



Toward 2050 in California

A Roundtable Report on Multiracial Collaboration in Los Angeles

Julie Ajinkya March 2012

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About Progress 2050

Progress 2050, a project of the Center for American Progress, seeks to lead, broaden, and strengthen the progressive movement by working toward a more inclusive progressive agenda—one that truly reflects our nation's rich ethnic and racial diversity. By 2050 there will be no ethnic majority in our nation and to ensure that the unprecedented growth of communities of color also yields future prosperity, we work to close racial disparities across the board with innovative policies that work for all.

About PolicyLink

PolicyLink is a national research and action institute advancing economic and social equity by Lifting Up What Works.® Founded in 1999, PolicyLink connects the work of people on the ground to the creation of sustainable communities of opportunity that allow everyone to participate and prosper. Lifting Up What Works is our way of focusing attention on how people are working successfully to use local, state, and federal policy to create conditions that benefit everyone, especially people in low-income communities and communities of color. We share our findings and analysis through our publications, website and online tools, convenings, national summits, and in briefings with national and local policymakers.

About PERE

PERE conducts research and facilitates discussions on issues of environmental justice, regional inclusion, and social movement building. PERE's work is rooted in the new three R's: rigor, relevance, and reach. We conduct high-quality research in our focus areas that is relevant to public policy concerns and that reaches to those directly affected communities that most need to be engaged in the discussion. In general, we seek and support direct collaborations with community-based organizations in research and other activities, trying to forge a new model of how university and community can work together for the common good.

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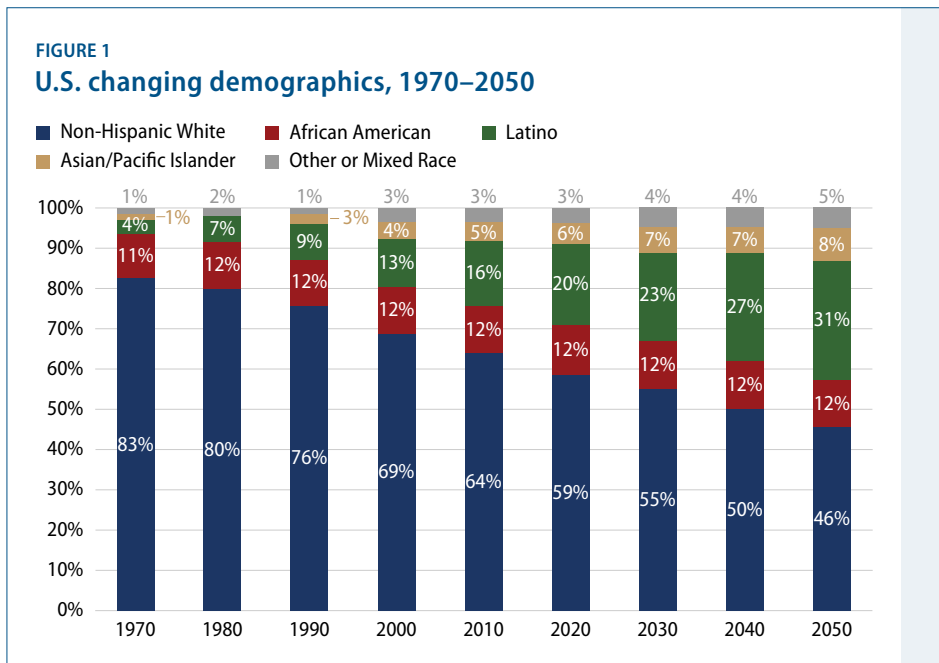
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Introduction and summary

As the United States prepares for a sizable demographic shift that will turn the country into a majority-minority nation by 2042, there are noteworthy communities across the country that have already experienced this transition and may hold lessons for the change that lies ahead. California in particular is a state made up of a number of such communities and has operated as a sort of bellwether for the rest of the nation’s racial and ethnic demographic shifts for the past few decades.

The most recent U.S. Census Bureau data project that the country will no longer have a clear racial or ethnic majority by the year 2050, yet California reached this milestone more than a decade ago in 2000. (see Figures 1 and 2)

California has not only served as a bellwether for the demographic shift that the rest of nation will soon experience, but the state has also experienced some of the opportunities and challenges that may accompany such population change. The racial and ethnic disparities in education, health, and employment, for instance, have been on the forefront of California’s progressive public policy agenda for decades, with the state’s community leaders, advocates, and decision makers understanding that such disparities prevent the state from realizing its full potential.



