

TOP 20 SOUTHERNERS TO WATCH

PEOPLE

Southern Lights

By Betty Liu

Southerners have long been singled out for their achievements in the US. Think William Faulkner, Andrew Jackson, Hank Williams, Martin Luther King, Jr. Or nowadays, Bill Clinton, Julia Roberts, Ted Turner and Oprah Winfrey.

Who will be next? The FT has canvassed opinion and selected 20 individuals representing the future leaders in business, politics and the arts. Some names are recognisable; others are just dawning on the public consciousness.

All have achieved a level of success – and shown even greater potential. Those outstanding qualities have earned them a place on the FT's first-ever Top 20 Southerners to Watch list.

Needless to say, the selection process was difficult. The FT received a strong pool of candidates, nominated by a distinguished group of panelists who are successful leaders in the South: Professor Jeff Rosensweig, associate dean at the Goizueta Business School of Emory University; Dale Jones, managing partner of the south-east region at Heidrick & Struggles, the executive

recruitment firm; Dr Betty Siegel, president of Kennesaw State University; Ferrel Guillory, director of the Program on Southern Politics, Media and Public Life at the University of North Carolina; William Ferris, senior associate director of the Center for the Study of the American South; and Ellen Dressler Moryl, director of the Piccolo Spoleto Festival.

The Top 20 were selected by a three-person committee chaired by Tom Johnson, former chief executive officer of CNN. Other members were Lionel Barber, US managing editor of the

Financial Times, and Betty Liu, managing editor of Southern Exposure.

Given the enormous pool of talent in the South, the list of choices was narrowed to those born in the original Confederate states of the South, excluding Texas. That inevitably excluded individuals who have also made a tremendous impact on the South. Maybe they will make the next Financial Times list of outstanding individuals.

Research by Jonathan Reingold and Geeta Sundaramoorthy

TOP 20 SOUTHERNERS TO WATCH

MARY LANDRIEU



BORN: Arlington, Virginia
TITLE: US Senator, Louisiana

This first woman senator from Louisiana beat back a tough Republican challenge for her seat in the 2002 election. Destined for a life in politics – her father, Moon Landrieu, was mayor of New Orleans in the 1970s – Ms Landrieu has broken many gender barriers in her political career, including being the first Democratic woman to serve on the Armed Services Committee. Known for her moderate views, Ms Landrieu, 47, opposed the nomination of John Ashcroft as attorney-general. Some political analysts say the senator may run for president in the future.

KENNY LEON



BORN: Tallahassee, Florida
TITLE: Founder, True Colors Theatre Company

The nationally acclaimed actor, producer and director distinguished himself by helping launch the premiere of Elton John's Broadway show *Aida* while serving as the artistic director of Atlanta's legendary Alliance Theatre Company. But Mr Leon, 47, appears poised to make the biggest impact yet as founder of his own national black theatre company. With his stellar credits and national reputation, Mr Leon is out to prove that theatre companies devoted to the African-American canon and other ethnic voices can succeed. His inaugural show, *Fences*, by August Wilson, is set to premiere in October.

SCOTT LIVENGOOD



BORN: Salisbury, North Carolina
TITLE: Chairman, Chief Executive Officer and President, Krispy Kreme Doughnuts

Not since Martha Stewart passed out scones and orange juice at the New York Stock Exchange has an initial public offering created such a stir as Krispy Kreme's in 2000. Leading the charge: Mr Livengood, an unassuming southerner whose business acumen has turned the company's famous glazed doughnuts into one of the hottest stocks of the past three years. Out to prove Krispy Kreme is no flash in the doughnut fryer, Mr Livengood, 50, is quickly expanding to Australia, Canada, Japan and the UK.

BRANFORD MARSALIS



BORN: New Orleans, Louisiana
TITLE: Saxophonist, Music Executive

This world-renowned saxophonist broke onto the global stage in his early 20s with his distinct jazz style and youthful energy. Now 42, Mr Marsalis, winner of three Grammys and numerous other accolades, is starting an ambitious new project: his own record label, Marsalis Music, to nurture a new generation of jazz artists. Besides releasing Mr Marsalis' latest CD, *Footsteps of Our Fathers*, the label has released albums by Harry Connick, Jr and a newcomer from Tennessee, Doug Wamble.

