

Green Latinos

<https://www.climateone.org/audio/green-latinos>

Recorded on February 7, 2014

Greg Dalton: I'm Greg Dalton and today on Climate One we're discussing Green Latinos. This year, Latinos will surpass non-Hispanic whites as the largest ethnic group in California, rising to 39% of the population. Latinos live in some of the state's most polluted communities, and in 2010, they were instrumental in defending California's main climate law from an oil company assault at the ballot box. But the relationship between communities of color and mainstream environmental groups has often been strained - is that still the case?

Over the next hour, we'll explore how Latino residents view carbon pollution relative to more visible and immediate concerns such as immigration reform. How will California's new majority impact its approach to the most important challenge and opportunity of our time moving from fossil fuels to cleaner energy and adapting to more volatile weather?

Our guests are Catherine Sandoval, Commissioner of the California Public Utilities Commission.

She's the first Latina to serve on the commission in its 100-year history, and she was also the first Latina to be a Rhodes scholar. Orson Aguilar is Executive Director of The Greenlining Institute, an advocacy group. And Adrianna Quintero is a Senior Attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council. Please welcome them to Climate One.

[Applause]

Greg Dalton: Thank you all for coming. Let's start, Catherine Sandoval, with you for a moment and just talk about the significance of this moment where we now have Latinos/Latinas as a majority in California. What does that mean for the state politics? And we'll get into energy and the others.

Catherine Sandoval: Thank you. Well, first, thank you for this invitation and for hosting this important topic. When you look at California, we have a very large state, 38 million people, and it's a tremendously diverse state with very large urban populations and actually huge rural populations that are as big as the state of Kentucky with the population the size of the state of Maine. And so Latinos have long been a huge force and a huge population in the Los Angeles area, places like the Bay Area. But now, we're seeing Latinos who have been growing in population all over California, of course, Fresno, the Imperial Valley and San Diego. But also, for example, earlier this year, I went to Del Norte County -- the E is silent I was told up there.

And I had the opportunity to meet with the Del Norte County board of supervisors since we were talking about Lifeline, the telecommunications program for low-income people. They have one of the lowest enrolment levels in the state, less than 25% of the people who are eligible for the program are enrolled. So we offered to both send people up there give them brochures, give them information because they were saying one of the real problems is, for example, a lot of the Latino parents don't have telephones and so it's a real issue getting a hold of people about school. So I asked them what language do you want the assistance in, and they asked for Spanish, English and Hmong. And this is Del Norte County by the Oregon border. So it just gives you a perspective of the diversity of California and just the extent of our diverse communities throughout the state.

Greg Dalton: Now, Orson Aguilar, let's get you also on this. Is it just a symbolic moment? We've known this moment is coming for a long time. It's not news to anyone. I'm a little surprised it hasn't

happened already. But - Latinos will be the majority in California.

Orson Aguilar: And I was thinking about what you're asking, is it a big deal? Is it not? And to me, it's really both. Yes, it's a big deal because it shows that America continues to be this vibrant, ever-changing nation that can accommodate different people from different backgrounds.

But to us at Greenlining, it doesn't really matter if we don't see the needle starting to move on key issues. and I was reflecting on the video that you showed earlier and it seems like they were all white males, right? When we look at who's driving the environmental force, there are some great leaders like Cathy, like Adrianna, but they're in probably in the 1%. We look at energy commissioners throughout the country. Cathy is one of only five energy commissioners throughout the country from Latino background. And so one it matters is if we can take advantage of the opportunity and what Latinos can bring to the environmental movement, it's going to matter very little if we follow the Wall Street approach, which is no matter what, it's still going to be a bunch of white guys in the room, making the decisions and making the money at the end of the day.

Greg Dalton: Thank you. Adrianna Quintero, let's ask you. Natural Resources Defense Council did a poll that shows some interesting results about what Latino voters and residents think about the environment. What was surprising or interesting in that poll?

Adrianna Quintero: Well, I think tying it into what everyone has been talking about, the importance of the growing Latino community, was really reflected in this poll. When 9 out of every 10 Latinos surveyed said that they support taking action to fight climate change, those are enormous numbers. Even when compared to other populations, they are enormous numbers and it shows that we've underestimated this community for years. We've underestimated the power, we've underestimated the commitment to protecting the environment and we're doing that to our own disservice truly.

What we need to do is recognize that there's a tremendous amount of awareness and power in this community because even -- this crossed party lines, it crossed gender lines, it even crossed income lines, so it wasn't just poor impacted communities that were aware. It was people across the board, Latinos across the board, even on the other side of the aisle, so to speak, where you still have a tremendous amount of climate denial. So to me, both of these together show a tremendous amount of opportunity for us to really motivate and mobilize the Latino community.

Greg Dalton: And a high degree of Republicans also, Republican Latinos, said they favor a strong or somewhat favor action on climate change which really struck me because I wonder where those Republicans are that's not the typical Republican voices we're seeing. So are they hiding?

Adrianna Quintero: Well, I think that it was 68% of all Republican Latinos surveyed said that they were very, very concerned. In fact, when you broke it down to extremely concerned, and very concerned it was still 45%. So when you threw in the somewhat concerned, we got up to 68%. That's a huge number. We see those numbers among Democrats oftentimes in the Anglo community.

So what that said to us was -- because we also had some focus grouping done where we've made it a point to include Republican Latinos, and what we found was that the perspectives were not that influenced by what you hear, the rhetoric that you hear from the mouthpieces of the Republican Party and the climate deniers. It was really something that hit home. Climate change was not as much a political issue as what we normally make it out to be. It was about protecting family members. It was about thinking about the ties that bind us to people in other parts of the world, whether we arrived two years ago, 10 years ago, or were here before the borders were drawn.

