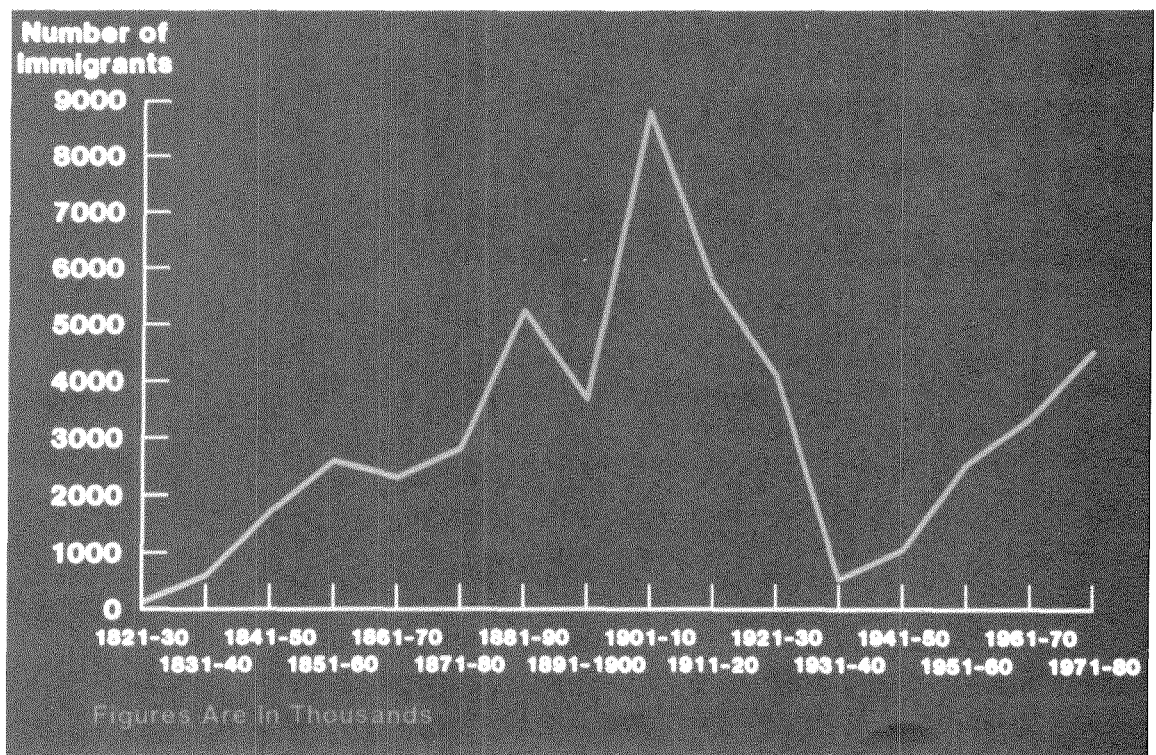


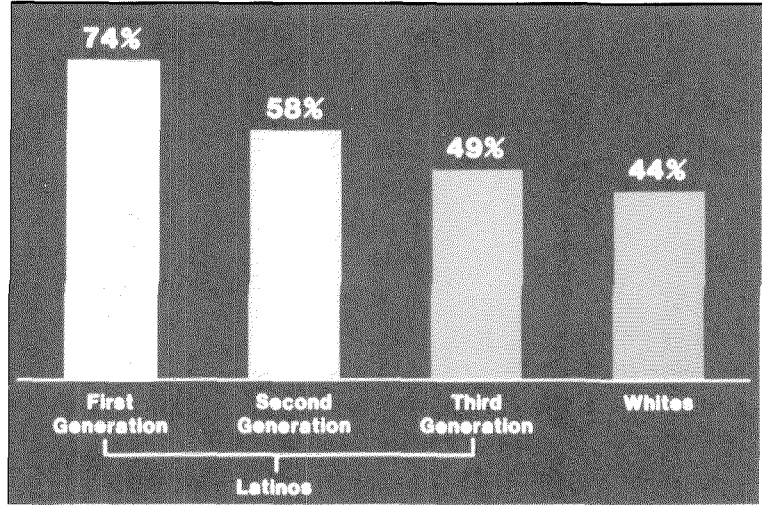
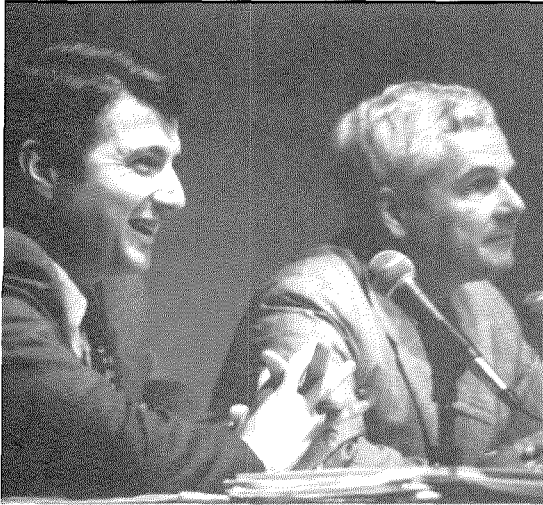
Minorities in California

NEW WAVES OF IMMIGRATION hitting the shores of the West Coast are rapidly changing California's demography. These new waves compare to the great influx of different cultures and languages from Europe between 1840 and 1920 but with one main difference: In 1965 the United States rescinded its racial quotas and the population groups arriving now come mostly from East Asia and Latin America. How will their presence, mingled with the minorities who were already here, affect political and economic trends in California, where whites now make up about 60 percent of the population? In what ways are all these minority groups — and different generations of minority groups — similar to and different from each other?

Some of the answers come from Bruce Cain and Rod Kiewiet, associate professors of political science, who two years ago undertook a study of California's minorities. With a grant from the Seaver Institute they surveyed 1,646 blacks, Latinos, Asian-Americans, and non-Latino whites on their attitudes toward political and social issues, their party

When the total number of immigrants to the United States peaked in the early 20th century, most were from European countries. The increase after 1965, when the U.S. rescinded its racial quotas, is mostly due to immigration from East Asia and Latin America.





affiliation and political activity. After analyzing all the data from these interviews, Cain and Kiewiet presented their findings at a March 5 conference at Caltech, which included three panels of business, political, and community leaders — mostly minorities. Some of the study’s surprising (and some not-so-surprising) results provoked lively debate among the participants. Robert Abernethy, NBC News Washington correspondent, moderated the panels.

The researchers were particularly interested in ethnic politics; they wondered to what extent they might find common interests among minorities that would make for political coalitions — the prophesied “rainbow” scenario of the 1984 campaign. What Cain and Kiewiet found was sharp diversity among the different groups (and, within those groups, differences between generations and income levels) and thus much reason to expect shifting, fluid alliances rather than permanent minority coalitions.

Latinos stood out in their support of bilingual education (65 percent) and amnesty for undocumented aliens (61 percent), and in their opposition to sanctions against employers for hiring undocumented (42 percent). In contrast, 41 percent of whites and 51 percent of Asian-Americans support bilingual education, while 44 percent of whites and 43 percent of Asian-Americans support amnesty. Differences exist, however, within the Latino

community — for example, differences between citizens and noncitizens on bilingual education and sanctions, between Mexicans and non-Mexicans on arms expenditures, and between higher- and lower-income Latinos on welfare expenditures.

