



People & Politics in America's Big Cities

A transcript from "People and Politics in Los Angeles,"
a conversation about the profound demographic trans-
formation of one of our nation's most diverse cities.

April 15, 2004
Los Angeles, California

DRUM
MAJOR
INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC
POLICY

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SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

Hon. Karen Bass

California State Assembly

Miguel Contreras

Secretary-Treasurer, L.A. County Federation of Labor

Dr. Fernando Guerra

Director, Center for the Study of Los Angeles

John Mollenkopf

Center for Urban Research at City University of New York

Hon. Richard Polanco (RET)

California State Senate

Ricardo Ramirez

University of Southern California

Raphe Sorenshein

*former Executive Director, City of Los Angeles
Charter Reform Commission*

About our host:

Using Los Angeles as a laboratory for understanding the urban experience, the Center for the Study of Los Angeles at Loyola Marymount University has become an academic leader in developing multidisciplinary courses, producing highly regarded applied research, and promoting civic involvement. Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles is the largest Catholic university in Southern California. With a strong base in the liberal arts, the university serves more than 5,300 undergraduates and nearly 3,000 graduate students. For more information, visit the LMU website at www.lmu.edu.

Preface

On April 15, 2004, some of the most compelling individuals in Los Angeles politics—including several current and future opponents—came together to talk about the profound demographic transformation now under way in what is one of our nation’s most diverse and vibrant cities.

The conclusion of the Drum Major Institute’s “People and Politics in America’s Big Cities,” released in May of 2003, was clear: urban democracy is at the crossroads. Significant demographic changes have complicated our electoral landscape. In addition to suburbanization and internal migration, massive immigration has blurred older racial and ethnic boundary lines. The result is a growing gap between the racial and ethnic backgrounds of those who govern and those who are governed by them. Experience has shown that if we fail to confront the nature of this “representation gap” in our cities or take steps to close it, we pay a heavy price.

That’s why the Drum Major Institute and the Center for the Study of Los Angeles at Loyola Marymount University called for a conversation between Los Angeles’ pre-eminent political and community stakeholders on the representation gap and how they are working to create a new, multi-ethnic, and better functioning urban democracy.

In a day-long conversation, we heard three fascinating panel discussions. In this brief, we bring you the transcript of the first panel with Hon. Karen Bass, community activist and newly elected California State Assembly Member; Miguel Contreras, the powerful Secretary-Treasurer of the L.A. County Federation of Labor; Hon. Richard Polanco, former State Senator who played an instrumental role in the ascension of Latinos to higher office; and, Dr. Raphael Sonenshein of California State University, Fullerton, who formerly directed the Charter Reform Commission for the City of Los Angeles. Dr. Fernando Guerra, nationally recognized for his work in urban and ethnic politics, moderated the discussion. John Mollenkopf, author of the “People and Politics” report, and Ricardo Ramirez, of the University of Southern California, began the conversation with presentations on the state of Los Angeles.

The conversation between these talented leaders is informative, insightful, and entertaining. We hope that you will enjoy it. Also included in this compilation is the executive summary from the “People and Politics” report. For more information about the report or conferences in Los Angeles and New York, please visit www.drummajorinstitute.org.

Andrea Batista Schlesinger

Executive Director

DRUM MAJOR INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY

People & Politics in Los Angeles

April 15, 2004
Loyola Marymount University

Moderator: Dr. Fernando J. Guerra
Director, Center for the Study of Los Angeles

- 1:30 – 1:45 **Welcome & Introductions**
Rev. Robert B. Lawton, S.J. *President, Loyola Marymount University*
Hon. Fernando Ferrer *President, Drum Major Institute for Public Policy*
- 1:45 – 2:15 **Presentation of findings from “People & Politics in America’s Big Cities”**
Dr. John Mollenkopf *Center for Urban Research at City University of New York*
Dr. Ricardo Ramirez *University of Southern California*
- 2:15 – 4:00 **Panel #1: Populations and Politics in Los Angeles**
How do we close the representation gap in L.A. today?

 PANELISTS
Karen Bass *California State Assembly, 47th District*
Miguel Contreras *Secretary-Treasurer, L.A. County Federation of Labor*
Hon. Richard Polanco (RET) *California State Senate*
Dr. Raphael Sonenshein *former Executive Director, City of Los Angeles*
Charter Reform Commission
- 4:15 – 6:00 **Panel #2: Los Angeles in 2010**
How do we create coalitions for a future multi-cultural city?

 PANELISTS
Hon. Richard Alarcón *California State Senate*
Hon. Robert Hertzberg *Speaker Emeritus, California State Assembly*
Mónica Lozano *Publisher & President, La Opinión*
Hon. Michael Woo *former L.A. City Council Member*
- 6:00 – 7:00 **Latino leaders on the past, present and future.**
A conversation with...
Hon. Cruz Bustamante *Lt. Governor, State of California*
Hon. Fernando Ferrer *former candidate for Mayor of New York City*
Hon. Antonio Villaraigosa *L.A. City Council*

Panelists and Speakers

Hon. Richard Alarcón

Richard Alarcón is the Majority Whip of the California State Senate. In 1993, Richard Alarcón was elected to serve on the Los Angeles City Council representing the residents of the Northeast San Fernando Valley in the 7th District. In 1998, he was elected to the California State Senate. Today, he is serving his second term in the State Senate representing nearly 1 million residents of the 20th Senate District in the heart of the San Fernando Valley. Prior to that, Senator Richard Alarcón was a teacher, community activist, and community leader on issues regarding workers' rights and benefits.

Hon. Karen Bass

A lifelong resident of South Los Angeles, Karen Bass is the recently elected Assembly nominee for the 47th district, and has dedicated her life and work to social justice and humanitarian efforts. In 1990 Karen Bass founded Community Coalition and has been the Executive Director for 13 years. Community Coalition is a grassroots, community based organization dedicated to improving the quality of life in South Los Angeles. Community Coalition formed in response to the crack epidemic that hit South LA in the late 1980's. Karen also helped to convene and create the 8th District Empowerment Congress, a model for L.A.'s Neighborhood Council program.

Hon. Cruz Bustamante

Cruz M. Bustamante became the first Latino to hold a statewide office in California in over 100 years when he was elected lieutenant governor in 1998. Prior to that position, Bustamante served as a California assemblyman and he was the first Latino speaker of the state assembly. Throughout this career Bustamante has supported the agricultural and immigrant communities of California, particularly in his home district of Fresno. He has promoted better education, environmental responsibility, and racial tolerance and diversity during his two terms as lieutenant governor. He is a low-profile politician who has earned a reputation as someone who works hard and who is not afraid to address controversial issues.

Miguel Contreras

Miguel Contreras was the first Latino elected leader of the 107-year-old Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO, comprising 350 local unions and more than 800,000 union members. Contreras has made the "100 Most Influential Hispanics" list published in Hispanic Business Magazine in 2001, 2002 and 2003. His leadership caught the eye of UFW founder Cesar Chavez, who asked Contreras to join the union staff. He spent more than two years in Toronto, Canada organizing the grape boycott and returned to organize farm workers for union elections under the just passed California Agricultural Labor Relations Act. Chavez trained Contreras to be a UFW negotiator. For 14 years Contreras organized and helped rebuild Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE) locals in Nevada, New York and Los Angeles.

Hon. Fernando Ferrer

Fernando Ferrer is recognized nationally as an architect for revitalizing American cities. During his 14-year tenure as Borough President of The Bronx, Mr. Ferrer designed and oversaw the largest urban rebuilding effort in the country—transforming what was once a national symbol of urban decay into an international model for urban revival. On Mr. Ferrer’s watch, over 66,000 small homes and apartments were built, over 34,000 new jobs were created by hundreds of new businesses and over 2.5 billion dollars were invested in institutional renewal and growth. In 1997, the Bronx revival was recognized by the National Civic League with the prestigious All America City Award. Since 2001, Mr. Ferrer has served as President of the Drum Major Institute, a non-profit, progressive policy organization dedicated to economic and social justice.

Dr. Fernando J. Guerra

Dr. Guerra earned his Ph.D. and M.A. in Political Science from the University of Michigan, and his B.A. in International Relations, with a University Certificate in Latin American Studies, from the University of Southern California in 1980. Guerra has written several scholarly articles and has also contributed to popular publications. His area of scholarly work is in state and local politics and urban and ethnic politics. He is currently working on a book on the political empowerment of Latinos in California. Previously, Dr. Guerra served as a Mayoral appointee to the Board of Transportation Commissioners and served on the Board of the Rent Adjustment Commission for the City of Los Angeles. Dr. Guerra is also currently a general partner of Guerra & Associates, which provides strategic planning for political, civic, business and non-profit entities.

Hon. Robert Hertzberg

Robert Hertzberg is a partner in the government relations practice of the Los Angeles office of international law firm Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw and has also worked as a consultant to LAEDC. Prior to that Robert Hertzberg served as Chairman of the Assembly Committee on Public Safety from 1997 to 1998, Chairman of the Assembly’s powerful Rules Committee from 1998 to 2000, and eventually as Speaker of the Assembly from 2000 to 2002. His legislative efforts have had an impact on a wide range of issues critical to the well being of all Californians, including public education, distribution of water resources, law enforcement, health and social welfare, energy policy, and improving the effectiveness of our public institutions.

