

The Coronado Project

Advocating a new Democratic electoral strategy that explores the voting potential of Hispanics in the Southwest, the Midwest and the South.

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To: Hon. Howard Dean, Hon. Harry Reid, Hon. Charles E. Schumer, Hon. Nancy Pelosi, Hon. Rahm Emanuel, The Congressional Black Caucus, The Congressional Hispanic Caucus, Hon. Bill Richardson, Hon. Joan FitzGerald, Hon. David Price, Hon. Alexis Herman

CC: Hon. Evan Bayh, Hon. Joe Biden, Hon. Phil Bredesen, Hon. Hillary Rodham Clinton, Hon. Russ Feingold, Hon. John Kerry, Hon. Ed Rendell, Hon. Tom Vilsack, Hon. Mark Warner, Gen. Wesley K. Clark (Ret.) and Hon. John Edwards

RE: The Crossroads

Date: May 22, 2005

Latinos and many Democrats are jubilant about the election of Antonio Villaraigosa as new mayor of Los Angeles. His election symbolizes the promise the Latino vote holds for the Democratic Party.

To fully reap the electoral potential of the Hispanic community, the Democratic Party has to resolve many challenges. Some of these challenges are raised in this initial memorandum from a group of Latino Democrats who believe the historical assumption that Latinos are “base voters” for the Democrats must change.

At a time when the nation’s demographics are rapidly shifting, our party must change the way it tries to achieve its primary purpose -- winning elections. The Villaraigosa victory is simply emblematic of the crossroads at which the party finds itself. One victory does not a future make.

Since the 2004 election, analysts and pundits have engaged in a narrow discussion of the importance of rural and religious voters without explicitly acknowledging that voters of color are a part of these populations; additionally, they have minimized the more historically significant fact -- Latinos responded in shocking numbers to the Republican message.

After back-to-back national elections, each narrowly decided by a deeply divided electorate, the Democratic Party has arrived at a crossroads. The party must transcend the false ideological choice of motivating the progressive base of the Democratic Party or continuing to focus solely on white swing voters. We must engage both -- voters from communities we claim to represent and those we seek to persuade. Party managers have to accept that Latino voters have slipped away from our base and become part of the coveted “swing vote.”

Over the last three election cycles, the Democratic Party has lost 28 percent of market

share among Hispanic voters. This lost share represents crucial winning margins in states like Iowa, New Mexico, Nevada and Colorado -- all states that could have helped John Kerry become President.

More provocatively, this downward trend means that if the Democratic Party does not improve its performance among Latinos, it is doomed -- especially as the voting-age population of these groups accelerates. In the next eight years, for example, close to six million Latinos will turn 18 and be eligible to vote.

The party must change its systems and frameworks if it hopes to exploit this market and win back Congress and the Presidency. Hampering progress, however, is a pervasive transactional culture that shapes the relationship between communities of color and the Democratic Party. Instead of developing strategies and political capacity in communities of color to increase the number of voters and votes, the Democratic Party is steeped in token commercial relationships and unaccountable voter-contact methods. Preventing any real discussion to change the status quo, this transactional culture precludes the Democratic Party and its campaigns from mobilizing the very voters that can help it form an electoral majority. Even worse, failure to reform the party's approach to Latino voters maintains a caste system that is ineffective, if not suicidal, for the party.

To forge a new path to the future, the Democratic Party must make at least seven major changes:

1) Terminate the party's reliance on transactional relationships with minority political interests. Too many Democratic campaigns outsource their responsibility for voter contact and personnel development. They rely on a handful of community leaders who claim they can move voters but use unaccountable methods or on consultants who do not fully understand or represent communities of color. This is enormously ineffective in a day and age when elections can be won or lost by a handful of votes.

2) Initiate multifaceted empirical research to gauge minority voting behavior. In 2004, the Democratic presidential campaign chose to ignore the demographic and political shifts occurring in the Latino community. We know little about Hispanics, a community historically treated as part of the party's "base," which has now slid into the swing-vote category. One of the new standards by which the Democratic Party's relationship to all communities of color will be measured -- and by which it can find electoral success -- is in its investment in polling and in demographic and market research to understand the views and habits of voters of color.