Note: Other includes all persons who are not included among other groups shown, and includes non-Latinos who identify racially as being Native American or Alaska Native, some other race alone, or multiracial.

Source: PolicyLink/PERE analysis of Statistical Abstract of the United States (1970 and 1980); U.S. Census Bureau, decennial censuses (1990 STF3, 2000 SF3, and 2010 SF1); U.S. Census Bureau Population Projections, 2008 (2020-2050), adjusted using the results of the 2010 Census.

The rest of the United States faces these same types of disparities. If they are allowed to persist, the country will have arguably squandered one of its greatest assets and potential contributors to economic growth in the 21st century.

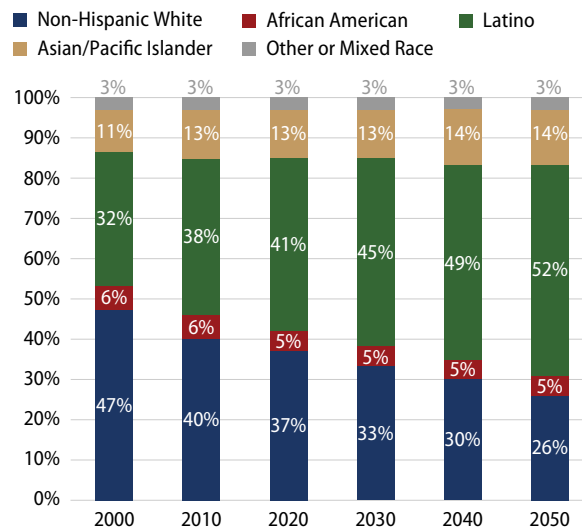
What lessons does California’s experience with demographic change hold? Are there particular challenges that the population change presents? Have Californian communities developed any notably successful initiatives to turn such challenges into opportunities for the state’s future?

It is in this spirit that the Progress 2050-PolicyLink partnership hosted its second event in a series of roundtable discussions focusing on demographic change in Los Angeles, California, in conjunction with the University of Southern California’s Program for Environmental and Regional Equity, or PERE. Progress 2050—a project of the Center for American Progress—and PolicyLink—a national research and action institute advancing economic and social equity—formed a partnership to initiate a national conversation to explore a new vision of what America can and should be in 2050. The longer-term objective of this effort is to learn from local leaders which investments are needed to make sure our nation embraces its diverse future. We intend for these conversations to inform our policy agenda and ultimately craft policies that lift up communities of color and create a future in which all can prosper.

Roundtable participants included community activists, policy researchers, business leaders, and academics. (see attached list of convening participants on page 18 of this report) The range of their expertise was diverse, as they represented groups that focused on issues from labor to business development, from education to media representation.

We chose Los Angeles as a site for this discussion because of its substantial experience with demographic shifts, not only between its white and nonwhite populations but also within its communities of color. To underscore this point, from 1990-2010, the Latino and Asian/Pacific Islander populations of the city each increased by 32 percent, while the African American population decreased by 24 percent and the white population fell by 16 percent.¹ Along with these population shifts, Los Angeles has also forecasted major trends that the rest of the country has only just begun to experience, including:

FIGURE 2
California’s changing demographics
 Population projections by race/ethnicity



Note: Other includes all persons who are not included among other groups shown, and includes non-Latinos who identify racially as being Native American or Alaska Native, some other race alone, or multiracial.
 Source: PolicyLink/PERE analysis of 1980-2010 decennial census data from CensusScope and American FactFinder, and 2020-2050 data from California Department of Finance, with projections data adjusted using the 2010 census.

- The “cultural generation gap,” which compares aging baby boomers at one end of the spectrum to the growing group of young people who are the most racially diverse generation the country has ever seen²
- The suburbanization of diversity and poverty

This change has at times been accompanied by tension—between the old and the young, between whites and nonwhites, and within communities of color—particularly as competition over increasingly scarce resources and employment continues to be framed as a zero-sum paradigm.

Yet Los Angeles does not only highlight problems that the rest of the country may soon face—it also offers solutions to these problems. In the report that follows, we provide an account of the conversation that took place at this city’s roundtable discussion and its particular focus on the important role that multiracial coalitions play in countering these anxieties. To be sure, while coalitions are thought to be effective at translating the growing numerical power of communities of color into actual political power, there are numerous kinds of collaboration—some proving more sustainable than others.

We begin our account with some demographic context about the state of California and the city of Los Angeles. We then move on to discuss coalition politics and their particular history in L.A., identifying some of the different multiracial coalitions that roundtable participants argued counteract the city’s reputation as a hotbed of interethnic strife.