Mónica C. Lozano

Mónica C. Lozano is the Publisher and President of *La Opinión* and is responsible for the day-to-day management of the newspaper overseeing the Marketing, Advertising, Editorial, and Business Development and Finance departments. She has been with *La Opinión* since 1985, having previously served as Associate Publisher, Editor and President prior to being named Publisher. Lozano is also Vice President of Lozano Communications, Inc., the parent company of *La Opinión*.

Dr. John Mollenkopf

John Mollenkopf is professor of Political Science and Sociology at the CUNY Graduate Center and director of its Center for Urban Research. He has authored or edited seven books on urban politics, urban policy, the politics of urban development, and New York City, including *A Phoenix In The Ashes: The Rise and Fall of the Koch Coalition in New York City Politics* (Princeton 1994). He has also served on the Urban Affairs Review editorial board, the executive committee of the Urban Politics Section of the American Political Science Association, and the executive committee of the International Center for Migration, Ethnicity, and Citizenship at the New School University, and has been an expert witness on racial and ethnic voting patterns before the New York City Districting Commission in 1991 and the Charter Revision Commission in 1988-89. He is currently researching educational attainment, labor market outcomes, and political and civic involvement among second generation immigrant and native minority young adults in the New York metropolitan area.

Hon. Richard Polanco

Senator Richard G. Polanco was elected to the California Senate in 1994 where he served as Senate Majority Leader representing the 22nd District (Los Angeles). Prior to his election to the Senate, Mr. Polanco served eight years in the state Assembly. During his tenure in the legislature Senator Polanco has been a leader, particularly in the areas of education, healthcare, children's issues, prison reform, water resources, transportation and technology. Senator Polanco has been a tireless advocate for business and for equal opportunity in contracting for women, minority and veteran owned businesses.

Dr. Ricardo Ramirez

Ricardo Ramírez is an assistant professor in the Department of Political Science and the Program in American Studies and Ethnicity at the University of Southern California. He is also an Adjunct Fellow at the Public Policy Institute of California in San Francisco, CA. His research interests include state and local politics, political behavior, Latino politics and the politics of race and ethnicity, especially as they relate to participation, mobilization, and political incorporation. His writings include co-authoring "Minority Participation and the California Recall: Latino, Black and Asian Voting Trends, 1990-2003," (with M. Barreto); "Citizens by Choice, Voters by Necessity: Patterns in Political Mobilization by Naturalized Latinos," (with A. Pantoja and G. Segura), "Latino Political Incorporation in California, 1990-2000" (with L. Fraga), and "Unquestioned Influence: Latinos and the 2000 Election in California" (with L. Fraga and G. Segura).

Dr. Raphael Sonenshein

Raphael J. Sonenshein received his B.A. in public policy from Princeton University, and his M.A. and Ph.D. in political science from Yale University, and is currently professor of political science at California State University, Fullerton. He has written extensively on the politics and governance of Los Angeles, particularly the relationships among racial and ethnic groups. His book *Politics in Black and White: Race and Power in Los Angeles* (Princeton University Press, 1993) received the 1994 Ralph J. Bunche Award from the American Political Science Association as the best political science book of the year on the subject of racial and ethnic pluralism. Between 1997 and 1999 Dr. Sonenshein served as Executive Director of the City of Los Angeles Charter Reform Commission. In 1999, he was selected as consultant to the City of Pasadena Charter Reform Task Force on School District Governance. His latest book, *The City at Stake: Secession, Reform, and the Battle for Los Angeles*, will be published in 2004 by Princeton University Press.

Hon. Antonio Villaraigosa

The newly elected City Council member for Los Angeles' 14th District, Antonio Villaraigosa made local history on March 4, 2003, by becoming the first modern candidate to defeat an incumbent in a primary election. But that was hardly his first accomplishment. Antonio has devoted his entire life to building community through civic action. He was elected to the California State Assembly in 1994 representing the 45th District in the heart of Los Angeles. His tenure in the legislature has been described as "meteoric." As a freshman he was elected Assembly Democratic Whip and two years later Majority Leader. In 1998, he was elected Speaker of the Assembly. As Speaker, the first from Los Angeles in 25 years, Antonio was widely credited with re-establishing the stature of the State Assembly, restoring civility to that body and fostering an unprecedented era of bipartisanship. On July 1, 2003, Antonio took office as the Los Angeles City Council member representing the 14th District which includes the east side and northeast L.A. communities where he was raised and has lived for most of his life.

Hon. Michael Woo

Michael Woo was the first Asian American elected to the Los Angeles City Council. Mr. Woo served as a legislative aide to former State Senate Majority Leader David Roberti, and then was elected to two terms on the L.A. City Council representing Hollywood and surrounding neighborhoods. As the first trained urban planner elected to the Los Angeles City Council, Woo was active on many planning issues, including authorship of the Hollywood Redevelopment Plan, MetroRail Red Line station siting, affordable housing design, mini-mall restrictions, pedestrian rights, and historic preservation. After leaving City Hall, Mr. Woo was head of the Los Angeles office of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), the nation's largest non-profit financial intermediary in the affordable housing and community development field, where he promoted new initiatives in neighborhood development, health care, and technology access.

Transcript

Presentation of findings from “People & Politics in America’s Big Cities”

John Mollenkopf: My name is John Mollenkopf and with Ricardo Ramirez we’ll be presenting the findings of *People and Politics in America’s Big Cities* and the additional work that Ricardo and Matt Barreto have done to extend the findings of the report to the Los Angeles case...¹

Perhaps a couple of weeks ago you might have seen an article in the *Los Angeles Times* showing that Los Angeles County had received the single largest growth in population of any county in the United States. And moreover, that nearby counties—Orange County, Riverside, San Diego County—were also in the top ten. That population growth is partly through natural increase, with more people being born than dying, but it also reflects the strong level of immigration to Southern California. In fact, the City and County of Los Angeles are really ground zero for the demographic changes that have been taking place in urban America.

Our challenge is to understand how our democratic system will adapt to these changes. Will we continue to have a government that is truly of the people and by the people and for the people? We are seriously at risk at this point that the governance of both New York City and the city and county of Los Angeles doesn’t truly reflect who is living in those places.

It’s a major challenge to understand what this gap in representation might be and how we’re going to respond to it and that was what motivated our study. And really we think of two kinds of representation gaps that have opened up in urban America since World War II. The first took place in cities that were experiencing basically a white to black or, less commonly, a white to Latino transition. That was a very difficult transition for American cities to make as we reflect on the level of urban rioting in the 1960’s and the trauma that

occurred in the subsequent years. And Los Angeles, of course, also experienced some of that in the civil disorders that have taken place. But that transition has largely run its course and cities that are going to become majority black already have become majority black.

Now there’s another kind of transition taking place in cities like New York and Los Angeles, where they’re getting less white but not necessarily more black. They’re getting much more diverse instead. And that creates its own specific sort of challenges that are the subject of our study here.

In the earlier period, from 1950 to 1980, as cities like St. Louis or Atlanta or Detroit were going from majority white to majority black, there was a period of decline, of disinvestment, a feeling that at least some people were abandoning the city and that there was a threat in the growth of the minority populations. And for a number of decades there were cities that were governed by whites that had rising and even substantially majority minority populations, creating conflict or a democratic deficit if you will. And that set the stage for a long period of struggle to elect minority mayors, to elect city councils that were more representative of their city’s population. Now the biggest cities with majority minority metros as of 1980 are cities that are all familiar to you: Atlanta, Washington, Detroit, Newark, New Orleans, Baltimore. Many of them succeeded in electing minority mayors in the early to mid to late 1970’s. Not all of them of course. That was slower to happen in the predominantly Latino metropolitan areas. For example, in San Antonio, Henry Cisneros did not become mayor until 1981. But there’s a different kind of struggle going on now. In other cities that are not experiencing this binary white to black type of transition, white populations are also declining.

The native born non-Hispanic white population of both New York City and Los Angeles are less than a quarter of the total populations of those

¹ The transcript from this event has been edited for length and readability.

cities today. But neither city is getting more black. In fact, the native born black populations of both New York and Los Angeles have also been declining along with the white population and for many of the same reasons: people are doing better, they're moving off to the suburbs, they're less likely to live in the city. In New York City, the Puerto Rican population has also been declining. But, these cities are growing rapidly in population. New York has not grown as fast as Los Angeles but it has been growing because of the impact of immigration, mostly from Asia and Latin America. In the case of New York, people are also coming from the Anglophone Caribbean, from the West Indies. They're coming from the former Soviet Union.

This has opened up a new kind of representation gap similar to the old black/white gap that we faced in the 1960s and 1970s with the people who are elected to office representing groups that were preponderant twenty years ago or thirty years ago. There is very little representation of the new groups that are rapidly growing. If you look at the most diverse metro areas, not like the first group that were predominantly black or Latino cities in their transition—New York, Los Angeles, Jersey City, Houston, Oakland, minority empowerment where it has happened has come much later in these cities and none of them has yet elected a Latino mayor. The City of Los Angeles and the County of Los Angeles are very good examples of this. There are statistics from the 1990 and 2000 census showing that the county grew and showing that the white population contracted very considerably from 3.6 million to 2.9 million in that decade for the county as a whole. And the black population also declined. And so there was tremendous growth in the Latino and Asian population and those populations became more diverse.

