

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

October 10, 2022

**MEDIA CONTACT**

Kacey Bonner

E: [lppipress@luskin.ucla.edu](mailto:ppipress@luskin.ucla.edu)

**UCLA LATINO POLICY AND POLITICS INSTITUTE ISSUES STATEMENT ON  
HARMFUL AND DIVISIVE COMMENTS BY LOS ANGELES CITY LEADERS**

**LOS ANGELES** – UCLA LPPI Founding Director Sonja Diaz, who also served as an appointed member of the 2021 Los Angeles City Council redistricting commission, issued the following statement in response to the racist, homophobic, and divisive statements by Los Angeles City leaders and public officials recently brought to light:

“As a research institute that focuses on the needs of Latinos, the continued proliferation of anti-Black, anti-Indigenous, and homophobic sentiments in the halls of power erodes trust in government and stifles policymaking.

The leaked audio of four Latino leaders, including the president of the Los Angeles City Council and the president of the Los Angeles County Labor Federation, is a clear reminder that descriptive representation is separate and distinct from substantive representation. The 2020 U.S. Census made clear that the City of Los Angeles, like the State of California, experienced population growth led by its growing, youthful, and diverse demographic groups. Yet, a scarcity mindset persists that says if one group gets something, it must mean another group is getting less. This mindset creates false political boundaries and affinities that inhibit building multi-racial and ethnic coalitions and limit an inclusive, healthy democracy. All the while, the political voice of a rapidly declining demographic not representative of Los Angeles or this nation’s future is maintained.

As an institute that believes political representation of Latinos by Latinos is vital, more is needed to not only elect candidates of choice but also launch data-backed reforms to hold our leaders accountable. That these abhorrent, racist comments occurred during the once in a decade political opportunity of the 2021 redistricting cycle further underscores the deep work needed to improve governance. Not only did these four leaders promote deeply racist ideas and stereotypes, but they also did so in the face of a great opportunity to follow the data and ensure Black Americans, Latinos and Asian Americans have equal political voice in a districting scheme that has benefitted a declining, a non-Hispanic White population.

In looking to the future, the root causes that limit enlightened and inclusive leadership in Los Angeles include multiple redistricting cycles of minority vote dilution; a citizens' advisory redistricting commission that lacks independence; and the weakening of core democratic institutions, like a free and fair press corps, that holds our systems accountable in real-time. We can only achieve racial healing and reconciliation through intentionality and meaningful accountability. Latino leaders, like myself, must recommit to true inclusion that safeguards the dignity of Black and Indigenous communities even as we advocate for equal political voice."

###

### **About UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute**

The UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute addresses the most critical domestic policy challenges facing Latinos and other communities of color through research, advocacy, mobilization, and leadership development to expand genuine opportunity for all Americans.