

Latinos and the Presidential Election*

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ABSTRACT

With California's Proposition 187 in 1994 as the backdrop for the relationship between Latinos and the Republican Party, this article explores the impact that the 2012 Presidential Election had on Latinos and the growing influence of Latinos in American Politics. I look at the historical roots of the relationship between the GOP and Latinos and the short road that brought us to the apogee of anti-Latino rhetoric throughout the 2012 Presidential Election and the GOP primary elections. I discuss whether or not the immigration issue has formed a structural barrier to the GOP's relationship Latinos. Next, this article looks at the outreach effort by the GOP, in particular the missteps and miscommunication between Republican Latino organizations and the Romney campaign. Last, I look at the results of the election and discuss what this could mean for the future of Latino politics and for the country. I also briefly look at the structural features of our electoral system that is hampering the

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GOP's ability to reach out to Latinos. I conclude with a short discussion on what the GOP can do to change this and how the Democrats should consider responding.

Keywords: Latinos, politics, GOP – Grand Old Party (Republicans), elections, Democratic Party, outreach, structures

RESUMEN

Con la Proposición 187 de California en 1994 como telón de fondo de la relación entre los latinos y el Partido Republicano, este artículo explora el impacto que la elección presidencial de 2012 tuvo sobre los latinos y la creciente influencia de los latinos en la política estadounidense. Miro a las raíces históricas de la relación entre el Partido Republicano y los latinos y el camino corto que nos trajo al auge de la retórica anti-latina en las elecciones presidenciales de 2012 y las elecciones primarias del Partido Republicano. Discuto si el tema de la inmigración se ha formado una barrera estructural para los latinos la relación del Partido Republicano. A continuación, este artículo analiza el esfuerzo de divulgación por el Partido Republicano, en particular, los errores y falta de comunicación entre las organizaciones de latinos republicanos y la campaña de Romney. Pasado, miro los resultados de las elecciones y discutir lo que esto podría significar para el futuro de la política latina y para el país. También miro brevemente las características estructurales de nuestro sistema electoral que está dificultando la capacidad GOP para llegar a los latinos. Concluyo con una breve discusión sobre lo que el Partido Republicano se puede hacer para cambiar esto y cómo los demócratas deberían considerar la posibilidad de responder.

Palabras clave: latinos, política, del Partido Republicano - Grand Old Party (Republicanos), las elecciones, el Partido Democrático, el alcance, las estructuras

1. INTRODUCTION

In what may be a watershed moment for the influence of Latinos on the future of national politics, the 2012 Presidential Election was a moment of emerging promise not only for Latinos, but for the formation of a viably strong and diverse coalition between minority groups and progressive whites to counter the historically dominant conservative white majority of the country. Latinos largely have the GOP to thank for

this growing phenomenon, as it was largely by their miscalculation to use anti-Latino sentiment to mobilize white voters that drove Latinos to participate in record numbers and join the overwhelming minority vote for President Obama.

The relationship between the Republican Party and Latinos is a sordid one, filled with half-starts, half-promises, and seemingly unending examples of how not to appeal to an electorate. But despite this relationship, hope remains among the dwindling numbers of Latino Republicans that the GOP will someday put forth the type of effort needed to make Latinos a force within the party. So far this has not happened, and perhaps this election will give the GOP the incentive it needs to bring Latinos into the fold, but the party still needs to work out among themselves how their principles can appeal to Latinos without giving it's important conservative base the impression that the Republican Party is "pandering" to Latinos.

This is a tall order, and the poor showing in the 2012 Presidential Election for the GOP among Latinos is the culmination of a long road of decisions that began in California in 1994 over a proposition advanced by conservatives to attack Latinos through means of political and social isolation by prohibiting them from accessing public resources, such as education, health care and other social services. While Proposition 187, the "Save our State" proposition, passed, the harsh rhetoric used to advance this proposition stained the relationship between Latinos and the GOP in way the party has not recovered and which has had a ripple affect across the country with equally antagonistic results.