Now, why does this representation gap emerge in cities like Los Angeles? First of all, the new immigrants are not citizens. They can't vote. They're

younger populations. Even if the birth rate is high, we're still waiting for the second generation to fully grow into its citizenship... Even the new Americans from these immigrant groups who naturalize and become citizens are less likely to vote. They tend to be less educated than the native-born and less likely to be homeowners, which is strongly associated with an awareness of tax issues and turning out to vote. They're less likely to speak English at home, and politics is still largely conducted in English. Many of the new immigrants are surrounded by people who are not citizens so they're also less likely to have the friends and neighbors effect getting them to turn out. The political establishment—elected officials, parties, the mass media—are less likely to beam their messages towards these audiences. They see them as less likely to turn out and of course we know in politics that people spend money on constituents that are prime voters who are certain to turn out, and less likely to focus on people that they're less familiar with. Taken altogether, this has created the new representation gap that's opened up in cities like New York and Los Angeles...

Now I'm going to hand off to my colleague, Ricardo Ramirez from the University of Southern California, who's going to take us through some of the most recent political experiences by these groups.

Ricardo Ramirez: Thank you. John did a great job at telling a story of change in the electorate. Well what about the representatives? Has there been change? And I want to take you through a few slides that show what's happened recently since the mayoral election to take in consideration how the demographics are beginning to impact the representation.

Going into the 2001 mayoral race there were two assumptions: One, it's going to be a close race between Hahn² and Soboroff³, and the second

² James K. Hahn ultimately won the Los Angeles mayoral race in 2001. A former Los Angeles City Attorney and City Controller, Hahn is the son of popular Los Angeles politician Kenneth Hahn.

³ Steven Soboroff, a real estate businessman and the only Republican in the primary, placed third in the mayoral race.

assumption was that Villaraigosa⁴ and Becerra⁵ would split the very small Latino vote and that the runoff would be between Hahn and Soboroff. Well, the first assumption was partly true. It was a very tight race between Hahn and Soboroff. But what wasn't expected was that the Latino electorate would rally behind Antonio Villaraigosa and that he would actually come up as a frontrunner out of the primary. In terms of the runoff, we end up seeing that there was a polarization of the ethnic vote, but that Latinos very much supported Antonio Villaraigosa even more than they did in the first race.

As the population in these precincts increases the percent support for Antonio grew exponentially as well. So the story for the mayoral primary was that there was some racial or ethnic polarization. During the primary, blacks and Latinos did rally behind a particular candidate: Blacks rallied around James Hahn and Latinos rallied around Villaraigosa, 71 percent, 62 percent respectively. Whites and Asians split their vote among all of the candidates. They didn't rally around a particular candidate. Well, what happened to this ethnic polarization in the runoffs? It actually increased. We see that blacks and Latinos voted even more cohesively for Hahn and Villaraigosa with 80 and 82 percent respectively but Asians and non-Jewish whites, rather than splitting their votes the way they did in the primary, actually rallied around Hahn at 65 percent and 62 percent for Asians and non-Jewish whites. We see that the only significant segment of the electorate that split their vote was the Jewish vote, with 46 percent for Villaraigosa and 54 percent for Hahn.

There were some assumptions during the California recall of what was to happen as well. And these were somewhat similar but just flip-flopped. The assumption was Schwarzenegger

and McClintock⁶ would split the Republican and the white vote, leaving the remaining Democratic and Latino vote going for Bustamante⁷, letting him win at least the second part of the question. What actually ended up happening was that it was the white vote that overwhelmed black and Latino support for Cruz Bustamante. This is specifically in Los Angeles County but it's a very similar story that we see taking shape in the entire state. So whites voted overwhelmingly against Bustamante and in favor of Schwarzenegger and blacks and Latinos for Bustamante.... The story with Asians was very interesting in that they were the one segment of the electorate that didn't rally around a particular candidate...

So the story to be told is that Latinos were taking more of an active role and that the population [increase] did create opportunities in combination with redistricting, for candidates to run in certain districts and increase the representation of blacks and Latinos in the city of Los Angeles. What we notice is that, out of the fifteen City Council districts, nine of them are 80 percent or more minority population. In eight of those nine, Latinos are half the population. So there's a lot of potential for Latinos to increase their representation at the city level in Los Angeles.

Unlike the mayoral race where you had a lot of competition in racially polarized voting in terms of preference for candidates, we see that in the municipal elections of 2003 the competition was more within the groups rather than across groups. So the competition was more evident when it was a black running against a black, a Latino running against a Latino. And we also noticed that when quality challengers come up you actually see a response by the electorate, by Latinos, by blacks, in terms of participating more.... Those elections where you had blacks running against other blacks

⁴ Antonio Villaraigosa, former State Assembly Speaker, won the plurality (30%) of the primary vote. No candidate won the majority, however, so a run-off election was held leading to Hahn's victory.

⁵ US Representative Xavier Becerra.

⁶ Republican State Senator Tom McClintock.

⁷ California Lieutenant Governor Cruz Bustamante.

and it was a very competitive race there was higher turnout and the same was true when Villaraigosa was running against the incumbent, Pacheco⁸. If we turn to the County of Los Angeles, there is also that potential but now you're expanding the universe and expanding the geographic area in which you want to try to expand the representation. But there are fewer positions. It's only a five-seat board of supervisors and while there is potential for a second Latino seat, whites hold three out of the five seats and Latinos hold one seat and African Americans hold the other.

Now we look ... at the hundred most significant positions in Los Angeles and we see that some of the possibilities that John alluded to in terms of the demographics and whether it's going to have an impact on representation is beginning to take shape. In 1990, Latinos held 14 out of the hundred most significant positions; African Americans had 16 of those positions and whites held the vast majority of those at 68. We see that Latinos witnessed a growth in this 14-year period of 16 overall positions. They went from 14 to 30. Blacks lost two positions, Asians picked up two and whites lost 16. So there was basically a shift and though it wasn't one for one, there was a reallocation of these hundred most significant positions. What does this tell us about Los Angeles County in general, and, in particular, the City of Los Angeles? Well, demographics do have a potential to change the electorate. Demographics also have the potential to impact representation. We see some of that taking shape but we still have that representation gap that John alluded to. This raises some questions. Will this lead to more coalitions among different groups or increase divisions? It's a story yet to be seen. But what is clear is that both the political parties and civic institutions need to take steps necessary to expanding the increasing Latino and Asian population in terms of what percent they are of the electorate so that you don't have that representation gap that we currently see.

⁸ In 2002, Antonio Villaraigosa unseated Councilman Nick Pacheco in an intense race.

⁹ Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley was part of the first crop of African American mayors in major American cities. He governed the city from 1973 to 1993, supported by an electoral coalition of African Americans, liberal whites, and Jewish voters.

Fernando Guerra: Thank you, gentlemen. On our first panel are former Senator Richard Polanco, Assembly Member-elect Karen Bass, head of the AFL-CIO in Los Angeles County, Miguel Contreras, and Professor Raphe Sonenshein from California State University, Fullerton, who has written several books on Los Angeles, including "Politics in Black and White," which was about the Bradley coalition⁹ and then also his new book on charter reform is due, I believe, in July. We're going to have Raphe come up here and actually give a quick presentation and then we'll have all four panelists come up. Raphe also served as the executive director of the charter reform effort here in Los Angeles. Professor Raphe Sonenshein...

Raphe Sonenshein: Hello everybody. I was on the phone at noon today with Fernando saying, what should I do as a panelist? And he said panelists give a talk. So, if it's a little bit less than coherent don't hold it against me. Basically, a lot of the work being done here is part of a very exciting development, which is the comparison between New York City and Los Angeles... We're really looking at two completely different cities that are very similar. The communities are very similar, the political systems are very different and the question is: what impact does that have on the political incorporation of immigrant and other communities?

Well, Los Angeles really is different. Los Angeles is non-partisan. Those of you visiting from New York have no idea. Los Angeles really has no political party organizations. All of the organizations are at the state level. There's really nothing local. And also, there is low interest in politics. You really have no idea if you're from a city with four or so daily newspapers that actually think things happen at City Hall and cover it. In Los Angeles, when you talk to someone, it's hard enough for them to know if they live in Los

Angeles let alone what is going on in City Hall. If you live in Santa Monica, you're not voting in Los Angeles city elections. This often comes as a big disappointment to voters when they get all riled up and discover they have no voice.

Politics competes with numerous other things out here. It dominates New York City. It does not dominate Los Angeles. New York City has a 51-member City Council, Los Angeles has 15, and I can tell you as someone who tried to increase the size of the City Council, it's going to stay fifteen... But, at the same time, what's odd about Los Angeles is it has all these openings and opportunities for success for minority politicians that are often not true in New York City, which is what a lot of my work has gone into, which is how we ended up with the strongest biracial coalition probably in the history of urban America, which was Tom Bradley's coalition, and for five terms it was a very dominating and successful coalition, while New York City had great difficulty electing an African American mayor and that mayor did not stay in office more than one term. So I think what we want to look at is opportunities and doors that are opened and doors that are closed.

What you don't have in Los Angeles is the organized political system to go and grab new people and bring them in. What you also don't have in Los Angeles is an organized political system to stop people from getting in and that is the good news and the bad news — or the bad news and the good news — depending on how you put it. Now within all this, immigration has changed everything politically, and in that sense the two cities are very similar. All of the old patterns change, new patterns have come in, but we don't know what the new patterns are yet. It used to be we knew who was who. In Los Angeles, black voters and Jewish voters were the liberal voters. Latino voters were also usually in that camp. And white non-Jews were the conservatives and they fought every four years. It was very normal. You could do whole research curves on it and you could go away for a while and come back and the same thing would be happening.

