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Category : Mayor Villaraigosa

Published by [Robert Mendel](#) on 9/10/2008

http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/05/21/070521fa_fact_bruck?currentPage=allProfiles

Fault Lines

Can Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa keep control of L.A.'s battling factions?

by [Connie Bruck](#)

May 21, 2007



The Mayor's talent for connecting with people is a boon, but he has alienated some old supporters. Photograph by Martin Schoeller.

“*Hola! Hola!*” Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa called out as he approached a crowd of boys and girls in MacArthur Park, on the gritty edge of downtown Los Angeles. The children, wearing green, red, and blue soccer shirts, swarmed around him as he asked about their games, tousled their hair. It was Sunday afternoon, May 6th—just five days after a May Day immigrants’-rights rally that had drawn an unexpectedly small crowd, of thirty-five thousand people. Among them were many women pushing babies in strollers, waving American flags and carrying signs that read “*Legalización—No Deportación*” and “*There Are No Borders in the Workers’ Struggle*.” Toward the end of the day, some forty agitators just outside the park began throwing rocks and bottles at the police. According to department protocols, the police should have attempted to isolate these rogue elements. Instead, they pushed them into the larger crowd and then, in full riot gear, moved into the park, hitting people with their batons and firing a hundred and fifty “less than lethal” foam projectiles. Twenty-four protesters and journalists were injured, as were seven police officers. Villaraigosa, the city’s first Latino mayor in a hundred and thirty-five years, was away, on a nine-day trip to El Salvador and Mexico intended to increase trade and to promote law-enforcement cooperation in countering the increasing influence of transnational gangs. That evening in El Salvador, he saw videos of the police melee. “Those images hit me in the gut,” he said. He recalled one in particular—“of a young boy, maybe twelve years old, hit again, again, and again, trying to run away.” He returned three days later, cutting short his trip. It was a warm spring day, and the park was filled with people playing soccer and picnicking. Several police officers stood on a distant hillside. The chief of police, William Bratton, accompanied the Mayor; he retains Villaraigosa’s strong support. Bratton usually seems to enjoy being the center of attention, but that Sunday, dressed in civilian clothing and looking fatigued, he appeared satisfied to be part of the retinue, as Villaraigosa, surrounded by a growing throng of children, walked slowly through the park. Wherever he went, people called out, “*Gracias, Villaraigosa!*” He paused periodically to say something to them, speaking in Spanish and occasionally translating for reporters: “We recognize your right to be here with your family and play, and your right to march here and speak out against the government—whether you are here legally or illegally. We will stand up for your rights. That is the American dream.” With a nod toward Bratton, he promised that there would be a full investigation, and “consequences for the abuse.” To a crowd of children, he said, “You speak English and Spanish both?” Most said yes. “That’s very important, to be bilingual,” he told them. “It would be great if you could learn a third language. It’s so important for you to stay in school. How many of you are from El Salvador?” About a dozen hands went up. (“I’m from Mexico!” yelled a boy who was wearing the green soccer shirt of the “Mexico” team.) “We need to make sure we work on this issue of gangs,” Villaraigosa said. “That’s what I was doing in El Salvador. You want to stay in school, stay out of gangs, take care of your mommy and daddy.” He stopped by a picnic table. A woman named María Sanchez had brought food for her extended family of twenty, and she offered him a tostada. Villaraigosa had just had lunch, but he ate it with gusto, and praised the cook. He asked for a tostada for Bratton, who was standing nearby. Then he hugged Sanchez and kissed her on the cheek. People took pictures of him with their cell phones, and gave him scraps of paper to autograph. Some children asked him to sign their soccer shirts. Soon he was autographing soccer shoes, sun visors, dollar bills. A man held out a bill. “*Veinte?*” Villaraigosa said, shaking his head with a smile, but he signed it, too. Villaraigosa had been tirelessly traversing the city ever since his return, reassuring the public that order would prevail, and repeatedly declaring, “We are one L.A.” He insists that the city’s extraordinary cultural diversity is its greatest strength. On Saturday, he had gone to two Cinco de Mayo festivals, one of them in Watts, a formerly African-American community that is now sixty per cent Latino. That evening, he attended Mass, where he spoke, in Spanish, about the events

of May 1st. On Sunday morning, before his visit to MacArthur Park, he had delivered remarks at the end of Mass at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels. The church was completed five years ago, and its huge nave, which seats nearly four thousand people, was filled with Latino, Anglo, Japanese, Filipino, Chinese, and African-American worshippers. Villaraigosa stood in front of a series of tapestries depicting the City of God superimposed on the City of Angels. "I come today with a heavy heart," he said. "We must pray for peace, but we understand there is no peace without justice. . . . There are many who have forgotten how they got here and seek to demonize the immigrants among us. I ask Angelenos to come together—now is not a time to point fingers but to come together." After the service, a long line of congregants formed, waiting for a chance to speak to the Mayor. He kissed babies, posed for pictures, and hugged people. Two elderly nuns told him that they were praying for him. He broke away only when one of his aides whispered that Cardinal Roger Michael Mahony, with whom he was to hold a brief press conference, was growing impatient. Villaraigosa likes to say that Los Angeles will soon be the world's most important city—a proving ground for a multicultural society, a place where well over a hundred languages are spoken within four hundred and sixty-nine square miles, where there are many ethnic communities that are the largest outside their native countries. But his vision of this international city of the future was undercut by the events of May 1st, when the L.A.P.D.—supposedly a new L.A.P.D., reformed and revitalized by Chief Bratton—acted in a manner that recalled infamously brutal moments of the past: in 1967, L.A.P.D. officers beat anti-Vietnam War demonstrators outside the Century Plaza Hotel; in 1991, they beat Rodney King, an unarmed African-American; in 2000, they beat demonstrators and reporters at the Democratic National Convention. The abuses in 2000 had led to the protocols that were ignored in MacArthur Park. The images of police firing into crowds of immigrants also underscored the volatility and the fragility of the diverse city that Villaraigosa celebrates. In the past decade or so, there has been a sharp rise in violence between Latinos and African-Americans; much of it is gang-related, emanating from the prisons. While Latinos have entered Los Angeles in growing numbers—between 1980 and 2000 their share of the city's population rose from twenty-seven per cent to forty-seven per cent, and will be more than fifty per cent by 2010—the proportion of African-Americans has declined. By 2000, African-Americans accounted for only eleven per cent of the population; schools that were once largely African-American are now predominantly Latino. There have been a number of highly publicized hate crimes against blacks, and some black students feel so threatened that they walk in groups when they leave school in the afternoon. Sometimes the Mayor seems to think that he can wrest the ideal city into existence through sheer kinetic energy. In the Villaraigosa administration, governing looks a lot like campaigning. The Mayor spends a great deal of time away from his office, appearing at half a dozen events most days, and holding multiple press conferences, in both English and Spanish. In times of crisis, his talent for connecting with people is a boon, but at other times it can appear contrived—as when, not long ago, he stepped into a busy major thoroughfare and started knocking on car windows, trying to hand out flyers to startled drivers. At a press conference recently, he noted that there were only five television cameras, and said, irritably, "We had sixteen cameras at the last event!" At a Greek festival, a woman approached Villaraigosa and exclaimed, "You work so hard! How do you do it?" He took her hands in his and replied, "Do you know what's happening? Your energy is flowing through me!" The pleasure that Villaraigosa derives from contact with people calls to mind Bill Clinton—an impression that Villaraigosa cultivates. In one of several conversations we had, he mentioned a column about him by George Skelton in the *Los Angeles Times*, in 2001. Skelton wrote, "Working a room, Villaraigosa is in a league with President Bush and Bill Clinton." Just before the mayoral election in 2005, Villaraigosa called his friend and supporter Nick Patsouras to talk about the opposition's tactics. Patsouras recalled, "Antonio told me, 'They're going to hit us with everything they have. But I see where I'm going."