Lastly, we recount some lessons in forging such coalitions that emerged from L.A.’s experience, which could hold value for the rest of the nation as we move closer to the day where there will be no clear racial or ethnic majority in the country.

Why California, and specifically why L.A.?

Manuel Pastor—a professor of Geography and American Studies and Ethnicity at the University of Southern California and the director of PERE—provided the backdrop for the roundtable discussion with a presentation on California and Los Angeles demographics. Pastor argued that the population change in California from 1980 to 2000, which saw the state’s non-Hispanic white population shrink to 47 percent, is roughly the change that the rest of the United States will experience from 2000 to 2050. In 2000, for instance, the country’s white population was roughly 69 percent, whereas in 2050 it is projected to be 46 percent. He elaborated that two other specific trends in California—and in Los Angeles specifically—serve as a bellwether for the rest of the nation.

The cultural generation gap

Brookings Institution demographer William Frey has argued that one of the pressing concerns facing the nation as our demographics shift is the “cultural generation gap” between an aging, largely white population and the growing young diversity in communities across the country. Pastor explained that California has once again been a bellwether for the rest of the country and has experienced this gap for some time. Recent PolicyLink/PERE reports have also described this gap as a “racial generation gap.”³ In his presentation, Pastor explained that most of the population growth contributing to this generation gap in Los Angeles does not actually come from immigration—counter to how it is represented in the popular media—but instead comes from the births of the second and third generation. He pointed to the following factors underlying this generation gap:

- **Decline in foreign-born residents.** Pastor argued that an important part of the region’s prophecy lies in its share of foreign-born residents. While the share of foreign-born residents went up most dramatically in the region in the 1980s, the share of foreign-born people in California actually fell in the past few years. Los

Angeles, in fact, is the only major metropolitan area in the country that did not see an increase in Latino children in the past decade.

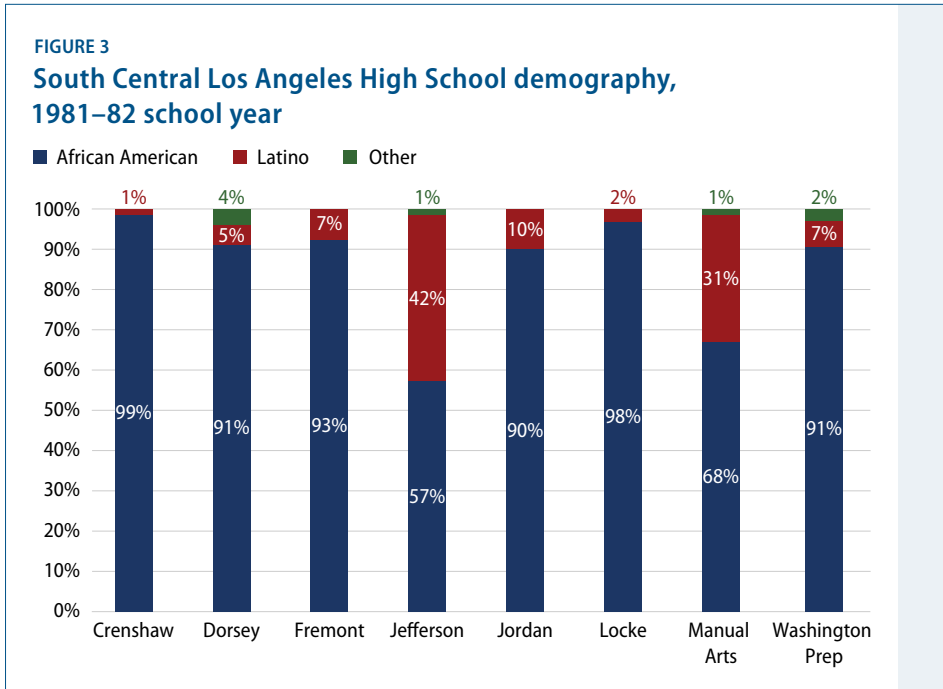
- **A more settled immigrant population.** Pastor noted that in 1990, 53 percent of the foreign-born population in Los Angeles County had been in the United States for less than 10 years. From 2005 to 2009, the share of the county's foreign-born with less than 10 years in-country was only 20 percent. In contrast, by that same time the vast majority of foreign-born residents had been in the country between 10 years and 30 years (55 percent) and fully 25 percent had been in the country for more than 30 years.⁴ The image of recent immigrants is now a reality of long-settled immigrants and their second generation children.
- **Rapid growth of youth population.** The median age of non-Hispanic whites in the United States is 41, whereas the median age for Pacific Islanders is 35, is 32 for African Americans, and is 27 for Latinos. This 14-year gap between non-Hispanic whites and Hispanics—which almost constitutes an entire generation gap—is even more pronounced in California, where the median age of whites is 43 and of Latinos is 27.
- **Mixed-race population boom.** While the rest of the country's youth population is also predicted to have much higher percentages of mixed-race individuals over the next few decades, California has once again emerged ahead of the curve. As early as 2000, census data report that 7.3 percent of California's population under age 18 identifies being descendant from two or more races, and Los Angeles is home to one of the largest populations of mixed race-individuals.

