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# Latino Policy iReport

NiLP Survey of NY Latino Opinion Leaders, Part 2 of 2

## Latino Mayoral Preferences and Political Influentials in New York

By Angelo Falcón (May 15, 2013)

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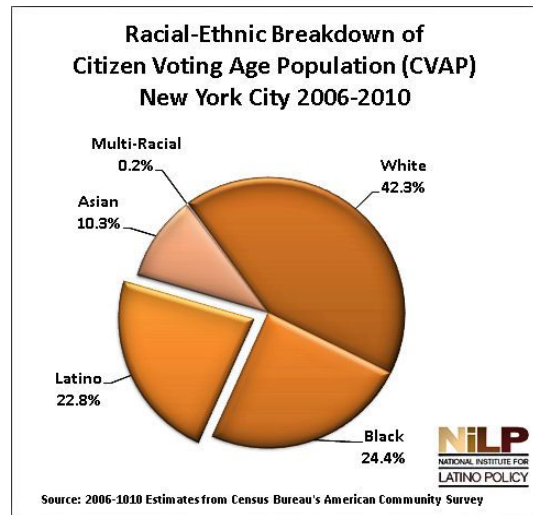
### To view Part 1 of this report, [click here](#)

With the New York City Mayoral election in play this year, the issue of leadership for the city and for the Latino community comes to the fore. Over 2.4 million Latinos reside in New York City, making up 29 percent of the population and 23 percent of its eligible electorate. Overwhelmingly registered as Democrats, the Latino vote makes up close to 30 percent of the voters that will turn out in September's Democratic Party Primary, making it a critical voting bloc in that party's nomination for Mayor. In the November general election, Latinos will make up more than 20 percent of total voters, making them an important factor at that point as well.

With the candidacy of Adolfo Carrion, there has been much speculation about his role in shaping the Latino vote for Mayor in the general election. Not running as a Democrat, but as an Independent Party candidate who unsuccessfully sought the Republican nomination, he will not impact the Latino vote in the important Democratic Primary. There is a Latino candidate currently in the Democratic field, Erick Salgado, but he is not generally seen to be much of a factor in the race.

Although Salgado's campaign denies it, he is perceived to be a surrogate for Bronx State Senator Ruben Diaz, Sr., who promotes an extremely socially conservative agenda.

Carrion and Salgado are Puerto Ricans, who represent the largest Latino group in the city. In 2010, Puerto Ricans comprised 31 percent of the city's Latino population, followed by Dominicans (25 percent) and Mexcians (14 percent). In terms of eligible Latino voters, Puerto Ricans were 44 percent of the total and Dominicans 23 percent, with other Latinos combined making up a third of the total. The disproportionate size of the Puerto Rican electorate compared to its population is largely a function of it being the only Latino group to arrive completely as US citizens.



Who are the key Latino leaders in New York who will be playing a major role developing this community's political agenda in terms of the Mayoral race. Are candidates like Carrion and Salgado viewed by Latino opinion leaders as influential among Latinos, with large enough political bases within this community that can mobilize significant support for their candidacies? There are currently 32 Latino elected officials in New York City at the Congressional, Borough President, State Senate, State Assembly and City Council levels. There are an additional two in the State Assembly outside of New York City.

### Number of Latino Elected Officials 2013 New York City by Borough and Position

compiled by the National Institute for Latino Policy (NILP)

Borough/County	2010 Latino Voting Age Population*	City Council	State Assembly	State Senate	Borough President	Congress	Totals
<b>Bronx</b>	51.2%	4	5	3	1	1	<b>14</b>
<b>Brooklyn</b>	18.8%	3	2	1	0	1**	<b>7</b>
<b>Manhattan</b>	23.3%	3	2	1***	0	0	<b>6</b>
<b>Queens</b>	26.0%	1	2	1	0	0	<b>4</b>
<b>Staten Island</b>	15.2%	0	1****	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
<b>NYC Totals</b>	<b>26.7%</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>32</b>