There was a tremendous sense of community and cohesiveness that really made a lot of those impacts that were happening in other parts of the world very relevant to what was happening here.

Greg Dalton: Catherine Sandoval, is that because they're closer to the sources of pollution, they're closer to it?

Catherine Sandoval: I think there are several things that play. So one to the point about the Republican Latinos and the demographics, I think it's also important to realize that places that we think of as Republican strongholds, like Orange County, Orange County has been majority minority since 2006. Orange County is majority Latino and Asian, and many of them are Democrats, which is why you have Loretta Sanchez who long ago, in 1996, beat Bob Dornan, B-1 Bob. So Lou Correa was the first Latino senator elected many, many years ago from Orange County. So I think we have a tremendous diversity, so the demographic diversity definitely drives that.

And as you said, Latinos do tend to live closer to the pollution sources. National surveys show, of children nationally, Latino children have higher rates of asthma than all other children. And in California, Latino children are the children with the highest rates of asthma and the number one predictor of asthma is how close you live to freeways.

So Orson and I grew up in the same neighborhood in East L.A., which is defined now by the East L.A. Interchange, so you're ringed by the 5 and the 60 and then you got the 110 and the 710, and Los Angeles is really economically a tale of two cities, right? You have Hollywood and the idea factory or the entertainment factory of Hollywood, Disneyland. But then you have goods movement which is really defined by the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, the second and third largest ports in America, huge amounts of truck traffic which runs on diesel. There have now been rules that require when the ships come in to port that they have to stop running on diesel and hook up to the grid to get to cleaner energy which has been tremendously helpful to the communities, but the trucks are sitting there idling. And the same thing happens in Oakland, where you have 880 and the Port of Oakland, and so the highest rates of asthma are in Oakland.

And so this is why, I think, we have a tremendous stake in looking at things like the greening of our transportation fleet which is a program that California Public Utilities Commission is working on. It's something Governor Brown is very committed to. And in Los Angeles, for example, the number one cause of absenteeism in the L.A Unified School District is asthma. So there is a direct link between our practices in the ports for goods movement, for transportation, to education and workforce preparedness, and economic readiness, and climate change. So I think that we're seeing Latinos polling so highly for climate change because there is a visceral experience with the local experience, the local drivers of the things that drive something locally which is why the polls are showing they're very concerned about this both in its local impacts and its global implications.

Greg Dalton: And a lot of this pollution is not new, a lot of these things have been known for a long time, but is there any traction or movement now and have Latinos been able to translate their numbers to the power of the ballot box or other mechanisms to make it happen? You could say the same things in the '80s and '90s, the ports have been polluting for a very long time. Orson Aguilar?

Orson Aguilar: Well, there's two things happening. I think Latinos are like any other Americans, they care about the same things. They have the same priorities for their families. They want a good job that doesn't kill you. They want good education for their kids. They want a safe community, same priorities that other Americans have cared about.

But when it comes to the environment, I think there are issues that we have seen firsthand the most. I think about my memories and there's two things that stand out growing up in Boyle Heights. One

is smog day. These were days where we couldn't go outside to play because it was too smoggy, but it didn't matter because when you took a deep breath then we all would dare each other to take a deep breath on those days, you would end up coughing because it will actually hurt in your chest.

And then another memory that I always think of is always in the afternoon it just smelled terrible in the neighborhood, and there was an incinerator that would always turn on about 5:00, 6:00 because they thought that would be healthier for the community. And so when you think of these things and when you get questions and we see a lot of polls, right? The Sierra Club has done a poll with NCLR, NRDC poll. Polls are polls, and if you focus too much on the polls, I think, you'll lose the bigger picture.

But clearly, one, we care about it because we suffer from it, but we also want to see solutions that make us healthier but also make our economies healthier, and I think we're starting to see that.

Senator Kevin de León, for example, who is now the Senate Pro Tem, is a clear champ of this stuff. So driving resources to make our communities cleaner but also make sure that the jobs are there. When Cathy looks at issues at the California Public Utilities Commission, she not only asks, "What is this doing with carbon?" But she asks, "Are minority businesses getting a fair share of the contracts? Who is getting hired for this?"

So I think we need more Cathys throughout the country to make sure that all these questions are being asked, not just the carbon question but who is going to get the jobs. Because one thing we realized, it's not a give or take. There's a win-win here, and if we truly drive the win-win, we can see better economic indicators follow better environmental indicators.

Greg Dalton: Let's pick up on jobs because green-collar jobs were supposed to be a great promise to communities. They were blue-collar jobs that could not be exported to China, by definition, were local installation jobs putting on solar retrofitting homes. Has that promise been realized or has that been elusive? Cathy Sandoval?

Catherine Sandoval: Well, one thing I wanted to jump in with this, so related to the jobs, one of the very interesting things about the NRDC poll is that the thing that polled highest for Latinos was energy efficiency. Support for energy efficiency polled 94% support. It was the highest thing, and one of the things that they shared is that, I think, if you phrase the question differently, it would poll even higher.

Adrianna Quintero: Even higher.

Catherine Sandoval: Because the question was, "Do you support building energy-efficient homes?" Which, to me, connotes a new home, whereas the whole effort for making homes and apartments more energy efficient, I think, would resonate even higher because I think there is a tremendous interest because a lot of Latinos live in apartments where you know it's drafty, it's not efficient. There's tremendous support for it.

We do see jobs coming through energy efficiency installation, but I think that we have a lot more opportunity. So one person who's here in the audience is Margarita Colmenares who's the CEO of Think Verde so along with the green theme, think green. So one of the things she's working on is LED lighting that can help to improve energy efficiency in homes. And so this is an example of what we call megawatts. I mean if you look at things like lighting, a third of all the energy consumption in a home or a business comes from lighting.

