With this year’s census likely to show a Latino majority in both the city and county of Los Angeles, it’s obvious that our collective future is linked to the social health of that group of people.

Another of Agius Vallejo’s subjects is a lawyer who has recently visited jail (to bail out a cousin) and the social-security office (to help an uncle). Relatives turn to the lawyer in times of need because “she’s the one in the family with knowledge,” Agius Vallejo said. “She’s the one who’s made it to the middle class.”

Each person who achieves social mobility improves the overall well-being of the community. Social climbers show others behind them the way forward. “The future of the city really hinges on the mobility of immigrants,” Agius Vallejo told me.

A healthy middle class with Latin American roots is critical to the entire country’s future too. That’s what another USC professor, Dowell Myers, argues in his book “Immigrants and Boomers: Forging a New Social Contract for the Future of America.”

Myers, a demographer, says our aging country needs to invest in its younger, immigrant communities as an act of self-preservation. It’s not just Latino incomes and rates of homeownership rise the longer they stay in this country, he writes, and provide potential members of the taxpaying middle class who will fund the retirement of the boomer generation.

Growing that middle class doesn’t require just social investment in things like public education — it will also require immigration reform. Without a path to citizenship, millions of people living in the U.S. will lack the basic tools needed to escape membership in the “permanent underclass.”

Passing immigration reform to build up the U.S. middle class might sound like a crazy idea to some readers of this paper. But if you take a good look at our country’s sociology and demographics, you’ll see it’s just common sense.

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OUR A2 VOICES

Monday: George Skelton
Tuesday: Hector Tobar
Wednesday: Steve Lopez
Thursday: George Skelton
Friday: James Rainey
Saturday: Sandy Banks
Sunday: Steve Lopez

George Skelton has the day off.