With this as the backdrop, this article explores the impact that the 2012 Presidential Election had on Latinos and the growing influence of Latinos in American Politics. First, I will look at the historical roots of the relationship between the GOP and Latinos. Given the recent animosity between the two, a step back to see how we got here would provide context to what happened not only in the 2012 Presidential Election, but in the primary elections, which have come to be a structural barrier to the GOP's relationship Latinos.

Second, this article will look at the outreach effort by the GOP, in particular the missteps and miscommunication between Republican Latino organizations and the Romney campaign. Last, I will look at the results of the election and discuss what this may mean for the future of Latino politics and for the country. I will also briefly look at the structural features of our electoral system that is hampering the GOP's ability to reach out to Latinos. I will end with a short discussion on what the GOP can do to change this and how the Democrats should consider responding.

2. HISTORY

The relationship between Latinos and the GOP was not always a rocky one and it began several decades before the anti-immigrant California proposition in 1994, Prop 187. As an emerging minority group with a long established history in the Southwest, the GOP witnessed how the John F. Kennedy campaign first reached out to Latinos in Texas through Senator Lyndon B. Johnson's nomination as Vice President in 1960. At the same time across the Southwest in California, Ronald Reagan gained popularity and influence within the Republican Party and his California roots was the beginning of his relationship with Latinos.

As Governor of California in the 1960's, Ronald Reagan recognized the growing importance of Latinos in that state and supported policies that were friendly towards the Latino demographic. While Latinos viewed Reagan's approach to them more favorably, Reagan was cutting his teeth in coalition politics in California, and he saw the growing Latino population as an opportunity worth exploiting to maintain power. While the American racial order is largely seen in black and white, the California that Reagan governed was a peek into the future of the diversity of American politics which would come over the next thirty years. Part of his appeal to Latinos was his support of bilingual education reform despite the long established law in California that education was to be conducted in English only (Brilliant 2012).

This support came at the expense of opposing policies that were favorable to African-Americans. Governor Reagan opposed the Rumford Fair Housing Act, which made it illegal to discriminate against African-Americans who wanted to purchase or rent property. The Rumford Act was sponsored by Assemblyman William Byron Rumford, one of the first African-Americans elected to any office in California, who had a strong record of supporting civil rights legislation while in office. In response to the Rumford Act, Reagan supported Proposition 13, which sought to overturn Rumford. Governor Reagan also responded to the growth of the Black Panther movement with some of the strongest gun control measures of any state. Ironically, it was this anti-black sentiment that has formed the basis for the progressive gun control regime in California.

Reagan would go on to be President a decade later, but the roots of Republican recruitment had already been planted with him, and his running mate, George HW Bush, was the founding member of the Republican National Hispanic Assembly (RNHA) in 1972. The RNHA claims that their support for Nixon resulted in 60% support among Latinos for Richard Nixon, though polling data in this era for subgroups is unreliable and 60% seems unlikely.

While 60% is not likely, discontent among Latinos with both parties as evidenced by the rise of La Raza Unida Party does not make it entirely unbelievable that the GOP enjoyed some level of support from Latinos that would demonstrate promise to Reagan that Latinos were a potential source of electoral support. Indeed, Reagan hired Lionel Sosa, a marketer who specialized in Latino messaging, to manage his outreach efforts into the Latino community for his first campaign. Sosa would be a mainstay of the Republican Party over the next twenty years, and he remains a powerful symbolic connection between the past and the present among Republicans who desire a return to the days when the GOP was seeking ways to be more attractive to Latinos.

It is difficult today to conceive of a Republican Party that would do what it can to win over Latinos, especially a party that would go to great lengths to demonstrate their care for undocumented immigrants, but that is exactly what happened in a primary debate between Reagan and Bush in 1980. Both candidates fielded questions from the audience in Texas, and a participant asked them if they thought that children of “illegal aliens” should be allowed to attend Texas public schools for free. Reagan and Bush both gave support for educating undocumented students in their responses, and their answers continue to confuse conservatives today who claim some ideological heritage from Ronald Reagan in those years.