They are not going to get me. I am like Clinton!" Villaraigosa became the Speaker of the California State Assembly in 1998, after just three and a half years as an assemblyman; he ran for mayor in 2001 and lost, but in 2003 he won a seat on the City Council and, two years later, the mayoralty. Because of the increasing number and importance of Latino voters nationally, Villaraigosa has assumed a position of prominence in the Democratic Party. He endorsed John Kerry early in the 2004 Presidential campaign and became co-chair of Kerry's national campaign. He spoke at the Democratic-caucus retreats of both the House and the Senate in early 2006, and, last January, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi invited him to Washington to attend the State of the Union address, seating him beside her husband in the gallery. During that trip, he had dinner with Senator Hillary Clinton; afterward, he told a friend that he was pleased by how much she knew about him.

California's Presidential primary has been moved up to February 5th (only Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina, Florida, and Nevada will hold their primaries earlier), and, because the state offers the largest number of delegates, candidates are paying more attention than ever to California politicians. Although Villaraigosa has been mentioned as a possible Vice-Presidential candidate in 2008, he is focussed on the race for governor in 2010. He is likely to be a formidable candidate; other Democrats who might do well in Los Angeles and San Francisco could face trouble in the center of the state, but there are a great many Latino voters in the small towns of the Central Valley, and Villaraigosa has ties to agribusinesses there, from his days as Speaker. "The table is set," a friend remarked. In recent months, though, Villaraigosa has had difficulties with the City Council, other political leaders, and the business community, and has come to appear less invincible. His broad coalition has begun to fray, and strains have emerged between him and the African-American community, which was crucial to his election. In December, a court ruling stymied his efforts at school reform, and that ruling was upheld on appeal in mid-April. That same month, Los Angeles lost to Chicago in the competition to be the U.S. candidate for host of the 2016 Olympics. After the announcement, a photograph in the Los Angeles *Times* showed the perpetually smiling Mayor looking slack-jawed and stricken. And in early May the courts handed him another political defeat. In the past year, the Mayor and the City Council have approved two laws extending the city's "living wage" protections to workers who had previously not had them. A Superior Court judge blocked the more recent law and accused the city's political leaders of "bad faith" for not putting the issue before the voters in a public referendum. This time, the Mayor had company in defeat, but, as one local politician said, "it was Villaraigosa's deal." And although his efforts to reassure the public after the violence in MacArthur Park have been praised, many public officials believe that Villaraigosa should have returned to Los Angeles more quickly. Assembly Speaker Fabian Núñez, a close political ally, called him on Wednesday, May 2nd, and told him to come back immediately. But he waited two more days.

It was surely not coincidental that Villaraigosa scheduled a trip that took him away on the day of the rally. The year before, his conduct during the huge immigrants'-rights demonstrations in March had been damaging to him politically. He had ignored advisers' warnings not to associate himself with the protest, one of the largest demonstrations in the city's history. Standing on a balustrade outside City Hall, he addressed some five hundred thousand protesters. "There are no illegal people here today," he told the crowd. "America was built on the backs of immigrants." Until that moment, Villaraigosa told me, "I had ninety-four per cent approval among Latinos, ninety-two per cent among Democrats, eighty-seven per cent among African-Americans, and seventy-four per cent among Republicans. I dropped thirty-six per cent among Republicans, and double digits among Democrats, African-Americans, and Latinos, though a lot of the numbers have come back up." Not all Latinos, he explained, are in favor of immigrants' rights. Villaraigosa says that his position on immigration is hardly radical—he supports the McCain-Kennedy bill, which would strengthen border security while providing additional temporary work visas for immigrants who enter legally—but he feels that