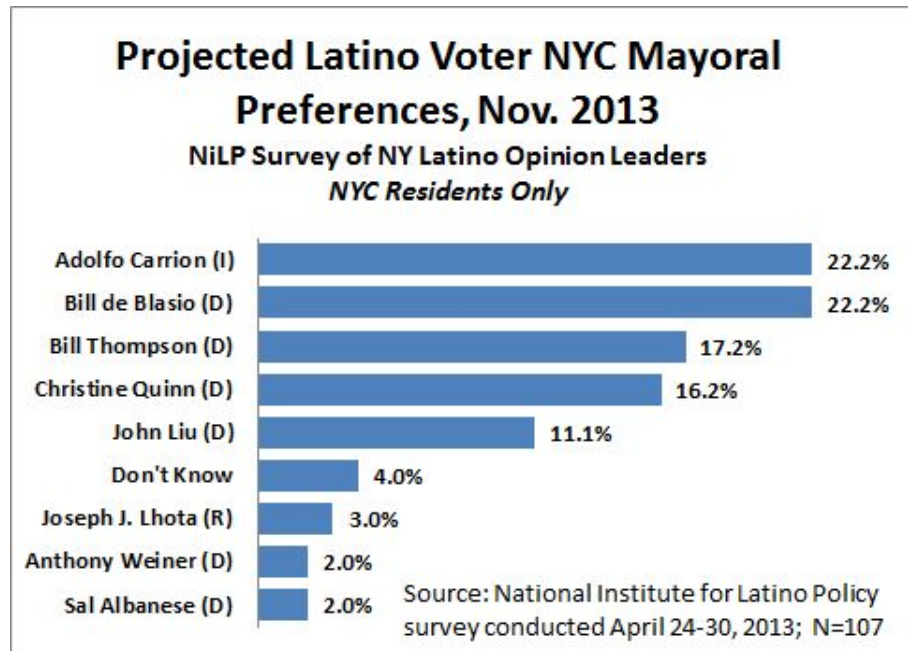
\* Source: 2010 Census  
 \*\* includes parts of Queens and Manhattan  
 \*\*\* includes part of The Bronx

To promote a discussion of these issues within the Latino community, the National Institute for Latino Policy (NILP) conducted a web survey of Latino opinion leaders in New York. Based on the membership of the influential NiLP Network on Latino Issues, this survey included Latino leaders and activists in a wide range of areas, including government, business and the nonprofit sectors. The lack of reliable opinion polling of and coverage about the Latino population makes this type of elite survey a useful supplement to understand Latino public opinion, especially of political issues. (See a [2012 NiLP iReport](#) for a discussion of this problem.) This NiLP Survey of NY Latino Opinion Leaders was conducted on April 24 -30, 2013 of 128 Latino opinion leaders in New York State. All responses were completely anonymous.

### Latino NYC Mayoral Preferences

The Latino opinion leaders in this survey were asked who they thought the majority of Latino voters would support for NYC Mayor in the November general election. All the known candidates in the Democratic, Republican, Independent and Liberal parties were listed.

The Latino opinion leaders in this survey thought that Adolfo Carrion and Bill de Blasio both led the pack equally in being able to attract the majority of Latino voters in November. They were followed by Bill Thompson (17 percent), Christine Quinn (16 percent) and John Liu (11 percent).



The most surprising result of this survey is the relatively low level of Latino support (22 percent) Carrion is perceived as having by Latino opinion leaders and his sharing frontrunner status with de Blasio. This could be mostly the effect of his not running as a Democrat, as well as his assuming center-right positions on a number of fiscal and other policy issues. He has, for example, been critical of unions and has opposed proposal to allow noncitizen voting in local elections.