Education was a burning question for Texans, as it remains a contentious issue today. The growing Latino population in Texas had created the social conundrum of how to deal with children of undocumented immigrants, and this social issue had deep political implications. Texas had been passing laws to limit access to education for these children throughout the decade, but two years after the debate between Reagan and Bush, the Supreme Court would hand down their ruling in *Plyler v. Doe*, which struck down these attempts to limit the education of Latinos. The court found that the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment applied to these children, and they could not be denied access to the public school system based on their immigration status (Olivas 2012).

The fight for access to education, however, did not end with children after the Plyler decision in 1982. As the Latino population grew, so did the push for equal access to the university system for undocumented students. As a result, Texas became the first state to pass in-state tuition for undocumented students, HB1403, by overwhelming margins with only one member of the Texas House voting against the bill and three State Senators voting against it. With little fanfare, Governor Perry signed HB1403 on June 16, 2001. Ten years later, Governor Perry would have to defend his support for

undocumented immigration in a hostile Republican Presidential primary, in which the hardline conservatives were accusing him on being soft on “illegal immigrants”.

3. GOP PRIMARY AND “THE PIVOT”

The primary process has been a source of discord among Republicans at the federal level, but also at the state level where a significant or growing number of minorities are present. Much of this is due to the growing homogeneity of the Republican Party, where almost ninety-percent of all Republican primary voters were white. This is an astonishing number given that the country will soon be comprised of a demographic in which the majority of the population will belong to an ethnic or racial minority group. There are already several important states where this is true, including California and Texas. And there are several states where non-Hispanic whites are less than sixty percent of the population, such as Florida.

As the GOP fails to diversify, its capacity to compromise becomes more difficult and as the discussion over immigration percolates, the GOP has found itself out of step with rest of the country. There are essentially two approaches the country can take regarding immigrants, particularly the undocumented; an assimilationist approach and a criminal approach (See Figure 1). Assimilation includes a humane approach to family unification and a sensible pathway to citizenship for the undocumented. This approach views this population as members of society who operate outside of the system because of our defective immigration policies. The criminal approach is the policy most advocated by the GOP, in which immigrants are viewed as criminals for finding themselves outside of legitimate society.

Figure 2 illustrates how damaging the Republican stance on immigration has been. When Latinos are asked the same question about their preferred approach to immigration and whether or not it will make them more likely to vote for a candidate, Latinos for both parties, as well as independents overwhelmingly prefer candidates who promote the assimilation model.

The figures below is a graphic illustration of the GOP conundrum regarding Latinos and has been reflected in what is known as “the pivot” every four years during the campaigns for President and other executive offices throughout the country. As the figure illustrates, the GOP is unique in that the likelihood of support for candidates who promote an assimilationist approach to immigration is lower only among Republicans. For non-Republicans, assimilation is the dominant strategy for any candidate seeking to gain favor among its constituents. This phenomenon creates a problem for moderate Republican candidates in the primary elections, where opposition candidates can

threaten viable national candidates by taking a hardline approach to immigration, requiring moderate candidates to move further right on the issue than they normally would to protect themselves in the primary.

As the GOP base has become hardened in their stance on immigration, it has become a litmus test of sorts for primary candidates. Rick Perry, the governor of Texas, had to defend himself for signing the uneventful HB1403 ten years prior and Mitt Romney pushed further right to shed any concerns that he might not be committed to “conservative” values. In a primary debate in Arizona, Mitt Romney called the infamous anti-immigrant bill, SB1070, a “model” for the nation. One popular candidate, Herman Cain, said that the country should electrify the fence at our southern border. Jon Huntsman, perhaps the most cosmopolitan of the primary candidates, was not able to gain any traction with his reasonable overtures on immigration. As far as the GOP primary was relevant to Latinos, it was a race to the bottom to see who could outdo the other in their contempt for Latinos.

