

Their agendas and interests diverge, and because many newer immigrants are not citizens or came to the United States illegally, they do not vote. . . .

Consequently, say immigrant advocates, the more recent arrivals from Latin America have been ignored in these days of painful post-riot recovery. Or, worse, they are shouldering the bulk of the blame for the chaos that ruled the city's streets for three days.

"There are many Latino leaders who say they represent Latinos, but they do not represent all Latinos," said Carlos Vaquerano, an official with the Central American Refugee Center.

Madeline Janis, executive director of the center, which is headquartered in the Pico-Union district, urged that all Latino leaders unite to support new immigrants in the wake of the riots.

"There's going to be a big backlash now because immigrants are an easy target, and if we don't have the established Latino leadership defending the rights of the newer immigrants, then we are going to be in an even more desperate situation than we are," she said.

Janis experienced the backlash when she appeared on a live radio talk show Thursday. The seven or eight calls from listeners that she fielded advocated sending immigrants back to where they came from, she said. . . .

"It did not happen in East L.A., Wilmington . . . areas that are just as poor but which have a different, stronger sense of community, a stronger attachment to their neighborhood," UCLA demographer Leo Estrada said.

"These people are more likely to own their own homes. . . . Everybody said, 'How can they destroy their neighborhoods, their jobs . . . ?' Well, my answer is that they did not consider it to be their own." . . .

Latino-owned businesses in South Los Angeles and in Pico-Union were heavily damaged. . . . State officials believe at least 30% of the estimated 4,000 businesses destroyed belong to Latinos. . . .

In addition, 19 of 58 people killed in riot violence were Latino, and hundreds more were injured and left homeless. . . .

In contrast, the Eastside was largely quiet. Only 10 businesses were looted in a 15 1/2-square-mile area. . . . No fires or other acts of violence were reported, and only 70 National Guards troops were deployed there.

There were signs Thursday that some effort is being made to bridge the gap between the newer and more established communities. The Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) sponsored a meeting Wednesday night—a week after the riots erupted—with Los Angeles County Supervisor Gloria Molina and representatives of the Central American community, among others, who discussed emergency aid.

"There's a realization we have to strengthen our ties with the newer immigrant community," said Antonia Hernandez, president and general counsel of MALDEF. . . .

The immigrant community has also been alarmed over actions by the police this week. In violation of longstanding policy, Los Angeles police officers who arrest illegal aliens on suspicion of looting or other riot-related crimes are turning suspects over to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service for probable deportation.

According to the INS, illegal aliens accounted for more than 1,200 of the nearly 15,000 people arrested in the riots. . . .

According to many accounts provided during the riots and in their aftermath, Latinos did more looting than burning. In interviews, Latino looters said they acted out of anger at the system and at years of discrimination. More than a response to verdicts in the trial of officers charged in the King beating, many said they were taking advantage of the anarchy to share in the wealth.

6. Rubén Martínez Describes the Fight Against Proposition 187, 1995

Political passions are inflamed . . . at the Peace and Justice Center, a quasi-underground youth hangout just west of downtown Los Angeles. In the August heat, as skateboarding daredevils go airborne in the parking lot outside, about 20 activists in their late teens and early twenties plot pyromaniacal political theater in a meeting room decorated with posters of revolutionaries including Malcolm, Martin, Che and Marcos. . . .

The young activists are planning a demonstration set to take place at the federal courthouse where the fate of Proposition 187 will be determined by Judge Mariana Pfaelzer on September 10. "We have to be there so that they will feel a serious presence," says César Cruz, a Chicano student at the University of California at Irvine. . . .

Nods around the room. "Yeah, I think we should . . . take the streets!" says a blond, blue-eyed . . . Chicana who goes by the name of "Lucha" (in Spanish, "Struggle").

"Logistics!" César cries out, furiously scribbling notes on loose-leaf yellow sheets that lie on the floor next to his copy of *The Diary of Che Guevara*. "Who's going to bring the bullhorn?" . . .

November, 1995 marks the first anniversary of the California election that placed the issue of immigration on the national agenda with the re-election of Gov. Pete Wilson and his all-out crusade for Proposition 187. It also marks the anniversary of the biggest student mobilization in Los Angeles since the late 1960s. . . .

Most of the activists at the Peace and Justice Center are veterans of last year's protests—high school and college students who led walkouts, organized teach-ins, and volunteered for get-out-the-vote efforts. Many were present at the pre-election October 16 march in Los Angeles which drew over 100,000 people onto the streets, one of the largest demonstrations in modern California history.

"Proposition 187 affects me in every way," says Ana Vásquez, a 20-year-old student at the University of Southern California. "My family is half documented and half undocumented. My mother's a citizen, my *tíos* came across the river."

Most of the advocates for the undocumented are young Chicano and Central American citizens like Ana who feel that 187 paints all Latinos, regardless of

immigration status, as welfare freeloaders, criminals, and the cause of the worst economic downturn in California since the Depression. In this, the activists of the 1990s differ from their 1960s forerunners. . . .