The suburbanization of diversity

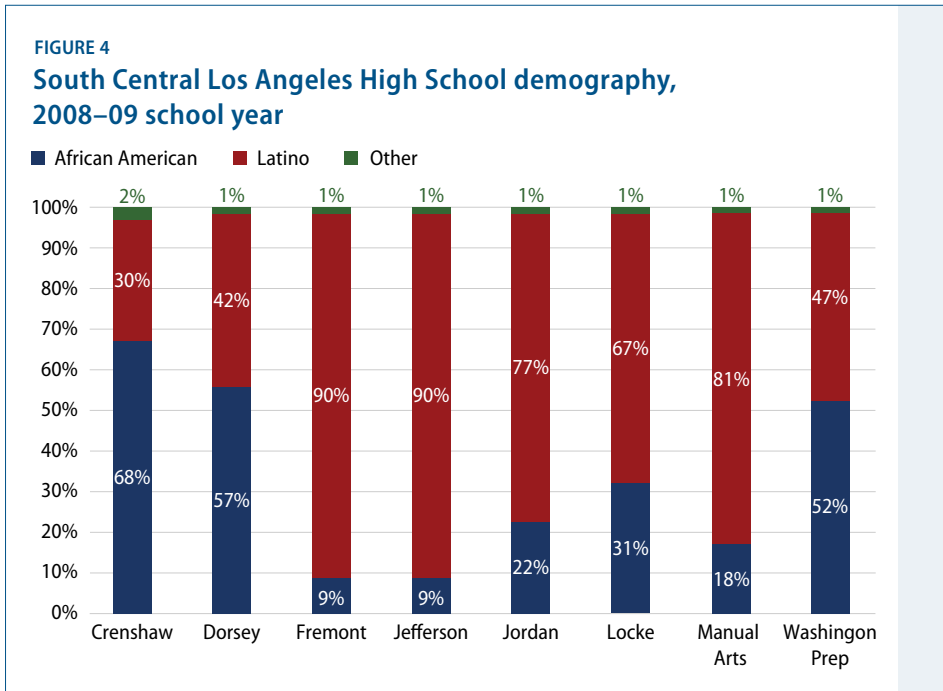
It used to be the case that diversity was much more concentrated in urban centers while suburban areas were predominantly white. Yet Pastor noted that one of the most important trends that Los Angeles has forecast for the rest of the country is the suburbanization of diversity.

- **Diversity spreads to the suburbs.** In 2010 the largest suburbs across the United States were 65 percent white, about 10 percent African American, 17 percent Latino, and 6 percent Asian—which is actually quite comparable to the American population distribution.⁵ Again Los Angeles saw this spread of diversity into the suburbs as early as the 1990s.

- **Increased proximity between communities of color.** Spatial changes increased the proximity between Los Angeles’s Latino and African American populations in suburban and exurban areas, which is particularly evident if we look at the change in composition of high schools in southern Los Angeles. (see Figures 3 and 4) Manual Arts High School, for instance, went from being 68 percent African American in the early 1980s to being 81 percent Latino in 2008-2009, while Alain L. Locke High School went from being 98 percent African American to being 67 percent Latino.⁶



Source: USC PERE analysis of California Basic Education Data System (CBEDS)



Source: USC PERE analysis of California Basic Education Data System (CBEDS)

Demographic change presents challenges to Los Angeles

Pastor kicked off the roundtable discussion by asking participants how these demographic shifts resonated with their work. Participants began by describing challenges that rapid population change had presented in the region, including better data collection, the high incarceration rates that disproportionately affect communities of color, and the challenges that increasing diversity in the suburbs presents to infrastructure investments.