Among those respondents who indicated that they were following the Mayoral race "very closely," by far the largest percentage (30 percent) thought de Blasio would attract the majority of the Latino voter in November. He was followed by Carrion and Quinn (18 percent each) and Thompson (13 percent).

Carrion's socially liberal/fiscally conservative approach seems to have resonated with the Latino opinion leaders in this survey. Among those identifying as politically conservative, 67 percent think Carrion will attract a majority of Latino votes, as do 40 percent of those who identify as politically moderate. Among those who identified as liberal, only 14 percent thought he would get majority Latino voter support, as did only 9 percent of those who considered themselves politically progressive.

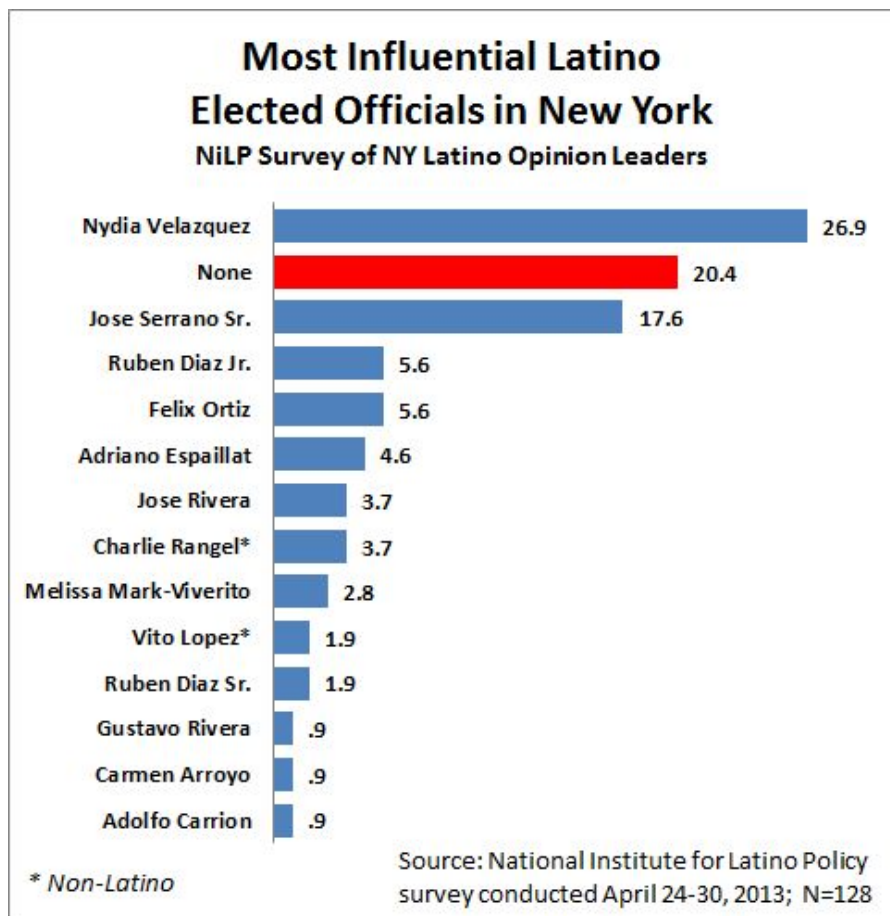
Without a much stronger base of support in the Latino community, Carrion will be waging a very uphill campaign as a third party candidate. However, his strategy of presenting himself as an independent candidate with a "Republican-light" policy agenda could be effective if the current political corruption scandals in both the Democratic and Republican parties escalate and the party primaries become overly divisive.

The other question is whether this type of Latino elite opinion will hold in terms of the behavior of the regular Latino voter. However, the take of Latino opinion leaders on their community's political sentiments is an important indicator that cannot be ignored.

## Most Influential Latino Elected Officials

Who are the critical political players in the Latino community that can influence its political preferences and policy agenda? The Latino opinion leaders in this survey were asked, in an open-ended question, to identify who they consider to be the most influential Latino elected officials in New York State.