Newt Gingrich, however, was seen as a potentially important candidate because he had an immigration proposal that was unusually progressive compared to his counterparts. Mr. Gingrich had spent the year before the primary holding special meetings with Latino leaders throughout the country and had immigration as a centerpiece issue he argued he could solve. Mr. Gingrich turned to the Kriebel Foundation for a policy they called the “Red Card Solution”. Red Card Solution was an attempt to rhetorically and substantively separate the concepts of legalization and a pathway to citizenship. This was an important step for the GOP leadership if they were going to have any chance against those in the party who saw a pathway to citizenship as “amnesty”. To Gingrich, this was a solution that could move the party forward with Latinos, while finding a suitable compromise that pragmatic Republicans could promote to calm their ideological base.

However, Mr. Gingrich could not get much traction within the party on this and he had also made some key outreach mistakes in his messaging. Mr. Gingrich hired a very competent communications manager in Sylvia Garcia to be his National Hispanic Inclusion Director, and they made regular press releases in Spanish with their English press releases. However, some Latino activists, while impressed by their efforts, were not impressed that their Spanish translator had a Spanish background and was a member of the *North American Academy of the Spanish Language*, an arm of the *Royal Spanish Academy*. While the nuance was lost on Newt Gingrich and they were satisfied to hear that his press releases were written in “perfect Spanish”, activists and common folk alike did not see this as an effective outreach effort. This was yet another

example of how even genuine attempts to bridge the GOP with Latinos could be wrought with pitfalls.

Regardless, the strategy in the primary went further right rather than taking any advice from Newt Gingrich. Instead of working to find some compromise that might soften the image of the Party, Republican primary candidates began collecting the endorsements of the most ardent national figures against immigrants. With great fanfare, the Romney campaign boasted about the endorsement of Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio, the most notorious figure in the country who has made it his mission in life to use the pain and suffering of Latinos to his advantage in elections by stoking nativist and racist sentiments of his constituents (Hagan). Russell Pearce, a State Senator in Arizona who has since been recalled for his extreme views against Latinos and immigrants, supported Mitt Romney as well, calling Romney's immigration strategy "identical" to his own.

Russell Pearce was the architect of the State Republican Party's political strategy to us SB1070 to mobilize whites against Latinos in the 2010 election, and which brought him close to anti-immigrant groups with racist ties. One of his former supporters and friends who organized the Arizona Militiamen movement against immigrants, J.T. Ready, was revered by anti-immigrant politicians until he shot four people including a child, and then turned the gun on himself (Rudolph). Mitt Romney had also sought out the endorsement and consultation of Kris Kobach, the Secretary of State of Kansas and author of SB1070 along with similar bills passed by legislators around the country. Kobach is now representing Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents who are suing the federal government for directives ordered by the President to prioritize immigration enforcement on violent offenders rather than families who are of no danger to society, but have found themselves outside the law because of our broken immigration system.

4. OUTREACH

Republican outreach into the Latino community continues to lag behind that of the Democrats and has not been a serious part of the Republican program since Lionel Sosa was asked by Ronald Reagan to fashion a marketing campaign targeting Latinos. The *¡Viva Bush!* campaign in 2004, headed by Jennifer Korn and supported by Karl Rove, is often seen as a successful Republican outreach program. Republicans won about 40% of the Latino vote that year, a high watermark for the GOP, but it also came in the face of a John Kerry campaign that was a low point for Democratic concern over Latinos (Navarette 2004). The ensuing win by the Bush campaign gave

Democrats pause, but we have yet to see a campaign where both parties have made equal efforts to recruit Latinos for candidates and as voters.

At the time, however, 2004 seemed like a symbolic moment for the emergence of a political narrative that included Latinos beyond symbolic overtures. The success of the Republican Party gave a strong impression that a new era of politics had emerged, yet interest in GOP outreach was still relatively low in the academic literature. In his review of the literature, Rodolfo O. de la Garza's (2004: 103) reading of the political landscape largely reflects this sentiment. He wrote, "Now that Republicans are heavily engaged in convincing the electorate of [a] need for change, scholars would be well advised to monitor the extent to which those efforts are penetrating Latino communities". Robert G. Marbut (2004: 82) largely agreed, however, he cautioned Republicans not to revert to using nationalistic agendas to mobilize the Anglo base or they will be cutting out the fastest growing segment of the population.