3) Invest resources in message delivery to communities of color in correlation to their importance to Democratic vote goals. Too many Democratic consultants and campaigns fail to understand that segmented messages can be delivered to minorities through the mainstream media and not solely through segregated minority-specific media. They also see expenditures in minority-specific media as political exercises (a political transaction) -- not as investments in voter performance. In the 2004 election, a series of misjudgements and missed opportunities by the consultants and executive levels of the campaign and party -- against the advice of minority consultants and some of the senior

staff in the headquarters and the states -- contributed to the unconscionable loss of vote share from communities of color.

4) Develop a strategy for the recruitment and election of candidates of color. Republicans have used a limited number of minority candidates and officeholders to achieve their goal of chipping away at the Democratic base. The GOP has been more adept at supporting candidates it deems qualified -- equating capability, performance and diversity with "experience" while Democrats have missed too many opportunities to aggressively promote qualified candidates of color as a part of an overall electoral strategy. In response, the Democratic Party must recruit and elect minority candidates to lead beyond their majority-minority communities and within the party. We are at the point when adding qualified candidates of color can and will add to the party's national vote totals.

5) Develop and empower Latino and African American political operatives in decision-making roles. The Democratic Party, hobbled by its entrenched and generally well-intentioned consultant class, has great difficulty accepting minority operatives in decision-making roles beyond outreach to their own communities. When minorities are hired, they are rarely empowered to allocate resources. This boxes minority staff and their communities into a political caste system. Republicans have exploited this system to make the argument, not wholly unfounded, that the Democratic Party takes minority voters for granted.

6) Understand that communities of color need to create their own political capacity for the betterment of themselves as well as the Democratic Party. Neither African Americans nor Latinos have developed their own partisan entities or effective membership organizations outside of the national Democratic Party. Unlike most allied communities (environmentalists, pro-choice, gays and lesbians, etc.), African American and Latino political aspirations are disproportionately invested in the Democratic Party and its candidates. African American and Latino leaders must organize their communities now through new *partisan* ventures and initiatives. The Democratic establishment should not be threatened by these efforts. Increasing political capacity in communities of color is critical to the Democratic Party's ability to win future elections.

7) Respect, understand and act on the party's changing demographics. Despite the overwhelming amount of attention paid to changing demographics of the Hispanic market by the general media, many in the Democratic Party do not appreciate the potential of the new electoral equations on every level. Effective messaging to and organizing of Hispanics in Colorado, Nevada and New Mexico could have won the 2004 national election. John Kerry was the highest Democratic vote-getter in history and still lost the election because too many Hispanics, African Americans and single women voted Republican or did not vote. Developing targeted messages to Latino voters to increase their numbers at the polls is the key to future Democratic majorities.

1. Terminate the party's reliance on transactional relationships with minority political interests.

Ending the party's reliance on transactional politics with minority communities is the predicate to creating an electoral majority.

Too many Democratic elected officials, candidates, committees, consultants, staff and their allied organizations have a rapidly diminishing capacity to communicate with, organize and turn out voters of color. They "outsource" their responsibility to organize the Democratic base instead of directly investing and organizing in these communities.

These explicitly commercial relationships are generally well-intentioned but often misguided, preventing our party from achieving its electoral potential. In too many instances, arbitrary dollar amounts and exclusively financial relationships serve as a substitute for a real plan to engage voters through the development and delivery of clear messaging.

Having placated their conscience and interest group politics, the Democrats then overemphasize the importance of messaging and outreach to white swing voters. Years of conditioning, lack of faith in meaningful change, a desire to demonstrate clout with power brokers and sometimes personal, if petty, enrichment has made this practice acceptable to campaigns, candidates and many community leaders.

This system of transactional politics must end.