on this issue the public holds him to a different standard than it does non-Latino politicians. That has long been Villaraigosa's central dilemma. Being Latino obviously accounts for a large part of his appeal and his political success, but the subject of immigration is one of the country's most polarizing issues, and if he appears "too Latino" he risks losing support among all his constituent groups. When he spoke at the National Press Club, in January, he was annoyed that many questions concerned immigration. He now seems to avoid the subject when he can. But Villaraigosa's recent troubles may stem less from the Latino dilemma than from his own shortcomings. His single-minded ambition contains a streak of petty vindictiveness, and he has alienated many who were once enthusiastic supporters. Even among other politicians—not a shy group—his drive for self-aggrandizement sets him apart; and some of his colleagues say that he cannot be trusted in the normal give-and-take of political life. "He wants you when he needs you, and then it's over," a legislator who has known him for many years told me. There are officials who deeply dislike him but hesitate to cross him. (One who did was banned from his office, and, at a press conference, Villaraigosa introduced everyone on the dais but that official.) When Nancy Pelosi praised him during a meeting of the California House Democratic delegation in January, Dennis Cardoza, a congressman from the Central Valley who served in the California Assembly with him, told her that she did not know the real Villaraigosa, who "stabs people in the back." Tom Hayden, the former activist, also served in the California legislature with Villaraigosa, and has known him for nearly twenty years. "Antonio's pattern is to leave people in the dust," Hayden told me. He pointed to Villaraigosa's treatment of Phil Angelides, the Democratic candidate for California governor last year, in his race against Arnold Schwarzenegger. Villaraigosa waited to endorse Angelides until several months after other Democratic officeholders had; he appeared publicly with Schwarzenegger, on one occasion in support of the Governor's bond proposals for infrastructure funding; and during the critical days of the campaign he went to Asia. Villaraigosa benefitted significantly when Schwarzenegger won a second term: the governor's seat will be open in 2010. According to Hayden, Villaraigosa might as well have said, "Look what I'm doing! I'm squashing Phil, and I got state bonds and an open run for governor." He continued, "You don't do that. The people he leaves behind and the damage to relationships may come back like karma." Few major American politicians have a more dramatic story of transformation. Villaraigosa began incorporating his story into speeches when he first ran for office, in 1994. He tells audiences he was so poor that he put cardboard in his shoes to cover their holes and, when he was seven, hawked the Spanish-language daily *La Opinión* in front of Grand Olympic Auditorium. His family lived in a small house in the City Terrace section of East L.A., and he says that sometimes his father, a Mexican-immigrant welder who was an alcoholic, beat his mother "to a bloody pulp." His father left the family in 1958, when Antonio was five, soon remarried, and had another son, whom he named Anthony. It was as if he were erasing his first son, Antonio, who was called Tony. Villaraigosa's mother, Natalia Delgado, worked for twenty years as a secretary at a large state agency; she died in 1991. He adored her, and frequently refers to her as "a single mom who raised four kids." A few years after his father left his mother—when Antonio was nine—she remarried, and two years later gave birth to a baby boy. When Tony was fifteen, he suddenly became paralyzed from the waist down, and underwent surgery for a tumor in his spinal canal. After his recovery, he started getting into fights, and his grades dropped. He also participated in the Chicano Blowouts of 1968, in which thousands of students in East L.A. walked out of school to protest the fact that Mexican-Americans were receiving an inferior education. (But he was ecumenical: he also helped found a black student union.) He was expelled from Cathedral High School, a small Catholic boys' school, where he had been taking college-prep courses, and went to Roosevelt High, a huge school, with thousands of students, where he was placed on a vocational track. He dropped out in eleventh grade, cruised Whittier

Boulevard in a 1965 Chevrolet Malibu, and got tattoos (“Born to Raise #####”). When his mother saw the bandages on his arms, she wept, fearful that she was losing him to a life of violence. But, he declares, she never stopped believing in him, and an English teacher named Herman Katz encouraged him to return to school and go on to college. Villaraigosa told this story in a speech that he delivered to the Democratic caucus in the Assembly in Sacramento, just after he had been voted Speaker. “There were a lot of people crying,” he recalled. “And I wasn’t, for some reason, but I was really emotional. Then the most beautiful thing happened—somebody said, ‘Let’s pray.’ And all of us got each other’s hands, and we prayed. It was a very powerful thing.” Gilbert Cedillo met Villaraigosa at Roosevelt High, and they became close friends. (Villaraigosa was Tony Villar then; he began using “Antonio” in the eighties, and he created a blended name when he married Corina Raigosa, a schoolteacher, in 1987.) “He’s really quick,” Cedillo says. “He talks quickly, moves quickly, doesn’t ponder—or, if he does, he does it quickly.” Through an Upward Bound program, Cedillo was accepted at U.C.L.A.; Villaraigosa went to East Los Angeles College and then transferred to U.C.L.A., where he ended up living in Cedillo’s apartment (“Rent-free,” Cedillo joked). They both became active in Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán, a campus Chicano-rights group. And both attended the Peoples College of Law, a night school dedicated to producing public-interest lawyers. (Villaraigosa took the bar exam four times, but never passed.) Villaraigosa visited Cuba with the Venceremos Brigade, a radical group. And he and Cedillo became deeply involved in Centros de Acción Social Autónomo, or CASA, an immigrant’s-rights organization led by the Mexican-American labor activist Bert Corona, and worked on its newspaper, *Sin Fronteras*. “At CASA, we wanted to organize the undocumented into unions, instead of seeing them as a threat,” Cedillo said. Like many other highly ambitious people, Villaraigosa presents his tenacious ascent as a kind of accidental journey. Recently, however, addressing a class on leadership at the University of Southern California, he mentioned that he practices self-actualization, which he learned from his mother: you visualize yourself somewhere, and then you see yourself methodically doing the things that it takes to get there. “I do this a lot,” he told the class. “If you see me spacing out, that’s what I’m doing.” Later, he told me that he has been engaging in this discipline since he was in his twenties, and that he used it to chart his course to the mayoralty. In 1978, Villaraigosa began working for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, as an investigator in employment-discrimination cases. “A group of women filed a grievance saying they were being discriminated against, and pointed to me as the person who was getting the benefits,” Villaraigosa recalled. “We had a woman supervisor at the time, and they said she was favoring me”—he smiled broadly—“and they asked me to testify on their behalf, and I agreed to do that even though I was the one who was supposedly benefitting.” Villaraigosa argued the women’s case in the grievance hearing—“and of course I go from being the fair-haired child to being in the outhouse,” he said. “So it started getting around the office that I was really good at representing people.” Shortly afterward, he was elected president of a local union representing civil-rights workers, lawyers, and others in six states. He was twenty-five. Over the next fifteen years, Villaraigosa continued to work as a union organizer, first at the Service Employees International Union and then at United Teachers Los Angeles. He attended workshops at an organization founded by Saul Alinsky, the community organizer whose theories also drew close attention from Hillary Clinton (in her college thesis) and Barack Obama. Villaraigosa’s union experience was valuable preparation for his political career, his lifelong friend Jesús Quiñonez pointed out, “because as a labor organizer you have to know how to build coalitions and organize a majority.” It was this, rather than the militancy sometimes associated with union leaders, that Villaraigosa assimilated. “Antonio’s strongest