The debate over immigration reform in 2006 – 2007 largely erased the gains made by the Bush Administration. The Bush Administration had initially run for office in 2000 on a policy of national integration with Mexico, both economically and socially. In a campaign speech in 1999, candidate Bush said about building a wall on our southern border, "The fearful build walls. The confident demolish them." This attitude changed quickly after the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. The primary concern on our Southern border was security, and the debate over immigration reform in 2006 could not focus the discussion away from the xenophobic concerns of the country.

The immigration debate also brought to the forefront a resurgence in political activism by Latinos, with massive marches across the country calling for comprehensive immigration reform. While this gave hope that these marches would put pressure on the politicians to write legislation that was favorable towards Latinos, the public backlash by conservative radio hardened the Republican Party against positive reform. Research measuring the attitudes of American voters following the marches also indicated that the protests had provoked negative reactions by the public in general (Marks, Nuño, and Sanchez 2008). The end result was no reform and a retrenchment of the security-first argument with President Bush authorizing 700 miles of new fencing along the border with Mexico.

Six years later, the Republicans have been unable to recover and the vigilance of the anti-immigrant wing of the GOP has dominated the narrative of the party. The GOP has become so reliant on interests that are so directly at odds with Latinos, it has created a mindset that has hampered even symbolic gestures to recruit Latinos. For

example, the Hispanic Leadership Network, a Latino outreach program funded by the American Action Network and led by Jennifer Korn who ran the *¡Viva Bush!* campaign mentioned above, sponsored a conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico late in 2011 to highlight the many achievements of “center-right” Latinos. However, one of the highlighted sponsors of the conference was CCA, also known as the Correctional Corporation of America. CCA is the largest private prison corporation in the country and has notoriously lobbied legislatures across the country for policies that would increase the incarceration rate. Their connections to conservative politicians in Arizona and the SB1070 debate has long been known to be influential with politicians at every level of governance, including Governor Jan Brewer. The irony that a private prison corporation which heavily lobbies for legislation that targets Latinos to be incarcerated was supporting the Hispanic Leadership Network was largely lost on HLN when it was brought up, although they did not prominently advertise their ties to CCA in their next conference.

It was out of this that emerged the Republican Party’s Hispanic spokesperson, Bettina Inclán, who participated in the HLN conference as an expert in communications. Ms. Inclán was hired as the Director of Hispanic Outreach for the Republican National Committee and was later appointed the National Deputy Director of Coalitions-Hispanic Vote for the Romney campaign. Ms. Inclán worked for the Rick Scott for Governor campaign in Florida in 2010, and prior to that she was the Deputy Director of Communications for the Steve Poizner for Governor Campaign in California. Ms. Inclán is also engaged to a Washington consultant who worked for the Sharon Angle for Senate campaign in Nevada. The Poizner and Angle campaigns were both unsuccessful, but both campaigns were also known among Latinos as being strongly anti-immigrant in their marketing.

Although Ms. Inclán may be an effective communicator, she is indicative of the problems Latinas face in the Republican Party, finding themselves supporting candidates with mixed messages. Latina operatives are highly visible and accentuate the dichotomy of reaching out to a demographic that is at the same time being vilified. At best they become managers of a tainted image and at worst appear to be apologists for policies that Latinos view as hostile to them. The messaging could get confusing, and to a point can confuse the messenger, as well. Soon after Bettina Inclán was appointed as the Republican Party’s Director of Hispanic Outreach in May 2012, she was asked to clarify Mitt Romney’s approach to immigration. Her response was, “As a candidate, to my understanding, he is still deciding what his position on immigration is...”

This caused a firestorm of attention by Spanish media and Democrats because Mitt Romney had taken such care in the primary to underline his immigration plan, which he called “self-deportation”, but it was yet another example of the gap between the primary constituents needed to win and the general election voters needed to be a viable national candidate. Ms. Inclán fell into obscurity after this high profile moment and later made an appearance in an oddly produced commercial called, “The Breakup”, where she played a former Obama supporter who was now breaking up with the President because of his policies.

5. THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

The Republican Party and the Romney campaign made the decision early on to focus almost entirely on mobilizing white voters. Their Latino outreach consisted of bringing on Bettina Inclán and sending out press releases comprised of lists of Latinos who were endorsing Mitt Romney. These lists were mainly from Latino Republicans culled from the other primary candidates, particularly Governor Rick Perry of Texas. Perhaps the most poignant moment of the campaign in the media was when Ron Brownstein of the National Journal reported that a Republican strategist said, “This is the last time anyone will try to do this” (Chait), meaning relying almost entirely on white voters to win an election. Given the changing demographics, this was a major gamble, but it’s not clear Mitt Romney had a choice.

The primary contest did not end until April because of the persistence of those like the Tea Party favorite, Ron Paul, to force Mitt Romney to spend valuable time and resources on winning primary elections and caucuses. Ron Paul supporters were claiming that a “brokered convention” was a possibility as late as May. Given the focus on winning primaries in which almost 90% of the participants were white, and having them drawn out until April, establishing any type of outreach effort to challenge President Obama was a tall order.

The President had focused on key areas around the country with a growing influence of Latinos, including Clark County in Nevada, Denver County in Colorado, and in the Tampa-Orlando area in northern Florida. Each of these areas were flush with Latino voters who could be the deciding factor in a tight race and each of these states had substantial growth in the Latino population, particularly Nevada where the Latino population increased over 80% from 2000 to 2010 (See Table 1).

Table 1 reports the twenty states with the highest share of Latinos, the growth in the Latino population, the Presidential vote breakdown, and the number of electoral votes available in each state. President Obama won thirteen out of the top twenty

states, giving him two-hundred fourteen electoral votes to Mitt Romney's ninety-nine electoral votes for winning the other seven states. Its important to note that President Obama won four important "swing states" that had a strong Latino influence, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico and Florida.

As mentioned above, the Obama campaign focused heavily on Latinos here, and the efforts of the campaign paid off. Republicans had early hopes in New Mexico because of their Republican governor, Susana Martinez, but Mitt Romney lost in New Mexico by ten percentage points. Colorado and Nevada were also thought to be very close races early in the campaign, but the President won those states by comfortable margins, as well, 5% and 7% respectively. Only Florida came in close. Cuban-Americans are diminishing in their electoral contribution to the Republican Party because of the population growth in the Puerto Rican and other Latin-origin countries, and because later generation Cuban-Americans are increasingly straying away from the GOP. It's been clear for some time now that the GOP will need to expand their Latino outreach beyond South Florida if they are to remain competitive.

Figure 3 illustrates the vote for Obama in nine important states where Latinos had an opportunity to impact the election. Nationally, the President won over 75% of the Latino vote, and with the exception of Florida, each state overwhelmingly voted for President Obama.

6. THE FUTURE

It is difficult to see how the Republican Party can recover from such a dismal performance among Latinos. It is clear that the GOP must adjust to the changing demographics of the country, but it is not clear yet how the GOP will manage to do that given the hardened stance of their constituents on immigration. They can start by giving a larger voice to the few Hispanics they do have in the party. Fortunately for them, the GOP has been successful at putting forth Latino candidates at the State level. Research has shown that co-ethnic candidates can act as a mobilizing force (Barreto 2010). Latino candidates can also act as an effective recruiter that can overcome barriers to communication endemic in GOP outreach (Nuño). With Senator Marco Rubio of Florida and Senator Cruz of Texas, the GOP possesses two of the three Latinos in the Senate. The Republicans also have the only two Latino governors in the country, Governor Brian Sandoval of Nevada and Governor Martinez of New Mexico.

