

The Media and the (Limited) Latino Vote

By Federico Subervi, Ph.D.

The potential impact that Latino voters might have on the outcome of the 2008 presidential campaign has become a topic of heightened media attention. In fact, discussions of Latino electoral influence date back many years as multiple studies over the years show increasing numbers of Latinos are becoming U.S. citizens, registering to vote, and voting. The power of Latino voters has been particularly felt in the victories of Latinos vying for the U.S. Senate, House of Representatives, and especially the election of Antonio Villaraigosa as mayor of Los Angeles.

Scholars, journalists and pundits have articulated many explanations for that limited participation

Analysts have also focused on the low Latino voter turnout; less than half of those who could register and vote actually do so, consistently passing up that opportunity and civic duty. Scholars, journalists and pundits have articulated many explanations for that limited participation ranging from structural factors that interfere with easy registration and voting, to Latinos' apathy or alienation from political action that may be considered irrelevant to improving their daily lives.

Missing from those discussions has been a detailed focus on the media. Specifically, how have the U.S. Spanish-language and English-language newspapers and television newscasts covered Latinos and Latino aspects of electoral campaigns? Also, how have the Democratic and the Republican Party used the media to reach out to and win Latino votes? And, what influence have the media actually had on informing and mobilizing Latinos?

My recently published book, The Mass Media and Latino Politics: Studies of U.S. Media Content, Campaign Strategies and Survey Research: 1984-2004 provides the first systematic analysis of all three

of those questions. It also helps readers understand the role the media are playing regarding the Latino electorate.

Among its many findings, the book shows that with a couple of exceptions, Spanishdaily language newspapers have historically not done that great of a job in covering presidential campaigns, at least not in terms of informing their readers about the specific issues most important to Latino voters. The coverage has

> part mirrored how Englishlanguage newspapers cover those elections and politics, i.e., with emphasis on the routine campaign activities and who is ahead in the electoral horserace especially among Latino voters. depth news analyses and opinion c o l u m n s specifically related to Latino issues concerns have also been lacking in most print media.

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Spanish-language television news programs have followed a comparable pattern with the emphasis on campaign activities and the electoral horserace. And while networks and their affiliates

can be commended for promoting the importance of registration and voting, as well as trying to bring a Latino angle to some of the stories being covered, they have also failed to provide in-depth analyses and explanations of where the candidates stand and how their party's platforms might impact different segments of the Latino communities.

English-language media have been much worse. Year after year during election campaigns, occasional stories in newspapers and on TV news superficially emphasize how candidates are wooing Latino voters, that the Latino vote could be important, or which candidate Latinos are favoring. A common pattern is the focus on presidential candidates' visits to Latino communities, which provide colorful images of Hispanic dancers and musicians as backdrops to the brief whistlestops that can be summarized with the cliché "hey amigo, vota por mi."

Meanwhile, the Democratic and Republican Parties have each reached out via the media in Spanish and in English. Part of that outreach has been paid political announcements on Spanishlanguage television, and sporadic radio spots, too. The Democrats' main theme has been that a vote for their party or candidate will help solve [immigration, education, drug, etc.] problems. On the other hand, the Republicans repeatedly claim that voting for their party is the path to reach the "American Dream." Another form of outreach, especially by the GOP, has been the creation and dissemination (or more accurately planting) of "news" and "opinion columns" that get printed word for word but with different bylines as "objective" or "impartial" information by either unsuspecting or surrogate local Latino media.

Has exposure to the media in Spanish and/or English influenced Latinos to increase their knowledge about politics and vote? Yes, albeit the data and conclusiveness of the findings are limited. On the other hand, the aforementioned patterns of media coverage may simultaneously be hindering mobilization and turnout among even larger segments of the Latino population who lack news and information that is ethnically relevant and thus serve as an incentive to register and actually vote

As the 2008 campaign continues, it will be interesting to see if, for a change, the media in Spanish and English offer more than occasional cursory stories about the potential influence of the Latino vote and how the immigration reform (or lack thereof) might mobilize Latinos (and non-Latino) voters.

