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Karen Umemoto, director of the Asian American Studies Center and professor of urban planning and Asian American studies.

At age 50, the centers and the IAC are shifting into a new stage in which they tap their valuable expertise not only to educate and build awareness, but also to improve the overall well-being of a city, state and nation struggling with their diversity and their identity.

Even with a new power balance in Washington, racial divisiveness will continue to be a major problem in America. "It's up to our centers to show how our resources and research fit into the larger picture," says Noriega, director of the Chicano center. "It's time to change the script."