ideological commitment is to get everybody in the room and work it out," a political consultant who knows him well says. In 1988, Villaraigosa broadened his network by joining the union board of the local branch of the A.C.L.U., many of whose members came from the city's heavily Jewish Westside. Ramona Ripston, the organization's executive director, recalled that, three years after joining the board, Villaraigosa told her he wanted to run for president. "Up until then—and since then—people who were elected president had served on the board for long periods of time," she said. Nevertheless, he was elected. "And then, after one year as president, he was gone!" Villaraigosa resigned from the A.C.L.U. presidency in 1994, to run for the State Assembly. Darryl Holter, who knew him in the labor movement, recalls, "I remember people saying—'Oh, is he running? He's a good guy, but I don't think he's ready for it.' With Antonio, at every step of the way, people think, 'Is he overreaching?'" Holter added, "Because of what his life has been—constantly exceeding others' expectations—he may not know his limits." At the time, Latinos were beginning to transform California politics. Two years earlier, State Assemblyman Richard Polanco had decided to try to increase the number of Latino state legislators. There were only a handful among the state's hundred and twenty, so Polanco recruited several candidates (one was in line for unemployment benefits when he reached her on her cell phone) and helped fund their campaigns. Nearly all won. Then Polanco backed Latino "crossover" candidates as well—that is, Latinos running for seats that were not clearly Latino—and many of them won, too. Today, there are twenty-six Latinos in the legislature. Villaraigosa was not part of Polanco's design. Perhaps because the Latino political turf had been constricted for so long, it was marked by bitter infighting. "We have a propensity, like other minorities, to hate one another," Richard Alatorre, a veteran Latino politician and a Villaraigosa adviser, says. In the early nineties, Polanco led the most powerful camp. The second most powerful was led by Gloria Molina, who had challenged the male-dominated Latino political establishment and beaten Polanco in a race for the Assembly in 1982. Tony Castro, then a reporter for the Los Angeles *Herald Examiner*, referred to Polanco, Alatorre, and other male power brokers on the city's Eastside as the Golden Palominos, and the name stuck. Later, some referred to Molina's cadre, which included Villaraigosa, as the Macho Dogs. Villaraigosa was a close friend of Molina's husband, Ron Martinez, and he had been best man at their wedding. When Villaraigosa entered the Democratic primary for the Assembly seat in 1994, Molina was one of his most ardent backers, raising money for him and campaigning door to door, but most of the Latino political establishment backed Polanco's candidate. From the start, Villaraigosa extended his campaign beyond East L.A. He had help from Westside liberals he had met through the A.C.L.U.; the city's progressives were solidly behind him; and he had strong support from labor. Gil Cedillo, who was then the head of Local 660 of the Service Employees International Union, said, "We gave Antonio a big check up front, which made him credible. I assigned a staff of twenty-five people every weekend to walk the district. And we gave him two full-time staffers and a computer system." "Most people didn't think I could win, but I believed I could," Villaraigosa said. "And I remember them telling me early on that I should concentrate on the Latino community, and I said, 'Why? I'm going for every community!' I've never been an ethnic. I believed my strength was that I would be a coalition builder. And, while I won biggest in the Latino areas of the district, I won in almost every area." On the night of the primary election, Villaraigosa held a victory party at the Plaza de la Raza, a Latino cultural center. Xavier Becerra, a congressman from Los Angeles, gave a speech praising the courage of Antonio and his wife, Corina, who had been battling thyroid cancer throughout the campaign. The next morning, Corina phoned friends, asking if they had any idea where Antonio was. She learned that he had left town for a few days with the wife of one of their close friends. Villaraigosa's supporters were outraged. The Macho Dogs held a meeting;

some wanted their money back, and there was talk of recalling him. Many were appalled at his recklessness. He had run as a family man, sending out pictures of himself with Corina and their two small children. (He also has two older daughters, whom he helps support, from relationships before he was married.) Initially, Villaraigosa defended his actions, saying, "It is a matter of the heart." He eventually acknowledged his error. That did not help much with many people, including his wife, who remained estranged from him for two and a half years. "He was a pariah," Cedillo told me. Perhaps no supporter was more upset than Gloria Molina. "It was a mix of anger and unbelievable disappointment, because we had worked so hard," she said. And she felt that Villaraigosa had betrayed a public as well as a private trust. "I so value these positions," Molina, who is now a county supervisor, said. "There are very few of us who have the opportunity to represent these people, and there just has to be a respect for the role you're undertaking." When Villaraigosa arrived in Sacramento, he largely ignored the chilly welcome he got from members of the Latino caucus and set about making other friends. "I was the one all the advocacy groups came to, because I am a believer," he said. "The women's caucus came to me and said they wanted to do a breast-feeding bill. And I said, 'Why me?' And they said they thought it was very important for a man to carry the bill." The bill established that women had the right to breast-feed in public. Villaraigosa's colleagues ribbed him. "Oh, I took abuse! I never forget some of the sexist things the guys would say to me. But I just took that issue on, man. I mean, nobody wanted it, and if you do a Nexis search you'll see—I was in the papers and on TV all the time!" A member of the Sacramento political élite recalls that, at his first meeting with Villaraigosa, after they had talked for a while Villaraigosa said, "You and I are meant to be. The minute I met you, I felt this special connection to you." Villaraigosa gravitated to the powerful Speaker of the Assembly, Willie Brown, who had held the office for nearly fifteen years. Brown was a flamboyant figure, with a closet full of Brioni suits and fedoras, and a gourmand's taste for food and wine, but he had a serious talent for leveraging his power, and he managed his members with finesse. Polanco was one of his lieutenants. Officially, Brown had taken no side in Villaraigosa's primary race. As Villaraigosa explained it to me, "Willie didn't endorse against me, but he closed out Sacramento; I couldn't raise much money. So when it was over he called me and said, 'I want to congratulate you.' I said, 'I want to thank you.' He said, 'For what?' I said, 'For not getting involved in my race.' And he got quiet—because we both knew he was. And then he said, 'Well, I would like to think if I had gotten involved I wouldn't be here congratulating you right now.' And I said, 'Mr. Brown, I have no doubt about that.' But he's the Speaker. Kiss and make up!" When Brown's chief of staff asked him to fill out a request for committee assignments, Villaraigosa continued, "I said, 'Just put me where the Speaker wants. I'm a team player.' I never asked to be appointed to the leadership, but he made me whip. "I didn't talk for six months in caucus—I just listened," Villaraigosa said. "I spent more time at the beginning with the senior members because I wanted to learn. So I'd go to dinner with them and listen to their stories, and I watched Willie all the time and I saw how he led." But it was John Hein, not Willie Brown, who played the most important role in Villaraigosa's political education. Hein—an imposing, big-framed former college basketball player—was the head of government relations for the powerful California Teachers Association. A keen strategist, Hein was so dedicated to the arcana of polling that he gained a reputation in political circles as the man who knew everything. He had met Villaraigosa when he was an organizer for the local teachers' union in L.A.; now Hein took an interest in the freshman legislator, and Villaraigosa reciprocated. In 1990, a California ballot initiative had imposed stringent term limits on state legislators, limiting members to six years in the Assembly and eight in the Senate. As a result, even freshmen were

