

# How Immigrant Communities Determine the Next NYC Mayoral Winner

A report on the past and present role of immigrants in determining who wins the mayoral election.

By: Linda Nwoke | Workers' World Today ([workersworldtoday.com](http://workersworldtoday.com))

Since 1965, most immigrants entering the U.S. live in the cities of six states: Florida, Texas, Illinois, California, New Jersey, and New York. These sanctuary states and cities often play a significant role in determining the political image they possess. They contribute to the shaping of group relations and creating new political lines in modern politics.

In New York, over 3.0 million foreign-born people make up the population. The state has the largest third-generation foreign-based population of European descent, with a large African American and Puerto Rican population. The second generation consists of children of immigrants who arrived in the early 1900s, and Latinos form the largest immigrant group in the City. Hernandez and Rivera-Batiz, 1997, reports that Dominicans comprise the largest foreign-born Latinos in New York City, followed by Puerto Ricans and a rapidly growing Mexican community.

## Limitations to political participation

Immigrants play an active role in various aspects of building society, including setting the political image. However, there are several reasons why immigrants are unable to participate in politics actively. Citizenship and language barrier are two major formal eligibilities identified to be a significant hurdle for immigrants in political participation. Portes and Rumbaut (1996) cited other issues as reasons for migration, level of ties with their home country, prevailing political environment, and experiences as determining the speed of assimilation into the society through citizenship.

Electoral institutions and legal requirements such as imposing limiting legal requirements and processes affect political participation., including others like eliminating non-citizen voting rights, lack of mobilization, political party behaviors. So, you can vote if you naturalize and get registered citizens.

## Voting patterns and racial/ethnic groups in New York City

Research findings by Brackman and Erie (1994) show differences in voting patterns across ethnic groups. For instance, while Latino immigrants naturalize late, they have higher voter registration and turnout rates than Asian Americans who naturalize sooner. Another group of researchers found evidence supporting the fact that local political

context shapes immigrant participation, as evidenced in the voting behavior of immigrant New Yorkers. According to John Mollenkopf, professor at the City University of New York, over 20% of eligible NYC voters are non-citizens, and more than 5 million falls within the age of voting in New York City, about a million, are non-citizens. Findings show that these non-citizens are almost all Chinese and Dominican immigrants', NYC Mayoral Election, Arithmetic-The Journey,

The position of Mayor of New York City dates back to 1665, with over 100 mayors. Since then, there has been only 1 Black mayor, no Latino or Hispanic mayor, besides John Purroy Mitchel (1914–1917), and no female.

It is worth mentioning that the elected Mayor by New Yorkers at any given period is a reflection of the political climate in New York and a tell-tale sign of the racial successions emanating from the competitive and covert negotiations that take place at different levels within the City and beyond given the prestigious and influential nature of the position. According to Chris McNickle (1993), "...when New Yorkers elect a Mayor, they reduce the diversity of countless neighborhoods and millions of people to a single human point. In his book 'To be Mayor of New York: Ethnic Politics in the City,' he explains that there hasn't been any racial group that has been big enough to control the position. Instead, the election of a mayor depends on the coalition. The strongest in the City's history has been the coalition between the Irish, who wanted status, and Jews who wished for protection from discrimination, among other things, between 1886 through 1961.

From 1960, the Jewish group became dominant and decided to work with other minority groups in the City, thereby forming a multiracial coalition that created and sustained a palpable racial tension in the City's polity. By 1989, the first black Mayor, David Dinkins, elected from a combination of black voters, Hispanics, Puerto Ricans, and a small number of Jews. His victory coalition formed on winning the allegiance of 98% black voters, 40% of Jewish voters, and 70% Latino voters, but not sustained for a second term. Thus, race drove Dinkins to victory in 1989, flipped, and contributed to his defeat in 1993.

By 1994, he lost by a narrow margin to Rudy Giuliani, who led for two terms as New York City's Mayor, 1994-2001, and passed the baton to Michael Bloomberg.

The 108th Mayor, between 2002-2013, Michael Bloomberg won his first election into office by the combination of 67% votes from whites, 23% votes from Blacks, and 23% votes from Hispanics, according to New York Times exit poll results. But by the 2005 elections, he won a re-election victory by gathering the votes of almost half of New York's black voters, a quarter of votes from Latinos despite facing a Hispanic challenger, and then served a third term.

According to September, the outgoing City leader, Mayor Bill de Blasio, the 109th Italian American, won the 2014 election through the racial combination of votes among 52%

white voters, 90% black voters, and 68% Hispanic voters 19, 2013, Quinnipiac University Poll Findings.

### **Battle for NYC's Mayor 110 Position**

With less than ten weeks to select the next Chief Executive of the City, predicting how the racial groups will vote poses a herculean task. For the first time, New York City will use ranked-choice voting, which is new to many New Yorkers, especially at the level of awareness, which might have dire consequences. According to polls, the problem is more evident in communities of color: 46% of African American voters report having heard nothing about ranked-choice voting, and 32% report having heard it a little. Thirty-eight percent of Latinos have heard nothing about ranked-choice voting, and 44% have heard a little. Only 20% of white voters claim they have heard nothing about it.

The combination of new ranked-choice voting, widely diversified candidates, pressing issues on economic recovery, social justice, public safety, and reopening post-pandemic makes the 2021 mayoral race the contest of a generation as dubbed. Candidates who recognize the role of immigrants and include these issues that affect them, such as healthcare, bilingual education, accessing city services in their policies, is a wise investment.

A strategy one of the mayoral candidate Shaun Donovan recognizes by covering the importance of immigrants, in his policy paper, is pushing for non-citizen New Yorkers, under his administration, to participate in local and municipal politics through the expansion of voting rights. According to him, as indicated on his website campaign page, "Immigrant New Yorkers contribute to the wellbeing of our City, ...we must extend voting rights to non-citizen New Yorkers to include them in the civic processes at the heart of our democracy. ... under a Donovan administration, New York City will allow people with Green Cards or valid work status to participate in municipal elections for mayor, borough president, city council, and others..."