

UCLA experts: Where is Los Angeles headed?

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As elections approach to determine who will lead Los Angeles, the nation's second largest city faces both new and longstanding complex challenges — housing, crime, police reform and now a scandal over racist comments by powerful local leaders.

UCLA experts are available to provide insight into issues that top voters' concerns.

Divisions run deep. Can new leadership unite the city?



[David Myers](#)


Myers is a professor of Jewish history and director of the newly founded [UCLA Initiative to Study Hate](#).  He also serves as the director of the Luskin Center for History and Policy at UCLA.

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“The release of the tape of the conversation among the three L.A. City Council members reveals the persistence and extraordinary toxicity of hateful racist stereotypes in some of our most trusted — and seemingly progressive — politicians. They must take the only acceptable step and resign. And we, as a city, must use this as a moment to confront the hate that lurks within us and expel it. Only then can we become a true community of equals.”



[Shannon Speed](#)

Speed is an anthropologist and director of the UCLA American Indian Studies Center. The center's [Mapping Indigenous L.A.](#)  website uses story-mapping to share the experiences of the Indigenous communities of Los Angeles, which has the largest population of Indigenous people in the U.S. Speed can comment on the Indigenous diaspora, the intersection of Indigenous and immigrant communities and the erasure of Indigenous people through insufficient and biased data collection efforts, including the U.S. Census.

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“It is unfortunate that Indigenous Oaxacans who contribute so much to the city of Los Angeles have to experience racism in multiple ways every day, but it is inexcusable that they have to experience it from our elected officials. The egregious remarks made by former L.A. City Council member and president Nury Martinez about Indigenous Oaxacans reflect more than her individual racism. They reflect the ongoing nature of settler power, with its attendant Indigenous erasure and harm, as it manifests in our city.”



Veronica Terriquez

Terriquez is director of UCLA's Chicano Studies Research Center. She has a long history of working with and supporting youth groups and grassroots organizations to encourage voting and civic engagement, particularly in underrepresented communities.

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"There are so few Latina leaders in Los Angeles and in our country; we can't let Nury Martinez's vile words close the doors for other leaders coming up or let this moment in time erode decades of coalition building among young Latinas, Asian Americans, Indigenous women and Black women. What we heard from Nury Martinez's voice in the recording does not represent the voices of the next generation of Latina leaders who are committed to multiracial equity and inclusion."



Jim Newton

Newton is a lecturer at the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs and editor-in-chief of the policy magazine Blueprint. He is an author and veteran journalist and has taught journalism ethics at UCLA. He can discuss environmental policy, the Supreme Court, political divisions and

media coverage of the campaigns.

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"Locally, Angelenos confront the questions of the moment for the nation's second-largest city: crime and homelessness, as well as a broader referendum on the city's leadership. All of that poses challenges to journalists as they weigh local concerns and national trends and try to make sense of the patchwork of races."

Housing and homelessness: Is a solution within reach?



Randall Kuhn

Kuhn is a professor at UCLA's Fielding School of Public Health who studies the social determinants of health. At the end of October, he and colleagues will publish a new study on the unhoused in Los Angeles.

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"While 90% of unhoused people in our survey would accept a housing offer, only 2% would accept group shelter. Most have serious doubts about any option that separates them from their partners, pets and possessions or deprives them of basic privacy, security or dignity ... We are presently in an 'all hands on deck' situation. Almost any idea that produces housing units is a good idea."



Ananya Roy

Roy is a professor of urban planning, social welfare and geography who directs the UCLA Luskin Institute on Inequality and Democracy. She can comment on housing insecurity and matters of racialized policing in Los Angeles.

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“The recent political turmoil in Los Angeles is a stark reminder of the racist, and especially anti-Black, policies that key city council members, including those disgraced by this scandal, have perpetrated, especially against unhoused and housing-insecure communities. It is time for a fundamental change in our political system, and a lot is at stake with this election and upcoming special elections.”

Does a rise in crime negate reform and resources?



Jorja Leap

Leap is a professor in the UCLA Department of Social Welfare and can comment on alternatives to police action as part of public safety.

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“When candidates talk about public safety, it needs to go far beyond a discussion of law enforcement. Both mayoral candidates, Karen Bass and Rick Caruso, need to address the issue of community violence intervention — and what that means in terms of child abuse, domestic violence and street gangs, which are part of both public safety and the dilemmas of the unhoused in Los Angeles.”