The top three choices of the respondents were 1. Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez, 2. "None" and 3. Congressman José E. Serrano. These stood out as the frontrunners, with the others listed as influentials having much lower support. By far, the Latino elected officials viewed as most influential were the community's two Congresspersons. Nydia Velazquez, whose district includes Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens, was the frontrunner with 27 percent viewing her as the most influential. She was followed by Bronx Representative Jose E. Serrano with 18 percent.



Beyond these two most influential, the second largest percentage of the Latino opinion leaders (20 percent) indicated that they could not identify an influential Latino elected official or didn't think there was one. This was followed by less than 6 percent who identified others they considered influential, led by Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr. (6 percent). It is interesting that the four Puerto Rican political families (the Arroyos, Diazs, Riveras and Serranos) of the Bronx are all represented on this list.

In considering who are most influential Latino elected officials in the state,

there was an interesting ideological difference. While the largest percentage of those who considered themselves "progressive" identified Congresswoman Velazquez (37 percent), 50 percent of those who considered themselves "liberal" identified Congressman Serrano.

Both women (32 percent) and men (24 percent) felt that Velazquez was the most influential. The men were more critical, with 24 percent indicating they could not identify any influential Latino elected official, compared to 16 percent of the women. Congressman Serrano came in second with women (18 percent), and third with men (18 percent), following "None" (24 percent).

There were also interesting differences among the Latino opinion leaders based on what sector of the economy they were employed. Among those who worked for government, Velazquez was seen as most influential by 30 percent, with Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr. coming in second with 17 percent. Among those respondents working for the private sector, "None" came in first with 27 percent, followed by Congressman Serrano (23 percent) and Congresswoman Velazquez (18 percent). Among those working in the nonprofit sector, Congresswoman Velazquez came in first (34 percent), followed by "None" (21 percent) and Congressman Serrano (16 percent). In all three cases, everyone else only registered in the single digits or with no one. Along all the ethnic lines of the Latino opinion leaders surveyed,

Congresswoman Velazquez was seen as most influential (with 24 percent of the Puerto Ricans, 38 percent of the Dominicans and 33 percent of other Latinos). Among Puerto Ricans, Congresswoman Velazquez tied for first with "None" (24 percent), followed by Congressman Serrano (17 percent). Among Dominicans, Velazquez (38 percent) was followed by Assemblyman Adriano Espaillat (25 percent), and with 13 percent each for "None" and Congressman Serrano. Among other Latinos, Congresswoman Velazquez (33 percent) was followed by Congressman Serrano (27 percent) and "None" (13 percent).

## **Conclusion**

This survey of Latino opinion leaders NYC Mayoral preferences presents what could possibly be a different pattern of Latino politics. Latino voter support for the few Latino Democratic Party candidates for NYC Mayor that there has been, Herman Badillo and Fernando Ferrer, has been overwhelming. Both had served as Bronx Borough President before running for Mayor. which is the case as well for Adolfo Carrion. However, according to this survey, running as a third party candidate, Carrion is not expected to attract a large Latino vote. If this indeed becomes the case, then his influence on this race would be minimal unless he can develop an effective non-rationally based electoral strategy. This could create a vacuum for the Latino voter that the other candidates would attempt to address to their benefit in what are anticipated to be tight races both in the Democratic primary and the general election.

There has long been a concern about the existence of leadership vacuum in New York's Latino community. This concern has been heightened by recent political scandals involving Latino elected officials as well as the lack of Latino candidates for citywide and statewide elective office. This survey confirms that this remains a challenge facing the Latino community. While this community's two Congresspersons emerge as being perceived as the most influential, this could be simply an artifact of their position as federal elected officials and not

necessarily of their role in local Latino politics and policy issues. This perception, however, may represent an interest in their playing a greater role locally and it will be interesting to see what it will be in this year's Mayoral election.

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