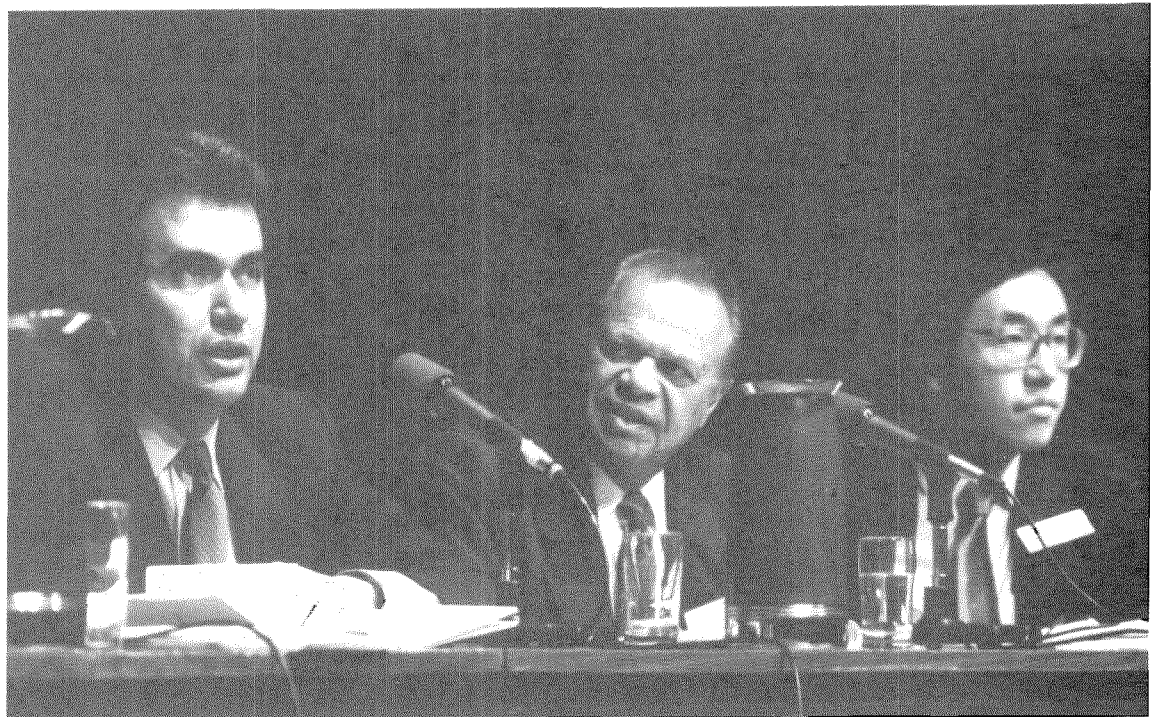
Blacks tended to be the most liberal and loyally Democratic. They also supported bilingual education (63 percent) and amnesty (41 percent) and constituted the biggest group supporting increased spending on welfare (84 percent) and the equal rights amendment (81 percent). But the researchers found a streak of social conservatism running through the black responses. Blacks were the strongest of the minority groups in favor of prayer in the public schools and considered crime and drugs the biggest problems facing the country — stands usually associated with the political right.

Attitudes of Asian-Americans in the Cain-Kiewiet study turned out to be much more conservative than those of the other minority groups. They made up the largest group sympathetic to increased military spending (38 percent — larger than whites), and at 73 percent, second only to whites (75 percent) in favoring the death penalty for murder. (Only 47 percent of blacks and 52 percent of Latinos supported the death penalty.) Asian-Americans voted for Reagan in 1984 and are registering Republican in large numbers. But the Asian community,

Left: Bruce Cain (left) and panel moderator Robert Abernethy.

Cain’s study showed that, among Latinos, support for amnesty for undocumented aliens decreases with each generation. Such generational tensions could create problems for Latino representatives.

Political directions of California's minorities were discussed by Los Angeles City Councilmen Richard Alatorre (left) and Michael Woo (right) and Oakland Mayor Lionel Wilson.



like the Hispanic, is far from being a monolithic block. The Japanese approximated whites in their political attitudes, while Koreans resembled Latinos on language and immigration issues. The Chinese remained difficult to categorize because of the great division between generations.