So that's really low-hanging fruit that if we could do that, a lot of lighting generates heat which generates a need for air conditioning, makes your refrigerator cycle more, and so these are

examples that if you could attack some of that, it could be a cost-effective way to be able to help people reduce their bills, to be able to reduce demand, not just for lighting but for air conditioning and for refrigeration, and therefore, that we have to build less polluting power plants so it can create a virtuous cycle. So I think that there are a lot of opportunities like that and it's going to be important to look at those types of issues as opposed to there are, for example, other types of programs that have looked at, "Okay, let's look at the whole house and that there's one program that allows basically a certain amount of co-pay from the state if you do this list of measures." However, the problem is that it focuses on homeowners, not renters, and the starting co-pay for that program is \$10,000. So that program was actually designed before the recession of 2008 and at a time when there were people who had home equity lines of credit.

So we know, having done that analysis of that program, has been very successful but most of the participants are dual-income, no children families along the coast and I don't think we've delved deeply into the demographics, but I'm willing to lay money that few are Latino or African-American or Hmong or many of our other diverse communities, and it's also directed at homeowners. So part of what we're trying to look at is how can we really reach the diversity of people and especially people who live in hot climates or in the hotter neighborhoods that have a high demand so that we can look at the entire picture?

Greg Dalton: Well, this gets back to sort of the environmental elitism point and, Adrianna, you touched on that earlier that environmental groups have somehow overlooked Latino groups. So let's get to that implied elitism which Cathy is talking about that environmental policy, as she just described, and some of the organizations, such as NRDC and others, have been geared toward people who are driving their Range Rovers to their second house in Tahoe.

Adrianna Quintero: Yes. I do think that for a long time -- and some of it comes from the genesis of the environmental movement. It really started as a very white, middle class, highly educated group of individuals out there fighting for the planet, and unfortunately, there hadn't been a reboot soon enough, I think. And so what we see is that there's been a fracturing there and it's a missed opportunity again. And so, at this point, what we have to do is make-up for some of that lost time, and really start to change the conversation. And so that's one of the things that I've really been working at in NRDC and NRDC has been strongly behind is how can we change the conversation so that we are actually talking in a voice that's much more inclusive, in a way that people can understand and relate it to their lives, not simply, "Are you driving your Prius to Whole Foods and buying your \$12 light bulb?" That's out of reach for many people, even for young people frankly.

So we see the risk of continuing to speak in those terms and we see the opportunity and the need to truly mobilize communities and allow them to step in and speak their story. Tell us your story. Tell us why it's important to you, whether it's because you grew up in a very polluted neighborhood or because you really believe that our country can do it. Whatever part of the spectrum we fall on, it's important for us to make sure that those voices are heard by our decisions makers, whether it's at the PC level or at the presidency of the United States. We want the majority of voices to be diverse because otherwise it's too easy to simply write it off as a white elitist movement. We're never going to succeed that way. And right now, I really believe that the environmental movement, the mainstream environmental movement has that squarely in their sights and we're ready to make a change.

Greg Dalton: Who are some of the leaders? Who are some of the leading voices? Cathy Sandoval said brown is the new face of green. Who are some of the emerging leaders? Other than yourselves here, who are some people that you think we'll be hearing more about in the next 5 or 10 years? Adrianna?

Adrianna Quintero: Well, I think that some of the people that have already come up here like Loretta Sanchez, Kevin de León. And frankly, if you go through the list of Latino leaders, what's surprising, it's almost hard to narrow it down to these are going to be the Latino leaders. But if you look at our leadership, whether it's in Congress or in Sacramento, most of our Latino leaders right now have a keen awareness that this is an important issue for the community, whether you're talking about Raúl Grijalva who's a Congressman from Arizona and has been committed to conservation and environmental issues his entire life, even when he was at the state level, or you're talking about somebody who is at the city level.

What we see is that you truly have a movement of people who have the ability to make change, taking that and running with it. And that's something that we, as part of a group called Voces Verdes, and the goal in that is to re-amplify all of those voices and make sure that people are out there seeing that there is leadership on this issue, that Latinos care about it, whether they're business leaders, whether they're political leaders, community leaders, youth leaders because it's really important to have that diversity out there. So as a Latina growing up in the middle of California or in Florida or in Illinois, I have a role model who I can aspire to work with, to work towards. We need those role models and we need them now.

Greg Dalton: Adrianna Quintero is a Senior Attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council. Our other guests today at Climate One are Orson Aguilar, Executive Director of The Greenlining Institute; and Cathy Sandoval a commissioner with the California Public Utilities Commission. I'm Greg Dalton. Orson Aguilar, let's talk about some of the efforts in the state legislature to direct funds from the cap and trade program. California's move toward moving away from fossil fuels is creating a big flow of money. There's some fight over that money, who gets what. Some of it you want directed toward communities of color. Tell us about how that might play out?

Orson Aguilar: Well, I think anything at the core of what we do is around the three Es, right? We need energy, right? Our families need to keep the lights on. They need to be able to stay warm on weekends such as this where it's going to get cold. We care about the economy, but we also care about equity. And so it's always hard when you focus on all those three because we're not used to doing that. We live in a very silo society and I think the great thing about the work that NRDC and Greenlining are doing together and others is that we're breaking apart those silos and saying, "It's not just about the environment, it's about all these things and it's about people's need."

And so we're seeing that play out in Sacramento. Senator de León and even today's Latino caucus leader, Senator Ricardo Lara, these are two very strong advocates, one, to make sure that we clean up communities but to really make sure that we don't do mistakes of the past. Mistakes of the past are we pass a huge environmental bond. We go out and buy pristine wilderness areas that most Latinos will never get to visit because, unfortunately, we don't have the type of money to visit these places such as Yosemite. There's a lot of data showing that.