Several participants immediately noted that while such demographic data is enormously helpful in understanding population change—not only in Los Angeles but across the country as well—community groups were in need of better disaggregated data to get at many subgroup needs as well. Manju Kulkarni from the South Asian Network and Chancee Martorell from the Thai Community Development Center both expressed frustration with joint “Asian” data that often did not break out different sub-Asian ethnic groups and failed to represent the diverse economic struggles that some members of the community suffered more than others.

In 2010, for instance, the American Community Survey documented nationwide rates of economic insecurity for the Thai population relative to the aggregate Asian population. While 22.8 percent of Thais lacked health care coverage and 13.1 percent of Thai families lived below the poverty line, 15.7 percent of Asians reported lacking health care coverage and 9.1 percent of Asian families were living below the poverty line.⁷ Health care and poverty are two issues that Thai CDC focuses on in the community, meaning disaggregated data for Los Angeles, which are currently nonexistent, would aid their work tremendously.

To this end, it should be noted that the Center for American Progress recently joined with the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and the University of California, Los Angeles, to release a special issue of the *Asian American Pacific Islander Nexus Journal*, titled “Forging the Future: The Role of New Research, Data, and Policies for Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders.” The report addresses the urgency of better data collection on AAPI communities

in five sectors: civil rights, economic development (including sustainable neighborhoods), education, health, and Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders.

After discussing data collection efforts, Shana Redmond from the University of Southern California raised the issue of disproportionate incarceration in communities of color. We know that as of 2010, California's prisons were operating at 175 percent of their design capacity, and that there are significant racial and ethnic disparities in the state's prison population—25.6 percent of inmates are white, while 39.3 percent are Latino, 29 percent are African American, and 9 percent are other communities of color.⁸ Redmond argued that the rates of African American incarceration are increasing while the population is staying relatively constant, effectively diluting the political power of the community. Maisie Chen of CADRE, a group based in L.A. that works to get parents involved in schools serving low-income neighborhoods of color, agreed with these concerns, arguing that high incarceration rates result in locking away the diversity of the region instead of appreciating it as a potential asset to regional economic growth.

Next, Linda Wong of the Center for Urban Education spoke to the suburbanization of diversity issue from Pastor's demographic presentation and voiced concern that the needs of outer-ring communities are often overlooked in conversations focused on infrastructure investments and social services. The diversification of the suburbs has been accompanied by higher poverty in these areas, yet misconceptions prevail about structural investments such as access to public transportation as only being needed in inner-city locales. Research on the growing social service challenges of rising suburban poverty supports Wong's concerns, confirming that while poverty rates approach 20 percent in many Los Angeles suburban communities, these areas rely on relatively few social service organizations that are forced to stretch operations across much larger service delivery areas than their urban counterparts.⁹

Numerous participants also raised the issue of interethnic tension, as the rapidly changing demographics of Los Angeles—specifically the growth in Latino and Asian populations and the decline in the African American population—have often pitted communities of color against one another in a zero-sum contest over limited resources. Conflicts range from redistricting battles over the geographical concentration of certain communities of color and their corresponding political representation, to statewide ballot measures that propose denying public benefits to undocumented residents while documented residents suffer from economic insecurity as well.

The diversification of the suburbs has been accompanied by higher poverty in these areas, yet misconceptions prevail about structural investments such as access to public transportation as only being needed in inner-city locales.

To be sure, this tension has in fact become a serious concern to the participants, who specifically highlighted social, economic, and political competition between African American and immigrant populations. The growing proximity of these populations mentioned in Pastor's presentation means that immigrants are often moving into traditionally black neighborhoods and bringing new businesses, new churches, and new ways of living with them. This has also been interpreted as displacement, negative impacts on native-born wages, and competition over limited employment and other resources.¹⁰

Los Angeles overcomes challenges through multiracial collaboration

Yet the intractable nature of this tension that is often portrayed by the media ignores the various levels of multiracial collaboration that are flourishing across the city. Ange-Marie Hancock from the Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration at USC suggested that the discussion could focus on the positive vision of multiracial collaboration that Los Angeles has experienced and could share with the rest of the country instead of harping on past encounters with conflict.

In fact, Los Angeles has a rich history of such collaboration and continues to offer examples of cross-community coalition work that effectively counters the challenges posed by demographic change discussed above. In the following sections, we offer distinct cases of coalition work that have flourished in the city and could offer lessons to the rest of the United States as the country prepares for similar population shifts.