I believe that if and when the Latino-oriented and general market media provide Latino audiences significantly more expansive and indepth coverage of issues that are relevant to them as Latinos and also convey messages that are truly "incentivating" for political participation, the Latino vote will increase and turn into a much more powerful force in the electoral processes.

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Operational Citizenship

What does it mean to be a citizen in the United States of America? Why is it that thousands of people go to "citizenship classes" to learn about the United States? Why is it that many people in foreign countries dream of coming to America and becoming United States citizens?

To be sure, there are many answers to these questions. In this edition of *La Voz de Austin*, I want to share with you the idea of "operational citizenship." It seems appropriate that we discuss this topic in light of the current excitement with the race for the presidency in the United States.

I believe there are three kinds of citizenship. I believe there are first class citizens, second class citizens and third class citizens. Allow me to explain.

First Class Citizenship

A first class citizen is an individual who is eligible to vote and does so when the opportunity presents itself. While this may sound simple, it appears to be an increasing problem for the world's premier democracy.

In Texas, in the last presidential election (2004), only 56% of registered voters bothered to turn out (7,359,621 out of 13,098,329). When people who are citizens, go out and register to vote and then turn out to vote early or on election day, they are what I would call "first class citizens."

Second Class Citizenship

Individuals who practice "second class citizenship" are registered to vote but do not bother to turn out and vote. The voting rolls are filled with individuals who fail to turn out to vote.

Why don't people who are registered to vote not bother going to cast their ballot? This is indeed a mystery in many places. Aside from the standard excuses of, I got out of work late. I couldn't find the correct place to cast my ballot or I forgot, these citizens who fail to vote make the United States look bad, especially when one sees news stories from other countries where people have stood in line for hours to cast their ballot. When people who are reqistered to vote fail to do so they are "second class citizens" in my hook

Third Class Citizenship

This is the sorryist kind of citizenship. (Is sorryist a word?) "Third class citizens" are those individuals who are eligible to vote but couldn't care less about the right so many people have fought and died for. These individuals also have their set of excuses for not being registered. The most popular being the, "I don't want to be called for jury duty" excuse.

I don't know what to do or say

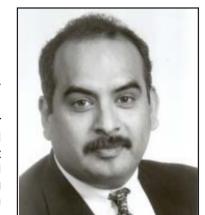
about this sorry group of citizens.

Some years ago, the Center for Voting and Democracy and the Chicago-based Midwest Democracy Center announced an essay contest for young people to address the question "Why don't we vote?"

Given the all-time low in youth turnout in the 1998 congressional elections and rampant evidence of plummeting political participation by young people, the question was timely. The project also wanted to ask young people what they thought should be done about this decline in participation.

Cash incentives were offered and nearly 9,000 essays from young Americans across the nation were received. It was a challenge to identify the winning essays, but with the help of a notable group of judges, the project was able to identify the winners.

The essays were a revelation. Not all were well-written. Not all were profound in their insights. But the creativity of many proposals, the range of perspectives and the depth of feeling about this critical question to the future of our democracy were important to see. Whatever might be said about young Americans, they deserve to be taken very seriously.



Editorial

Alfredo R. Santos c/s Editor & Publisher

Cambiando de Temas

We would like to make a few announcements in this edition of *La Voz de Austin*. We are currently seeking individuals in the **San Marcos** Hays County area who would be interested in helping us start a *La Voz De Hays County*. We might also add that we are seeking to do the same in **Seguin**, **Texas**. Si acaso conozen a alguien, give us a call at (512) 944-4123.

También queremos compartir que Alfredo Santos c/s, editor de La Voz de Austin was notified by PODER (People Organized for the Defense of the Earth and her Resources) and Austin based organization that he is one of the recipients of the Annual Cesar Chavez Award. More details to follow. Gracias a toda la gente que han apoyado los esfuerzos de La Voz de Austin a travez de los ultimos tres años.