So that's important. It doesn't mean we stop doing that, but we also have to make sure that funds that are derived from the cap and trade system truly clean up the communities. So how do these funds truly eliminate asthma? I was one of these kids that grew up on an inhaler. Are we really going to drive down asthma rates once we put this money down? Are we truly going to bring better bus service to low-income families and bus service that is powered by electricity? Are we going to be able to let Latinos drive Teslas or electric vehicles still being only driven by the elite folks who can? These are big questions that we're tackling, but we're starting to see movement.

I think you asked the question earlier, have we seen the green job's promise? I don't think we've seen any data, but quite frankly, I think there's a lot of hype and exaggeration about how impactful these green jobs would be. But I think it was also visionary. It's perhaps it was a little too soon, and

hopefully with these policies that Greenlining and NRDC are pushing in Sacramento, we start to see some momentum and sustainability for some true green jobs in a lot of the sectors.

Greg Dalton: Adrianna Quintero?

Adrianna Quintero: That's really well said, Orson, and I completely agree with you. I think that one thing that I would add, going back to our polling, what we found in both the focus groups and in the poll is that a lot of Latinos really still believe. Latinos still very much believe in the American dream. We do. We believe it. We still believe that our government can make change.

And you know what? Every single one of us, Latino or not, we should all believe that, right? Too bad we've given up on our government. But for the most part, many Latinos, again, recent arrivals or have been here for many years, still believe that we can get this done and that's what really we needed behind the green jobs. We needed to have mobilized those Latino voices and those leaders who said, "We can do this." This is not something that we can give up on just because of what happened at Solyndra. We can't just write off an entire generation because of one corporate failure, otherwise, where would our country be?

So that's not the American way and that is not the American dream. And so we need more people to believe that we can get it done if we're ever going to see any kind of success because there are not going to be easy lifts, but it is doable and this is still the greatest country in the world, and that's why people still keep coming here looking for that American dream. That, to me, is where the real potential lies, whether you're talking about Latinos, Asians, African-Americans or young people who have not been engaged, these are people who want to see the change and are willing to step up. We need to just get them engaged.

Greg Dalton: We didn't give up on the space program after there were some fires or failed missions.

Adrianna Quintero: Exactly.

Greg Dalton: We kept going forward to the moon. Cathy Sandoval?

Catherine Sandoval: So one of the things I wanted to address, too, is the participation of Latinos in the environmental movement and then calls to action for the environment. So there's been some very interesting analysis about the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power has done and also Southern California Edison when they have made calls to action to say, "Please, our community, our customers, we need you to conserve electricity or conserve water."

So picture in your mind, okay, when you do the call to action in a big community like Los Angeles, six million people in the city, 10 million people in the county, who's the person who shows up to that call? I think a lot of people picture the person. It's a woman with a flowery skirt, maybe Birkenstocks, and that woman is probably white, okay? The person who shows up the most in the call to action is a Latina, okay? Latinas consistently are the ones showing up who are conserving energy and who are conserving water in bigger numbers. It was the east side that beat the west side in conservation in L.A., right? And it's Latinos and Latinas especially who have been the background.

And then when they have drilled down to that, that it's a question not only about saving money in my household bill, but as you were saying earlier, Adrianna, the consciousness of the impact, not just on the familia but on the community, and doing it for the sake of the community. And I had the opportunity to visit a group of community-based organizations in San Diego. It was in 2012 right in

the wake of the San Onofre Nuclear Power Plant going down, and so we're asking for help from the community to do demand response so that we were going to ask the community to conserve power to use less so that we wouldn't have to do blackouts.

So in San Diego, it's on the Mexican border, it's incredibly diverse. The participation of diverse communities is important. And at that community event, I met a lot of people who, in November 2011, somebody in Arizona made a mistake, managed to black out Imperial County, parts of Northern Mexico, all of San Diego, and luckily the Great Western blackout was stopped in front of the San Onofre Nuclear Power Plant. But I met people in that community meeting who had to take people to the hospital that night. They took elderly to the hospital, elderly people who were on breathing machines who needed the electricity. And so they really, really got the community impact of blackout.

And so this was one of the things that we did in response to the outage of San Onofre was really ask the diverse communities of California to participate. We worked with the utilities to ask them to reach out in the diversity of languages to look at different things, education, disability, age, ethnicity, language, a variety of things that affect them and to work with the community organizations to really get the word out. So I think that there is actually this interesting schism between perception of who is an environmentalist and the reality.

And in fact, even the word "environmentalist," I've seen some interesting things that say, "Latinos identify more with the word conservation than with environmentalism." I was talking to one of my Latina amigas who was saying, "Well, conservation also goes better with the word "conserva," to conserve which, like in English, it's a verb and it's a verb that connotes not only use less but there's a consciousness about conservation. Whereas, the environmentalism, the environment is "el ambiente," and there's no word as "ambientism," that makes no sense. So it's about the conciencia of conserving.

Adrianna Quintero: That's right.

Catherine Sandoval: And then I think when we look at our heroes and leaders, look at people like Ortensia Lopez who is the executive director of El Concilio de San Mateo, so Olga Talamante who is the executive director of the Chicana/Latina Foundation who have long been advocates for the economy for the environment for empowerment for our people. And you look at people like Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta who part of the Farm Worker Movement was about the toxics and the chemicals. You know, we think of Cesar and Dolores as farm leader workers, but they were also important environmental leaders.

Greg Dalton: Adrianna Quintero, let's get you on that because environmentalist, it's a very loaded term. There's lots of baggage and lots of people might hold the values, but they would bristle at the term or the identity of being an environmentalist, and you work for a big environmental organization. Do you see that?

