



David R. Maciel*

Mexamerica at War with Donald Trump

A Case Study in California

Part II¹

The Consolidation of Chicano Power

In the face of aggression and hostility from Donald Trump and his administration, California's Chicano civic organizations and policymakers responded with full force and by all possible means to counter and even spin those initiatives, particularly in the political arena. Today, Chicanos are by far the dominant ethnic group at both the local and state levels and are at the forefront of the resistance. No other state in the Union even comes close to the number of Chicano elected and appointed policymakers in California.

The decades of ethnic struggles and the legacy of the Chicano movement in California are now visible and a *bona fide* reality. Key Chicano civic organizations, such as Hermandad Mexicana and Vamos Unidos USA, are very active in their advocacy for the civil rights of the Mexian/Latino Diaspora. Moreover, a generation of Chicano policymakers between the ages of 38 and 60 collaborate closely with these civic organizations.

The members of this generation are almost all bilingual and bicultural with working-class origins. They are all the product of the public university system of California, one of the finest in the nation. Many of them —if

* Professor emeritus at the University of New Mexico (UNM); davidmaciel1001@gmail.com.

All California Chicano policymakers are members of the Democratic Party and most certainly subscribe to its core ideology and agenda.

not all—initiated their political careers as community activists or as staff members for established politicians. All Chicano policymakers are members of the Democratic Party and most certainly subscribe to its core ideology and agenda. The clearest example of their endeavors is the fact that today a Chicano is the speaker of the State Assembly, one of California's legislative bodies. What follows in this text is a succinct profile of some of the most influential Chicano state politicians today and key reflections about their impact and absolute opposition to President Trump.

Xavier Becerra. First generation son of Mexican immigrant parents. In 1990, after completing college and law school, he became a member of the State Assembly. Subsequently he was elected member of the federal House of Representatives and served from 1996 to 2016. In 2017, he was appointed California's attorney general by Governor Jerry Brown, replacing Kamala Harris, who had been elected to the Senate.

Throughout his political career, Congressman Becerra has consistently advocated Mexican immigrant issues and civil rights. He was a major proponent of the Dream Act, and he specifically supported the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) proposal, signed as an executive order by President Barack Obama. DACA authorized temporary legal status in the United States for the youth brought to the U.S. as undocumented children, who are the product of the U.S. school system or enlisted in the armed forces under certain conditions. Regarding this, Becerra stated, "This is a new day for the Dreamers all across America. Through President Obama's leadership, our youth now have the opportunity to put their talents and education to work for the country they know and call home."²

Since the first day of his confirmation as California's attorney general, Becerra has made it abundantly clear that he will defend immigrant rights with legislative

initiatives and legal battles in the courts. As California's chief legal officer, he sets the stage and leads the struggle against the Trump administration's anti-Mexican, anti-Latino rhetoric and legislative agenda at the state level. He most certainly serves as a role model nationally for what a principled politician can do against injustice and discriminatory actions. He has just been re-elected for a second term.

Kevin de León. His mother immigrated from Mexico at a very young age. After graduating from law school, he was elected to the California Assembly. A short time later he became a member of the State Senate. He rose through the ranks because of outstanding legislative endeavors to become the Senate's first Chicano president *pro-tempore* since the nineteenth century. As Senate leader, he has set forth a most active agenda that includes advocacy for education, housing, economic development, and international relations. An important priority on his agenda has been his many efforts to considerably enhance ties and projects between California and Mexico. He has personally led various successful Senate delegations to Mexico over the years.

Analysts have pointed out the remarkable advocacy, energy, and personal commitment that Senator Kevin de León has displayed during his tenure. He has served tirelessly and meticulously and has been a consistent champion of Mexican/Latino civil rights. He was the author of the first national legislation to avoid the separation of undocumented families as a result of deportation processes. In 2013, he headed negotiations with Governor Jerry Brown to pass a law to grant driving licenses in California to undocumented workers. He also successfully led the drive to raise the minimum wage, which greatly benefited Mexican-origin workers in the state. The very latest of Senator de León's initiatives is SB54, a bill known as The California's Values Act, which just awaits Governor Jerry Brown's signature. Its ultimate purpose is to make California a sanctuary state; in other words, "to protect the safety and well-being of all Californians by ensuring that state and local resources are not used to fuel mass deportations, separate families, and ultimately hurt California's economy."³ This bill provides essential safeguards to ensure that police, schools, health facilities, and courts remain accessible to Californians, regardless of their immigration status. Specifically, it states,