2. Initiate multifaceted empirical research to gauge minority voting behavior.

The transactional culture of the Democratic Party has prevented the party from keeping up with America's changing demographics. The strategic foundation of modern campaigns is based on accurate surveys and polling; productive focus groups; and the ability to organize voters to vote. Minority voters are no different. The problem is that for decades, Democratic candidates and committees have not invested sufficient resources in researching the attitudes and voting habits of the minority voters that are generally assumed to comprise its national base.

After the 2000 election, the media and Democratic consultants began to cast about for a new universe of white voters that would be the decisive factor in the elections of 2002 and 2004. In their discussions of the importance of cubicle and NASCAR dads in the 2002 election, security moms in the 2004 election and their discussion of married, rural and religious voters today, these same media and political mavens share an implicit, if not explicit, view that white Anglos alone are the voters that turn elections.

As a result of this continuing myopic view of electoral data, the potentially historic erosion of Hispanic Democratic support (by at least nine percent by the most conservative estimates), the defection (of as many as three percent) of African Americans and the second consecutive drop among single women have been largely discussed as side issues.

No one disagrees that any of the aforementioned groups of white voters were and will remain important to a Democratic electoral majority, but the assumption that minority voters were going to vote in their traditional margins for the Democratic candidate

proved to be disastrously wrong in 2004. Campaign decision-makers did not care enough to delve into and document minority political sentiments. As a direct result of ongoing Democratic neglect, Hispanics are now a swing voting community. How the Democratic Party addresses them is now more critical than ever.

In 2004, more partisan polling was conducted on Latinos than in 2002, but most of it was conducted by the 527 organizations. By law, these 527s could not coordinate with the Democratic Party or its candidates, thus limiting the impact of the polling that took place.

Outside efforts led campaign decision-makers to say “Well, the New Democratic Network is doing that;” or “America Coming Together is doing this, so we do not have to.” These decision-makers decided their responsibility to move certain groups of Democratic voters critical to winning the election was being fulfilled by outside efforts with which they could not coordinate. However, in complying with election law, these organizations were not allowed to deliver a direct message in support of John Kerry’s election. This is certainly not the best way to go about winning the ‘most important election of our lifetimes.’

Neither the Kerry/Edwards campaign nor the Democratic National Committee would exclusively poll African Americans or Latinos in 2004 more than once for each – total! Unbelievably, the Latino poll was not done until after the Democrats’ Latino mail program had already been produced. The Democrats outsourced core research responsibilities, making minimal direct effort to understand its base and paying the price on Election Day. In stark contrast, the GOP conducted extensive research to expand their base while chipping away at ours.

The need for more polling and research can best be demonstrated through the story of the Democracy Corps poll released in July 2004. This single poll concluded that Latino support for Kerry would not dip below the 65 percent won by Al Gore in 2000. This one-time finding by a single polling organization set into motion a ruinous strategy. Democratic decision-makers saw no consequence to Bush matching or exceeding his 2000 performance among Hispanics -- despite the fact that Bush in 2000 had already outperformed the Reagan landslide of 1984 and despite Republican strategists openly telegraphing their desire to improve upon that performance.

So while the GOP was slicing its data on Latino voters and targeting them with persuasive messages through a variety of channels, Democrats were floating over an electoral landscape that had changed beneath them. Since the Democrats could not or would not read the lay of the land, the GOP came away with the highest number of Hispanics that ever voted Republican.

The lack of empirical knowledge about communities that provide the base of our national vote goals has multiple implications. Some professionals are already arguing that targeting “urban voters” (a stereotypical euphemism for minorities) has reached a point of diminishing returns in terms of value to Democratic victories, ignoring the increased “browning” of America’s cities, suburbs and rural areas.

Census data indicates minorities, and Latinos in particular, will continue to grow as a percentage of the eligible voting age population in the coming decades. Again, nearly six million new Latino voters will come online in the next eight years. Yet, the Democratic Party's program for young voters is built around mostly white and college-educated students.