Adrianna Quintero: I do see it. I think that it's very charged politically and not only here in the U.S. I think that part of why Latinos identify with conservation is because even there, some of the environmental groups that they identify with are the more --

Greg Dalton: Self-righteous?

Adrianna Quintero: Well, I would say the more visible and the ones who have been willing to walk to the very front - to get to the line, and you know what, you've got to cross the line sometimes to make change. But I think that for many people, that's very scary and that is not where they want to

be. That's not what they want to identify with. They don't want to identify with militaristic environmentalists. They want to identify with a culture of conservation. I do believe that what we're learning about the community is going to teach us a lot. It's taught me a lot and I know it's taught NRDC a lot about how we even deal with women, with our own already, our membership and how do we talk about this in a way that is much more inclusive. And I think you're right, the verb, I hadn't thought of that, but that's a really, really wonderful way to look at it. When you're looking at conservation, it automatically tells you what this is about, what you need --

Catherine Sandoval: What to do.

Adrianna Quintero: What they're asking you to do, conserve. And conserve is different than limit or deprive yourself. It's more about keeping what you have in a certain state of goodness and pleasantness. And so I think that we can actually learn a lot from that, from what we're seeing in the Latino community and step away from thinking of the environment as something that's over there. That's another thing that we've been seeing a lot and I think that, again, it applies across the board to young people as well, and more and more so now.

But when you look at the traditional environmentalist model, it's really been about the vision of the lone hiker in the woods, all by himself, there's nothing else around and this pristine forest. When you look at enjoying the environment from a Latino perspective, it's about let me get 25 of my closest friends and go out and let's have a picnic on the beach or on that same hiking trail where that guy wants to go and be alone. Let's be there and let's love the trees and appreciate nature, but let's do this in a different way.

Frankly, I don't think that even the image of the lone hiker resonates very much with most women, especially women voters. When you're looking at women voters and you're thinking, if it was me and let's put my Latina identity aside, let's pretend I don't want to go with 25 of my closest friends because I'm not feeling that social. I do want to go with my two children and I want to show them the birds, and I want to teach them, and I want us to be able to enjoy this together. So I think that that resonates with a lot of mothers, a lot of women who also think of this as, "How can I conserve my planet as a place that I can share with my children, with my family, with future generations?" So while, yes, it applies definitely to Latinos and that is how we get motivated, I think there's a lot to learn there for across the board on how we need to be talking about environment.

Greg Dalton: So does that mean the NRDC logo is going to go from that polar bear to some people who are cooking a barbecue, in a picnic or something like that?

Adrianna Quintero: I don't know that I have that much influence.

Greg Dalton: Okay. But the idea of -- the environmental movement hasn't done a very good job of making climate as a health issue. Climate is certainly about the health of the polar bears more than the health of humans. Let's talk about this framing of health and environment. Orson Aguilar, in terms of connecting those two, because it is thought about as somewhere else --

Orson Aguilar: Yes.

Greg Dalton: -- some other -- a frog in Costa Rica that I'm never going to see. Why do I care about that?

Orson Aguilar: Definitely. The framing is -- if you can get the framing right, you're going to get your audience and I think we saw it in the Prop 23 debate. It wasn't won on the polar bear, at least, with Latino voters or other voters of color. It was won on the health issue. So as soon as we started

talking about health, started showing --

Greg Dalton: Clarify what -- remind us what Prop 23 was, 2007.

Orson Aguilar: I'm sorry. Prop 23 was an initiative to undo California's landmark legislation, AB 32 was an initiative, helped fuel by the Koch brothers, and it was soundly defeated at the polls largely because Latinos overwhelmingly -- actually, all communities overwhelmingly defeated it.

They saw right through it. The reframing made a huge difference in the polling and we are working with great groups like the Ella Baker Center, APEN, Asian Pacific Environmental Network, where we try to clearly understand what was going to motivate them not only to vote against Prop 23 but get them to come to the polls. And by and far, it was the health issue.

One of the things I just wanted to go back real quickly is the conservation. I think most Latinos are conservationists, and I think the question is, is it something cultural, is it something in our DNA, or have we been forced to conserve given our economic circumstances? Because depending on how you see that, I think the future -- is something for us to look out for in terms of how you define that.

I look at my parents growing up. My mom took the bus every day for 30 years, had a transfer, she hated that. She was not doing that out of the goodness of her heart. She was doing that because she couldn't afford a car. And as soon as she was able to get a car, 30 years, she dumped that bus.

And I ride the bus in my community in East Oakland and I see the folks there would rather not be on that bus. The bus is late, it's crowded, it's dirty. They're not doing it because they're trying to help the polar bear or their kids, quite frankly. They're doing it out of necessity.

And so I think the key question as we look forward is, our communities, frankly, they yearn to be Sierra Club members, right? They want to have the house in the suburbs, two cars in the driveway, they want to have time to actually participate in civic activities, have disposable income to pay a membership fee. I think, frankly, that scares the mainstream environmentalists because, when more of our communities become Sierra Club members, they could also become bigger polluters. And I think that's a question that isn't being discussed and should be discussed because, as we see more Indians now being able to afford AC for the first time ever. Same in China. There is a lot of fear with that because they're sucking up resources to have the basic comfort that we have here. I think that is going to be something that's going to be more stark, especially if we don't address our issues of inequality. We're here talking about the environment, but inequality is this big theme that impacts everything, and if we don't start to address it right, I think this kind of environmental Latino love fest that we have now could possibly change in the next 5 to 10 years.

Greg Dalton: Cathy Sandoval, inequality is the theme in American politics right now?

Catherine Sandoval: Yes. And I think it's also related to -- again, part of what we've been talking about is sort of lack of understanding. And going back to the framing issue as well, I think, when we talk about Latinos and conservation, it's about people, not polar bears.