But immigration has changed everything. Immigration has taken an atom where you knew where the protons and the electrons were and it has cracked it open and sent everybody off spinning into different places. I don't know much about physics, but normally things come back but in a different shape. So what happened is Los Angeles hasn't become formless, it's just become different. It still has coherence but not the old coherence. Among the things that have changed is Latinos and here's one place where I disagree a little bit about the notion that Latinos are not succeeding in Los Angeles politics. I actually think the group that is not succeeding in Los Angeles politics are Asian Americans, who are suffering the greatest lack of representation...

Here's what's been going on if you look at the voters in Los Angeles. One group is leaving and being replaced by another group. Who's leaving? White Republicans. Who's taking their place? Latino voters. I just summarized for you Los Angeles politics over the last 15 years because it changes everything. I'll give you some quick numbers if I can remember them well enough. White Republicans cast 30 percent of all votes in Los Angeles when Richard Riordan was elected Mayor in 1993. In 2001, they cast 20 percent of all votes. That's a big change. They're moving out. They're no longer in a position to dominate the system, they're simply one piece of the system. Jewish voters didn't move out. Jews represented 18 percent of the voters in Richard Riordan land and 19 in 2001. Republicans are leaving, Jewish voters are staying, and those two groups are not the same. There's too much of a tendency to lump white voters together. They're very far apart. But Latino voters went from ten percent of all voters in the Riordan election to 22 percent in 2001. It's a simple mathematical thing where once there were Republicans there are now Latinos. And what does that mean? It means that Los Angeles is now an irredeemably, irrevocably, and I've run out of words beginning with the letters "I, R" Democratic city, a city that had historically — much more than New York had in a sense — two sides contesting, always a

Republican in the runoff for mayor. I don't know if we'll ever again see a Republican in the runoff for mayor. It's going to be two Democrats from now on. But that doesn't mean we know what kind of Democrats we've got or what kind of coalitions will form.

The more I look around at the coalitions I see in Los Angeles, I've come up with the phrase "mix and match coalitions." It depends on who you're running against. It depends on what the framework of the election is. There are many possibilities. You could say, well, a coalition of color should be the way to go because in any particular election, African Americans voted for the same candidate. Where there was such a race, Rocky Delgadillo getting elected City Attorney in 2001, the one group he didn't have were Jewish voters but it might have something to do with the fact that he was running against a very well known Jewish candidate, Mike Feuer, who had a lock on that group. You could say, well really what we need is the old Bradley alliance back, but led by Latinos instead of African Americans. Well, then you've got the Villaraigosa campaign of 2001. Latinos voted for Villaraigosa, so did liberal Jewish voters, but not African American voters.

So do those two things contradict each other? I only have to tell you one thing: those elections were on the same ballot. They weren't four years apart. The same people went to the polls and generated two completely different coalitions. But each coalition made sense in its own right. The fact of the matter is, we're not sure where things are going and, pressed as I always am to announce the death of the Bradley coalition, which needless to say I'm reluctant to do, I've been driving this car for a long time and, you know, it's a 1973 model and it seems like it still should run, so I've been willing to neglect evidence of its decline. Well finally I came around a few years ago and started telling people, all right, all right, all right, I'm trading this thing in. This sucker is dead. There is

no Bradley coalition. The moment I say that, we hold the election on secession.¹⁰ And the secession election generates a new version of that old 1973 car, called the Tom Bradley coalition. Who votes no on secession? It's all the people who voted yes on Tom Bradley against Sam Yorty.¹¹ It's the same people: Jewish voters, Latino voters, African American voters. Who votes for it? Those remaining Republicans in the northwestern San Fernando Valley. So now I'm trying to see if I can get that car to drive a little bit more but of course I'm discovering you can't do that because that's just another one of the mix and match pieces out there now. Sometimes the pieces come back like that. Sometimes they come back a different way.

But how does this all relate to the biggest problem we're hearing about today, which is participation and exclusion, the rise of immigration and the politics of immigration leading to a huge gap between population and participation? Seeing it from where I see it, Latinos look to me to be closer to their registration, unfortunately, than their population in terms of representation. They've crossed the first boundary of greater representation than voter registration but that's still not great. I look at Asian Americans and I realize that with City Council districts that have a quarter of a million people you will never elect an Asian American council member without a quirky development that's hard to predict of just the right candidate at just the right time and I find that quite discouraging.

Now people tell me that Los Angeles has a City Council that is too small, if you'd only fix those little structural things. Well we spent two years on charter reform and we fixed a lot of structural things, some of which I think may actually hold some answers to some of the problems that we're talking about. The one we thought would have the most impact was increasing the size of the City Council. You may not know there were two charter reform commissions... I don't recommend that to

¹⁰ In 2002, Los Angeles residents defeated a ballot proposal under which the San Fernando Valley would have seceded from the City of Los Angeles.

¹¹ Mayor of Los Angeles from 1961-1973. Faced with a challenge from then-Councilman Tom Bradley in 1969, Yorty played the race card—claiming that Bradley would be elected by a "black block vote."

my friends in New York. But we agreed on having a larger City Council, we just couldn't agree on the number because we didn't want their number, they didn't want our number. So we put them both on the ballot and the voters, however, did agree. They hated both of them. They voted two to one against increasing the size of the City Council. The only group that gave us a majority vote for that, by the way, was Jewish voters who had absolutely nothing at stake in the increase of the size of the City Council. It didn't draw a ton of support from black voters or white conservative voters. So that's a dead idea. Voters in California hate politicians and they hate government leaders. They don't know how large the Council is by the way but they are quite convinced that it's exactly the right size. That's what our polling found. Nobody actually knew how big the Council was, which could lead to some cynical strategies for expanding the Council that I will leave unsaid.

We did, however, create a couple of other things that may help. One is a system of neighborhood councils... One reason we designed neighborhood councils that were advisory and not decision making was that we wanted non-citizens to have the opportunity to participate. If they had been formal decision making bodies, they would have had to have formal elections and the California forbids non-citizens to vote. So we explicitly wanted bodies that were established to keep the Valley happy and to actually have a big impact in the areas of low citizenship so that people could participate. Secondly, we created area planning commissions, which I hope some day will become boroughs, even though that's kind of a dirty word at City Hall right now. If you have boroughs there's a chance you will begin to elect more local people, provide more avenues of participation and that may make up for having too small a City Council right now.

The fact of the matter is, at the end of the day it'll be smart people in politics who realize the potential unmobilized power of people who are not currently in politics and will pull them in and it may be that the greatest way to do that will be

through unrestrained, vicious, mean, political competition, where in close races people think "Maybe I should actually register some voters. Maybe get some people to become citizens." And that's something I think we should all encourage.

Fernando Guerra: Thanks, Raphe. And now we're going to have our other guests, Karen Bass, Richard Polanco, Miguel Contreras come on up here and we're going to talk about mixing and matching. And as Miguel's making his way up I'm going to ask him a question so he can think — don't trip though, Miguel. OK? In this mixing and matching of coalitions in Los Angeles, where does labor fit in? And Karen, while you're walking over here, in this mixing and matching of coalitions, what kind of coalition did you put together in your primary election? For those of you who don't know who the individuals are up here: of course we've met already Professor Raphe Sonenshein. To his right is Senator Richard Polanco, who's been involved in Los Angeles politics for a long time as an elected State Assembly Member and then an elected State Senator and he was Majority Leader in the State Senate for quite a while. He retired two years ago to pursue other ventures. He is one of my heroes for his ability to orchestrate, to prompt and to mobilize individuals to be able to get elected. Then next to Raphe on his left is Miguel Contreras, one of the most significant local labor leaders in America. He heads up the AFL-CIO of Los Angeles County. He's got the title of Secretary Treasurer, but he's really the head honcho of Los Angeles County. And next to him is Karen Bass, one of our own in terms of her paying tuition here at LMU because her daughter's currently a sophomore or a—?

Karen Bass: —Junior.

Fernando Guerra: And Karen has just recently won the Democratic nomination to the 47th Assembly District in a very interesting election. So why don't we start off Miguel with some comments and then also your response to the role of labor in these mixing and matching of what Raphe was talking about? Miguel...

Miguel Contreras: Good afternoon and thank you Dr. Guerra for inviting me to participate. In terms of the opportunities in mixing and matching, clearly we have to look at the recent elections since term limits took place here in the city of Los Angeles and in the state of California. I think term limits have provided us with an opportunity to make changes here that I don't think would have happened without the term limits kicking in. Term limits in the State Assembly are six years and in the State Senate, eight years and in the City Council of Los Angeles, another eight years. Term limits did provide us an opportunity to elect people and have better representation.

My background is in organized labor at the L.A. County Federation of Labor and we clearly are looking for candidates who would do the best representation of working families in Los Angeles. We're out there doing candidate recruitment, voter registration, get out the vote efforts and, of course, raising the necessary funds to run effective campaigns. But I want to talk to you about three areas that we've really been involved in. One was using the Latino vote in different areas. I want to explain that our [priority] is electing good Latino candidates in predominantly Latino districts and again term limits give us a great opportunity to do that. You know, we do have in these different races good candidates who come from predominantly Latino districts. People like [State Assembly Members] Fabian Nuñez, Marco Firebaugh, Ed Chavez, Cindy Montañez, primarily real Latino districts. Also on the State Senate side you have Gil Cedillo, Escutia, Rich Alarcón, Gloria Romero, again, from safe Democratic seats but then you have the second phase of that: people who are crossover candidates. Crossover candidates [are] Latinos who have been elected in areas that are not primarily Latino. People like Dario Frommer or Jenny Oropeza who have been successful in getting crossover votes electing them even though they have Spanish surnames and [are running in] areas that are not predominantly Hispanic.