trying to position themselves to become Speaker. Villaraigosa was among them, and Hein counselled him, stressing the importance of raising money and directing him to organizations that would contribute. Legislators could choose to keep the money they raised in their own account or place it in a communal pot, to be distributed by the Speaker to election campaigns. Most of the Democratic leaders were wary of this arrangement, because if they failed to become Speaker they would lose control of their money. Hein told Villaraigosa to put the money in the pot, and he did. "Others did that later, but he did it first, and it elevated him," Hein said. In 1996, Cruz Bustamante (backed by Richard Polanco) was elected Speaker—the first Latino to hold the position—and Villaraigosa became majority leader. About a year later, Bustamante decided that he wanted to run for lieutenant governor in the 1998 election, and immediately the jockeying to succeed him began. But Villaraigosa was in the best position, and he had the skilled assistance of Bob Hertzberg. Villaraigosa and Hertzberg—bearish, bespectacled, Jewish, eccentric (he hugs virtually everyone who crosses his path)—had been an odd couple for years. Hertzberg was the treasurer of Villaraigosa's 1994 campaign, and in 1996 he won an Assembly seat himself; he and Villaraigosa roomed together in Sacramento. "Bob Hertzberg was the organizational force behind Antonio's campaign for Speaker," Parke Skelton, a Villaraigosa political adviser, says. "Bob is a detail guy, strong on administration. Antonio's a vision guy. They made a good team." After Villaraigosa was elected, he pushed out Cruz Bustamante, even though Bustamante had been a generous ally and they had made a private deal that the official handover would not take place for several months. "Antonio reneged," Polanco says. During his tenure as Speaker, Villaraigosa oversaw legislation involving health care for the poor, consumer rights, and bonds for parks, education, and the environment. "He was a truly progressive Speaker," Martha Escutia, a former member of the Assembly who was elected in 1992 with Polanco's help, says. Villaraigosa took up legislation that she had worked on to provide health coverage for children in low-income families, put his name on it, and got it passed. He also supported a two-billion-dollar environmental-restoration bond proposed by Tom Hayden in the state senate. "Antonio took it and named it the Villaraigosa bill, got credit for the whole thing, and ran for mayor on it," Hayden told me. Also as speaker, Villaraigosa acquired new friends who happened to be billionaires: Ronald Burkle, the supermarket magnate; Roland Arnall, the founder of Ameriquest, one of the biggest sub-prime lenders in the country (which recently agreed to pay \$325 million to settle accusations of predatory lending practices); and Eli Broad, a leading Los Angeles philanthropist in the fields of education, scientific research, and the arts. He also formed a close friendship with Keith Brackpool, a British-born businessman, who had previously pleaded guilty to securities fraud in England, and who was promoting a California water-storage scheme that could have brought him hundreds of millions of dollars if the state had approved it. With these companions, Villaraigosa travelled on private jets and developed a taste for expensive wine. (When he summoned the sommelier at a restaurant recently, a friend joked, "Antonio, I knew you when you drank Manischewitz!") According to one legislator (though Villaraigosa denies it), he even began getting out of his car "in an almost regal way," extending his arms while waiting for his driver, a highway-patrol officer, to help him into his jacket. About two years after Villaraigosa became Speaker, he began preparing for the 2001 mayoral race. His advisers thought that it was a difficult gamble, but he believed he could emulate Willie Brown, who had become mayor of San Francisco. Like his predecessor Cruz Bustamante, Villaraigosa wanted to retain his Speaker's title as long as possible, using the position to raise money while he was campaigning, but Hertzberg, who was in line for the job, wanted him to go. At one point, Villaraigosa is said to have threatened Hertzberg if he did not get his way. The two finally reached a compromise—Villaraigosa would become Speaker Emeritus—but their partnership was finished. In the mayoral race, Villaraigosa suffered a crushing loss to James Hahn, a laconic city attorney whose father, a longtime

county supervisor, was beloved in the African-American community. Nevertheless, he often says that it was the campaign he enjoyed most. "Straight from the Heart of L.A." was his slogan. "We wanted it to say a number of things," Villaraigosa told me. "That I'm from L.A., I live in the center of the city, and I'm a leader who has heart." He explained, "In criticizing the Democrats from time to time, I've said that the Republicans have beaten Democrats because they speak to America's heart, and we speak to her head." Recalling the contest with Hahn, Villaraigosa told me, "Everybody would say, 'He's got way more detail than you, you've got to have more detail!' And I said, 'I don't believe that's why people vote. They vote on who you are. So I want them to see who I am, as a person.'" Many Villaraigosa supporters also recall that campaign fondly. "It had been a long time since there was such excitement about a candidate in Los Angeles," Sheila Kuehl, a state senator from Los Angeles who served in the Assembly with Villaraigosa, says. Kuehl, a Democrat, appreciated Villaraigosa's support for gay rights, but his appeal was much broader than any single issue. "There was such hope about Antonio," she says. "He's someone who cares about all the classes, rich and poor." When Villaraigosa campaigned, workers at union meetings stood on their chairs and shouted, and immigrant voters were galvanized. In 1986, Ronald Reagan declared amnesty for 2.7 million illegal immigrants, and there was a dramatic increase in the number of new Latino citizens. Many of the new citizens lived in Los Angeles, and Miguel Contreras, the formidable secretary treasurer of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor and a Villaraigosa backer, helped organize large-scale get-out-the-vote campaigns. In the closing days of the race, the Hahn campaign ran a television ad that attacked Villaraigosa for asking President Clinton to reconsider the case of a convicted Latino drug trafficker who was the son of a major Villaraigosa contributor. Showing a grainy image of a man smoking a crack pipe, the ad seemed designed to inflame racial fears. The Hahn campaign also raised the issue of a misdemeanor assault charge that had been lodged against Villaraigosa in 1977, after a fight in a restaurant. He has said that he was defending his mother, and the charges were dropped, but the campaign wanted to remind people that he'd been an angry Latino street tough. In the end, Villaraigosa was defeated by seven percentage points, and he got only twenty per cent of the black vote. Jesús Quiñonez says that although the ad was damaging, "the truth was, he hadn't built enough support in the black community, or in the Valley"—a more conservative and Republican area. "He didn't have the coalition he needed." After Villaraigosa's defeat, the friends he had courted when he was Speaker—Ronald Burkle, Roland Arnall, and Keith Brackpool—provided him with a temporary berth; each is said to have been paying him a consultant's fee of about ten thousand dollars a month. Villaraigosa considered running for a state-senate seat—the same one that Gil Cedillo, his friend of more than thirty years, was hoping to win. Cedillo implored him not to. A close adviser of Villaraigosa's warned him, "There is a perception that you are not loyal. This will only reinforce it." In the end, Villaraigosa decided not to enter the race. (He told a friend that he thought he ought to remain in L.A. and try to focus on his marriage, which had suffered as a result of his life in Sacramento.) Nevertheless, the episode ended his friendship with Cedillo. In 2003, Villaraigosa successfully ran for the City Council. During the campaign, he promised that he would not seek the mayoralty again in 2005, but a year later he reconsidered. As mayor, Hahn took strong steps to try to improve the L.A.P.D. They included firing the police chief and bringing in Bratton. He also fought off a move for secession by the Valley. But Hahn was so nondescript that even his big accomplishments tended to be overlooked, and his administration was plagued by allegations of corruption. Villaraigosa loves to tell the story of assembling his consultants and closest supporters—fifteen in all—to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of his entering the race. One by one, they voted, he says. No one thought that he should do it. "They all felt that, when I ran, I would be the next mayor of the city, but that I should wait. And