Okay. For I think most people, not just Latino children, polar bears are an abstraction that they see, first and foremost, on the Coca-Cola commercials, the cute little polar bears in the Christmas commercials. Or if they're lucky enough to go to the zoo, and a lot of Latinos only go to the zoo if their school happens to have a field trip to the zoo, or it's a really, really big deal for the family to be able to go to the zoo and to get the bus to the zoo, or pile little bunch of kids to go to the zoo. It's a big abstraction. Okay.

But I think what people do understand is the visceral impacts on community. After my family moved out of East L.A., we moved to Montebello and my parents thought that they had achieved the

suburban dream, which in some ways turned out to be the suburban nightmare because we realized after we moved there, and this was before some of the disclosure laws that exist now, we're asking our neighbors what is that smell, right? So we went from, I remember very well, Farmer Johns and we thought we had escaped Farmer Johns and then there is this terrible smell that turned out to be the dump on the top of the hill that's also right next to the high school I ended up going to that later, because of the efforts of many of our legislators have made it a priority, became one of the top Superfund sites in America.

And then it also turned out that that was right on top of a natural gas storage facility, that there were leaks in the area. So our communities are confronted with a lot of these issues that I think raise the consciousness and activism to see what can we do to address these problems and it often is response to toxics or response to pollution, which then gets people involved but also looking at -- when you look at polls of Latinos, it's quite often things like parks will poll as incredibly important.

Okay. And Yosemite is a very important park, but I'm talking about your local park where people can go because they don't have backyards and they can have a barbecue, they can have a birthday party, and be able to have a place where they're out in green space. Having those types of community parks where then you're able to connect enjoyment of a clean environment, of green space and all of that within the community, I think is something very important and something that can also help to address those different drivers of inequality.

Greg Dalton: Before we go to audience questions, we've been talking about issues of framing and language and identity. I want to ask you how you respond to a climate denier. If you encounter someone socially, maybe it's a relative somewhere, how do you speak to a Latino denier and try to convince them that it's happening, it's real and they ought to care about it? Catherine Sandoval, how would you -- have you had that experience, somebody says, "Ah! That's a conspiracy," or "It's not happened," or "The weather is always changing," or "I don't believe in that"?

Adrianna Quintero: I think the same way as we deal with any climate denier is listen first and see where they're getting their information and what's the issue that's really bothering them about this.

Because what I like to say is we wouldn't have stuck with the horse and buggy and thought that that's as good as it's going to get, so why should we be sticking with all technologies insofar as our energy generation in what we can do to limit the amount of pollutions going into the air? Let's forget about whether or not climate change is the issue and look at all the opportunities we have here. We may have to agree to disagree, but frankly I've got science on my side and we can talk about that at length later, but I do think that there's some, at some level, that's not a rational argument and they know that. So what I like to do is talk more about, "Okay, let's forget about that argument because that's not coming from that place. Let's talk about solutions," and say, "and tell me why you oppose us moving these solutions forward." And to me, that is really what changes the conversation.

We have opportunities to change the way that we've done things. Why stick with fossil fuels when we have all of this new potential? I mean, look at the cell phone. Would we still be carrying our big bricks? No. Nobody wants that. We want the latest iPhone. It's the same thing. We don't want to be burning coal like we've done since the Industrial Revolution. We want to be doing something better. We want to show that we're progressing. To me, that's the only conversation to have there.

Catherine Sandoval: I would also add on this panel that I'm the only person here who's actually voted to build a gas-fired power plant, right? But I've also voted against power plants. But this is part of what we do on the California Public Utilities Commission. So I just voted on Wednesday to build a gas-fired power plant that is a peaker plant down in San Diego and there were many people who opposed it, although there was documentation of the need for more energy.

And so there were many people who also said, "Can't we just go to 100% renewable?" And so that would be great, but scientifically, we're not at the point yet where we can have a system that's reliable enough. Sometimes we need a role for gas for firming and shaping. So I think that one of the things that I said when I voted for this is, "This is a peaker plant, how much it will turn on depends upon the behavior of the people and how much you conserve."

And so, looking at other things like what can we do to push energy efficiency all the way and make it affordable and make it accessible to everybody and make it effective, what can we do to push demand response, how can we get these other things I think is going to be critical. Because when I say I've actually never met a Latino climate change denier, I think that's also because traveling both up and down the state from the Mexican border and the Oregon border and nationally and internationally, I've met so many people who understand the visceral and local impacts of the things that are the drivers of climate change, right. In the same way that all politics is local, the drivers of climate change are local and people understand that because they're in our neighborhoods.

Orson Aguilar: Were you wearing the green suit when you made that vote?

Greg Dalton: Yes.

[Laughter]

Greg Dalton: We're talking about Green Latinos at Climate One. Our guests are Catherine Sandoval, Commissioner with the California Public Utilities Commission; Orson Aguilar, Executive Director of The Greenlining Institute; and Adrianna Quintero, Senior Attorney with Natural Resources Defense Council. I'm Greg Dalton.

Let's include our audience questions. Welcome to Climate One.

Jose Gonzalez: Hi. I'm Jose Gonzalez, a Green Chicano, Green Latino, et cetera, founder of Latino Outdoors. One of the things that comes to mind, obviously, the challenge of the message in climate in general, right, to the mainstream kind of American public. How do we make that concrete and actionable? How do we care about the polar bears but also just make change now?

So also realizing the diversity within the Latino community. So you're engaging a recent immigrant community, an established Hispano community, a Puerto Rican community, Dominican, Cuban, who might prefer to go by nationality, by different ethnic markers and language. So what have you found on that because I know it comes a lot to that relationship building?

Greg Dalton: Adrianna Quintero?

Adrianna Quintero: It's a really tough question to answer actually because it is -- you can't say that a population of 53 million Latinos is homogeneous. By no definition are they homogeneous or are we homogeneous.