The third area we concentrated on was the Latino vote in swing districts and we did that primarily

in the year 2000 in the congressional seats here in Los Angeles County where we targeted three races: Adam Schiff running against Jay Rogan in the Pasadena area, south of here Jane Harman ran against Steve Kuykendall, and a little south-east of here, Steve Horn and Gerrie Schipske. And Latinos are not a voting block in those areas but they did represent anywhere between 10 to 12 percent in each district. We knew each of these elections historically had been won by two or three percentage points. So we launched a major campaign to make sure we got voter registration to get out the Latino vote in these areas and we were very successful. Harman beat an incumbent and Adam Schiff beat an incumbent and Gerrie Schipske lost to Steve Horn, a ten-year Congress Member by one percentage point. It was so close that when they redistricted, the Republicans gave up on that seat and now it's held by Loretta Sanchez. So again in that case it wasn't a predominantly Latino district, it was by using the Latino vote that we knew would make a difference in these close elections.

Lately we've been working on electing African American candidates who will understand Latino issues. So in the last cycle of elections at City Hall we launched a campaign on behalf of Martin Ludlow, who comes out of a labor background and has worked really hard in the Latino community and we helped put him in office and of course, more recently our good sister to my left here, is always to my left, Karen Bass. Karen Bass has always worked well with the Latino community. Electing African Americans who have close ties to Latino community and to organized labor and to address those issues [is a priority] because clearly the fight in the future in terms of transition is going to be in some of those African American congressional seats where Maxine Waters, where Diane Watson, Juanita Millender-McDonald hold seats right now. Population-wise most of them now are Latino seats and voter registration-wise it's a matter of time before they become predominately Latino. So the question is, how's labor going to help with this transition? My druthers are to elect people like we just did

with Martin and Karen who really understand Latino issues.

We look at Alex Padilla, the President of City Council, Fabian Nuñez, the Speaker of the California State Assembly—Latinos here in Los Angeles have done very well for themselves. Clearly there's more room to grow to match our population but I think we're on the move as long as we continue to register to vote, to get out to vote and to elect good candidates to represent our community.

Fernando Guerra: Karen, what prompted you to run and what were you thinking about in terms of the environment described by Raphe and by Miguel? And give us your own take on what type of voters you were trying to appeal to.

Karen Bass: Sure. What prompted me to run? The gentleman sitting to my right. No, I'm just kidding. He certainly was a significant factor but let me just say that...

Fernando Guerra: Tell me, how did that conversation go? Who called who?

Karen Bass: Well, there are a number of people who encouraged me to run for office for a number of years and Miguel had certainly been one of them. I'm born and raised in Los Angeles and [have] been a lifelong activist and frankly feel that the struggle for social and economic justice has been what's defined my life from childhood... My activism has always been outside of the electoral arena and so it really wasn't until recently that I began to consider this. In short order, the coalition put together around my candidacy involved community activists, involved labor, and it also involved significantly women. One of the things that drew me into the race was when people pointed out the number of women that were turning out of Sacramento. And I knew that there hadn't been an African American woman in Sacramento in a number of years but frankly it was just a little below my radar screen. And so women certainly rallied behind my candidacy.

To provide a little bit of historical context, there are a number of us in this city who have worked together for 20 to 30 years as community activists. Back in the day it was called third world unity, where we built multiracial coalitions in the 70s. Many of those activists, like me, have gone in different directions. Some have gone into the labor movement. Some even head up unions. Some have started community-based organizations like I did, a grassroots public policy group that from its inception in 1990 was... an African American and Latino organization because that reflects the population of South Los Angeles. And so many of us have been involved in multiracial organizing for a long time because it was the right thing to do, not just because of changing demographics, because it's what made the most sense...

Labor's involvement was absolutely critical. The same coalition that was involved in my candidacy was also involved in Martin Ludlow's, as Miguel mentioned, but was also involved in Antonio Villaraigosa's election for Mayor because many of us knew Antonio for the last 20 or 30 years and we rallied together because we saw what was going on within the African American voters as really a generation divide. A generation divide, a separation between the status quo and people like myself who had always been activists but outside of the electoral arena now saying we have to come inside the electoral arena. We have to push the envelope and we have to fight once again as we have been for many years for multiracial coalitions.

Fernando Guerra: Richard, some have called you the—are you getting a phone call, too? Just make sure it's not Miguel calling you. You have been called the godfather of the Latino Caucus of the California State Legislature. How did that come about?

Richard Polanco: That was someone else's description of what was taking place and what I would really like to [ask] is, did this happen in a vacuum? Was this by accident? Did term limits really expedite the political growth in state government? And I would

say that there are three elements that were the foundation for the growth because whether term limits was here or not it was inevitable that the political representation was going to continue to increase, and I'll share with you why.

First, we had the reapportionment of 1990. That reapportionment, if you recall, was handled by three men and was supposedly the fairest reapportionment ever.¹² Little did they realize that Xavier Becerra who went to Congress, myself and [another legislator] were all put in the same Assembly seat. and so with regards to the issue of reapportionment being fair, they also compacted all of then Assemblywoman Escutia's seat with 80 percent Latino voter representation. And so, I had the privilege of serving the Latino Caucus and I realized in 1990 that I was going to be the only person returning. Everyone else was ready to go. And so I began to identify, recruit, fund, bring the campaign management team to individuals who I believed were viable candidates but who didn't have all the elements that you need in order to mount a campaign.

I think the real element that gave us the sustained ability for growth was the roar of anti-immigrant bashing that occurred in California, one of the ugliest periods of our time.... I believe it was in 1987 the amnesty program¹³ kicked in and as leader of the [Latino] Caucus at that point I realized that we had an obligation as well as an opportunity to look at those 5.2 millions who came out of the shadows into a process that took them so far and only so far and that was to become and start the process for naturalization. As Caucus Chair, we created manuals and traveled up and down the state providing training to non-profits, to adult schools, to community colleges. We ear-

marked ten million dollars for six years in a row, leveraging that with federal dollars targeting that population, training them, putting them through what it would take to pass that test from the 5.2 million we naturalized in that period of time about 2.3 million. We saw the growth of political representation. And so one reapportionment, two, IRCA, incredible role, up and down the state.

The third was the [Voting] Rights Act¹⁴ because we knew that we could always depend on what the court has established And so when you begin to see the mix there was the question, can Latinos run in districts that were non-Latino voter majority? And the answer was yes. We did not confine ourselves. We started the process with Liz Figueroa who ran in a district that had a 12 percent Latino population, not registration. We went to the Central Valley where Cruz Bustamante was recruited... We broke the glass ceiling in Central Valley. We broke the glass ceiling in Sacramento where Debra Ortiz served a district with an 18 percent Latino population. And so the notion was that if we can improve and have candidates who have viability, candidates who can go to the community that they want to represent and say here's my history and then bring all the necessary resources, we could in fact make a difference.

From 1994 to the present, that Caucus grew from seven members to 24. It is an incredible presence that is there. The Asian Americans have modeled it—I have given training sessions, they are thinking outside the box, they are running in communities that are certainly not Asian majorities by any stretch of the imagination. And so I close by saying the following: the beneficiaries of what has occurred politically... have not only been at the state level, but the labor movement is probably

¹² In September 1991, following the inability of the California governor and legislature to agree on a reapportionment plan, the California Supreme Court appointed three special masters to propose a plan. The California Supreme Court adopted their plan in 1992.

¹³ The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) provided undocumented immigrants living in the United States with amnesty from deportation and legal penalties and offered them the opportunity to legalize their status in the United States and become naturalized citizens.

¹⁴ The Voting Rights Act of 1982 held that minorities had a right "to elect representatives of their choice." The Supreme Court ruled that this required states with many minority voters to draw electoral districts that ensured those voters would be represented in elected bodies.

alive and well because of this population. It is what is keeping it in the forefront because of the issues that the labor movement is articulating with regard to issues of livable wages, working conditions and the other beneficiaries I think are the politicians in the sense that they are able to represent. The real challenge for us for the next phase is twofold. One, how do we create economic empowerment, because economic empowerment and the political empowerment go hand in glove and you need the two, and if you look at this population it is nowhere near receiving what it should be.

The other element is to use as the report card, the report that was done recently, the Latino Scorecard.¹⁵ It is an embarrassment that in this day and age as it relates to the Los Angeles County area, public safety gets a C grade, housing gets a D grade, economic development gets a C grade, education gets a D grade, and health care gets a C grade. I raise that because the challenge for those in the political arena and the challenge for all of us is to use this as a measurement. We come into politics to make a difference. That's what I looked for when we recruited people and funded them. It's of no value if we were there in numbers without a strategic plan for economic revitalization and empowerment. It is of no value if we cannot lessen the numbers of uninsured. It is of no value if we cannot create an educational system that we could all be proud of. That is the real challenge and I would ask my good friend Doctor Guerra that we begin to develop some form of mechanism to allow for this political clout with labor and this thriving and ever-growing community that is still behind to put that challenge to all of us so that a decade from now or five years from now and a decade from now, this grade would be something that we could all be very proud of. We earned it, our people deserve it, we have to make it happen, it's not going to happen by itself. Thank you.