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VOTE











FROM THE OFFICE OF JOYCE HUDMAN, BRAZORIA COUNTY CLERK

EARLY VOTING SET TO BEGIN

Early Voting for the March 4 **Democratic Party** and **Republican Party** Primary Elections begins on Tuesday, February 19, at ten locations in the county: **Alvin, Angleton, Brazoria, Clute/Lake Jackson, Freeport, Manvel, East Pearland, West Pearland, Sweeny** and **West Columbia**. Early voting is easier for many voters because a person can choose whichever location is most convenient to his or her schedule and daily commuter route. For instance, a voter from the southern part of the county who commutes to **Houston** can stop off at the **Manvel** location, which has easy access off Hwy. 288, instead of trying to get back to the **Clute** or **Brazoria** location before the polls close. Early Voting is also more convenient for voters who have moved within the county and who have not notified the Voter Registrar of the change. On election day, they would be required to return to their former precinct to vote and fill out the change of address form. But during early voting, they can go to the early voting location closest to their new residence, vote, and fill out the proper change of address form for future elections.

The schedule is as follows:	
●Tuesday, February 19 – Friday, February 22	
●Saturday, February 23 7 am – 7 pm	
●Sunday, February 24 1 am – 6 pm	
●Monday, February 25 – Friday, February 29	

Voting Locations are listed below:

- Alvin Alvin Library, 105 S. Gordon
- Angleton Courthouse West Annex, 451 N. Velasco, Room 144
- Brazoria Pct. 4 County Barn, 1001 Market St.
- Clute/Lake Jackson Brazosport College, 500 College Drive
- Freeport Freeport Library, 410 Brazosport Blvd.
- Manvel Courthouse North Annex, 7313 Corporate Dr.
- East Pearland Justice of the Peace Courtroom, 3801 E. Pear
- West Pearland Westside Event Center, 2150 Countryplace Pkwy.
- Sweeny Sweeny Community Center, 205 W. Ashley Wilson Rd.
- West Columbia West Columbia City Hall, 512 E. Brazos

Anyone with additional questions can call the Elections Department toll-free from anywhere in the county by choosing the proper prefix:

- North County area: 281-756-1373
- Central & West of the Brazos area: 979-864-1373
- Brazosport area: 979-388-1373

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

This March Texas Democratic presidential primary provides us with a unique opportunity to make our voices heard throughout this country. My own history of working with the late Willie Velasquez founder of Southwest Voter Registration Education Project throughout the southwest was always based on breaking new ground. We always struggled against the establishment be it Anglo or Hispanic.

The key was to open up the process to have more participation of those who felt disenfranchised. The principle was to create a coalition who would put the interests of opportunity for everyone first and self interest second. Senator Obama's campaign captures the spirit of empowering people of all backgrounds.

As a second generation Mexican American the future of our great state depends on breaking the paradigms of the past that limit opportunity for all Texans and create a new vision for our country. We have to be as courageous as Senator Barak Obama who understands the magnitude of his candidacy and seize opportunity for true change in our state and our country. I believe this opportunity does not come along that often. Please join me in supporting Senator Obama.

Respectfully,

Gilberto S Ocañas Former Texas Democratic Party Vice Chair Former DNC Deputy Executive Director

La Voz de Brazoria County

Se encuentra en el internet www.lavozdebrazoriacounty.com

A TODAS LAS PERSONAS Y PARTES INTERESADAS:

Shintech Incorporated se ha registrado con la Comisión de Calidad Ambiental de Texas (TCEQ o Texas Commission on Environmental Quality) para enmendar un Permiso de Calidad de Aire Núm. 9347 el cual autorizara la modificaccion de un Resina Del Cloruro De Polivinilo (PVC) Que Facilidad Industrial ubicada a la Carretera 332 del Estado del Este de 5618, Ciudad de Freeport, Condado de Brazoria, Tejas. Información adicional sobre esta solicitud puede encontrarse en la sección de avisos públicos de esta publicación.



U.S. Population Projections: 2005-2050

If current trends continue, the population of the United States will rise to 438 million in 2050, from 296 million in 2005, and 82% of the increase will be due to immigrants arriving from 2005 to 2050 and their U.S.-born descendants, according to new projections developed by the Pew Research Center.