Los Angeles has a rich history of multiracial coalitions

In 1969 an African American politician named Tom Bradley ran against incumbent Mayor Sam Yorty, challenging the establishment in a largely conservative city, which made little room for progressive or nonwhite politicians. But that year brought what political scientist Raphael J. Sonenshein calls the “big bang” of minority and progressive politics in L.A.—an alliance of African Americans and white Westside liberals who came together for the first time in support of common interests.¹¹ Both groups felt that they had been excluded from the elite, exclusive, conservative group that traditionally ran the city and thought it was time for a change.

Unfortunately, Yorty ran a slanderous campaign that painted Bradley as an unknown black militant to be feared, and voters succumbed to Yorty’s scare tactics, re-electing the mayor. When, four years later in 1973, Bradley again took on Yorty, Los Angeles was ready for a change and elected Bradley as its first African American mayor. With the benefit of better familiarity, which countered voters’

fears, and the support of the same strong biracial coalition, Bradley was able to secure a solid victory.

More than 30 years later, history repeated itself. In 2001 Antonio Villaraigosa ran against then-incumbent Mayor James Hahn. Hahn received strong support from the city's African American population—the result of his political legacy and of being the son of a longtime progressive advocate for communities of color. Some pundits also believed that the African American community was afraid that electing the city's first Latino mayor would mean that the black community would lose political clout to the city's increasing Latino population.¹² Villaraigosa ran an energetic campaign and assembled a rainbow coalition but in the end was unable to defeat Hahn's coalition of black and white support—which harkened back to 1969 mayoral race with the incumbent this time using scare tactics that painted Villaraigosa as “soft on crime.”

In another nod to the race between Bradley and Yorty, four years after his first defeat, Villaraigosa again challenged Hahn in 2005, that time becoming the city's first Latino elected mayor in 133 years. The difference four years later has been credited to Villaraigosa's increased support among non-Latino voters—his white voter support increased to 50 percent in 2005 from 41 percent in 2001; his black vote increased to a stunning 48 percent from 20 percent; and his Asian vote increased to 44 percent from 35 percent.¹³ Though some analysts argue that the 2005 Villaraigosa victory may have had less to do with the strength of his multiracial coalition—given that he had, after all, built a similar coalition in 2001—it still offers an example of how once-divided communities came together to translate their numerical strength into political strength that neither community could wield alone. Los Angeles has also had more recent experience with nonelectoral coalitions, which roundtable participants argued united diverse groups behind common frames, increased trust between communities, and addressed the generational gap raised above.

Common frames enable issue-based coalition work

Roundtable participants also discussed labor exploitation as a potential cross-community organizing frame that affects various communities of color in Los Angeles. Chancee Martorell from Thai CDC explained that labor has actually been a very successful interethnic organizing frame for Asian organizations in the city and described a retailer accountability campaign that brought Asians and Latinos together to fight for workers' basic human rights.

The 2005 Villaraigosa victory offers an example of how once-divided communities came together to translate their numerical strength into political strength that neither community could wield alone.

In the mid-1990s a Los Angeles group then-known as the Korean Immigrant Workers Advocates, or KIWA, became inspired by a workers' rights campaign in San Francisco and began a similar retailer accountability campaign in Southern California to organize Asian and Latino garment workers who were owed back-wages by retailers. Their investigation into the industry revealed that retailers and manufacturers were making up to 600 percent profit off their products while depressing the wages of workers, particularly female workers of color. The retailers repeatedly denied their culpability, claiming instead that their subcontractors were the true culprits.

But in 1995 when the first case of modern-day slavery broke in Los Angeles, it presented a golden opportunity for the campaign to capitalize on the media's fascination with workers' conditions in Los Angeles. El Monte, a Southern California garment company, was owned and operated by seven members of a Thai family brought up on criminal charges involving 72 Thai nationals who had been trafficked to L.A.'s garment industry. These Thai nationals lived lives of indentured servitude and were held against their will in deplorable conditions.

The Department of Justice prosecuted five of the seven owners as traffickers of modern-day slavery, and they were sentenced to five to eight years in prison. The civil case, which was brought by the Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC), also resulted in a \$4 million settlement in back-wages that the retailers and manufacturers agreed to pay because of the poor publicity garnered by the scandal. The case set a precedent because it held the retailer and manufacturer responsible for subcontractor worker conditions. In addition, the case also had two important impacts on community relations in Los Angeles.

First, the liberated Thai workers became highly involved in KIWA's retailer accountability campaign and strengthened the interethnic organizing frame of labor. Given that the majority of L.A.'s garment workers are Latino, drawing on the common working experience from the Asian community, particularly one that had prevailed in the courtroom, increased the confidence of workers on the campaign. Organizers described an aspirational shift from workers initially setting out to win back-wages to eventually wanting to change a system and reorganize an entire industry. The new, strengthened coalition went on to achieve state-level legislative victories, including codes of conduct on the part of contractors and third-party monitoring systems that ensure the conditions are legal and fair.