1. State and local law enforcement agencies and school police and security departments will not engage in immigration enforcement. No state or local resources will be used to investigate, detain, detect, or arrest persons for immigration enforcement. No agency will detain or transfer any persons for deportation without a judicial warrant.
2. State agencies will review their confidentiality policies in order to ensure that eligible individuals are not deterred from seeking services or engaging with state agencies. State agencies shall not collect or share information from individuals unless necessary to perform agency duties.
3. California schools, health facilities, and courthouses will remain safe and accessible to all California residents, regardless of immigration status. Each shall establish and make public policies that limit immigration enforcement on their premises to the fullest extent possible consistent with federal and state law.⁴

So far, this bill is the most forceful and comprehensive anti-Trump initiative yet. As columnist Harold Meyerson recently wrote in the *Los Angeles Times*, “The California elected official who most personified the state’s resistance to President Trump and all of his work is Kevin de León.”⁵ Because of term limits, De León concluded his tenure as president *pro tempore* of the Senate. He remains quite active and influential in the political arena.

Anthony Rendón. He is a third-generation descendent of Mexican immigrants who came to the United States in the 1920s and settled permanently in Southern California. He has a Ph.D. in political science from the University of California at Riverside. After college, he directed the important organization Plaza de la Raza Child Development Center, whose task was to advocate for child development and welfare, particularly of immigrant children. He was subsequently elected to the California Assembly where he continued supporting social programs including immigration and civil rights.

In the same vein as his Senate counterparts, Rendón has highlighted that the legislative branch in California is more than ready to confront the anti-Mexican rhetoric and practices of Donald Trump and his associates. He emphatically stated,

As can be observed, both leaders of the State Assembly and Senate are totally in accordance on their stances against this

horrid anti-Mexican discourse and agenda of Donald Trump. What Trump really meant when he stated that “California is out of control” is the fact that the State (according to him) is handily outside the political norm, but in fact the opposite is the case.⁶

State Assembly Speaker Rendon said California has the most manufacturing jobs in the nation and produces a quarter of the country’s food. He added, moreover, “If this is what Donald Trump thinks is ‘out of control,’ I’d suggest other states should be more like us.”⁷

Ricardo Lara. Lara is a first-generation son of parents who came originally to California as undocumented workers and subsequently gained their legal status under the 1986 immigration reform. From an early age, he was very passionate about politics. He began his political career serving as a staffer for California Assemblyman Antonio Firebaugh, a champion of immigrant rights. He was later elected to the California Assembly for five years. In 2012, he became a California Senator where he has held leadership positions on important committees such as the Committee of General Resources and others on education, immigration, civil rights, and international relations. He authored the law called the California Dream Loan Program, which provides financial aid for Dreamers to help with their university expenses.

In addition, Lara was instrumental in supporting other important bills in favor of immigrants; for example, a law permitting undocumented workers to get driving licenses. He was also a major proponent of a law, unprecedented in U.S. legal history, granting state professional licenses to undocumented workers to allow them to practice professions that require state licenses, such as law, medicine, and accounting, among others. No other state has ever passed such a law. Yet, California and the Chicano political leadership are once more in the vanguard

Trump’s most persistent rhetoric is unquestionably his anti-Mexicanism. It is also abundantly clear that his ire and racism against Mexicans are an integral part of his policy agenda.

In the November 2018 elections the Democratic Party in California experienced a “blue tsunami”; 21 Chicanos occupy seats in the Assembly and 7 in the state Senate.

of addressing the realities of California that ultimately also benefit the state as a whole.

Senator Lara introduced the Education for a Global Economy Bill, voted in by the electorate. It re-introduces bilingual education in California public schools, which has been banned by Republican administrations. This was a major victory for minority education and especially for non-English-speaking students in California.

Ricardo Lara has also worked extensively on promoting closer ties between California and Mexico on issues of economic development, education, and culture. He has met on a regular basis with Mexican officials and politicians to advance these efforts.

In 2018, Ricardo Lara was elected insurance commissioner, a position with a great deal of influence. As insurance commissioner, he is in fact part of the top echelon of California politicians. Lara is now part of California’s “Plural Executive,” which includes the governor and seven other elected officials.

Eric M. Garcetti. Of dual heritage, Garcetti is Los Angeles’s first elected Jewish mayor as well as the second Mexican-American mayor in over a century. His grandfather, Salvador Garcetti, was born in Parral, Chihuahua; subsequently, the family emigrated to the U.S. In 2006, Eric Garcetti became a member of the Los Angeles City Council. He was elected mayor in 2013 and re-elected in 2017. From the onset of his administration, he made immigrant rights and issues a central priority, establishing an office of immigration affairs as part of his agenda. When Donald Trump was elected, Garcetti stepped up his advocacy for Dreamers and other immigrants. Recently, he pointed out that the city of Los Angeles not only offers sanctuary to undocumented persons, “but we defend them.”⁸

Under his tenure, Los Angeles became a *de facto* sanctuary city and has been in the forefront of the battle against Trump’s threats to limit grants to the sanctuary cities.

