



Urgent Action



Online Extra

- College student expelled for organizing pro-labor teach in by Dan Margolis, 05/04/05 16:21 After attempting to organize a teach-in for University faculty and staff focusing on the school's poor working conditions, Robert Patillo, a student at Clark Atlanta University, was thrown out of school. The forum was to be led by representatives of local labor unions, as part of a national "Student/Labor Week of Action."

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LA mayor's race: Hahn moves to the right

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Author: Rosalio Muñoz

People's Weekly World Newspaper, 05/05/05 16:25

Antonio Villaraigosa's campaign to become Los Angeles' first Latino mayor in 133 years is picking up steam. Now the incumbent, Mayor James Hahn, is trying to appeal to Republican voters by attacking his Mexican American opponent's previous activism in the American Civil Liberties Union.

Sen. John Kerry endorsed Villaraigosa at an April 30 appearance by the two at Los Angeles Valley Community College. Villaraigosa served as a vice chairperson for Kerry's 2004 bid to defeat George W. Bush.

The Kerry endorsement added to a growing list of progressive and liberal leaders supporting Villaraigosa, including Reps. Maxine Waters and Henry Waxman, both Democrats in Congress, and Los Angeles City Council President Alex Padilla. Waters and Padilla had supported Hahn in 2001 when he defeated Villaraigosa in a bitterly contested race.

Hahn has responded to Villaraigosa's strong progressive support and 18 percent lead by shifting his campaign to the right. A May 1 Los Angeles Times headline said, "Hahn intensifies focus on Valley; Battling for a quick comeback, the mayor ratchets up appeals to white conservatives by painting Villaraigosa as a liberal extremist." The Hahn campaign sent a flier to "the prosperous enclaves of the Santa Monica Mountains," in which County Supervisor Mike Antonovics warned voters against taking "a risky gamble on a former ACLU president who has opposed the Los Angeles Police Department again and again." Villaraigosa served as president of the Southern California ACLU chapter in the early 1990s.

At an April 29 press conference with Republican leaders Hahn, a Democrat, said of Villaraigosa: "It's not that he's just to the left of the mainstream ... he's not in the mainstream."

The event with GOP leaders focused on Villaraigosa's opposition, as an ACLU leader, to "anti-gang" injunctions. Former GOP chair Shawn Steel called Villaraigosa "pro-gangster," according to the Los Angeles Times.

In the final televised debate of the campaign April 23, Hahn noted that Villaraigosa had been charged with misdemeanor assault in 1977. He did not mention that charges were dropped after the jury deadlocked with an 11-1 vote for acquittal. The allegations stemmed from a restaurant altercation when Villaraigosa responded to insults to his mother and sister.

The Hahn campaign's attempt to play on negative Latino stereotypes could backfire by jeopardizing the previously liberal Hahn's support among trade union voters,

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many of whom come from poor communities that have been stigmatized with “gang” stereotypes.

While Hahn, as the incumbent, has the endorsement of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, Villaraigosa, a former labor organizer, enjoys a lead among trade union voters.

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