It's a matter of, again, trying to almost use the Univision model, not to mention other media versus here, but the Univision model of trying to speak in a way that will resonate with the majority. And here in California, the majority are Latinos of Mexican descent. They may be identified as Chicano, some still as Mexicano, some as Latinos, whereas if you go even just as far as New Mexico, you're talking about Hispanics, who don't want to be called Latinos, but then another group wants to be called Latinos. So it's very challenging, but I think that you can find the common ties, and I think that's what we've been talking about here, is what are those ties that bind us culturally beyond a language? I'm not assuming that we have an identically shared heritage, but recognizing that we do have some things in common. We do probably all, no matter where we fall on the socioeconomic

ladder, remember our abuelita, our grandmother, who conserved everything. I mean, the foil paper. I remember her cleaning it off until the day she died because we got to use that again.

And that gets handed down and it's still very much -- in fact, there is some polling that was done by Gallup a few years ago of climate attitudes in Latin America and a lot of what we saw was the same things that we're talking about here, this deep cultural lean towards conservation and towards the family unit, and the family unit, not being the four people who are around your dinner table, but the 40 people around -- so oftentimes around your dinner table but also beyond your dinner table. So even -- I think that's where we find the common ground.

So while we've talked a lot about local issues, that is very important. But sometimes those don't resonate. If you're talking about a local incinerator to folks in Florida, that's not going to resonate. So you have to, yes, recognize that some in our community are suffering tremendous impacts and that does pull on our heartstrings but also recognize that maybe we need to talk also about beaches and about parks, as we mentioned, and other things because what we find is that we don't lose a lot of people when we talk about that.

There's still a lot of engagement. But we've got a long ways to go, a long ways to go. One thing I want to add though just about the health really quickly, just to give props to one of our up and coming Latino leaders and this is Congressman Raul Ruiz labeled climate change the biggest public health crisis facing us. And I think that that's something that does go back to the messaging that does resonate with us. Health is very important, the well-being of our families. So we need to just look for those common themes.

Greg Dalton: Let's have our next question at Climate One for Green Latinos. Okay.

Margarita Colmenares: Hi. My name is Margarita Colmenares, Think Verde. I've had a chance to work with some of our local schools with kindergarteners, first graders, green teens at schools. And one of the concluding projects was for them to design an environment that they would like to see, their future environment, and it was really amazing how many of the kids identified a new built environment that included solar, lots of green. Skylights. And one child even put - a sixth-grader added storage, which is an emerging technology.

So I want to use that to kind of bridge over to this other issue of emerging technologies and how sometimes, not just the Latino community, but the larger community at large, is disconnected from that. I had the chance to be a part of an attempt to do an emerging pilot project in affordable housing, but it turns out that it didn't quite fit into the model that the California Energy Commission, the way they had written the request for proposals, didn't quite match up.

So with all these new emerging technologies that are coming out, load shedding, demand response, how do you think that we can help not only educate the Latino community but the community at large how to participate in these programs and affect their own bottom lines?

Greg Dalton: Who'd like to tackle that -- Catherine Sandoval, you're on the PUC.

Catherine Sandoval: Oh, yes. Sorry. Yes, I'll take that one. So I think it's interesting because you're saying that the young people are even envisioning a variety of renewables. And so you're right that we have to do a lot of things that break down the silos. And so there's some new things that are coming up that are going to allow demand response to be what we call "the supply side resource." As you hook things up so that you can use software and telecommunications, the marriage of communications and energy is creating new power to be able to make the actions of the people quantifiable and dispatchable.

Right now, when there's a call, often they tell people, "Unplug your cell phones, unplug your coffee pots," but how many people actually do that? But like if we could do things like have the lights automatically dimmed down and when you can do it through new just sorts of things like some of the LED lighting you can dim and people wouldn't even notice. In the same way it would be very successful like our air conditioning cycling programs, they just slow the cycling and nobody even notices, it's a win-win. The customer gets something and the utility has less power.

So we need to be able to make those things a supply side resource, that can then compete against a power plant so that we don't have to build the power plant. But the key is to make them quantifiable and dispatchable so that we can realize that vision that the children can already see.

Greg Dalton: Let's have a one one-part question. Hello, welcome to Climate One.

Enrique Gallero: Hello. Enrique Gallero. There's been some discussion of kind of the conflict between improving your economic condition and then that increases your carbon footprint. So as you gain more money, you can afford a car, you can afford air conditioning. Is there a way to kind of incentivize conservation, and especially to incentivize it for people who are naturally conservationists, people who are lower income?

Orson Aguilar: I would just say since we're in the spirit of quick answers, I think that's a great frame for us to pursue solutions to this because if we can tackle it through that frame, I think we're going to get there a lot faster. So don't have the quick answer because it's a complicated one, but it's a great frame for us to work forward from.

Greg Dalton: Clearly, delinking carbon emissions and economic growth at a macro sense is what needs to happen. Those are people are going to come out of poverty in India, in China, et cetera, and they're going to grow dirty or grow clean and that has big impacts. Anyone else quickly to add, Catherine Sandoval?

Catherine Sandoval: I would quickly add to that is we've looked at things like, here in California, we're moving to eliminate the plastic bag when you go to the grocery store. In Latin America, people for centuries have been bringing their bolsa to the market. I remember in the '70s going to Mexico and people were bringing their bolsa to the market, their bag, and you can also tap into the cultural roots whether you go to Olvera Street or I was in San Diego last week, they're selling the canvas bags with a picture of the Virgin de Guadalupe, right.

We get these ideas, oh, we're new, we're hip, we're evading plastic bags, but it's something that they've been doing in Latin America for centuries.