Census data also clearly shows that Hispanics are a part of the changing religious dynamic in America and are a rapidly growing segment of rural populations. As reported in Newsweek's March 21st issue, while 72 percent of first generation Hispanic immigrants are Catholic, by the third generation only 52 percent of Hispanics remain Catholic. This shift traces the explosion of evangelical Protestantism in the Hispanic community, particularly as the Hispanic population grows in the rural South and Midwest.

3. Invest resources in message delivery to communities of color in levels that correlate to their importance to Democratic vote goals.

The Democratic Party's transactional mentality has cemented the belief that segregation of effort is the only means by which message delivery can be conveyed to Latino and African American communities. Most Democratic campaign managers and consultants believe that messages to Hispanic voters need to be delivered exclusively in Spanish and broadcast on Telemundo, Univision or Spanish radio or, for African Americans, on Black Entertainment Television or "urban" radio. Many decision-making Democrats see no utility in anything else, and some even question the need for these modest efforts.

Sadly, Democratic media expenditures for minority communities are usually a last-minute response to external pressure from elected officials from those communities or the realization that those communities are not performing as expected. Because expenditures are not part of an overall strategic effort to maximize votes from the community, and due to limited understanding or appreciation of minority markets, it is not surprising that media expenditures to turn out minorities often receive greater scrutiny than the money that defines the transactional politics on the ground. Further, while there is a lot of debate over the cost of communicating to minority voters, there isn't as much thought invested in to what is actually being communicated.

Driving the lack of empirical research and community messaging is the failure of decision-making Democrats to develop vote goals for those communities. This usually coincides with weak strategies to increase overall vote share from these communities as part of the general market media plan. Most consultants and decision makers argue that they easily reach saturation points in a campaign -- but this is because they do not appreciate the extent and the outer reaches of segmented markets or their potential.

The sophisticated elements of Corporate America -- backed up by solid empirical research -- understand that marketing to Hispanics requires unique media strategies and distinct creative concepts as part of mainstream advertising campaigns. Decision-making Democrats are tied to dated beliefs that ignore new market realities. With \$15 million left over from the primary season, there was clearly no timely investment or interest in developing a profile of John Kerry within minority communities.

On even the smallest details, for example, Democrats come up short: Democratic campaigns consistently lack B-roll, or background shots, which show all of the components of the Democratic Party in a setting relevant to the issues or mood of a campaign. Democratic general market television ads often omit African Americans and Latinos, diminishing the attention that communities of color pay to those ads -- while Republican ad-makers frame race as a positive element in their advertising.

While targeting Spanish-speaking immigrants is essential to counter Karl Rove's strategy to attract the Hispanic vote of future generations, it is not the whole enchilada. It must come as a surprise to many in the Democratic establishment that most Latino voters receive their news and political messaging from English-language media. The key to persuading Latinos is using cultural cues that speak to the individual viewer while segmenting the message.

In order to reclaim Hispanic vote share, Democrats must learn from corporate America and Republican leaders -- the marketplace has changed. In order to communicate its superior record with communities of color in the new information age, the party must research, understand and implement new communications methods.

4. Develop a strategy for the recruitment and election of candidates of color.

An integral part of the Bush White House strategy appears to be institutionalizing the promotion of a minimal number of African Americans and Latinos to high-profile positions. They project images that mask their anti-community public policies. This is as true with respect to judges, cabinet officers and candidate recruitment as it is to the development of staff and consultants. By comparison, Democrats tend to take a more narrow view of personnel and political development. Nothing distinguishes the two parties' strategies towards minority communities more than the area of candidate recruitment.

In 2002, the Democratic gubernatorial candidates in Maryland and Florida passed on opportunities to choose African American running mates. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend chose to pick a Republican who had never run for office, while attacking the business credentials of African American GOP nominee for Lt. Governor Michael Steele, who is now likely to be the most credible candidate Republicans can put up for the U.S. Senate since Sen. Charles Mathias in 1980.

In Florida, Bill McBride's campaign chose to believe that antipathy among African Americans stemming from the 2000 presidential recount would be enough to motivate them to turn out, rather than giving them a direct stake in the election's outcome by

placing Daryl Jones on the ballot.