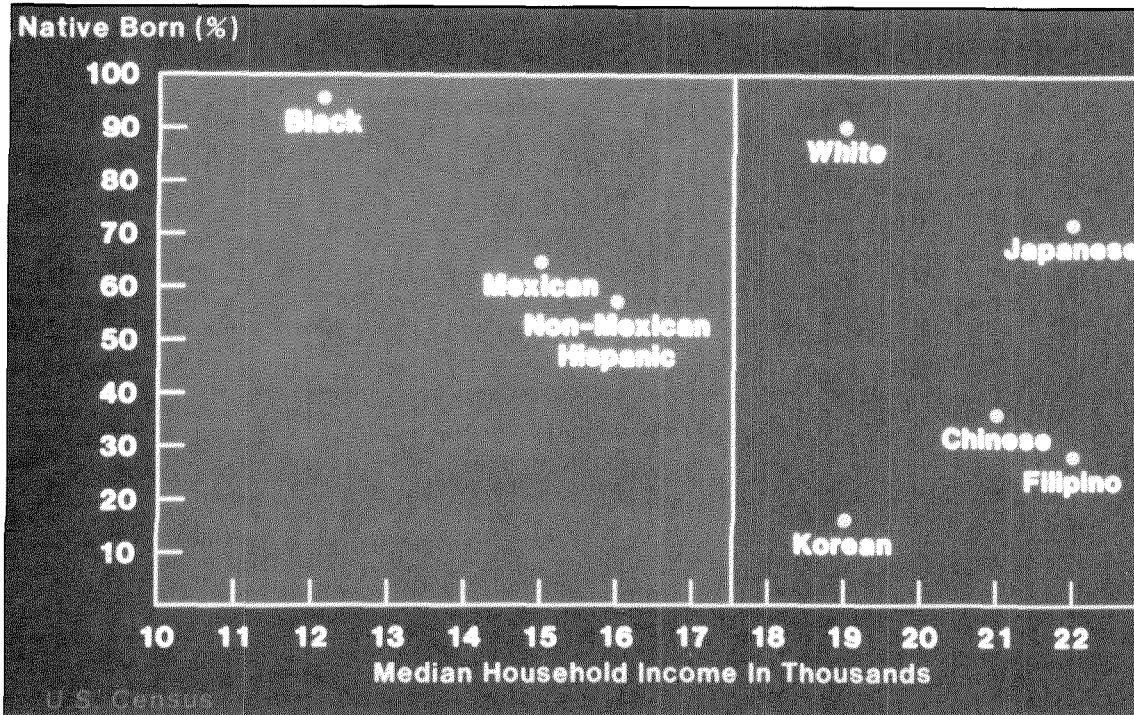
Cain and Kiewiet also studied minority political power, which depends critically on participation in the political process. They found that the large number of noncitizens substantially suppresses both Latino and Asian-American participation rates, but the latter appears low even after adjusting for noncitizens. Asian-American politicians, however, have been relatively successful at the city and state level, many having run as nonethnic candidates. Blacks and Latinos have had their greatest successes in legislative seats.

Three examples of minority successes at the polls were on hand at the March conference to discuss the study's findings on the political directions of California's minorities: Los Angeles City Councilman Richard Alatorre, the first Latino elected to that body in two decades (and a veteran of 13 years in the State Assembly); Michael Woo, the first Asian-American member of the Los Angeles City Council; and Lionel Wilson, the first black mayor of Oakland.

All three panelists took exception to some of the conclusions of the study, which Woo termed "provocative." Alatorre claimed that

the Latino positions on bilingual programs and amnesty seemed in his experience to be just the opposite — most recent immigrants *want* their children to learn English and much of the Hispanic community actually fears amnesty, partially because of the political activism of many of the illegal immigrants. Wilson did not find surprising the social conservatism evident in black responses to the survey given the strength of the black church. But he thought that the younger Asian-Americans (at least in Oakland) were far more liberal than the older generation. Woo also didn't quite buy the extreme conservatism ascribed to the Asian community and thought that the Democratic Party shouldn't write them off. "It's a matter of how the ideological labels are defined," he said. "If different questions had been asked — for example, how much money should be spent on schools — the answers might have pointed in a different direction." Woo also noted ambivalence in the Asian community on bilingual education. Traditionally, he said, Asians have not demanded such programs but have urged their children into areas such as mathematics and science, where language is not so important.