Second, though immigrant labor movements have historically had a complicated history with the African American community—particularly because of economic competition issues—this campaign's ability to use the frame of slavery resonated

with members of L.A.'s progressive black community. The campaign gave rise to a group called the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking, or CAST, which maintains an interethnic organizing frame and has won support from black leaders in the community. CAST is seen as a pioneer organization that combines direct services, training, and advocacy. While its focus is international victims, it has recently branched out to domestic victims—for instance, the Mary Magdalene project in South L.A., which provides outreach services to young African American women lured into prostitution and their families.

Trust facilitates coalition work between African Americans and immigrants

Roundtable participants underlined the importance of building trust between different communities before coalition work is possible, particularly citing the tension between African Americans and immigrants as an example. Linda Wong of the Center for Urban Education argued that face-to-face organizing helps break down barriers and preconceived, detrimental stereotypes that communities may harbor of one another. Regina Freer of Occidental College also contended that successful coalitions are iterative. Freer explained that in order to reach a constructive level of trust that allows groups to connect with individuals outside of their particular group, it is important to first discuss what these demographic changes mean within their group in order to reach a more democratic level of consensus about how their group has been affected.

A recent report, titled “All Together Now,” by the Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration at USC, writes more about the importance of African American-Immigrant Coalitions and echoes these sentiments about building trust in coalition work. The authors argue that “a common and unifying agenda should be based on a vision of ‘everyday social justice,’” meaning that both communities must have an honest dialogue about their daily needs—from education to economic stability to healthcare—before they come together. These discussions can often be painful but are considered necessary by the authors to transcend shallow coalition politics, which are based on fragile and episodic interests. Instead, coalitions should be formed around shared values, which will lead to continued engagement and social movement sustainability.

The report also notes that labor can be a successful organizing frame across communities, particularly because both African American and immigrant com-

munities experience economic vulnerability. One example of such a successful collaboration is UNITE HERE's Diversity Task Force, which trained black workers for union hotels. The task force was formed in response to the dramatic decline in black employment in the industry, from about 15 percent in 1980 to roughly 2 percent in 2009. Union and business leaders teamed up to create a Hospitality Boot Camp program, designed specifically to train African Americans to find jobs in the industry, though the campaign was instigated by a union that has become largely Latino and immigrant in its membership.¹⁴

The economic security frame is central to both African American and immigrant communities. The key to such a frame is to make sure that both communities understand that their interests are better served collectively, as opposed to individually. Better work protections for immigrants impact African American workers' rights, and fighting against racial profiling of the African American population also helps other communities of color resist discrimination and criminalization. Making this argument not only enables more effective cross-community collaboration, but it also underlines the importance that roundtable participants placed on finding a common frame that relies on collective action instead of zero-sum competition.

Youth coalitions pave the way forward

Some of the most promising collaborative initiatives in Los Angeles that do challenge this zero-sum paradigm are youth-based—somewhat unsurprising given the everyday spaces such as school and afterschool programs that young people can access. But in a country where the majority-minority shift will take place in the youth population by 2023—almost 20 years before the rest of the population—it is even more significant that today's youth offer hopeful lessons in interethnic collaboration.

Roundtable participants picked up on the cultural generation gap from Pastor's demographic presentation and discussed the emerging promise of youth leadership and coalition work in Los Angeles. Manju Kulkarni of the South Asian Network lamented that one of the unfortunate lessons that California had for the rest of the country was how the generation gap handles the draining of resources. As older Americans refrain from investing in younger Americans because they no longer see themselves reflected in this diverse population, they forget that this youth population comprises the future leaders, voters, workers, and homebuyers that our country will increasingly rely on for economic growth.

The economic security frame is central to both African American and immigrant communities. The key to such a frame is to make sure that both communities understand that their interests are better served collectively, as opposed to individually.

This is precisely why, according to other roundtable participants, youth leadership is vital to nurture. Megan Scott from Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education, or SCOPE, argued that capacity and leadership development was crucial to building grassroots power to ensure that communities of color could organize for more social and economic opportunities. Ange-Marie Hancock from USC, who has written extensively on youth coalition work in Los Angeles, expressed great optimism that it is such youth work that is building a strong future for Los Angeles and could be modeled by the rest of the country.