I listened, and I said, 'I know the evidence says I can't win this race, but my gut says I can. So I'm running.' And everybody looked at me—they thought it was, like, daunting! He ran a very different race this time, going out of his way to show that he intended to be the mayor of all Los Angeles. 'Latinos have an advantage over African-Americans with white voters,' a local political consultant told me. 'Because of having screwed over African-Americans for hundreds of years, whites have a primeval fear of letting them come to power. But Latinos are very much like our grandparents and great-grandparents, coming to this country for jobs—so, ultimately, they're not so scary. But the way you make it scary is if you say Latinos are taking control.' Keeping the idea of rising Latino power in check was difficult for the Villaraigosa people. 'Every day during the campaign, his base would be saying, 'Why aren't we doing this event in East L.A.?' Representative Maxine Waters, a sharp-tongued, deft power broker, had endorsed Hahn in 2001. But Hahn had failed to pay attention to Waters, and many African-Americans were angry with him for firing the police chief, who was black. 'Antonio started going to churches in South L.A., doing events with Maxine—and he did great outreach during the campaign,' Ari Swiller, a former campaign aide to Bill Clinton, told me. Swiller later worked for Ronald Burkle, and raised considerable money for Villaraigosa. Endorsements matter a great deal in the black community, and Villaraigosa secured quite a few, including Maxine Waters's and Magic Johnson's. On May 17, 2005, Villaraigosa won a landslide victory, with forty-eight per cent of the African-American vote, and even support from Republicans in the Valley. Shortly afterward, he appeared on the cover of *Newsweek*, with the headline 'A LATIN POWER SURGE.' 'Antonio was upset,' Villaraigosa's friend Richard Katz said. 'To have that headline, after he'd worked so hard to run a campaign saying he is Latino but would be the mayor of all of L.A. But if it weren't for Latino power he wouldn't have been on the cover of *Newsweek*. So it cuts both ways.' On July 1, 2005, Villaraigosa and his wife led a long procession through the streets of downtown Los Angeles to the steps of City Hall. In his inaugural address—before an audience that included Willie Brown, Al Gore, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, and Governor Schwarzenegger—Villaraigosa declared that he would never forget where he came from. ('It may be a short way from City Terrace to City Hall, but, fellow-Angelenos, we all know what a vast distance it truly is.') He talked about his mother, and said that stories like hers were everywhere. 'We see them in the faces of people who clean homes and offices. Who work the night shifts and who empty bed pans. We see them in the faces of people who sweep the floors and load the freight. . . . Even though we live in the entertainment capital of the world, it's not hard to see who the real stars are.' There was a prevalent sense that a Latino mayor was long overdue, and Villaraigosa's excitement about the city was a tonic for many Angelenos. In contrast to the mayors of cities like New York and Chicago, the mayor of Los Angeles has little structural power. But Villaraigosa set grand, and sometimes grandiose, goals. Building a subway to the sea. Planting a million trees across the city and reducing air pollution at the huge port. Fighting crime. Alleviating traffic congestion. Paving roads. Achieving twenty-per-cent reliance on renewable energy by 2010. (When I asked a Villaraigosa adviser how the Mayor had decided upon this energy goal, he explained, 'The state said it would achieve twenty per cent by 2017, so he said, 'We'll do it by 2010! It's very ambitious. Moving the Department of Water and Power is like moving the Titanic.') Villaraigosa appointed new people—many of whom were very talented—to government jobs, and assigned these issues to them. But he wanted a signature initiative, and he decided to seek mayoral control of the public-school system, the second-largest in the country. Explaining his mission to friends, he has said, 'When I look at these kids, I see myself.' Villaraigosa's self-image retains vestiges of his tough youth—an audacious risk-taker, cool and unflinching, who punishes his enemies and meets the biggest

challenge. In Los Angeles, education was that challenge. Proposition 13, the 1978 initiative that imposed radical tax limits in California and engendered many other anti-government initiatives, has brought about a severe erosion in public services, particularly education. In the nineteen-sixties, California was among the top ten states in annual per-pupil spending; today, it is thirtieth. In the Los Angeles school district, more than sixty per cent of the students are Latino, and forty-one per cent of elementary students speak limited English. Many are children of undocumented immigrants; some live in garages, sheds, and attics, and move to a different neighborhood, and a different school, every few months. According to one study cited by the mayor's office, more than half never graduate from high school. Mayoral control is in effect in New York City, Boston, and Chicago, among other places, and has been seen as a management remedy for failing schools, on the ground that it is easier to hold a mayor accountable than a largely anonymous school board. Although results in these cities have been mixed, high-profile mayors like Michael Bloomberg, who ended thirty-two years of school decentralization in New York, and Richard Daley, who took over the Chicago school system in 1995, have been praised for their efforts. But Villaraigosa faced significant obstacles that they did not. Both the Los Angeles City Charter and the state constitution stipulate that the schools be controlled by an elected school board. And the very contours of the Los Angeles Unified School District are daunting; the district serves twenty-six municipalities, in addition to the city of Los Angeles. "The district has over six hundred thousand kids, over eleven hundred school sites, seven billion dollars in a general school fund and nineteen billion in a construction fund," a friend of Villaraigosa's said. "It's too much for the mayor to control." Some of Villaraigosa's political advisers agreed, telling him that it was an unwise political gamble, since he was unlikely to achieve results, and certainly not before his anticipated run for governor in 2010. Not even the vehement opposition of John Hein, who, Villaraigosa told me, has "one of the great strategic political minds in California," could dissuade him. When, during the mayoral campaign in early 2005, Villaraigosa proposed that the mayor should run the schools, Hein called him and said, "You know how C.T.A. feels about mayoral control. Why would you want to go against your friends?" Both Hein and Villaraigosa knew that the California Teachers Association was critical to Villaraigosa's future. Ordinarily, the union stays out of mayoral races, but Villaraigosa told me that the teachers' unions contributed heavily to his 2001 race and his 2005 race. ("A million!") Hein explained, "Antonio has always been considered one of us." (Villaraigosa believed that the C.T.A. was investing in him as a future governor, who might free the state from the restraints of Proposition 13.) Villaraigosa was evidently afraid of angering Hein, but unwilling to relinquish the idea. Hein says, "Antonio promised me he didn't really mean what he had said. Then he gave a speech—in which he said the opposite of what he'd told me." Hein says that he called Villaraigosa and told him to lose his phone number. They did not speak for several months. The rupture worried Villaraigosa, and he began to vacillate. But, just as he had underestimated Hein's power, he failed to anticipate the pressure from supporters on the other side of the schools debate. In July, 2005, shortly after his inauguration, the *L.A. Times* editorial page—which had endorsed him for mayor—began to complain: "The new mayor of Los Angeles boldly proposed taking over the local schools, and then skittered away from the idea. . . . Enough waiting. Enough seeing." Eli Broad, a Villaraigosa supporter, is deeply interested in education reform, and he promoted a bill in the legislature providing for mayoral control. Broad and Bill Gates, through their respective foundations, recently committed close to sixty million dollars to create a campaign, "ED in '08," to make the national education crisis a priority in the Presidential race. And Broad, who has been generous to Los Angeles in large, important ways—saving the Disney Concert Hall project, donating sixty million dollars to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art—is accustomed to deference. Although Villaraigosa agreed with the mayoral-control bill's objective, he didn't think much of its chances and refused to lend