Fernando Guerra: Richard, let me follow up with a question regarding the model that you developed in terms of the recruitment, the endorsement, the fundraising and all of that. Could a similar model work for a Latino running for an executive position—Governor of California, Mayor of Los Angeles? So few Latinos have been elected to executive office. I mean we have Gonzalez as Mayor of San Jose,¹⁶ Serna, who was Mayor of Sacramento,¹⁷ Judith Valles, Mayor of San Bernardino, directly elected to the Mayor's position.¹⁸ What would it take for the type of coalition that we've heard about and then also the process that you described to get a Latino elected let's say Mayor of Los Angeles? Oh, and while you're doing that, your role in 2001 and who you supported and what you were thinking during that time.

Richard Polanco: Sure. I think that we all have a standard of whom we support and why we support either issues or people. And I'm no different. We all have the opportunity to endorse and not endorse. To the first question of how do we get to the point where you can [elect a Latino executive]. I think a lot has to do with the candidate themselves. Simply because you happen to be of an ethnic group does not necessarily mean that that community is going to respond to you. With, all due respect to Antonio [Villaraigosa], who I served with in the Assembly, I did not feel that the two years of speakership prepared him for a mayoral position. And so I did not support him. Will and can we? Yes. But it takes that individual to harness his natural constituency and build it because that's your foundation. It's like your family. You have a crack in your foundation and your family is not going to be strong. You harness that, you build that and you allow for the inclusion of people and views in order to build the kind of coalition that you need for Los Angeles. Can it happen? Yes. When? When that right individual steps up and people

¹⁵ Developed by Loyola Marymount University, the United Way of Greater Los Angeles and five other universities, the Latino Scorecard is a bi-annual report that monitors key indicators of Latino progress and develops policy recommendations for ensuring future prosperity.

¹⁶ Ron Gonzalez was elected Mayor of San Jose in 1998.

¹⁷ Joe Serna Jr. served as Mayor of Sacramento from 1993 to 1999.

¹⁸ Judith Valles was elected Mayor of San Bernardino in 1998. It was her first elected public office.

recognize it, that this is a person that I'm committed to, I believe in, there's a history, there's a track record, I can point to things that have been completed and demonstrated, and is capable of managing a city like Los Angeles.

Fernando Guerra: Miguel, one of the interesting things about Proposition 226¹⁹, which was kind of seen as an anti-labor proposition, was the fact that Latinos voted against that proposition to an even higher degree than members of union households. Can you talk to that and did that surprise you that your own membership wasn't as mobilized or as supportive as even the Latino community?

Miguel Contreras: First of all it didn't surprise us. After all, 30 percent of our union members belong to the Republican Party. So it didn't surprise us. You know, but clearly that's one of the reasons that labor for the last few years have been trying to align ourselves with the Latino community on issues of immigration reform, naturalization, amnesty, the idea of a living wage and higher minimum wage, the idea of a driver's license bill for immigrant workers. All these have been supported by the labor unions because we need to align ourselves with the Latino community if we in turn are going to ask for assistance in our fight and this was our biggest fight in the last 40 years. And it was sponsored by Pete Wilson and the Republican Party and we went out there and, you know, 60 days out the polls had us 32 points down, you know, but we did a big campaign specifically targeting the labor unions and the Latino community and when all was said was done on election day we defeated it. But, the highest vote against 226 came from the Latino community and that's why we want to put additional effort in aligning ourselves with the issues that affect the Latino community.

Fernando Guerra: OK. I'm going to give Raphe a chance to respond a little bit after I ask Karen this question and then also if you, any of you have questions I think we passed some cards along and

they're out there and you can write the question down and there will be people going around collecting them and I'll take them up here and if I like the question I'll ask it. Karen, you talked about and I think Rich Polanco alluded to the fact that Liz Figueroa, Debra Ortiz, Jenny Oropeza were Latinas able to win in non-Latino districts because they also appealed to the women voters. In Los Angeles we've had a tremendous history of African American women winning. Currently, there are no women in the Assembly or in the City Council but certainly Rita Walters has served there before. Right now, the three African Americans from Congress from Los Angeles County are all women and so, African American women have done extremely well. So when you go up to Sacramento and you are faced with public policy issues, sometimes you might have a contradiction in terms of an "African American" position, a "women's" position and then with what Miguel talked about with you being very responsive to Latinos, Latino positions. When these three things or these three issues contradict, how are you going to handle that, you who have this multiple kind of representation, some would even say multiple personalities, that you're going to be out there representing everybody.

Karen Bass: Well I don't have a multiple personality. You know, the 47th District is an interesting district actually. It's probably one of the few ways you could carve out a chunk of Los Angeles where the voters are predominantly African American and white. You know, the Latino vote was about 20 percent so: 40-40-20. You would have to give me a specific example because I can't really imagine a conflicting agenda along those lines. I've always been guided by a set of values and I believe that value system is consistent with working people, is consistent with African Americans and is certainly consistent with women's issues. So I would have a hard time imagining where there might be a collision. I really appreciated what Richard Polanco was talking about in terms of what motivates people to

¹⁹ A 1998 ballot measure that, among other things, would have required labor unions to obtain member's explicit permission before using union dues for political contributions.

run and it's not just people running because they represent your ethnic group but what are the values, what are the reasons why they choose to seek public office. I just want to make one little quick comment about the past mayoral race too in terms of Villaraigosa's run. I appreciated Raphe when he pointed out the vote for Rocky Delgadillo²⁰ because I think one of the things that gets missed in the vote for Villaraigosa is, the coalition that came together to support him but two, the fact that Antonio was running against Jimmy Hahn. The legacy of Kenny Hahn amongst the African American voters is like having JFK Jr. running for Mayor in your community and so sometimes looking at statistics and looking at a slide drops out the context that I think was very important.

Raphe Sonenshein: Just a couple of real quick comments that grow out of what everybody is saying, especially in comparing us to the New York experience. I think people need to realize that while diversity is a big factor in California, the role of the Latino community is so fundamental to the changes that have happened in Los Angeles. The rise in the Latino community is the single most important factor in Los Angeles and California social and political life without any question. It's not to disparage any other groups but it's not simply a salad politically of equally valid groups who are going to have an equal impact on the system so as blunt as I can say that I think that's important.

The rise of Latinos has saved the Democratic Party in California. The Democrats have gone from a struggling party to a party that has put the state out of play in presidential elections. This used to be a reliable Republican state, so that's a very significant thing. Secondly, the discussion that Miguel and Karen are having is really important for you to think about. We get hung up on these tables, number of Latinos, number of African Americans, number of Asians as if that tells us the whole story. It tells us part of the story. Representation is a step but there were several African American candidates

in Karen's race. And there were several white candidates. To me what really mattered was which candidate won, and since I've known Karen for years I thought she'd be fantastic, but Miguel's comment points out that if you think about it incorporation beyond representation you get a lot more subtle about this, which is that Karen was seen as responsive to constituencies like Latinos and organized labor. She was also seen as responsive to Jewish voters in the district and a number of other things. That allowed her to emerge way out in front of simply being a number, another African American woman in the State Assembly. That's only one piece of her identity.

...On the comments that Richard was making, I think that what has been the missing piece in the whole discussion for years now is: power for what? And in a way I think we've been very shaped by the African American experience and took for granted that what was driving the African American experience in politics was a social change agenda for which office-holding was a funeral. And I think because of the way the world works, office-holding to a certain degree became an end in itself. And counting up who's got the most seats became an end in itself. I think it's great to be reminded very eloquently by Richard that if you don't have a coherent agenda for change, all the offices in the world, a) don't amount to a hill of beans, but b) what they amount to 10 years from now is you then backtrack because people then say what was it all, what was the point of this, just to put a bunch of people in office. And I think it pays to pull out report cards. And pull them out all the time and say, look, can we go back and remember why we got into this business in the first place? And I guess that's a new experience for us because we become very good at organizing. That's the reason everybody's gotten this far but you've got to remember, organizing for what...

Fernando Guerra: I've got some great questions here. The first one is: for many of the first black elected officials, their election and their incorpo-

²⁰ Rockard J. Delgadillo was elected Los Angeles City Attorney in 2001, after a run-off with then-City Councilman Mike Feuer. Delgadillo had much of the traditional "Bradley Coalition" backing him except that he lacked the support of Jewish voters, who defected to his well-known Jewish opponent.

ration came at a time when cities were increasingly ignored by the federal government and we saw it in Detroit, Newark, etcetera. Now you see Latinos getting to state office just at a time when we have a budget crunch and a variety of different issues that are just downgrading. Are we weakening government just as Latinos are getting elected the way that cities were weakened when blacks were getting elected?

Richard Polanco: It's interesting because I have a cynical point of view of some of the reform that has been brought forth because of what you've just stated. That is, when it comes to term limits it's amazing how it was okay prior to the emergence of people of color. You go through Sacramento ten years ago it'd be totally different. And so it begs the question, why term limits? And when you research the reason for the term limits and who initiated it and who that individual was trying to get to, it's clear that it was very racially motivated. Supervisor Pete Schabarum sponsored that initiative²¹ who wanted to get rid of Speaker Willy Brown. The only way he could get rid of Speaker Willy Brown was to bring forth term limits, which he did. It qualified, it passed. That net effect, obviously some will argue that because of the turnover you've seen an increase [in minority representation]. I'd like to say that irrespective of whether term limits were there or not, we were going to see growth with or without term limits.