In New York, Andrew Cuomo's challenge to Carl McCall, as with Kennedy Townsend in Maryland, may have put too much stock in parental legacy in how his campaign approached communities of color, rather than accepting the strategic importance of Carl McCall's candidacy for the African American community and the national Democratic Party.

While there is much to rejoice about in the elections of Ken Salazar and Barack Obama to the United States Senate, the decision-making record of the Democratic Party leadership does not fare well under close examination. Neither Obama nor Salazar was the first recruitment choice of national Democrats. It was not until after Democratic frontrunner Blair Hull and GOP nominee Jim Ryan imploded in Illinois that national Democrats saw fit to rush to the front of the Obama parade.

Ken Salazar was the highest elected Democrat in Colorado, but was denied an opportunity to address the Democratic National Convention in prime time due to the opposition of a minor, non-elected primary opponent. By contrast, even when faced with significant primary opposition, the White House chose to recruit and support Mel Martinez for Senate in Florida in 2004 over other Republican candidates.

In 2006, there are serious Republican African American and Latino candidates vying for gubernatorial or Senate seats in Ohio, Maryland and Texas, and yes, recent Democratic efforts in California, New York, New Mexico and Texas to elect minorities as governor or senator met with limited success. The point isn't that minority candidates are always the best alternative but that little effort has been made by national Democrats to use minority candidacies to improve coordinated or subsequent national Democratic performance.

What will national Democrats do about the candidacies of Kweisi Mfume, Bob Menendez, Michael Coleman and Harold Ford in Maryland, New Jersey, Ohio and Tennessee, respectively? Are the Democratic leadership and its campaign committees working to figure out how African American and Latino voters and candidates will help Democrats achieve victory in the 2006 elections and beyond? Are they conscious of how the Republican Party's aggressive promotion of minorities serves to mask its true agenda?

Mentoring and supporting qualified candidates of color for higher offices will translate into victories beyond the immediate election cycle by reaffirming to minority voters that people from their communities can find opportunity, respect and acceptance in the Democratic Party.

5. Develop and empower Latino and African American political operatives in decision-making roles.

Every election cycle the word goes out, "Do you know any Hispanic or African American field organizers?" More frequently, the same question gets asked about minority press staff. But rarely, if ever, is the question asked about campaign managers

or communications, field and finance directors.

The Democratic establishment has difficulty envisioning minority operatives in decision-making roles outside of outreach to their own communities. Even within outreach operations, resource-allocation decisions are rarely left to the discretion of outreach staff. This is because while acknowledging that minority voters play a role in Democratic victories, the political culture excludes minority operatives from strategic decision-making roles and holds off decisions about communities of color until near the end of a campaign. Some campaign operations do go through the motions of doling out senior titles, but they generally fail to match these positions with commensurate authority over planning and budgets.

Achieving greater diversity isn't simply about including a person of color on the staff. It requires combining roles with responsibilities effectively. When minority operatives play no strategic role in setting targeting, budgeting or communications goals but are merely displayed as prominent "faces," they cannot serve minority communities, their candidates or themselves well over the long term.

A major contributor to this self-defeating culture is the 32-year dominance of Iowa and New Hampshire in the presidential nomination process. The strategic decision-making teams for campaigns are either natives of these states or reflect their dominant white Anglo population. From the ranks of these mostly Anglo staffers flow, year after year, new campaign managers for future state-wide and presidential campaigns. Those campaign managers then hire the Anglo communications and field directors who worked with them in these early states. These staffers then move on to become consultants, lobbyists and congressional leadership staff – creating a self-replenishing model for a monochromatic monopoly on institutional power.

Many experienced campaign managers and communications and finance directors come out of the Iowa and New Hampshire axis. They populate the troika of federal campaign committees and perpetuate their stranglehold by mentoring their successors. How many Anglo twenty-something's have run coordinated campaigns as compared to minority field operatives of any age?