Of the 117 million people added to the population during this period due to the effect of new immigration, 67 million will be the immigrants themselves and 50 million will be their U.S.-born children or grandchildren.

Among the other key population projections:

- Nearly one in five Americans (19%) will be an immigrant in 2050, compared with one in eight (12%) in 2005. By 2025, the immigrant, or foreign born, share of the population will surpass the peak during the last great wave of immigration a century ago.
- The major role of immigration in national growth builds on the pattern of recent decades, during which immigrants and their U.S.-born children and grandchildren accounted for most population increase. Immigration's importance increased as the average number of births to U.S.-born women dropped sharply before leveling off.
- The Latino population, already the nation's largest minority group, will triple in size and will account for most of the nation's population growth from 2005 through 2050. Hispanics will make up 29% of the U.S. population in 2050, compared with 14% in 2005.
- Births in the United States will play a growing role in Hispanic and Asian population growth; as a result, a smaller proportion of both groups will be foreign-born in 2050 than is the case now.
- The non Hispanic white population will increase more slowly than other racial and ethnic groups; whites will become a minority (47%) by 2050.
- The nation's elderly population will more than double in size from 2005 through 2050, as the baby boom generation enters the traditional retirement years. The number of working age Americans and children will grow more slowly than the elderly population, and will shrink as a share of the total population.

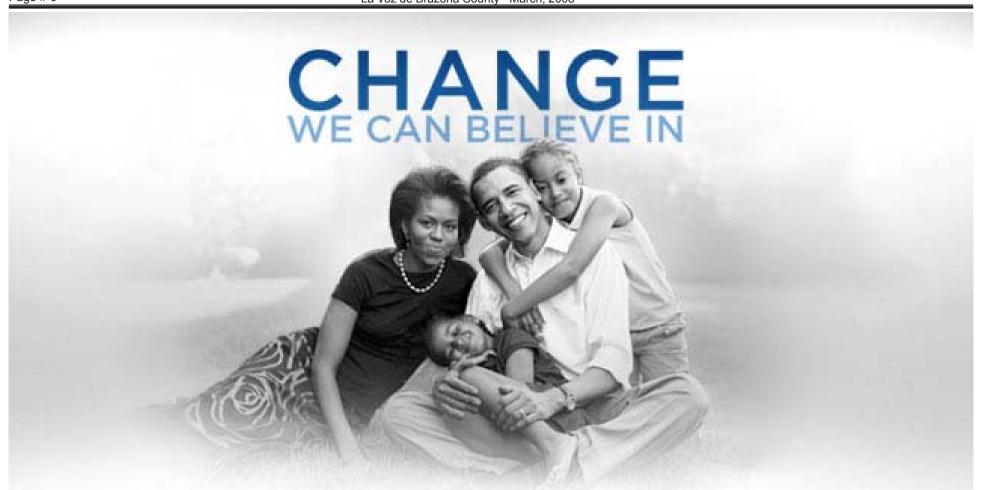
The Center's projections are based on detailed assumptions about births, deaths and immigration levels—the three key components of population change. All these assumptions are built on recent trends. But it is important to note that these trends can change. All population projections have inherent uncertainties, especially for years further in the future, because they can be affected by changes in behavior, by new immigration policies, or by other events. Nonetheless, projections offer a starting point for understanding and analyzing the parameters of future demographic change.

The Center's report includes an analysis of the nation's future "dependency ratio"—the number of children and elderly compared with the number of working age Americans. There were 59 children and elderly people per 100 adults of working age in 2005. That will rise to 72 dependents per 100 adults of working age in 2050.