AMY WOODS BRINKLEY



BORN: Franklin, Virginia
TITLE: Chief Risk Officer, Bank of America

Ms Brinkley's work in risk management has catapulted her to one of the most important jobs at Bank of America. Her position puts her in the small club of senior female officers at major financial institutions, and makes her one of the most powerful women in business. Ms Brinkley, 47, is credited with helping turn Bank of America into a leaner, more integrated financial institution after its merger. Bank analysts say Ms Brinkley is a likely candidate to become the first female chief executive of a large US bank.

JOHNNETTA COLE



BORN: Jacksonville, Florida
TITLE: President, Bennett College

Proof that a career does not end at 65, Dr Cole emerged out of retirement last year to help rescue one of only two historically black women's colleges in the US. It is not the first time for the 66-year-old professor: Dr Cole also helped turn Spelman College (the other black college for women) into a top-ranked liberal arts institution over a decade and in turn became a distinguished role model for African-American women. She also made history by becoming the first African-American woman president of Spelman when appointed in 1987.

JOHN DEWBERRY



BORN: Waynesboro, Virginia
TITLE: President/Founder, Dewberry Capital Corp

More than a 130 years after the Civil War destroyed towns and cities across the South, the developers are building them back up. Mr Dewberry, 40, represents a new crop eager to give southern cities striking facelifts, continuing the groundbreaking work of Tom Cousins of Cousins Properties and John Williams of Post Properties. Where previous developers became famous for building skyscrapers, Mr Dewberry is setting his sights on mixed-use projects in the heart of sprawling cities such as Atlanta and Charleston, hoping to create vibrant urban centres.

ELIZABETH DOLE



BORN: Salisbury, North Carolina
TITLE: US Senator, North Carolina

This long-time public servant continues to make history, even at the age of 67. Elected the first woman senator from North Carolina, Mrs Dole has served in the Nixon, Reagan and first Bush administrations in pivotal roles including both labour and transportation secretary. Mrs Dole spent eight years as president of the American Red Cross before seeking the Republican presidential nomination in 1999. Her husband, Bob, the former senator, has given up seeking the Oval office. Mrs Dole will continue to be a big force in the US Senate.

C. RAY NAGIN



BORN: New Orleans, Louisiana
TITLE: Mayor, New Orleans

Cleaning up the Big Easy is no task for the faint of heart, but Mr Nagin, 47, is doing exactly that in his first year as mayor. Elected with no prior public office experience, Mr Nagin is rooting out corruption and cronyism, arresting workers in his own city government, restructuring departments and collecting delinquent taxes from businesses and homeowners. The former senior executive of Cox Communications has done all this while still maintaining an eye for the little things that make the baroque city attractive to businesses and tourists: earlier this year, he announced a \$1m programme to fill the city's 60,000 potholes.

RALPH REED



BORN: Portsmouth, Virginia
TITLE: President, Century Strategies

The rise of the Republican party in the South owes a great deal to Mr Reed. As director of the Christian Coalition, Mr Reed transformed the Christian conservative movement into one of the most powerful forces in American politics. As chairman of the Republican party in Georgia, Mr Reed, 42, helped lead the Republican takeover of state offices, including the governorship. After launching his political consultancy group, Mr Reed was tapped earlier this year as the south-east chairman of George W. Bush's re-election campaign.

H. JEROME RUSSELL



BORN: Atlanta, Georgia
TITLE: President and Chief Operating Officer, H.J. Russell & Co

Presiding over the company his father built, Mr Russell, 41, has helped turn H.J. Russell & Company into the biggest minority-owned real estate developer in the US. With revenues exceeding \$300m, H.J. Russell is also the fourth-largest minority-owned company in the country. Breaking through racial barriers, the company has worked on some of the biggest development projects in Atlanta, including the Georgia Dome, the Georgia-Pacific building and the Carter Presidential Library.

JOHN SHIVER



BORN: Jacksonville, Florida
TITLE: Executive Director and Head, Department of Viral Vaccine Research, Merck

Hired to focus on novel approaches to vaccine development, Dr Shiver, 46, heads a team of researchers developing a vaccine against HIV/AIDS. Dr Shiver is combining forces with Aventis to test a joint vaccine on human beings later in the year. A former fellow at the National Cancer Institute, part of the National Institutes of Health, Dr Shiver also directs research projects on other infectious diseases, including influenza and hepatitis C.