Similarly, the consultant community driving much of the Democratic Party's strategic viewpoint is overwhelmingly Anglo, with only a handful being minority-owned. Since the majority of partners come from the same pool of campaign managers and communications directors whose history usually stretches to Iowa and New Hampshire, the opportunity for minority staff suffers. As a result, the strategic imperatives of research and message delivery are subsequently affected, perhaps explaining the dearth of empirical research and message development cited above and certainly feeding the transactional practices of the party.

Democratic campaign committees have abysmal track records of pushing or promoting minorities into strategic decision-making roles. Since 1982, in all of the campaign committees there have been only two political directors, three communications directors and two executive directors from communities of color. The clear majority of these

hires, made at the DNC, are the legacy of former DNC Chair Ron Brown, who in 1992 helped lead the Democratic Party out of the political wilderness.

Perhaps worse than the personnel record is the bias often expressed in such statements as “Well, our state is different from the rest” when campaign teams are being formed. This coded language refers to the belief that minority operatives could not be capable of managing any facet of a campaign other than outreach to their own community, or that minority voters are somehow different than white voters in the way they choose to support their candidates.

While not all consultants are insensitive to minority interests, the lack of an integrated strategy incorporating minority voting behavior and candidates is clearly a result of the Democratic Party’s lack of diverse personnel capacity in positions of responsibility and authority.

In 2004, building on the legacy of the Gore campaign, which became the first Democratic presidential campaign to be managed by an African American, many of the Democratic candidates had African Americans or Latinos in major roles such as deputy campaign manager, political director and communications director or press secretary. However, after the nomination was sealed, only the DNC retained a minority in a leadership position, that of a Hispanic serving as communications director.

6. Understand that communities of color need to create their own political capacity for the betterment of themselves as well as the Democratic Party.

Existing Democratic organizations have not adequately addressed the core operational and strategic deficits in the party. If communities of color continue to give the Democratic Party the benefit of the doubt, leaving our political destiny in the hands of others -- Republicans will continue to win elections and our communities will pay the price. While it is our hope that the leaders of the Democratic Party will take this memorandum to heart, we cannot afford to take the chance that they will once again miss an opportunity to change.

We urge the leadership of African American and Hispanic communities to take matters into their own hands and to set their respective houses in order. African American and Hispanic leaders must invest in new organizations and create new forms of political expression and participation within their communities. These new partisan efforts are not designed to pull minorities out of the Democratic Party but to concentrate Democratic resources within communities of color to correct voter registration and performance deficits.

Historically, 501(c)(3) organizations have been the primary vehicles for minority political expression. Yet federal law limits their activities and their ability to message or organize in an explicitly partisan manner, making them incomplete vehicles for the development of minority political infrastructure.

The lack of effective political structures reaching deep into minority communities is

compounded by the primarily white network of progressive 501(c)(4) organizations. MoveOn and most gay and lesbian, environmental, choice and women's organizations are perpetually challenged in both staffing diversity and their ability to reach into communities of color.

The 527s and organized labor have far better records by comparison, but they face the gravest threats to continued effectiveness from proposed revisions to campaign finance laws and the lack of support for workplace organizing efforts. Further restriction of independent political speech and diminishing union membership are trends hardly conducive to Democrats regaining majority political status.

In the last five years, only two organizations, both 527s, made partisan research and messaging to minority communities a significant focus. The NAACP Voter Fund in 2000 and the New Democrat Network Hispanic Project in 2004 targeted the African American and Hispanic communities respectively.

The Voter Fund hasn't been able to match its 2000 performance in part due to internal strife and a lack of significant funding, while the New Democrat Network's Hispanic Project has been criticized by some within the Latino community for being established by someone from outside of the community.

Frankly, this parochial infighting is counterproductive. The point shouldn't be argued about any one organization being the arbiter of any community's politics. Members of the community should focus instead on how to build on their initial successes and diversify activity throughout the community because the size and growth of the respective communities require it.

More message research, voter contact templates, candidate and staff training, especially in the areas of fundraising and targeting, as well as partisan advocacy for the community all need to be enhanced further – no matter what happens at the DNC or in national campaigns. The fact that we have Leader Pelosi in the House and pro-choice members of Congress leading both campaign committees does not negate the need for Emily's List and other pro-choice organizations.