his prestige to it. That angered Broad. Villaraigosa told me, "Broad is such an armchair quarterback! I said to him, "Look, I'll never tell you how to make money. But I know the legislature." Villaraigosa also felt that Broad had instigated the pressure from the *Times*. In early October, approaching the end of his first hundred days in office, Villaraigosa attended a meeting with the *Times* editorial board, whose members criticized him for his inaction on the schools, according to a Villaraigosa aide. An adviser said, "My impression is that, when the rich and powerful and the L.A. *Times* are pounding on you in a synchronized way, most elected officials yield. Early on, Antonio put a rope around his neck with his comments about a mayor taking over. The more he got in, he saw the impracticality. But he thought, How can I look like I'm not deviating from what I said? When push comes to shove, I'm committed." Villaraigosa decided not to confront the legal obstacles head on. He might have tried to amend the City Charter with a referendum, for example, but polling had shown that mayoral control of the schools was not popular. Instead, he decided to go the legislative route in Sacramento, which he still considered his domain, and where Fabian Núñez, an ally, was Speaker. He announced the broad outlines of his plan in his State of the City address, in April, 2006, and Núñez and Schwarzenegger enthusiastically endorsed the idea. But the California Teachers Association made its strong opposition plain. By June, when it was time for the bill to be introduced, it seemed to Villaraigosa that the C.T.A. had cowed much of the legislature. "They had that place locked down," he said recently, with evident admiration for the union's display of raw power. "I couldn't get a resolution that said, "His name is Antonio Villaraigosa"; I mean, they had it locked down!" Villaraigosa was chastened, and since it wasn't in the C.T.A.'s long-term interests to see Villaraigosa politically harmed, Hein came to his rescue. He helped Villaraigosa make a deal with the local teachers' union, which was incorporated into the legislation. Mayoral control was replaced by a mayoral partnership with the superintendent, the school board, and a council of mayors (the representatives of the twenty-six municipalities that, along with the city of Los Angeles, make up the school district). Teachers would have more to say about the curriculum—something they had long sought—and the mayor would assume control of a cluster of three underperforming high schools and their feeder schools. A *Times* editorial attacked the compromise, saying that Villaraigosa had "caved," and Eli Broad wrote him a letter saying that he would not support the bill. Villaraigosa remained obstreperous with Broad. As he recalled, "We kind of got into it, and I told Eli, "You know, you're used to directing mayors. You don't direct me!" I said, "How many billionaires are there in this town? Six, seven, eight? There's one mayor. I'm going to tell you right now—this is all I can get, and this is going to be a war!" (Broad says that he had no recollection of this conversation.) Representatives of the school district were overwhelmed by the power of the Mayor, the Speaker, and the C.T.A. Many legislators agreed that the bill was a badly flawed and probably unconstitutional amalgam, but they were loath to vote against it. African-American political leaders were particularly critical. It had been shaped without their help, and some saw it as a further instance of Latinos' taking control. In addition, "it was not good public policy, and not very well thought out," according to Mark Ridley-Thomas, a state senator who has known Villaraigosa for more than twenty years, and was one of the few African-American politicians to support him in his 2001 mayoral campaign. Villaraigosa lobbied Ridley-Thomas aggressively, but he abstained. Villaraigosa also met with Maxine Waters, but she was angry about not having been consulted earlier. "You should run something through your allies," a friend of Villaraigosa's told me. "It's a big problem with him. He thinks people will think it's right because he has done it." The battle for votes seemed to bring out Villaraigosa's rougher edges. He can appear almost menacing when he wants to—holding someone's hand too long, drawing too close. At a reception in Sacramento one night, according to someone who was there, he greeted a man allied with the school