JOHN T. EDGE



BORN: Clinton, Georgia
TITLE: Southern food connoisseur

Perhaps no other aspect of Southern culture is more familiar than its cuisine. In Mr Edge, Southern food has found a devoted advocate. His award-winning books and articles, including *Southern Belly* and *A Gracious Plenty: Recipes and Recollections from the American South*, have taken readers on food tours across the South. While directing the Southern Foodways Alliance at the University of Mississippi, Mr Edge, 40, is also at work on a four-book series chronicling iconic American foods. The first subject: *Fried Chicken: An American Story*.

HAROLD FORD, JR



BORN: Memphis, Tennessee
TITLE: US Representative, Tennessee

Lauded as the face of a new generation of more centrist Democratic political leaders, Mr Ford shot to national prominence last year when he challenged Representative Nancy Pelosi from California for House minority leader. Though he lost, Mr Ford has years to make up for the defeat – at 33, he is the youngest Democrat in Congress. Political watchers say the ambitious Democrat – once selected as one of the 50 sexiest people by *People* magazine – is eyeing a US Senate seat in 2006 and possibly a presidential nomination in the future.

JOHN HUEY



BORN: Atlanta, Georgia
TITLE: Editorial Director, Time Inc

Since his appointment in 2001, Mr Huey has shaken up the mastheads of one of the world's largest magazine companies and, in the process, rejuvenated the publishing arm of AOL Time Warner. The award-winning magazine editor, known for his sharp, intense management style, rattled corporate culture by hiring outsiders to head Time's stable of magazines, which generate nearly \$1bn in profits. Having already been hailed for his work at *Fortune* magazine and *The Wall Street Journal*, Mr Huey, 55, is seen as the likeliest candidate to succeed Norman Pearlstine, Time Inc's editor-in-chief.

SALLIE KRAWCHECK



BORN: New Orleans, Louisiana
TITLE: Chief Executive Officer, Smith Barney

Hand-picked last year by Citigroup's boss, Sanford Weill, Ms Krawcheck is facing the Herculean task of not only restructuring research at Smith Barney, but also helping lead the charge in restoring credibility on Wall Street. Ms Krawcheck is just the woman to do it: she is the former chief executive of Sanford C. Bernstein, which largely escaped the recent conflict-of-interest controversy. Sanford Bernstein is a research-only firm. At just 38, Ms Krawcheck is already one of the most powerful women on Wall Street.

TOM TAYLOR



BORN: Fort Lauderdale, Florida
TITLE: President, Eastern Division, Home Depot

At just 37, Home Depot's youngest division president is also one of its longest employed. Having begun as a Home Depot floor clerk 20 years ago, Mr Taylor is a prime example of working your way up to the corner office. He now leads the biggest unit of the world's largest home improvement retailer, with more than 600 stores under his supervision.

MICHAEL VICK



BORN: Newport News, Virginia
TITLE: Quarterback, Atlanta Falcons

This star quarterback is one of the National Football League's most electrifying players, often called the Michael Jordan of his sport. The 22-year-old has single-handedly put the Atlanta Falcons back on the map and given Atlanta sports fans something to crow about: Mr Vick, the first African-American quarterback taken on as a number one overall draft choice, is already being sought for national commercial endorsements. Though sidelined with a broken leg in August, he is expected to recover fully and continue changing the face of one of America's favourite sports.

JIM WALTON



BORN: Winston-Salem, North Carolina
TITLE: President, CNN News Group

Mr Walton rose to prominence earlier this year when he succeeded Walter Isaacson as head of CNN's news operations. His appointment was hailed by the old CNN guard as a switch back to doing what the cable news network does best: deliver hard news and analysis. Mr Walton, 45, is no softie. He has made some bold, controversial changes, including cancelling Connie Chung's evening show and goading the rival Fox News network by comparing its news programming to a Timex watch: cheap-looking. All eyes are on whether Mr Walton's changes can pull CNN's ratings ahead of Fox.

REESE WITHERSPOON



BORN: Nashville, Tennessee
TITLE: Actress/Producer

Hollywood is always in search of the "next big thing" and in Ms Witherspoon, studio executives may have found a bona fide female star. Commanding \$15m for her return as Elle Woods in the *Legally Blonde* sequel, Ms Witherspoon, 27, is fast approaching the status of the two biggest female box office draws, who are also southern belles: Julia Roberts and Sandra Bullock. Ms Witherspoon's recent films, including *Sweet Home Alabama*, all grossed near or over \$100m.