Greg Dalton: We needed some of our grandmothers' virtues. Let's have our next question at Climate One.

Eduardo Benavides: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Eduardo Benavides. I'm an international student from Costa Rica. As Costa Ricans, we believe a lot in sustainable development more than conservation. And based on this, a question for Mr. Aguilar, I like the idea that you proposed earlier on about having Latinos driving Teslas and switching through, and hopefully that dream will come true eventually. My question is that, if we rely on electric transportation, this will also imply that we will burn potentially more fossil fuels in power plants. I see a lethargic change towards renewable energy sources. What is the Green Latinos' movement regarding making a government proposal in moving towards renewable energy sources more quickly?

Orson Aguilar: Well, I think that's -- you hit the nail on the head, is it moving fast enough? Clearly,

it's not. But I think this year, we're going to see a big push in the California legislature -- a big push for electric vehicles and it's going to win, quite frankly. Governor Brown already included it in his State of the State Address, \$250 million for some of these projects. And frankly, it's going to happen in California, and as they say, "As goes California will go the nation."

I believe that's the strategy. And so I would say it's starting to happen and trying to figure out how we plug in people like you would be great.

Adrianna Quintero: Just one quick addition. Key way to get things moving is to put a limit on carbon emissions. It sounds really policy focused and limited and it's not that sexy to talk about that as something you can do, but it's so important because the minute that we put the limit on that -- we're tackling 40% of the carbon and we are moving innovation. We've seen that rules, they might seem dry, but they do move innovation. So we need to really engage and make sure that we regulate new and existing power plants right now.

Greg Dalton: That's happening in California. We talk about a lot of that dry stuff here at Climate One. So for our next question.

Male Participant: I learned a lot today. I learned that a lot of my American friends have long since forgotten how to be Americans and you pointed out what that's about. How are you going to sell the forgetful Americans on how to reestablish themselves and build on how this country was really built, which -- you exemplify that and I applaud you.

Orson Aguilar: Thank you.

Adrianna Quintero: Oh, thank you very much for your comment, sir. And that's a tall order. But --

Orson Aguilar: Very tall.

Adrianna Quintero: -- I'm ready. We'll do it. I'll take care of it. No. I think that it's about -- again, it's all about exemplifying what we can do. Stop focusing on our failures and start focusing on how much we achieved in this country, and how much creativity and ingenuity there is, whether -- we're talking about recent immigrants who bring to the table tremendous amount of ingenuity.

We've seen what Costa Rica has done, for example, like the previous question. But there is so much to be done, but there is still so much potential in our youth, in our people across the board, of all ages. We just have to stop focusing on the rhetoric that we hear in Congress and start focusing on the energy that we see in our innovation.

It's not -- since I'm too old to be on one of these lists, every time I see one of this like 30 under 30, it kind of bugs me, but it's really inspirational to see how much we're doing. That's not the sign of a country that can't get it done, we just - you got to believe.

Greg Dalton: Let's have our last question at Climate One. Welcome.

Alex Aldeguer: Thank you. My name is Alex Aldeguer. And I was -- many of the comments that you have provided have been rooted in personal experience from the home. What's the role of the Latino as a business leader in the environmental community?

Greg Dalton: I should mention, we tried to get some of them here today and there's not so many of them. Orson Aguilar, we talked about how many there are there.

Orson Aguilar: How many Latino executives, business leaders are there, and frankly, I looked at some of the top solar companies and didn't find any Latinos on the board. There are a few, but I

think that's the next place we need to go to. There are clearly a lot of civic leaders, elected officials, and it hasn't quite yet translated to the business community. It's starting to and there are some examples, but those two examples are still very far and few between for us to say that we've made real meaningful progress.

Adrianna Quintero: And really quickly --

Greg Dalton: Adrianna Quintero?

Adrianna Quintero: Yes. Through our initiative, Voces Verdes, we have focused exclusively on trying to identify Latino leaders in sustainable business, in energy, in climate, but especially in the energy space, and what we find is -- going back to Cathy's point early on, a lot of people who are really engaged in energy audits and energy efficiency retrofits, and more and more so in the renewable energy space, we need to do much better and our hope is to, again, raise those people who are there as role models so that we create that pipeline. But we're getting there.

Greg Dalton: I want to finish by asking each of you briefly what you have done to manage, reduce your own carbon footprint and what the next thing will be. Starting with Adrianna Quintero, quickly, what have you done, what's your next carbon reduction action?

Adrianna Quintero: I did a lot of the low-hanging fruit, a lot of the energy efficiency, making sure that the windows had the fittings and that all of our light bulbs were efficient and I can't wait to learn more about the new LEDs because I much prefer those. We, unfortunately, live in a rental, can't have solar, but hopefully it can get to that type of renewable energy. And again, any chance I get, I talk to anybody and everybody about how important it is and take action to tell my leaders how I feel and how important this is for me and for my family.

Greg Dalton: Orson Aguilar?

Orson Aguilar: My wife and I are raising three kids in one house with abuelito and our abuelita in the same house, and this is a 1,300-square foot house. So if we can do that, I would challenge others to do that.

Greg Dalton: Catherine Sandoval?

Catherine Sandoval: So my house is even smaller than Orson. So --

Orson Aguilar: How many kids do you have?

Catherine Sandoval: Right. Well, I have two who are kind of in and out because they're in college. But just today I took the train here and then walked here from the train station.

Greg Dalton: We have to end it there. We've been talking about Green Latinos at Climate One. Our guests are Adrianna Quintero, Senior Attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council; Orson Aguilar, Executive Director of The Greenlining Institute; and Catherine Sandoval, Commissioner of the California Public Utilities Commission. I'm Greg Dalton. Thank you for coming to Climate One and talking to us today.

Adrianna Quintero: Thank you.

[Applause]

[END]