

POLICY MOTION

TITLE: Calling on Action by City Council to Address the Racist Leaked Recording of Councilpersons Martinez, De León, and Cedillo

PURPOSE: Calling on councilpersons De León, and Cedillo to follow Martinez in resigning or for the city council to immediately agendize a censure motion for councilpersons De León, and Cedillo [Council File 22-1189](#) (FOR).

BACKGROUND:

As widely reported by the LA Times and Knock LA, all three councilmembers engaged in an abhorrent conversation that disparaged and disrespected Councilmember Mike Bonin, his family, and his son, a child who lives in our neighborhood.

The Mar Vista Community Council calls on Councilpersons De León, and Cedillo to follow Martinez in resigning or for the city council to immediately agendize a censure motion for councilpersons De León, and Cedillo. Mar Vista Community Council leaders expect a unanimous vote on these censures. Anything less is tantamount to an endorsement of anti-black racism, violence against children, gerrymandering, and power brokering in backroom deals in violation of the Brown Act.

Martinez, De León, and Cedillo disparaged and disrespected other City Councilmembers, the Black, Quaxan, Jewish, and LGBTQ+ communities. In addition they plotted to manipulate the redistricting process and appointment of a council seat to their own political gain, and strip away representation from renters. Angelenos deserve better. These three councilmembers should take ownership of their vile and inexcusable actions and immediately resign. While resignation will not begin to repair the damage that has been done to our City, it is the first step in showing true accountability and remorse. Los Angeles cannot begin to heal while these three remain in power.

Make no mistake, the current situation is not merely a matter of some errant words spoken in frustration and taken out of context. Instead, the portions of the recording already released are evidence of intentional violations of the law during the redistricting process. Specifically, Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act requires that redistricting changes not have a discriminatory purpose or effect. In the recording released and commented on by the LA Times, we see clear evidence of an overt discriminatory purpose in redistricting proposals which were subsequently adopted. This opens up the city to liability and makes urgent the need for a truly independent redistricting commission. We also believe that the City Council desperately needs expansion. We are the most underrepresented City Council in the entire nation with a constituent to

representative ratio of 260,000 to 1. This concentration of power in too few hands drives the favor brokering and horse trading on display. Angelenos desperately need a diverse representative government, not those who cling to racism in justification for their policymaking.

There were multiple examples of discrimination on display that day. Councilmember de León compared an adopted Black child to a luxury handbag. Councilmember Martinez disparaged the Indigenous Oaxacan Community in Koreatown saying “I see a lot of little short dark people,” employing stereotypes long used against Oaxacans in Mexico and in the United States. “I was like, I don’t know where these people are from, I don’t know what village they came [from], how they got here,” Martinez said, before adding “Tan feos” - (They’re so ugly). Councilmember Martinez called Councilmember Bonin’s son a “changito - (little monkey)” and expressed that “this kid needs a beat down” regarding his excitement at participating in an MLK Day parade. Throughout the released recordings there is a deep vein of anti-Black racism that pervades all aspects of the discussion on redistricting.

Our council calls attention to the unusual circumstances in Council District 10. The choice by CM Nury Martinez to appoint Herb Wesson, who was clearly barred from holding the seat by the City charter, exposed the City to liability and disenfranchised the residents of Council District 10 - all in pursuit of her own power. When community members and Councilmembers called out the swift appointment of Heather Hutt as a backroom deal, or puzzling, they were accused by CM Martinez of not wanting to see a Black woman in power. We know now that this appointment was the result of power brokering, the purpose of which was to benefit CM Martinez, not the stakeholders of Council District 10. That CM Martinez would wield identity politics to create divisive chaos in Council District 10 to hide her backroom deals is fiducially, morally, and ethically reprehensible. This is not the leadership that Angelenos deserve.

CM Martinez has also limited public comment at City Hall in a way that has never been seen before and which would never be tolerated by Neighborhood Councils or the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment. She frequently takes the bare minimum of comment allowable under the Brown Act, even when an issue is contentious or important. Her dismissive and contemptuous attitude towards the public has radiated into the Council during her tenure as President, creating an environment where casual racism is accepted without question and systematic racism can flourish. An example of this is when a Black man disrupted the August 10th, 2022 City Council meeting by merely shouting, Councilmember Buscaino flippantly threatened to call DCFS on the man to remove his infant son.

This contempt for public comment also affects Neighborhood Councils. In a Community Impact Statement Townhall earlier this year, Councilmember Martinez promised the Neighborhood Council system a continuation of telephonic comment so that we could share our community impact statements. However, this promise was never fulfilled and in-person comment returned with no notice or consideration for Neighborhood Council volunteers. We believe this choice speaks deeply to the contempt that Councilmember Martinez has for the public as evidenced by her shocking statements.

Our Council also believes that many of these conversations may also be evidence of violations of the Brown Act. Both redistricting and the Council District 10 appointment were matters that were agendized in Council, but it is clear that these decisions were being made prior to open and observable Council meetings. Given that it has been reported that there is over an hour of disgusting rhetoric, Neighborhood Councils therefore wonder what other topics may have been discussed not only that day, but in any other secret meetings.

In 2022, we don't expect to hear explicit recordings of literal, systemic racism, recordings of the leaders of City Hall participating in racist, anti-black rhetoric while discussing gerrymandering on the basis of race and socioeconomic status and backroom deals to keep themselves in power.

To Councilpersons De León, and Cedillo, resign immediately so the city can begin healing.

THE MOTION: The MVCC is FOR the City Council taking action to Address the Racist Leaked Recording of Councilpersons Martinez, De León, and Cedillo. Calling on councilpersons De León, and Cedillo to follow Martinez in resigning or for the city council to immediately agendize a censure motion for councilpersons De León, and Cedillo [Council File 22-1189](#) (FOR).

DIRECTED TO: Los Angeles City Council

ACTION/VOTE COUNT: