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In my opinion

More than a mayoral victory

In a landslide victory Tuesday, Antonio Villaraigosa defeated incumbent James Hahn to become the next mayor of the nation's second largest city, Los Angeles.

After nearly 135 years, it's about time a Latino took back the office.

The race, which included considerable name-calling and mudslinging mostly from Hahn at Villaraigosa, had many voters appearing less as Villaraigosa supporters and more as Hahn detractors. Hahn ran on the slogan, "Los Angeles can't trust Antonio Villaraigosa," while his opponent went with "Vote Hope" and informally, "Sí, se puede!" ("Yes, we can!").

In a matchup of the same two candidates four years ago, Villaraigosa lost just as handily as he won this round. Coupled with a low voter turnout, Villaraigosa's victory is somewhat soured.

However, a win is still a win, and Villaraigosa's election to office is certainly a boon not just to Los Angeles, not just to the Latino community, but also to the life, energy and leadership of Democrats nationwide.

While Villaraigosa built his campaign on charisma and promises, Hahn stressed his experience. But his inability to successfully address the city's problematic public school system and traffic issues during his time in office left voters hungry for change.

At least with Villaraigosa in office, Los Angeles will get a much-needed change of pace.



ANNEMARIE KNEPPER
WORKS ON PAPER

Villaraigosa started his political career in the labor movement and then moved to the California State Assembly. While he was speaker of the Assembly, voters strongly supported his \$9.2 billion school bond measure. His two years as a city councilman were less successful, moving only one major initiative, a plan to lower prescription drug costs.

Critics claim Villaraigosa's plan for L.A., including an expensive subway expansion, is overly idealistic. Some also cite shady campaign contributions (later returned) as a bad way to start a mayoral run. Also, Villaraigosa said several times during his city council campaign that he would not run for mayor this cycle, and later promised to finish out his four years as a councilor if he won.

Villaraigosa's record is far from perfect, but he now has the potential to make Los Angeles and the unheard communities within the city boundaries, major players in the nation and world.

Though Villaraigosa has made an effort to minimize it, the symbolic nature of his victory cannot be

underestimated. With his new post, Villaraigosa has an unprecedented opportunity to move Latino issues into the national consciousness. Arguably the most underrepresented group in politics, Villaraigosa's victory launches him into ranks of other prominent Latino politicians including San Antonio Mayor Edward D. Garza, San Jose Mayor Ron Gonzales, Albuquerque Mayor Martin J. Chavez and Miami Mayor Manuel A. Diaz.

For Villaraigosa and Los Angeles, opportunity abounds. So now that he's made history, what's next? The city of Los Angeles requires an action-oriented mayor just as much as the nation needs Latino representation. Curbing gang violence and making more housing available is a tall order for anyone. This time, Villaraigosa will have to keep his promises. He will have to serve several competing interests at the same time. Los Angeles demands it.

What happened in Los Angeles on Tuesday is bigger than just a man winning a race and bigger than just a city choosing a new mayor. Villaraigosa's success or failure in the next four years will help determine the role of American Latino politics in the next decade. The weight on Villaraigosa's shoulders is heavy.

Let's hope he carries it with strength and care.

¿Sí, él puede?

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INBOX

of every reader.

There is no evidence whatsoever that Sen. Harry Reid and the Democrats oppose Janice Rogers Brown's appointment to the U.S. Appeals Court because she is African-American. Rather, she is opposed because she is a right wing ideologue who routinely abuses her position of power to twist the law to the conservative agenda.

It is upsetting to see Furtwangler resort to such dirty tactics as comparing a principled stand against extremism to a despicable act of racism. Whatever one's stand in relation to the upcoming battle over court nominees, such behavior is not acceptable.

I respect Furtwangler's right to his own opinion. However, it would be appreciated if in the future Furtwangler did not draw his cartoons directly from the right wing propaganda machine, and perhaps showed some independent thought.

Kirk Wintermute
Senior

Peak Oil means drivers need to 'power down'

Major kudos to Ailee Slater for her column about Peak Oil ("A 'peak' into oil's future," ODE May 16). This issue is the most underreported story out there, and I was elated to see the Emerald get the issue out.

Ailee's column fell tragically short, though, of presenting the full scope of peak oil's ramifications.

The most predictable result is what will happen to our globalized,

oil-based economy when declining oil supplies shoot gasoline prices to \$5, \$7 and even \$10 per gallon. How will goods get from China? How do we get to work, school or the store in this reality? Further consider that the U.S. dollar's strength is largely contingent on cheap, widely available petroleum.

Our food supplies are also in real trouble as this progresses. Consider that the average food item travels 1500 miles, and it takes 10 calories of fossil fuel for every one calorie of food produced. Pesticides, fertilizers, tractors and semis — all are based on petroleum. Recent increases in oil costs have bumped costs for farmers to 10 percent — consider what happens when oil doubles or triples in price in the coming decade.

Hydrogen to the rescue? Sorry — hydrogen is an energy medium, not an energy source. You've got to burn something (oil, coal, nuclear material) to get hydrogen. Hydrogen will not save us.

The only alternative, as Professor Richard Heinberg and others have done well to demonstrate, is to power down. We must use less energy if we ever hope to adequately weather this imminent crisis. Ride your bike. Live closer to work and school. Buy local food; grow some of it yourself. Advocate for measures to stop sprawl. As peak oil demands that our globalized economy be relocalized, we must be sober in our response. We must stop chasing the American Dream and live on less, if we can hope to live at all.

Brandon Rhodes
Senior

CORRECTION

On Tuesday in "Ebony Excellence" the Emerald reported in a story summary that 10 black students received awards. The students were students of color, but they were not all black. The Emerald reported that "Large paintings, mostly composed by black students, were also on display at the back of the ballroom." All the art was created by Yvonne Stubbs. Andiel Brown's name was misspelled in a photo caption. Lijin Abraham was not identified as co-director of Black Women of Achievement. There was a total of 10 winners of awards, but only the names of three were reported. Jordan Thierry, Leonidas Watson, Percy Appau, Mark Padoongpatt, Keith Allen and Nate Jackson also won awards.

The Emerald regrets the errors.

Editorial

Faculty pay should stay priority for University

On Wednesday, the Emerald reported the University faculty's salaries are only 86.2 percent of the average compensation across the nation ("Faculty pay not on par with other higher-eds," ODE May 18). Professors at the University receive about 20 percent less pay than comparable positions at comparable schools.

The reason for this disparity? As so often happens when Oregon's budget gets tight, education takes one of the biggest hits.

In 2001, when Oregon experienced an economic recession, Salem lawmakers decided to save money by decreasing state allocations to universities. In 2003, with budget problems still at hand, the legislature again threw a punch to collegiate education, freezing salaries for all state employees. That decision, of course, affected University professors.

The results of such a long-standing pay disparity (University professors have long received a below-average salary since at least 2000) are quickly making themselves clear. Department heads report a decreased ability to hire new, assistant professors, and some report that the quality of University academics is falling as a result of disgruntled faculty.

Administrators hope that eventually, University professors' salaries will only be 5 percent below the national average. Of course, it might help to use a little more sense in budget allocation. In theory, instead of fundraising for sporting arenas and bigger buildings, the university could channel some of the energy to raise cash for the people who matter most.

Unfortunately, it is also unclear whether the state of Oregon is making professors a top priority. As one of the largest and most popular state universities, bringing in many students from out of state as well, it is in the best interest of the state to take note of the faculty salary situation. Keeping these professors happy and well-compensated is essential to creating a harmonious and productive University campus — certainly more so than the construction of a new sports arena. Our school can't afford to lose teachers, nor can we afford to decrease the stability and learning environment of our campus.

We hope, in the future, Oregon lawmakers and University administrators will take a good, long look at University of Oregon professors and affirm what we already know: These faculty members are essential to our educational institution, and their pay should reflect that.

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