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Review of: Politics in Black and White: Race and Power in Los Angeles, by Raphael J. Sonenshein

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Review

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Left Coast City: Progressive Politics in San Francisco, 1975-1991. By Richard Edward DeLeon. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992. xii + 239 pp. Illustrations, charts, tables, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. \$35.00, cloth; \$14.95, paper.)

Richard DeLeon, professor of political science at San Francisco State University, provides a stimulating, significant, and largely persuasive analysis of recent San Francisco politics, especially progressivism—a phenomenon unrelated to early twentieth-century activities carrying the same label. Using factor analysis of voting on thirty-four ballot propositions between 1979 and 1990, DeLeon identifies three distinct tendencies among voters: liberalism (expressed as support for redistribution, social equality, and civil rights), environmentalism (expressed as support for greater control over development), and populism (expresses as hostility toward established power centers). Each has a unique spectrum of support and opposition in terms of socioeconomic class, ethnicity, and gender identity. Progressives, in DeLeon's analysis, are those who support all three tendencies. Thus, all progressives are liberals, but some liberals are not progressives—most notably those opposed to limits on development.

DeLeon begins by identifying a pro-growth regime ("regime" denotes a political coalition that holds and uses power) that dominated city government before 1975. The pro-growth coalition included liberals, unions, and racial minority groups (all committed to creation of jobs and affordable housing), as well as developers and business interests seeking to maintain the city's role as regional economic center and to realize its potential as a Pacific Rim economic center. DeLeon presents the narrow mayoral victory of George Moscone in 1975 as the first success of the emerging progressive coalition, but Moscone's successor, Dianne Feinstein, was a centrist, progrowth liberal. In 1986, after years of effort, progressives pushed

through Proposition M, a slow-growth, "accountable planning" initiative. It was, DeLeon argues, the progressives' greatest victory, combining environmental objectives to limit and direct growth with liberal objectives (jobs and housing) and populist goals (citizen participation in the planning process). Progressives elected Art Agnos as mayor the next year; when he behaved more like a pro-growth liberal than a slow-growth progressive, some progressives contributed to his defeat in 1991. Thus, DeLeon describes the progressives as an anti-regime—a political coalition able to block the use of power but unable itself to win and use power effectively.

DeLeon not only analyzes the emergence and development of this progressive coalition, but also points to its need to resolve key internal contradictions if it is ever to transform itself from antiregime to regime. All this he does convincingly. His focus throughout is largely on land-use issues; other important issues—such as public employee unionism, housing policies and rent control, methods for electing city supervisors (by district or at large)—appear in his narrative but are subordinate in his analysis to land-use issues. DeLeon did not interview leading figures; doing so might have provided an opportunity to explore the extent to which those figures made choices based on the political alignments that he describes and, conversely, the extent to which they acted out of different understandings and motives.

ROBERT W. CHERNY
San Francisco State University

Politics in Black and White: Race and Power in Los Angeles. By Raphael J. Sonenshein. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993. xxii + 301 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, bibliography, index. \$29.95.)

The automobile-inspired sprawl of Los Angeles has fascinated historians and other social scientists. Few scholars outside Southern California, however, have realized that patterns of race relations in Los Angeles are of national significance. This book, along with Mike Davis's *City of Quartz* (1990), should cause historians to reexamine some of their assumptions about racial politics in U.S. cities.

Politics in Black and White is a valuable and important study of race and politics in Los Angeles during the last three decades. It argues that several groups of citizens were largely excluded from city politics because Los Angeles was a western city without a strong political machine. In the early 1960s, substantial numbers of liberal Jews and African Americans—groups that had little voice within the municipal administration—began to cooperate in an attempt to gain political power and to address the growing problems of poverty, discrimination, and police brutality. After years of painstaking organizing, this cooperation resulted in a political coalition that came to power when voters elected Tom Bradley mayor in 1973. Once in power, this coalition dramatically changed city policies. Mayor Bradley's affirmative action program led to the hiring of minorities for professional and supervisory positions. Bradley also appointed to city commissions and boards significant numbers of African Americans, Jews, Latinos, and Asian Americans. These actions helped to solidify Bradley's electoral coalition and allowed him to win reelection four times.

Some historians might be tempted to dismiss this book as the work of a political scientist, but Sonenshein's history of the coalition's early years and Bradley's 1969 and 1973 mayoral campaigns is gripping. Sonenshein's experience as an insider within the coalition and his reliance on interviews with key strategists help to make these accounts compelling. Sonenshein's comparison between Los Angeles and New York is also thought provoking. New York's machine politicians responded to some of the con-

cerns of that city's African Americans and liberal Jews and thereby delayed the formation of a biracial or multiracial coalition.

Sonenshein's book does have some weaknesses. Its discussion of the Bradley administration's final years, and especially the aftermath of the 1992 uprising, relies too heavily on polls and not on the kinds of interviews that make the earlier portions of the book fascinating. Although Sonenshein is clearly aware of the presence of Asian Americans and Latinos in Los Angeles, the book could look more closely at their participation in the reform coalition. Connections could be drawn between Bradley's coalition and the coalition of Mexican Americans, African Americans and Anglos that won Edward Roybal a seat on the Los Angeles City Council in 1949. Despite these few flaws, Sonenshein's book is an important contribution not only to the often-neglected study of Los Angeles but also to the scholarly understanding of racial politics in the United States.

KEVIN ALLEN LEONARD
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Comrades and Chicken Ranchers: The Story of a California Jewish Community. By Kenneth L. Kann. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993. x + 303 pp. \$16.95, paper.)

Now a suburb of San Francisco, the California town of Petaluma was once the center of a unique community of Jewish chicken ranchers, distinguished by its devotion to agriculture, leftist ideologies, and Yiddish culture. Kenneth Kann traces the transformation of this ethnic community, from its origins in the 1920s through the 1970s, by allowing the actors in this drama to speak for themselves. The oral testimony that Kann gathered during more than a decade of interviews with three generations of Petaluman Jews is presented in a "choruslike fashion,"