Many pundits and scholars point out that these Republicans would be ineffective in recruiting Latinos over to the GOP. It is often pointed out that Cuban-

Americans, such as Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio, would be largely ineffective at winning over Latinos who are primarily Mexican-Americans in the Southwest. That may or may not be true, but strategists should remember that the primary necessity among Republicans isn't necessarily winning over Latino voters, but convincing independent white voters that the Republican Party is not extreme in their views. As we have seen, independent voters would prefer candidates who promote an assimilation model of immigration reform. Latino candidates, like Mr. Rubio, would go a long way in softening the Republican image among white voters. Along with the Latino Senators, Governors Sandoval and Martinez can act as ambassadors to the Republican core voters, and perhaps convince them that a more sensible approach to immigration would be best not only for the country, but the Party itself.

But along with the tonal shift in the GOP, the Republican Party will need to reevaluate their policies and see how they can make adjustments (Alvarez and Bedolla 2003). With regards to immigration, the GOP may want to adopt a more market-based approach to immigration, rather than allowing cultural factors to drive their viewpoint. Promoting small business growth, home ownership, and better opportunities for school choice, are other areas that seem to be a natural source of votes for the GOP. It may also be beneficial to take a global approach in appealing to Latinos, and developing greater commercial integration with Spanish-speaking countries.

Expanding recruitment efforts will also be important. If the GOP is going to sell their policies to the Latino electorate, they will need a diverse stable of representatives to do so. Establishing a concerted program to recruit Latinos to run for office will need to be a top priority for the party. Without more Latino faces, the damaged brand of the GOP will have a difficult time overcoming the barriers to communication between the party and Latinos.

The GOP also needs to assess the structural disadvantages created by the primary process. With Republicans already at a disconnect with the electorate at large on immigration, the GOP primaries require candidates to make up a lot of distance between their far right appeals for their white primary voters and the moderate messaging that is necessary for the general election. It would be worth the effort to evaluate the order in which the primaries are conducted, and move up primaries in states with a more diverse population. With Iowa playing such a prominent symbolic role, GOP candidates are forced to promote a message that only damages the party. It may make more sense to move up states like Texas, Florida and Colorado, so that GOP candidates will be forced to consider the effect their positions will have on Latino voters.

As the GOP struggles with the future of their party, it will be incumbent upon the Democrats to convince Latinos why they should remain in the Democratic Party beyond being second worst in a two-party system. While the decisions that lay ahead for the GOP will be contentious, the demographic reality facing the cultural purists on the right has already determined the future of the Republican Party. While this process will take longer in some states than in others, the greatest unknown question is how will the Democrats respond when the GOP does come up with a viable strategy for Latinos?

Figures and Tables:

Table 1: Presidential Vote in Top 20 Latino States as a Percent of Total Population by State

State	Latino Population Growth 2000-2010	Latino Population %	Obama %	Romney %	Electoral Votes
New Mexico	25%	46.3%	52.0%	42.0%	5
California	28%	37.6%	60.2%	37.1%	55
Texas	42%	37.6%	38.0%	57.2%	38
Arizona	46%	29.6%	44.5%	53.5%	11
Nevada	82%	26.5%	52.4%	45.7%	6
Florida	57%	22.5%	50.0%	49.1%	29
Colorado	41%	20.7%	51.5%	46.1%	9
New Jersey	39%	17.7%	58.3%	40.6%	14
New York	19%	17.6%	63.3%	35.2%	29
Illinois	33%	15.8%	57.6%	40.7%	20
Connecticut	50%	13.4%	58.1%	40.7%	7
Utah	78%	13.0%	24.7%	72.8%	6
Oregon	64%	11.7%	54.2%	42.1%	7
Washington	71%	11.2%	56.2%	41.0%	12
Kansas	59%	10.5%	38.0%	59.7%	6
Massachusetts	46%	9.6%	60.7%	37.5%	11
Oklahoma	85%	8.9%	33.2%	66.8%	7
Georgia	96%	8.8%	45.5%	53.3%	16
North Carolina	111%	8.4%	48.4%	50.4%	15
Maryland	107%	8.2%	62.0%	35.9%	10

Source: Demographic data compiled using US Census. Election data compiled from exit poll results published by CNN Election Center website

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