The three were much more sanguine on the possibility of coalitions across groups than the Cain/Kiewiet study would seem to warrant. Although they agreed that differences exist among the groups, "we're not going to form coalitions on differences," says Alatorre.



Variation in minority economic circumstances does not depend on the percentage of native born. Asian-Americans, although many more of them are recent immigrants, are better off economically than blacks or Mexicans, who as groups have been in California much longer.

“You don’t have to love each other. You have to define the issues that bring you together; that’s how politics operates.” The most explosive issue in Los Angeles, according to Alatorre, is how to accommodate the large number of third-world people.

Woo did not think that there would be a big explosion but perhaps “lots of small ethnic explosions” over certain issues. He didn’t think the split between racial and ethnic groups was inevitable and envisioned a number of “cross-majority-minority linkages” evolving. In Oakland, according to Wilson, no explosion ever occurred, and blacks and Hispanics coalesced around the need to develop power. That city, which is 62 percent minority, has been found by a University of Wisconsin study to be the most integrated city in the United States because, according to Wilson, people there have learned to live and work together.

Economic, as well as political, assimilation interested the Caltech researchers, and the second section of their report concerned business opportunities for California’s minorities, in particular the effects that government assistance programs have had on those opportunities. This crucial area of public policy has not received much attention, said Cain. It’s difficult enough to start a business, but minorities have some additional problems as well. As many as 75 percent of minority businesses are sole proprietorships, and many go under.

According to the report, although Asian-Americans are generally wealthier and better educated than other minority groups, and have large stable families from which to draw capital and cheap labor, their businesses concentrate on retail and service, in which they have difficulty reaching out to English-speaking markets. Latinos also have large, stable families, but generally come from an economically and educationally disadvantaged background. The language problem also works against Latinos trying to break into other markets. Blacks don’t have the language problem, but they do generally come from disadvantaged backgrounds. They have less recourse to family resources and probably experience greater prejudice.

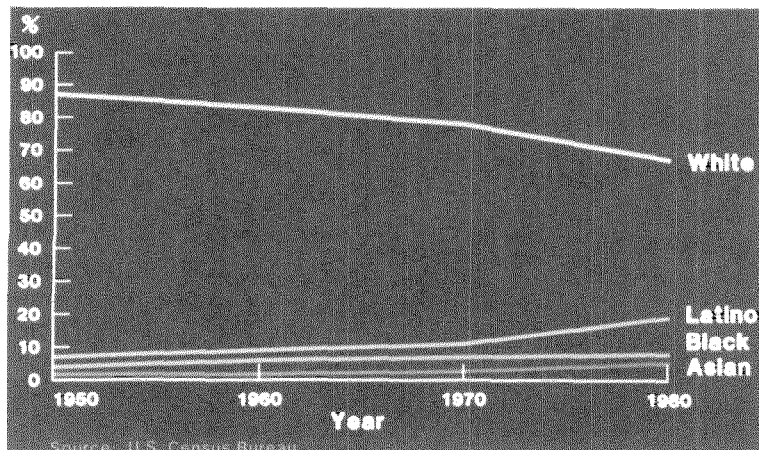
Government involvement can be justified, said Cain in his introduction to the panel discussion, by increasing prosperity, creating a class of minority entrepreneurs, and bringing more jobs to the minority communities. Three government strategies aim at accomplishing this: SBA (Small Business Administration) loans, MESBICs (Minority Enterprise Small Business Investment Corporation), and procurement preferences. If the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings bill forces cuts in these programs, not only will a number of small, marginal minority businesses suffer, but a group of younger, better educated entrepreneurs who have used the loans to create profitable businesses will be in trouble as well, the study concluded.