His great commitment to this cause is exemplified by his recent statements to the effect that no one should be targeted in Los Angeles because of immigration status.

A Concluding Note

It is obvious that, although important, these multifaceted initiatives and major victories by Chicano politicians in the Golden State do not represent a definitive triumph in this ongoing conflict. Donald Trump will be president for at least two more years. The significance of this is that the “war” between the two polarized factions has just begun. Trump’s most persistent rhetoric is unquestionably his anti-Mexicanism. It is also abundantly clear that his ire and racism against Mexicans are an integral part of his policy agenda. Despite the various key institutional checks and balances on the presidency, the head of the executive branch does wield enormous power and influence on all fronts.

After all, the president sets the national agenda and the overall tone of national politics. And let us not forget that the Supreme Court, the Senate, and a majority of state governorships are currently in Republican hands. And while certain members of the Republican Party do not necessarily subscribe to Trump’s extremism, many do. Also, the important factor of his substantial base of supporters must not be forgotten, with their deep-seated fear of the “threat” of the Latino-Americanization of the United States to their well-being, culture, and identity. All combined, these forces and proponents will unleash a most difficult upcoming period for the Mexican-origin community as well as other Latinos in the United States.

However, the outcome of the “war” is far from decided, especially in California. The demographic growth of the Chicano/Latino community, a substantial number of civic organizations, an increasingly college-educated population, a recent generation of Chicano and Chicana principled, nationalist, well-educated, and experienced elected and appointed officials will become defiant pressure groups that will use all the legal and political avenues at their disposal to confront this adversity. They all come one way or another from an immigrant experience, have contemporary personal immigrant ties, and have a substantial immigrant-based constituency. They have consistently struggled for immigration reform and for the

protection of immigrants' civil rights and provide a human face and dimension for the subject of immigration from Mexico and Latin America. And while the future is uncertain and the material conditions and political climate hostile, the will, power, energy, and knowledge that justice and history are on their side will be a more formidable foe to Donald Trump and his followers than they ever anticipated.

The November 2018 elections solidify this effort because of the fact that the Democratic Party in California experienced a "blue tsunami." Democratic candidates won even in previous Republican strongholds like the San Joaquin Valley and Orange County. In total, 21 Chicanos occupy seats in the Assembly and 7 in the state Senate. All these struggles remind us that throughout their history, Chicanos/Chicanas have faced Herculean odds and have been many times victorious. In the end, they will be again. In the words of Cesar Chavez, "Sí se puede." **MM**

▼
Notes

- 1 The first part of this article was published in *Voices of Mexico* no. 104. [Editor's Note.]
- 2 Statement by Representative Becerra "A New Day for Dreamers," Washington, D.C., August 15, 2012. <https://votesmart.org/public-statement/735091/rep-becerra-a-new-day-for-dreamers#.XEISZ1xKg2w>.
- 3 Office of the Attorney General, "Attorney General Becerra Issues Law Enforcement Bulletins Providing Guidance to California's Public Safety Authorities under the Values Act," March 28, 2018, <https://oag.ca.gov/news/press-releases/attorney-general-becerra-issues-law-enforcement-bulletins-providing-guidance>.
- 4 See <http://www.cbhda.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/SB-54-De-Leon-CA-Values-Act-FACT-SHEET.pdf>.
- 5 Harold Meyerson, "Kevin de León Personifies the Trump Resistance. He Should Run for Governor," April 4, 2017, <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-meyerson-de-leon-governor-20170404-story.html>.
- 6 Sharon Bernstein, Reuters, "California Is Not 'Out of Control,' Leaders tell Trump," <https://in.reuters.com/article/usa-trump-california-idi/NKBN15M021?il=0>.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 "Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti Weighs In on Immigration Debate," NPR, March 1, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/2017/03/01/517988135/los-angeles-mayor-eric-garcetti-weighs-in-on-immigration-debate>.



VENTA ESPECIAL

REGRESO A CLASES



Explanada de El Colegio de México, Carretera Picacho Ajusco 20,
Ampliación Fuentes del Pedregal, 14110 Tlalpan,
Ciudad de México T 5449 3098
libros.colmex.mx | www.colmex.mx

Gran venta de libros y revistas de El Colegio de México

Obsequios y descuentos de hasta 70%

Sociología, estudios de género, literatura, lingüística, economía, demografía, medio ambiente, urbanismo, relaciones internacionales, ciencia política, estudios asiáticos y africanos, e historia.