These organizations have not flinched from supporting their "own" candidates or opposing the party's preferred candidates who fail to meet their group's interests. Likewise, Democrats must see the wisdom and logic of supporting independent African American and Latino political organizations seeking to develop political capacity within their own communities.

7. Understand, respect, and act on the party's changing demographics.

Latinos are leading an historic transformation of the nation's electoral landscape, and it appears that few national-level Democrats recognize it. The Democratic Party's leadership must understand the basic components of population growth that are changing the face of America. The numbers Karl Rove sees and studies apply to the Democratic Party as well.

Republicans have moved past simple ethnic targeting, and use market research to identify persuadable voters based on reading, viewing and purchasing habits as well as demographic information and income. They have expanded their reach geographically and exponentially by playing at the margins of every part of the electorate. Democrats continue to use race, incomplete voter history and geography as their primary means of targeting voters and, therefore, play into the false arguments on differentiating the levels and types of resources for swing or "base" voters.

Ultimately, the argument between those who advocate concentrating on swing voters (represented by the current dialogue over rural, religious and married white voters) and those who advocate only moving "base" voters is based on an entirely false paradigm. Democrats have to step back, open their eyes to a new demographic landscape and chart a better course. The Republicans already have.

Conclusion

We are not suggesting that the increased mobilization of minority voters must be the only priority of the Democratic Party. Rather, we contend that expanding our vote share among Latinos -- who have recently demonstrated a greater interest in voting Republican -- has not been fully explored. Developing a stronger relationship between Hispanics and the Democratic Party can lead to the creation of a new Democratic majority. Ignoring these recommendations could very well cement the Democrats' minority party status for decades to come.

This baseline memorandum represents the Coronado Project's opening statement. It is intended to stimulate the development of a more sophisticated electoral strategy for the Democratic Party. It is our hope that Democratic Party leaders and potential national candidates will take these ideas into account as they develop their future plans and assume their shared responsibilities for Democratic success.

In the end, the challenge to the Democratic Party and to the African American and Latino communities is to develop a more mature set of relationships. The command and control entities of the party must accept that maximizing Democratic performance among African American and Latino voters is the foundation of our party's return to power.

The Coronado Project

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Luis Elizondo-Thomson worked on the Kerry Campaign in Washington D.C. in multiple capacities from January 2003 through November 2004 as a Regional Political Desk and finishing as Director for Hispanic Affairs. He previously worked for John Kerry's leadership PAC the Citizen Soldier Fund. In 2000, he worked on the Gore/Lieberman Campaign in Nashville and the Florida Re-Count efforts.

Luis Navarro served as national political director for the Service Employees International Union and the John Kerry for President Campaign through the Iowa caucuses before directing the western regional operations for America Coming Together (ACT) in 2004. Prior to that, he was a veteran of the DNC and DCCC as well as serving as a senior campaign or congressional aide to Congressman Al Wynn and former House leaders Tom Foley and Vic Fazio. Luis began his career managing Maryland House Speaker Michael Busch's first general election campaign and working in Southern politics. He currently sits on the boards of 21st Century Democrats and the Ballot Initiative Strategy Center and was named a Rising Star of 2000 by Campaign and Elections Magazine.

Paul Rivera served as the Senior Political Advisor for the Kerry-Edwards campaign in 2004, after managing New York State for John Kerry in the Democratic Primaries. He worked for Carl McCall's 2002 gubernatorial campaign in New York and previously as a White House advance person from 1994 through 2000. He is a veteran of the past four presidential elections and the 1992, 1996 and 2000 Democratic National Conventions.

Jesse Treviño worked in the Clinton Administration as a speechwriter for the President's Special Envoy to the Americas and for Energy Secretaries Bill Richardson and Federico Peña. He managed the daily caucuses of the 450-plus Latino delegates at the 2000 Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles and worked in Florida, New Hampshire and Illinois for Gore-Lieberman 2000.