Fernando Guerra: So Karen, do you buy the assumption that there's a conspiracy to weaken state power just as Latinos are gaining power or is it just a coincidence?

Karen Bass: No. Well one I just don't buy into conspiracy theories and I just refuse to be cynical because I'm an activist which means that I'm an optimist at heart and I'm getting ready to go up to Sacramento so I definitely want to go up in a spirit that I can certainly make a difference. But, but having said that, you know, I do think things happen within a greater social and economic con-

text so if you look at when there were African American mayors, we all know that that is when cities were declining but we were also having a change in our whole national economy, away from an industrial based economy to an information based economy and I know people in the room understand the permanent loss of jobs that happened and the policies that defunded cities. That's a much greater social and economic context and so I don't think that it's a conspiracy. Now having said that, you can look at a few other things. Like you can look at all of the states that denied the right to vote to African Americans in the south and then you can look at the war on drugs and the massive incarceration of folks and the states that put into permanency if you have a felony you could lose the right to vote forever. And if you put those maps together, it's the map of the southern states. And so a number of people are looking to try to change those laws. So again I don't think it's a grand conspiracy, I do think you can have an effect that seems like that but it's very important not to because otherwise I feel that it leads to hopelessness and it's the reason why people don't participate.

Raphe Sonenshein: One big difference between the political context today and when African Americans came up is that the Republican Party wrote off the black community one hundred percent, probably from 1964 on and really built their party around all voters who were uncomfortable with the aspirations of African Americans and it was a pretty coherent plan that worked to a great degree. The Republicans are much more confused now about how to deal with immigration and specifically how to deal with Latinos. And I think therefore it was cost-free for Republicans to starve cities when cities were run by African Americans. I think that was a pretty simple strategy, pretty clear. Starving out Latino-led governments now is more complex. They're reading studies in the White House that say that if people vote in the same proportions that they did by group in 2000 that the president will lose by

²¹ Proposition 130, setting term limits for state legislators, passed in 1990.

three million votes instead of half a million because of the rise of Latino and Asian American voters. As a result the Republican Party can't come up with a policy on immigration because part of the party is dreading losing those voters but the key to this is African Americans were seen as one hundred percent Democratic, out of reach, and then they put them out of reach further. Latinos are seen more like Jewish voters I think, perhaps unrealistically, which is generally Democratic but persuadable on occasion. And as a result I think Republicans are a lot more worried about how they're perceived in the Latino community and the Jewish community than they ever were about how they're perceived in the African American community.

Fernando Guerra: Let me get Miguel and Richard to respond to these two questions and take off what you're saying. Two questions here is one, as Latino generations get older and Latinos climb the economic ladder they have become the target group for Democrats and Republicans, what is the future of this cohesive Latino vote that currently exists? And now they're taking off from what Raphe was saying. A second question asks, why are Latinos in California not as organized as those in Florida, particularly in Miami? The numbers are dramatically smaller in Florida yet they have much greater success in winning office. What's the difference in Miami compared to Los Angeles from what you know?

Miguel Contreras: That's a good question because clearly the success that organized labor had in electing our type of candidates in the districts that are predominantly Latino is because we've been able to use some of the resources out there that prove to be very successful in terms of them getting the same information from the same area. I mean they heavily rely on the Spanish television. Here a lot of people read "La Opinión". Nobody reads "Hoy" but a lot of people read "La Opinión". The Latinos go to the same church, predominantly the Catholic Church, you know,

so it's the same television, the same newspaper, the same churches, if you look at the demographics you see clearly there's a drop off in voters between those who have been naturalized and became US citizens since Proposition 187²² to those who are second and third and even fourth generation here. We have an easier time dealing with the more immigrant Latinos because of how we can reach them. But the Republicans are showing us that we have a difficult time holding on to the second or third generation Latinos. They voted just like everybody else on the recall. We couldn't stop that, you know? And I'll be very candid with you, we do not have a handle on how to generate voting activity in the second and third generation Latinos here in Los Angeles. It's something that we need to figure out. One thing we want to launch is more initiatives on education as opposed to some of the initiatives on living wage and minimum wage because we think that might be a vehicle for us to garner support from this particular group.

Fernando Guerra: Richard, can Republicans successfully mobilize Latinos or get them to vote for their issues or their candidates?

Richard Polanco: My biggest fear was that President Bush would be the president because if you look at the time when he was Governor, at that time we had Pete Wilson here in California. And as Governor in the State of Texas [Bush] was doing everything opposite of the anti-immigrant [position of Pete Wilson]... [Running for President] Bush, was able to speak the language and articulate his position on the issues of immigrants, [and Latino support for Republicans] shot right back up to 42 percent. If [Republicans] articulate policies that matter to this constituency, yes they can win. The question is, will they? And if they do, how? And so to the second and third generation, a generation that, as it improves its socioeconomic status, the issues become different for them... We should not take [this community] for granted.

²² Proposition 187 denied social services, health care, and education to undocumented immigrants in California and required California law enforcement, social services, health care and public personnel to report undocumented immigrants to state and federal immigration officials. The proposition passed overwhelmingly in 1994 but court injunctions have prevented most provisions from going into effect.

If it is campaigned to and it resonates it will respond. Arnold — Governor Schwarzenegger, excuse me — part of it was his stardom, you know? But a lot of it had to do with more than that and so, yes it can.

Fernando Guerra: Just an interesting note about the Republicans and being able to sustain representation: just over the last six to seven years there have been five Latino Republicans who have been elected to the state legislature. Four of them are now gone. None of them [were] replaced by [other] Latino Republicans... which then brings me to the whole question of sustainability and it's the same thing that one can say about Asian American elected officials, whether they're Republicans or Democrats. We've had over the last twenty years something like eight Asians elected to the State Assembly or State Senate and none of them when they left office were replaced by Asians. I have a question here that says Asians have education and economic empowerment, so why have they not been able to form coalitions behind candidates? Is there a financial base? What are the reasons? What would be the necessary conditions for Asians to be part of this mix that we've been talking about? Because we've hardly mentioned them. So Raphe, why don't you start off with that?

Raphe Sonenshein: Well, one of the great mysteries for political scientists for years is that even when you control for various other variables, the participation rates of Asian Americans remain low compared to other groups. They have all of the ingredients to be the equivalent of the Jewish community in politics, small in numbers but large in political participation but it could be a number of things. One is there's very few districts that are set to a size and a population that Asian American constituencies can control. The fundraising base is colossal, very loyal and crosses party lines... Asian American candidates can share resources across the country, across party lines through organizations. There's a lot of organizing going on in the greater Los Angeles area for candidates. Maybe part of what is being fought is the comparison to the

Jewish community. The Jewish community is an overwhelmingly politicized community all the time, twenty-four hours a day politicized community and it's possible that Asian American communities have not had some opportunities in terms of population but also may not be as connected to the idea of participation. At the same time there's resources that are online now that weren't around ten years ago that are very exciting but it has been hard to hold seats...

Fernando Guerra: Well, what about Mike Woo?

Raphe Sonenshein: Well Mike Woo is actually a good example in the sense that he was a very talented politician who had a seat that was not an Asian seat but he made it his seat... It was a liberal seat. It was the Thirteenth District and he's a good solid progressive candidate, very bright, very well regarded, got elected. When he left there's actually no logical reason to replace him with another Asian American candidate. He was not an Asian American candidate, at the same time Mike was able to get tons of support from other Asian American groups not of his own nationality.

Fernando Guerra: Who will be the next Mayor of Los Angeles? Miguel.

Miguel Contreras: Yeah, I think I'd be a good candidate. Oh, I thought you were asking your own question there. Who'd be the next Mayor of Los Angeles? I think we'll have a very spirited race. [Congressman Bernard Parks] has already announced his exploratory committee. There's more and more speculation that any day now we'll hear whether or not former Speaker Bob Hertzberg will run and then, of course, State Senator Alarcón from the Valley announced his intentions for that seat. So we already have a potentially very crowded field and the question is, how popular is [current Mayor James Hahn]? Are people excited about this mayor? I'd say no, but are they angry at this mayor? I don't think they're angry at this mayor so but I think a year, even six months will tell us what the whole story is.

Executive Summary

People & Politics in America's Big Cities: The Challenges to Urban Democracy

THE STUDY

Urban democracy is at the crossroads. The profound demographic changes under way in America's largest cities have resulted in a growing "representation gap" between elected officials and those they represent.

The political and economic costs are too great to ignore. Cities that did not recognize and ameliorate the widening gap created by demographic change in the 1960s and 1970s paid a heavy price. The urban riots of the 1960s and the subsequent racial polarization, white flight, and economic disinvestment took a heavy toll on cities like Detroit and Newark. Cities that collaborated to bridge this political gulf fared far better.

"People and Politics in America's Big Cities" is a critical investigation into the impact of the profound demographic transformation under way in New York and Los Angeles. Written by two leading experts on urban politics—John Logan and John Mollenkopf—the paper traces black-to-white succession in big cities and its political consequences. It shows how immigration has altered that pattern, producing new racial and ethnic contours in metropolitan America, and particularly in New York and Los Angeles. Analyzing the 2001 mayoral and city council elections, it explores the growing gaps in representation between the populations and elected officials of these cities and asks what might be done to address them.