One particular initiative is the Community Coalition, known as CoCo, in South Los Angeles. CoCo has a youth program called SC-YEA (South Central Youth Empowered through Action) that includes about 50 leaders and 250 youth who form high school organizing committees in eight southern L.A. high schools. The students come together to address disparities in how resources are allocated at the Los Angeles Unified School District, the nation's second-largest school district. The students take part in leadership training, interactive political education and discussion, and hands-on organizing, but the coalition also directly invests in basic supports such as transportation, dinner, academic counseling, and free or low-cost SAT courses.¹⁵

CoCo focuses on black and brown unity and intergenerational leadership, and has won campaigns that focus on closing the achievement gap by improving South L.A. high school facilities and ensuring access to college preparatory coursework. One tangible success was the campaign's role in creating the Architecture, Construction, and Engineering Academy at Locke High School—an academy that prepares high school students to go directly into a career in a growing industry or to continue on to a four-year university.

Another successful youth initiative called the Freedom Riders recently hosted a very successful event in Los Angeles that encouraged coalition work not only across race and ethnicity but also across generations. The Center for American Progress partnered with the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles, or CHIRLA, to show clips from the civil rights documentary “Freedom Riders,” followed by a panel discussion comprising two African American freedom riders who were student activists 50 years ago and two undocumented Latino immigrant students who are active in the fight for immigrant rights today.

The project seeks to expand the understanding among today's student activists about the strategies and tactics of young people 50 years earlier who were able

Capacity and leadership development was crucial to building grassroots power to ensure that communities of color could organize for more social and economic opportunities.

to fundamentally change American history. Key to this success was the ability to engage people of color in leadership roles while also reaching out to other ethnic groups in order to expand the range of activists working to support the rights of people of color. The project also seeks to connect the civil rights struggles of African Americans who relied on student protest to the immigration struggles of today's student activists, underlining common issues between both communities in building awareness about the other's issues.

The event in Los Angeles was attended by a full house of about 200 people and was the result of a successful partnership not just between CAP and CHIRLA, but one that also included unique multiracial and cross-cultural organizations, including African American Studies at USC, the Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration, the California Dream Network, Chicano and Latinos American Studies at USC, Community Coalition, Wise Up!, the National Hispanic Media Coalition, and the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity.

Such vibrant examples of youth collaboration demonstrate that a new generation of leaders is emerging in Los Angeles—leaders who are considered not only on the forefront of demographic change in their own city but who may also pave a way forward for the rest of the country to model.

Conclusion

California has time and again proven to be an interesting bellwether for demographic trends that the rest of the United States can expect for the nation at large. Among these predictions lie significant challenges that growing communities of color face such as disparities in employment, education, and health, rising incarceration rates, and weaknesses in data collection that prevent a comprehensive understanding of how substantial these challenges are for all communities of color. These challenges have also generated divisive competition among communities of color and led to tension over limited resources.

Yet despite these challenges the significant lead that California has experienced in population change has also resulted in a mass of knowledge of how to counter these divisions and enable communities of color to fight together for more social and economic opportunities. Los Angeles in particular has been home to various examples of multiracial collaboration that have not only won electoral victories and greater political representations for communities of color but have also successfully fought for labor rights, increased employment opportunities, and more promising educational reform that prepares our youth of color to become strong workforce participants and more engaged citizens.

As our country moves forward toward 2050 and a day where there will no longer be any clear racial or ethnic majority, it will be important to learn lessons from regions such as Los Angeles as to how our diverse communities can work together, embrace what we hold in common, and ensure our future is one that works for all and not just some.

List of participants at the convening in Los Angeles

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Manju Kulkarni | South Asian Network |
| Chancee Martorell | Thai Community Development Center |
| Shana Redmond | University of Southern California |
| Linda Wong | Center for Urban Education |
| Robin Toma | L.A. County Human Relations Commission |
| Enrique Velasquez | PolicyLink |
| Delia de la Vara | National Council of La Raza |
| Brenda Rivas | National Hispanic Media Coalition |
| Mary Campbell | University of Southern California |
| Megan Scott | Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education, or SCOPE |
| Maria Cabildo | East L.A. Community Corporation |
| Sara Sadhwani | California Immigrant Policy Center |
| Margarita Ramirez | Liberty Hill Foundation |
| Manuel Pastor | University of Southern California |
| Regina Freer | Occidental College |
| Ange-Marie Hancock | University of Southern California/Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration |
| Alma Salazar | L.A. Area Chamber of Commerce |

About the author

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Endnotes

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