These activists want to reach out beyond the Latino community. "We're trying to break down the image that this is the 'Chicano movement' of the nineties," says Angel Cervantes, a founding member of the Four Winds Student Movement. . . . A lot of organizers are moving away from race and ethnicity towards issues of class."

This post-nationalist rhetoric has yet to translate into political reality, however. . . . The turnout at last year's marches was practically 99% Latino. And the election results once again confirmed California's political and cultural fragmentation. . . . White Californians voted nearly three-to-one in favor of 187, while Latinos voted nearly four-to-one against. Asians and African-Americans wound up in the middle, nearly splitting even. . . .

. . . Had Latinos voted proportionate to their population numbers (approximately one-third statewide), 187 may well have been defeated. But low voter-registration and turn-out rates—along with the fact that a substantial number of Latinos, both documented and undocumented, are not citizens—have historically held back not only a possible swing vote, but a bloc that could, theoretically, become the dominant force in California politics.

. . . Many Latino institutions—energized by 187, like the students—are focusing on political empowerment through more traditional channels.

Last year, community-based organizations such as the Central American Resource Center, One Stop Immigration, and the Catholic Church-based United Neighborhoods Organization recruited people for marches, conducted letter-writing campaigns, and coordinated media-outreach efforts. Latino newspapers, TV, and radio stations went on an unabashed crusade. . . .

Many community-based organizations are focusing on increasing the ranks of eligible Latino voters. The Southwest Voter Research and Education Project projects that some 100,000 people will apply for citizenship in California in 1995 alone. Nationally, applications for citizenship rose 250% from 1992 to 1995. . . .

The Catholic Church is active in the citizenship drive as well. There are 187 . . . Latino-majority parishes out of a total of 290 in the most populous archdiocese in the country. According to Assistant Director of Hispanic Ministry Louis Velásquez, half of these parishes are helping the immigrant faithful naturalize. . . .

Interestingly, the Protestant evangelical churches are equally involved in a grassroots effort to, at the very least, keep their brethren from being deported. . . .

Some evangelical churches have taken a more radical stance on the issue of immigration. . . . When undocumented brethren are deported, an elaborate network of contacts are often able to return the deportees to the flock in a kind of Pentecostal sanctuary movement. . . .

Nonetheless, the citizenship drive is seen as the principal vehicle for Latino empowerment. "We expect to have 2.1 million people registered by next year," says Antonio González, director of the Southwest Voter Research and Education Project. . . .

Absent from the discourse of most mainstream institutions (and elected officials) is word on the fate of the undocumented, who are, at least ostensibly, the direct target of 187. While most community organizations speak sympathetically of

the undocumented, the practical and political upshot of this solidarity is conspicuous in its lack of definition. . . .

. . . Many activists . . . think that mainstream institutions have all but abandoned the undocumented. . . . The undocumented have begun advocating on their own behalf—forming, for instance, street-vending cooperatives and independent day-laborer unions.

Despite the recent high-profile crackdown at the border, the incessant sweeps of *la migra* in the cities, and the increasingly ill political winds blowing . . . in California . . . , many of the undocumented appear unfazed by the political storm. A visit to a day-laborer site on the corner of Sunset and Alvarado reveals the eternal hope of the immigrant. . . .

Ricardo Martínez, a 21-year-old man from rural Jalisco, still believes in the promise of California. "I'm hopeful that all this will change," he says, "and that one day the politicians here are 100% Latino, so that we can be treated better in California. Why do they put us down so much when they're practically living off of the work we do for them?" . . .

Still, the psychological impact of 187 politics has taken its toll on the undocumented. Whether children in classrooms distracted by fears that their families may be torn apart by *la migra* or working mothers nervous about sending their children to school or to public hospitals when they are ill, a climate of fear has dampened some of the immigrants' stubborn optimism. . . .

. . . Whatever the decision in court about Prop 187's constitutionality, the battle over the referendum will answer many questions about California's, and by extension the country's, future. The immigration debate, after all, includes issues of race relations, class disparity and the global economy. Three decades after the civil rights movement brought us both fire on the streets and major change to our public lives, a new and perhaps just as momentous struggle is upon us. At the center of the controversy are the newest Americans—and their blood relatives who have been here for generations.

7. Frank del Olmo Explains What Latinos Have to Lose by Proposition 209, 1996

The Times' last poll before Tuesday's election found that Latino voters in California are narrowly opposed to Proposition 209, the initiative that would abolish affirmative action in state hiring and contracting. All told, 42% of Latino respondents said they would vote against 209, with 38% leaning in favor of it and 20% undecided.

That more Latinos oppose Proposition 209 than favor it is no surprise. The initiative would force state and local government entities—most notably the University of California [UC] and the California State University system—to abolish the few programs to get more Latino students into higher education and to give more