

# HISPANIC-LATINO HERITAGE MONTH 2011

## ANTONIO RAMÓN VILLARAIGOSA

**“LEAVE YOUR MARK WHERE OTHERS CAN ONLY DREAM OF GOING.” — UNKNOWN**

Born in 1953, Villaraigosa is the oldest of four children. He faced many difficulties in his childhood, including the absence of his father and a decision to drop out of high school during his junior year, but he ultimately chose to fight back. At the encouragement of one of his former teachers, Villaraigosa returned to high school and received his diploma, and then went on to the University of California, Los Angeles, where he completed a B.A. in history in 1977.



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- Born January 23, 1953, Antonio Villaraigosa is the 41st and current mayor of Los Angeles, the first Mexican-American to hold that office in more than 130 years, and only the third Mexican-American to ever hold office in the city of Los Angeles.
- Prior to being elected mayor in 2005, he was a member of the L.A. Metropolitan Transit Board and the California State Assembly, where he served as Democratic Assembly Whip and Assembly Majority Leader.
- He was presented with the Tom Bradley Legacy Foundation Achievement Award in 2006 for “following in the footsteps of the first African-American Mayor of Los Angeles who served the city for 51 years.” He was also awarded a Doctor of Humane Letters by the University of Southern California.
- He served as a national co-chairman of Hillary Rodham Clinton’s 2008 presidential campaign. Later, he served on President Barack Obama’s Transition Economic Advisory Board.
- He was one of ten mayors from North America to be short-listed as a finalist for the 2008 World Mayor Award. He is also the current president of the United States Conference of Mayors.

His interest in civic justice and political action was truly sparked when he became a student at the People’s College of Law, a school dedicated to public interest law. After receiving his law degree, he was elected president of a local union representing civil rights workers and lawyers in six states. He went on to serve as a union organizer for United Teachers Los Angeles before becoming president of the Los Angeles chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union and then the American Federation of Government Employees.

In 1990, he paved a slightly different career path for himself, one where he could both influence and create policy, by becoming a member of the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Board. Four years later, he was elected to the California State Assembly, where he served as Democratic Assembly Whip and Assembly Majority Leader. His biggest political victory came in 2005, when he defeated incumbent James Hahn in the Los Angeles mayoral election. His dedication to reforming Los Angeles’ public schools and success in spearheading the city’s largest drop in crime since the 1950s earned him a second term in 2009.

Villaraigosa continues to fight for world-class education opportunities for all Los Angeles citizens and to keep the city’s streets safe and free of gang activity. He is also focusing on lifting the city out of the recession, creating jobs, and transforming Los Angeles into one of the most environmentally friendly big cities in the country.



<http://bit.ly/mZ3eA2>

**“A LEADER IS ONE WHO SEES MORE THAN OTHERS SEE, WHO SEES FARTHER THAN OTHERS SEE, AND WHO SEES BEFORE OTHERS SEE.”  
— LEROY EIMES**