district—and then, leaning in toward him, grasped his tie and slowly tightened its knot. (Villaraigosa’s office has denied that this happened.) In the end, the bill passed by a tiny margin, and a large photograph of an exuberant Villaraigosa appeared on the front page of the *Times*. But, after all his deal-making, the result was the antithesis of what he had originally sought. Control of the schools was spread among dozens of officials. Lines of authority were obscured. The superintendent now essentially had multiple bosses—the board, the mayor, and the council of mayors. Villaraigosa had spoken emphatically about the need for accountability. But, if that was the measure, the system was far worse than before. And a few months later, in December, a Superior Court judge ruled that the legislation violated numerous provisions of the state constitution and the Los Angeles City Charter. Rather than seek a settlement with the school district, Villaraigosa proclaimed, “I don’t quit!” He focussed on the school-board elections in March, convinced that if he won a majority the school board would give him the cluster—three schools and their feeder schools—that the court had denied him. He poured large sums of money into the elections, but they were indecisive, and runoff elections will be held on May 15th. Even if both his candidates win, he will have only a 4—3 majority. And that underestimates the likely independence of at least a couple of the new members. “Folks around town are saying, ‘Once Antonio gets his people on the board—’” Well, that is nineteenth-century boss thinking, and that just doesn’t exist anymore,” A. J. Duffy, the president of the local teachers’ union, said. At this point, Villaraigosa seems eager for compromise, and an agreement is evidently being discussed in which he could be given just a single school, perhaps followed by a second one, a year later, if he is deemed to be doing well with the first. It is a modest proposition. This, or some other form of mayoral partnership in the schools, almost certainly could have been negotiated from the start had Villaraigosa chosen to do what he does best—use charm and conciliation to bring everyone to the table. “He could have gone to the district and said ‘Look, it’s your district, but I want to help you make it work,’” a friend of his told me. “But he was too caught up in this idea of mayoral control, in being part of this list of mayors, like Mike Bloomberg and Richard Daley, who are so successful—without any real consideration of the legal strictures and the politics.” Some friends who were dismayed over the school-reform battle wonder whether the Mayor, who has shown an aptitude for the study of power, and for drawing political lessons from defeat, will do so this time. They point out that being an executive is very different from being a legislator, and that he is learning on the job. A little humility would help. As Eli Broad put it, “He wants you to be with him one hundred per cent of the time. He has to realize that ninety-five per cent of the time is pretty good.” John Hein says, “He needs to grow, needs to mature,” but adds that he would still support Villaraigosa for governor. Not long ago, I met with Villaraigosa in his mayoral suite at City Hall. He was cheerful and seemed uncharacteristically relaxed. He said that he intends to be heavily involved in the 2008 Presidential election. (Recalling the 2000 election, he said, “I delivered forty-six of forty-seven Assembly Democrats to Al Gore. I go all out, because I know what’s at stake.”) He mentioned that Hillary Clinton had spent a few hours with him and his family at the mayor’s official residence, in Windsor Square. “When Hillary Clinton is one on one, she speaks from the heart,” he said. Later that same day, John Edwards had taken him to dinner. More recently, he had breakfast with Senator Barack Obama. When I asked him how he would make up his mind among the three front-runners, he said, “I’m very much a relationship person. What kind of people they are is important to me. I make a lot of decisions from the heart. If you want to be President of the United States, you have to appeal to the heart.” I reminded him that when he spoke at the U.S.C. leadership class a student had asked about the seeming absence of balance in his life, and he had said that he needed to work on that. How was he doing? “Right now I can’t tell you that there is a balance,” he said. “I’m going to have to find it. It’s very important. You need the nourishing for the soul, for the heart,

for the brain.” Villaraigosa says he sleeps only about three or four hours a night. Staff members and his friends have worried that his frenetic pace, combined with the lack of sleep, have made it hard for him to focus. (“His brain is going off like popcorn,” one friend said.) Although the Mayor is fanatic about his workout regimen, and loves to challenge associates about who can do more pushups and situps, he suffers from recurrent back pain. After his loss in the 2001 mayoral race, he underwent extensive surgery on his spine. He had another round of surgery, unpublicized, in the fall of 2005, shortly before his trip to Asia, and he is said to have been in considerable discomfort on that trip. He has been losing weight, and on some days he has dark circles under his eyes. A few months ago, the *Times* reported that he had stopped wearing his wedding ring, and quoted him denying rumors that he and his wife had separated. (His aides said that the ring was slipping off his finger, because of his weight loss.) Villaraigosa also said, “In a twenty-year marriage, there are many ups and downs.” He started wearing his ring again, but rumors of marital troubles persist. I asked whether, in retrospect, he saw things that he should have done differently in the school-takeover effort. He paused for a long time, and then said no. “I don’t judge success on a day-to-day or month-to-month basis. I fully expect to be part of an effort to transform the L.A. schools, and the measurement of that will be over a much longer period of time.” School reform, though, is no longer at the center of the Villaraigosa mayoralty. Over the past few months, he has shifted his focus to gang violence. Los Angeles has more gang members than any other city in the country, with seven hundred gangs and about forty thousand gang members, mostly black and Latino. Other cities have virulent gang activity, but, as the civil-rights attorney Connie Rice wrote in a recent report on gang violence commissioned by the Los Angeles City Council, “Los Angeles is unique, in its diverse demographics, in its vast geography, and in the scale and entrenched culture of its violence.” Arguing that attempts to control the gangs will be inefficient without addressing their root causes, Rice (a second cousin of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice) called for a “Marshall Plan” to end gang violence, at a cost of about a billion dollars, according to some estimates. In mid-April, about three months after Rice released her report, Villaraigosa described his own plan, in his State of the City address. He, too, believes that any effort to control gangs must be accompanied by community prevention and intervention strategies, but his proposals were on a dramatically smaller scale, with a budget of a hundred and sixty-eight million dollars. Villaraigosa’s partner in the anti-gang initiative is Chief Bratton, who reformed New York City’s Police Department in the nineties and, despite his differences with his old boss, Rudolph Giuliani, and the MacArthur Park melee, is widely regarded as one of the most effective and innovative police chiefs in the country. “Mayor Giuliani was a micromanager—he wanted to be involved in the minutest details,” Bratton said recently. “That became a problem for me, because it didn’t allow me to manage the N.Y.P.D.—too many of the decisions were made at City Hall. Villaraigosa is just the opposite. In the two years of working with him, I’ve never had a phone call about a personnel matter or a disciplinary decision.” Since Bratton arrived in Los Angeles, in 2002, he has argued strenuously that the city needs many more police officers. Mayor Hahn failed to win the necessary funds from the City Council. Villaraigosa, in his first year as mayor, collaborated with the council to impose a trash-collection fee that would fund the hiring of a thousand new police officers by 2009. Although Bratton is appreciative, he says he is still desperately short-handed. “I have nine thousand police officers right now. To have the equivalent of what I had in New York, I’d have to have eighteen thousand.” And, he added, “the crime problem in New York was nothing on the scale of these types of gangs and the violence they engage in.” Still, Bratton insists, the reduction in crime and improvement in quality of life that occurred in New York can happen in Los Angeles, too, if adequate resources become available. “Los Angeles and New York are effectively the America of the future,” he said. “They’re literally probably fifty years ahead of most of the rest of America, because

they are immigrant entrance points and the makeup of the country is most dynamically reflected in them. They both have issues of overcrowding, and large numbers of minorities, with all those tensions. So they're the experiments of the future." Not everyone is so pleased with Villaraigosa's anti-gang mission. It is somewhat reminiscent of his school-takeover attempt in its scale and complexity, and perhaps even more quixotic. It reflects Villaraigosa's penchant for taking on a seemingly insurmountable problem and attacking it with energy and theatrics—he began the campaign by releasing a "Ten Most Wanted" list, followed by a series of quick arrests of several of the people on it—rather than the careful study and measured initiatives that would be more likely to bring about change. Villaraigosa's adviser Richard Alatorre told him that the gangs were here when they were boys and would remain long after they and their children were gone. Villaraigosa, who will soon be starting his third year as mayor, clearly needs to show some measurable results. He was chagrined, he said, to read a Los Angeles *Times* editorial mocking the rhetoric of his State of the City speech: "Dream with me," the mayor called, as he did at his inauguration. But dream time is over. It's time to go to work. ♦