The second group of panelists differed in their reactions to this segment of the report. Harold Yee, president of Asian Incorporated, took strong exception to Cain's statement that Asian-Americans are reluctant to utilize government assistance programs. "Asians don't use government programs because they're shut out. They came in later and couldn't crack entrenched interests," he said. And since government programs touch only about 3 percent of Asian-American businesses, Yee didn't think it would matter to his community if the funds were cut.

Elbert Hudson, president of Broadway Federal Savings and Loan, was also "willing to live with the cutoff because the programs are not solving the problem anyway." He would let marginal businesses die rather than pumping money into them. He remarked on the "feeling that those businesses that are funded are doomed to failure. The black community has to help itself and can't do it from outside sources." Hudson estimated that there's \$350 million in black savings and loans, but the funds are actually controlled by nonminorities. David Lizarraga, president and chief executive officer of the East Los Angeles Community Union, a federally funded organization, expressed unwillingness to give up government assistance programs and depend on local resources. He claimed that government programs have had a positive effect on the Hispanic business community. "I'm still convinced that Horatio Alger would not have made it if his name was Horacio Garcia," he said.

The panel also split on the report's conclusion that both business skills and education are crucial to the success of minority businesses. David Horn, president of South Bay College, a Los Angeles business college, agreed, not surprisingly, with that conclusion.

Immigration is dramatically changing the racial/ethnic composition of California.

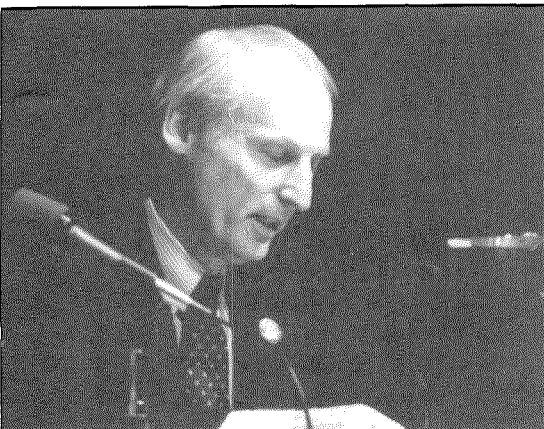
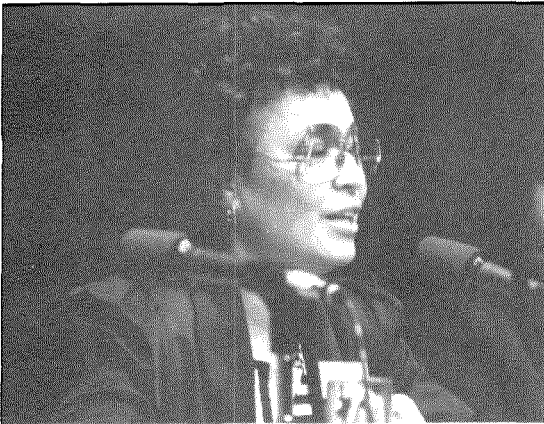
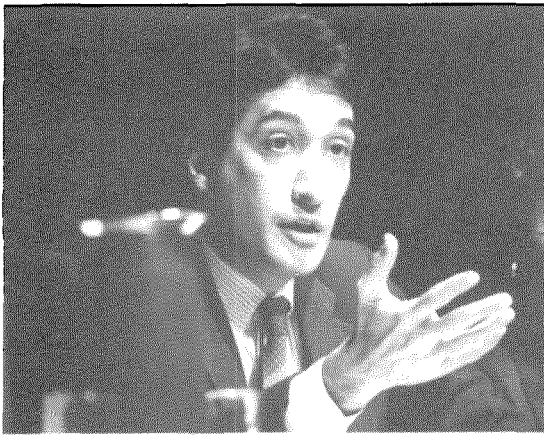


He claimed that education was the most important element for successful entrepreneurs, and that well-intentioned government agencies often supplied funds to persons unqualified to receive them. Others disagreed, Hudson insisting that "education alone can't solve the problems of black kids," and Lizarraga questioning the number of well-educated people who would want to run a business in a minority community anyway. And Asian-Americans, said Yee, *are* well educated ("we put our money into our kids") but don't get the return on human investment that whites get.