The Mission of the Pew Hispanic Center Chronicling Latinos' diverse experiences in a changing America

Illuminating Hispanic Lives

Founded in 2001, the Pew Hispanic Center is a nonpartisan research organization supported by The Pew Charitable Trusts. Its mission is to improve understanding of the U.S. Hispanic population and to chronicle Latinos' growing impact on the entire nation. The Center does not advocate for or take positions on policy issues. It is a project of the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan "fact tank" in Washington, DC that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

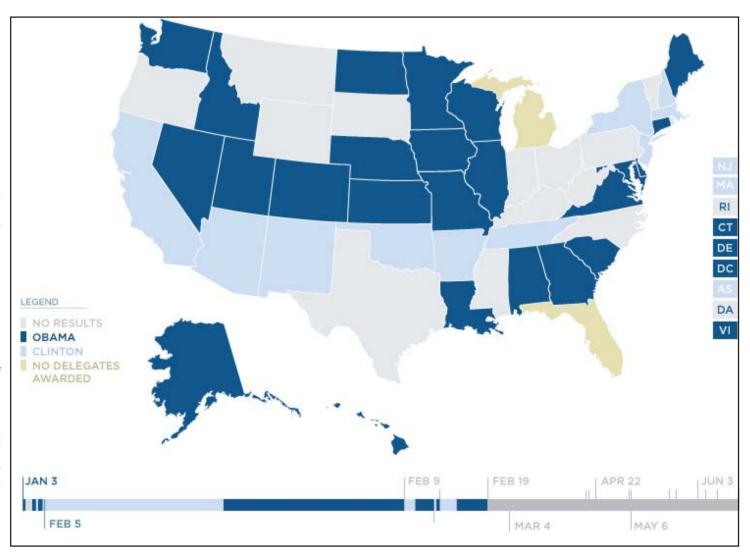


Ahora es cuando

Some of us have worked for more than 40 years as Chicano activists in Texas. We remember the way they treated us in the public schools, we remember the way they treated us when we went to work in the fields. But most of all we remember the way they treated us when we dared to stand up as activists in the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO).

The huge immigration marches and students walkouts across the county in 2006 are part of the frustration people have with living in the shadows of society. People from all walks of life are tired of barely making it. They are tired of living lives of quiet desperation.

The growing grassroots movement that is driving the Obama for President campaign is built on the hope that tomorrow will be different. Those of us who got into the Chicano Movement see Obama as we saw ourselves 40 years ago. Now is the time to stand up and stand with a man who believes in the possibilities of a better tomorrow.



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Un solo Candidato

Sólo hay un candidato en esta campaña presidencial que haya apoyado consistentemente licencias de conducir para los indocumentados, incluso cuando no fue popular apoyarlo.

Solo este candidato propone aumentar, y no reducir, el numero de emigrantes legales para solucionar necesidades reales de los empresarios, para mantener las familas latinas unidas, y para asegurar los derechos de los trabajadores indocumentados.

Este candidato ha sido recomendado por prominentes abogados y profesores expertos en inmigracion incluyendo a Jerry Kang de UCLA y Bill Ong Hing de UC Davis. Esto es logico, pues este mismo candidato ha ganado el apoyo de los expertos por sus planes anti-pobreza, tecnología y sanidad.

Solo un candidato entiende lo que es ser un americano de la primera generación. Solo uno sabe lo que significa ser pobre en América, solo este candidato sabe lo que es pertenecer a una minoria en América.

Es el mismo candidato que fue alabado por el senador Kennedy por trabajar duro como nadie, y mucho mas duro que ningún otro senador candidato a la presidencia, en la reciente propuesta ley de inmigracion del senado.

Este mismo candidato esta ahora corepresentando el DREAM ACT para que los estudiantes indocumentados puedan atender la universidad en los Estados Unidos y se ha comprometido a pasar la ley cuando sea presidente.

Este mismo candidato ganó el apoyo de los latinos en su estado porque trabajo incesantemente durante años para proteger los intereses económicos latinos.

El no es sólo el campeón de los negros, no es sólo el campeón de los blancos, y ciertamente aún menos el campeón de las corporaciones (es el ünico candidato que nunca ha trabajado por una corporación, el único candidato que se niega a recibir dinero de los "lobbyists"). El es campeón de todos por igual.