20, 21 y 22 de agosto, 2019
10 a 19 horas

Instituciones invitadas



También habrá descuentos en la librería Víctor L. Urquidí del Fondo de Cultura Económica que se encuentra dentro de El Colegio de México.



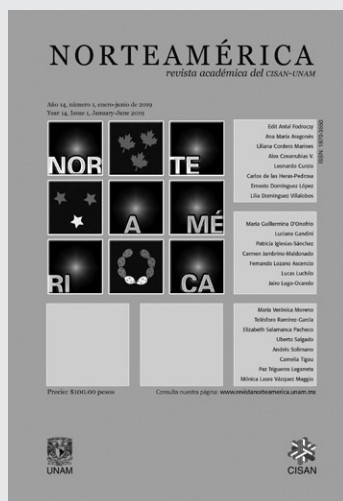


NORTEAMÉRICA

ACADEMIC JOURNAL OF CISAN-UNAM

An open forum to debate and exchange, from a multidisciplinary perspective, theoretical, methodological and current studies related to North America and its links to the world.

Año 14, número 1, enero-junio de 2019 / Year 14, Issue 1, January 2018



ENSAYOS / ESSAYS

Análisis del impacto de la cooperación en ciencia y tecnología entre América del Norte y la Unión Europea. Paralelismos entre Hungría y México
Edit Antal Fodroczy

Documental político en Norteamérica: una herramienta de contrainformación y configuración de las identidades políticas
Liliana Cordero Marines

The U.S. Presidential Elections from the Point Of View of the European Press
Carlos de las Heras-Pedrosa, Carmen Jambrino-Maldonado, Patricia Iglesias-Sánchez, Jairo Lugo-Ocando

ANÁLISIS DE ACTUALIDAD / CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

La ventaja competitiva de México en el TLCAN: un caso de *dumping* social visto desde la industria automotriz
Alex Covarrubias V.

Florida en el fiel de la balanza: el *Sunshine State* en las elecciones presidenciales estadounidenses
Ernesto Domínguez López

DOSSIER

Migración calificada en América del Norte
Camelia Tigau

International Mobility of the Wealthy in an Age of Growing Inequality
Andrés Solimano

Migración calificada de China, India y México dirigida a Estados Unidos: análisis de la reorientación de los patrones migratorios en la época reciente
Ana María Aragonés, Uberto Salgado

La contratación temporal de trabajadores altamente calificados H-1B en Estados Unidos: surgimiento, evolución y condiciones actuales
Paz Trigueros Legarreta

Implications of the U.S. Visa Reform for Highly Skilled Mexican Migrants
Elizabeth Salamanca Pacheco

Motivaciones para migrar: las clases medias mexicanas profesionistas en Estados Unidos
Lilia Domínguez Villalobos, Mónica Laura Vázquez Maggio

Patrones de movilidad científica y oportunidades laborales en el mercado académico: efectos de estudiar un posgrado en Estados Unidos entre investigadores argentinos de ciencias exactas y naturales
Lucas Luchilo, María Verónica Moreno, María Guillermina D'Onofrio

Inmigración calificada y desarrollo en México. Tendencias y modalidades contemporáneas
Telésforo Ramírez-García, Fernando Lozano Ascencio

Conflict-Induced Displacement of Skilled Refugees: A Cross-Case Analysis of Syrian Professionals in Selected OECD Countries
Camelia Tigau

Explicaciones de la migración calificada: el papel de las mujeres desde la experiencia norteamericana. Estereotipos, sesgos y desafíos
Luciana Gandini

REFLEXIONES / REFLECTIONS

APUNTES BIBLIOGRÁFICOS / BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES
John Lewis Gaddis: *On Grand Strategy*
Leonardo Curzio

Norteamérica,
revista Académica

CISAN
Centro de Investigaciones
sobre América del Norte
(Center for Research
on North America)
Universidad Nacional
Autónoma de México

Av. Universidad 3000,
Torre II de Humanidades, piso 9
Ciudad Universitaria, Coyoacán,
04510, México, D. F.

Información general
namerica@unam.mx
www.cisan.unam.mx/Norteamerica

VENTAS
voicesmx@unam.mx

Telephone
(011 5255) 5623 0308 y 5623 0281

PREGUNTE POR
NUESTRAS PROMOCIONES

SUSCRIPCIONES

México 1 año Mex \$200.00
2 años Mex \$320.00

EU y Canadá 1 año U.S. \$26.00
2 años U.S. \$34.00

Otros países 1 año U.S. \$48.00
2 años U.S. \$80.00