The third panel concerned issues of how minorities perceive discrimination and the opportunity structure of society. Cain and Kiewiet wanted to investigate the phenomenon of backlash against immigrants, which also has historical precedent. They hypothesized that minority groups might come together politically in response to a shared experience of discrimination and perceived inequities of opportunity. According to their study, 42 percent of blacks felt that their race limited their deserved opportunities (compared to 23 percent of Latinos and only 8 percent of Asian-Americans). In addition, blacks were far more likely than any other group to have personally experienced discrimination; blacks experienced more economic discrimination, while for Asian-Americans it was much more likely to be social.

Second-generation Latinos and Asian-Americans were more likely to perceive discrimination against them, as were college-educated blacks. Those who felt discriminated against were more likely to be politically active locally, but not nationally, so this issue may not be a likely candidate for producing consensus on national policy. One particularly interesting finding indicated that not only did blacks consider themselves the group most discriminated against in the country, but whites and Asian-Americans agreed with them. As Kiewiet put it in his introduction, "The battleground on these issues will be in the hearts and minds of *white* voters."

On the panel, Henry Cisneros, mayor of San Antonio, Texas, (elected with 94.2 percent of the vote) appeared optimistic about coalitions among minorities. "But what it depends on," he said, "is not a perception of discrimination but who is in a power position and how badly the groups need each other." He compared northern cities, such as Chicago, where blacks in power cooperate with



Hispanics, with Houston (and probably Los Angeles), where personalities and egos pull in opposite directions and groups don't communicate. And in Miami there is open hostility between Hispanics and blacks. Cisneros thought the most pragmatic approach would be to make "floating alliances" to deal with one issue at a time. Minorities might also coalesce around a particular personality (one obvious example being Cisneros himself, although he didn't say so), and the "dynamics of leadership" could overcome ideology. Most mayors of major cities in the United States are black, Hispanic, or female, he pointed out.

Edith Nealey, chairwoman of the South Central Organizing Committee, cited her group as an example of blacks and Hispanics working together in their own self-interest. The community (65 percent black and 30 percent Hispanic) had organized around the issue of the high crime rate, which was stalling economic development.

Monterey Park in Los Angeles County has a population of white, Hispanic, and Asian — approximately one-third each. Lily Chen, a Monterey Park city councilwoman, was interested in the study for its implications for a culturally diverse community, since the city has become known for the growing intolerance of English speakers toward immigrants. She hoped that what was happening in Monterey Park was not symptomatic of a growing backlash.

The fourth panel member, Roger Stanton, president of the Orange County Board of Supervisors, attacked the implied "natural place" of minorities in the Democratic Party. He also pointed out that Orange County, which is one of two Republican majority counties out of 58 in California, is not as homogeneous as is commonly thought. One of every four members of the population belongs to an ethnic minority.

Cisneros ended with the remark that there are "tough days ahead" for minorities, but he is optimistic that there is a "recognition on the part of the general public that new immigrants want what immigrants have always wanted — a meritocracy, which America has always claimed to be."

Cain concluded the conference on a similar note of optimism and a pluralist vision of America. The very fact of the great diversity among California's minorities may lead to easing of tensions among the many different groups making up the population. □ — JD

Panel members discussing community relations between racial/ethnic groups included (from top): Henry Cisneros, mayor of San Antonio, Texas; Edith Nealey, chairwoman of the South Central Organizing Committee; Lily Chen, Monterey Park City Councilwoman; and Roger Stanton, president of the Orange County Board of Supervisors.