THE IMPACT OF CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS ON POLITICS

- **From black vs. white to native vs. immigrant:** Racial diversity used to be understood in terms of black and white. Now, Latinos and Asians are increasingly prominent, and immigration has diversified all racial and ethnic categories. The emergence of new immigrant minority groups modifies the competition for urban power from one that pits native minorities against whites to one that pits new immigrants not only against whites, but also against native minorities.
- **New York and Los Angeles—Laboratories of this transformation:** New York and Los Angeles are laboratories of the great change under way in our nation's largest cities. Together, they are home to two-fifths of the immigrants in America. These immigrants, and their children, have joined African Americans and earlier white immigrants in forging a new kind of urban society.

THE IMPACT OF CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS ON POLITICS CONTINUED

- Diversity citywide, segregation in the neighborhoods: Segregation levels between whites and all three minority groups in New York and Los Angeles are significantly above the national average, especially in New York. New York has markedly higher black-Latino, black-Asian, and Latino-Asian segregation than the national average. This degree of separation may hinder communication and cooperation between and among different groups, creating a foundation for balkanized politics at the neighborhood and city level. It also may serve as a launching pad for multi-ethnic coalitions, created out of necessity.
- Transforming the cleavages of urban politics: New immigrant populations have blurred and transformed, without erasing, the older racial cleavages that characterize urban politics. Their presence has complicated the process of constructing multi-ethnic coalitions seeking minority empowerment. They also have introduced challenges for white incumbents, who must seek new ways to construct a political majority.
- The future of white political power is in coalition or fragmentation: The ability of white political leaders to sustain their electoral majorities in the face of continuing decreases in the white population will depend on their ability either to keep all non-white groups fragmented and divided or to forge cross-racial or cross-ethnic coalitions of their own.
- Mayoral elections reveal strain in multi-racial coalitions: The changing composition of the populations and electorates of New York and Los Angeles created difficulties for the coalition among blacks, Latinos, and liberal whites that previously had elected black mayors in the two cities. The steady increase of minority populations and the decline of white populations coincides with an increased tendency among white Democrats in New York to eschew Democratic nominees supported by minority voters in favor of a white alternative, even one nominated by Republicans. Similarly, in Los Angeles, white voters have supported white mayoral candidates against opponents with a greater minority base. In the 2001 primary elections, white voters in both cities did not support the first Latino candidate perceived to have a good chance of winning the mayoralty, exposing a potential white-Latino divide. Coalitions between blacks and Latinos cannot be taken for granted, especially if African Americans fear that their declining numbers and a rapidly growing Latino population might put their political power at risk.

THE TWENTY-YEAR REPRESENTATION LAG

- **Whites hold political office in both cities at far higher rates** than their population share and blacks hold offices at about parity with their population or a little more, but Latinos and Asians hold much less representation than their population share. Indeed, their current level of representation matches their much smaller population share twenty years ago.

- **Reasons for the gap:**

DEMOGRAPHIC: New immigrants have lower rates of citizenship and a smaller percentage of them are of voting age. They are less likely to register and vote, and therefore are less appealed to by candidates and parties, only perpetuating their lack of desirability as potential voters. New immigrants are less likely to affiliate with a party; they have fewer resources and therefore are less likely to have what it takes to run credible campaigns as candidates, especially in Los Angeles, with its non-partisan elections and larger districts.

POLITICAL: Political parties and native minority voters tend not to support candidates from new immigrant groups so as not to undermine the arrangements that brought them to power; black, Latino, and Asian voters tend not to support each other's candidates automatically; white politicians may have more organizational experience and political resources than other groups to put together electoral majority coalitions.

RACIAL: Persistence of racial polarization in neighborhood composition and urban politics.

- **How do we overcome it?**

Reform electoral system to promote new immigrant political representation; allow non-citizen voting in municipal elections and instant runoff voting in multi-candidate primaries; make greater efforts to inform and involve citizens who speak languages other than English; encourage political parties, unions, and community organizations to make conscious attempts to develop leadership in new communities.

CONCLUSION

It surely will be difficult to negotiate this new stage of urban politics, but doing so not only will enhance the functioning of our democratic system, it will enable cities to develop broadly embraced solutions to their most pressing problems. This is a key to cities' future prosperity, just as racial discord was often poisonous in the past. New York and Los Angeles may provide helpful lessons about how to make this transition. Similarly, the experience of other large cities in mediating the impact of changing demographics on electoral politics may offer useful lessons for New York and Los Angeles.

Also from the Drum Major Institute

THE 2004 DMI YEAR IN REVIEW

December 2004 | Is America better off now than it was a year ago? The 2004 DMI Year in Review provides a critical context in which to answer that question. From changes in rules governing overtime to the Bush administration's proposed changes to the Community Reinvestment Act, the DMI 2004 Year in Review offers a scathing indictment of the national administration. At the same time it highlights the success of local organizations and policymakers from both parties to expand access to affordable prescription drugs and stall the steady encroachment of big-box mega-stores into hard-working middle-class communities. Also included is the 2004 Injustice Index, the 2004 Election Recap which presents an alternate view of the outcome of the most recent national election with a map factoring in population density rather than physical size; the State of the States, an in-depth look at five states that were scenes for important debates in 2004, and more.

MIDDLE-CLASS 2003: HOW CONGRESS VOTED

May 2004 | Today's middle-class families are deeply concerned about making ends meet, affording everyday essentials, saving for the future, and avoiding the bankruptcy that has become nearly epidemic. This dangerous trend requires increased awareness by citizens and increased political urgency by law-makers. "Middle Class 2003: How Congress Voted" issues each member of Congress, as well as the House and Senate as a whole, a letter grade based on their 2003 votes on selected pieces of legislation. For more information on Middle Class 2003: How Congress Voted, please visit www.themiddleclass.org, a project of the Drum Major Institute.

PEOPLE AND POLITICS IN AMERICA'S BIG CITIES

May 2003 | The changing face of America is creating new challenges and opportunities for America's urban centers. The emergence of new immigrant minority groups has transformed the competition for political power in large cities from one that pits native minorities against whites to one that pits new immigrants not only against whites, but also against native minority groups. This report, commissioned by the Drum Major Institute for Public Policy, The Century Foundation, and Metropolitan College of New York, and written by leading demographers John Mollenkopf and John Logan, analyzes the 2001 mayoral and city council elections in New York and Los Angeles to determine the impact of these demographic changes on urban democracy.

THE MYTH OF THE MIDDLE? CAMPAIGN 2004 ON AMERICA'S MIDDLE CLASS

January 2004 | This survey of the candidates for the 2004 Democratic nomination for President looks at their positions on issues important to the middle class, including raising the minimum wage, expanding access to health care, making college education more affordable, and restructuring the tax code to benefit middle-class families. Candidates also identified the major challenges facing the middle class, and what they would do as president to restore economic mobility to poor and working-class Americans.

CLASS ACTS: HOW NEW YORK CITY NEWSPAPERS COVERED THE BUDGET CRISIS AFTER 9/11

April 2004 | In the spring of 2003, as New York City was enmeshed in the debate about how to resolve its significant budget crisis, the Drum Major Institute for Public Policy faced two questions it felt compelled to explore: Were New York City's daily newspapers doing a good job of helping the general public to understand the budget debate and the proposals being discussed by their elected representatives? And, would they help New Yorkers of all income levels to understand how these policy proposals would specifically affect them? In this report, leading media scholar Robert M. Entman of North Carolina State University, provides his response in an analysis of New York City daily newspaper coverage of the budget debate following 9/11.

FROM GOVERNANCE TO ACCOUNTABILITY: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS THAT MAKE SCHOOLS WORK

January 2003 | This report, by Kavitha Mediratta and Norman Fruchter of the New York University Institute for Education and Social Policy, comes at a significant moment for New York City's public schools. For the third time in the last 50 years—and the second time in a decade—the New York State legislature has passed a law that significantly altered the structure of the public school system. This report offers a new perspective on the debate between governance and accountability, ultimately concluding that "developing a new community accountability system that anchors the essential relationships between schools and communities in ongoing efforts to improve schools is one of the most critical tasks before us."

The Drum Major Institute for Public Policy is a non-partisan, non-profit organization dedicated to challenging the tired orthodoxies of both the right and the left. The goal: progressive public policy for social and economic fairness. DMI's approach is unwavering: We do not issue reports to see our name in print or hold forums for the sake of mere talk. We seek to change policy by conducting research into overlooked, but important social and economic issues, by leveraging our strategic relationships to engage policymakers and opinion leaders in our work, and by offering platforms to amplify the ideas of those who are working for social and economic fairness.

Originally called the Drum Major Foundation, DMI was founded by Harry Wachtel, lawyer and advisor to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. during the turbulent years of the civil rights movement. DMI was relaunched in 1999 by New York attorney William Wachtel, Harry's son, Martin Luther King III, and Ambassador Andrew Young.

From releasing nationally recognized studies into our increasingly fragile middle class, the relationship between schools and communities and the impact of changing demographics on politics, to launching an exciting and frequently visited web site that serves as a source of ideas and argument, DMI has demonstrated the strength of its mission and strategy.

Please visit www.drummajorinstitute.org for more information.

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MAJOR**
INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC
POLICY

110 East 59th Street, 28th Floor
New York NY 10022
T 212.909.9663 F 212.909.9493
drummajorinstitute.org

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