Los sondeos demuestran repetidamente que él es el candidato que puede vencer a McCain en noviembre. Los hechos han demostrado que es el candidato con la experiencia, el carácter, el curriculum, las habilidades y las soluciones fuertes que dan vida a la verdadera esperanza.

Barack Obama es el unico.

Jason Vieyra-Preston 785-209-4740 Junction City, Kansas

Translator Viviane Vives Austin. TX

Henry Cisneros: Clinton supporters don't need to divide to conquer

One of the noteworthy dimensions of this year's Democratic primaries has been the loyalty shown to Hillary Clinton's candidacy by Democrats who supported President Bill Clinton in 1992 and 1996, especially female voters, blue-collar families and Latinos.

As a Clinton supporter who has campaigned for her this year in Nevada, New Mexico and Arizona, I have spoken with many voters about why they are supporting Mrs. Clinton. They always give me solid and persuasive reasons. Despite the tendencies of the media pundits to speculate about divisive reasons to explain the preferences of Hillary Clinton voters over Sen. Barack Obama, Clinton supporters have made the following points:

Mrs. Clinton is ready to take on the difficult problems confronting the country on her first day in office. She will be able to go from the inaugural platform to the Oval Office and begin to tackle the challenges of our economy and the war in Iraq, while starting to work on her stated priorities of universal health care and investments in education. Voters tell me that she is smart and prepared and that they trust that she is primed for action.

Clinton voters seem to feel instinctively what I have observed personally for the many years I have known her: In addition to being smart, she is extremely well-organized and managerially competent to address the problems our country confronts. As a Cabinet officer in Mr. Clinton's administration, I watched her run meetings to produce outcomes. She is a no-nonsense person who breaks problems down into their component parts and systematically solves them.

As first lady, she represented the United States abroad in dozens of foreign countries, meeting world leaders and



Dr. Henry Cisneros

learning the intricacies of international relations. She doesn't make many mistakes â•" and when she does, she learns from them. At a time when the stakes in our world are so high, voters appreciate her battle-tested, sure-handed qualities.

Her supporters feel a sense of loyalty to a person who contributed significantly to some of the best years our country has enjoyed in its modern history. She was part of a team that produced the largest economic expansion in American history with lower unemployment rates, lower poverty rates, higher business formations, a record homeownership rate, higher levels of school performance and even a narrowing in the income gap.

Female voters in particular add to that fond remembrance a sense that the unique experiences of a person who has been a mother, a daughter, a wife and a sister can bring fresh perspectives and distinctive contributions to the nation's highest office.

Voters tell me they recognize that Mrs. Clinton has a big heart and a good heart. Yes, her commitment to the public good is driven by her intellect and her experience. But her inner drive comes from a desire to help people, to advance the country and to make a meaningful difference in our world. Since her early years working in the Children's Defense Fund to her years in Arkansas working to expand public health clinics for seniors to her work as a U.S. senator on children's health insurance, she has shown she is determined to reach out to families.

I met Mrs. Clinton when I was mayor of San Antonio, when she invited me to share and brainstorm on public health clinics in Arkansas and Texas. I was impressed with her dedication then; it has become even more focused, firm and effective over the years.

After listening to years of glitzy campaigning, political infighting and self-inflating assertions, I have found that voters generally break through the noise and find core truths. In this election, those voters gravitating to Hillary Clinton have respect in her policies, in her experiences, in her political lineage and her good heart.

Unfortunately, in the heat of a political battle, passions rise, and it seems necessary to draw hateful divisions between candidates or to denigrate one worthy candidate at the expense of another. Hillary Clinton supporters shouldn't be drawn into that game. There is no need. We have solid reasons to support her based on her public service record of a lifetime.

Henry Cisneros is executive chairman of CityView, which focuses on quality housing for working families. He may be reached through cityview.com.

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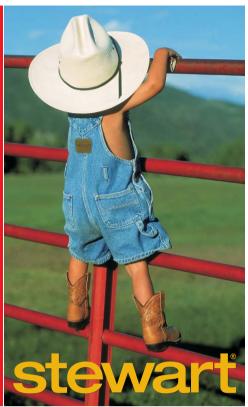
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