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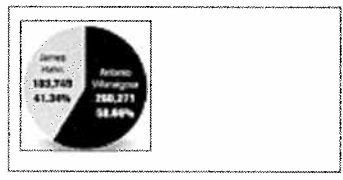
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San Francisco Chronicle

## L.A. mayor race seen as win for all Latinos Villaraigosa also backed strongly by blacks, whites

Tyche Hendricks, Chronicle Staff Writer  
Thursday, May 19, 2005

The election of Antonio Villaraigosa as mayor of the nation's second largest city Tuesday is being hailed as a milestone in the struggle of Latinos to gain political representation in proportion to their numbers.



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More than 86 percent of Latinos who cast ballots in Los Angeles supported Villaraigosa, according to exit polls conducted by the Center for the Study of Los Angeles at Loyola Marymount University.

But overwhelming majorities of African American and white voters also said they had voted for the son of Mexican immigrants, who will be the city's first Latino mayor since 1872.

"It's a big victory for the Latino community. He will become the national face of Latino empowerment," said Louis DeSipio, a political science professor at UC Irvine. "Is this the moment when the sleeping giant (of Latino voters) awakened? I don't think so, but ... it's reflective of the incremental growth of Latino political power and influence."

In Villaraigosa's 2001 bid to be mayor of Los Angeles, a city that is roughly half Hispanic, he lost to then-city attorney James Hahn, in part because his base was narrower. That year, Hahn enjoyed the support of white voters as well as the majority of African American voters, who associated him with his father, Kenneth Hahn, a longtime county supervisor who had broad support in the black community. But the younger Hahn's popularity has fallen

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This time around, Villaraigosa drew endorsements from key African American leaders who had previously supported Hahn, such as U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters, a fellow Democrat, and former basketball star Magic Johnson. The former speaker of the Assembly built a track record as a member of the Los Angeles City Council for the past two years and as national co-chairman of John Kerry's presidential campaign last year.

"He did constant outreach to African American communities and was very instrumental in the recruitment and victory of two African American candidates: Martin Ludlow in the City Council (in 2003) and Karen Bass in state Assembly (in 2004)," Fernando Guerra, director for the Center for the Study of Los Angeles, said Tuesday. "It clearly showed, 'Hey, I'm supportive of African Americans who are clearly supportive of Latinos and of labor.'

"African Americans have to become more comfortable with Latinos in political power, because it is a given in L.A. and in California that Latinos will have even greater power every year."

Villaraigosa's ethnicity was well known among voters, but he deliberately did not base his campaign on his heritage, said Walnut Creek attorney Nicolás Vaca, author of "The Presumed Alliance: The Unspoken Conflict Between Latinos and Blacks and What it Means for America."

"He understood it could boomerang on him," said Vaca. "With the Latino caucus in the state Assembly, there has been a real explosion of Latinos in politics in California. And in many ways, they're nothing more than regular politicians trying to get the job done without regard to ethnicity."

Now that he has been elected mayor, he will have to deliver to the diverse constituencies who elected him, analysts said.

"He's going to have to be inclusive on who he appoints and address the issues that are really important to African Americans: jobs, crime and education," said Vaca. "The big fear was, 'Oh, he's just going to take care of the Latinos.' But I don't think it can happen. There are too many diverse groups in L.A. He clearly struck a note with a lot of voters."

Throughout the campaign, Villaraigosa presented himself as the candidate for all Angelenos.

"He was L.A.'s candidate," said Marcelo Gaete, director of programs for the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials, based in Los Angeles. "What was unique is that he was a Latino who became L.A.'s candidate. When 60 percent of any population votes for you, that's a loud message."

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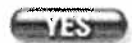
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