street, Durham, NC 27701

Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/stateofthesouth2025>

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MDC equips Southern leaders, institutions, and communities with the necessary tools and strategies to advance equity and economic mobility.

For over 50 years, institutions, communities, foundations, and others across the South have turned to MDC for deep knowledge and proven tools to design, demonstrate, and sustain what works to boost members of underinvested communities to higher rungs on the economic ladder.

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