

REMEMBERING UCLA'S LATINO FOREFATHER

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REGINALDO  
FRANCISCO  
DEL  
VALLE

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PRESENTED BY



UCLA Center for the Study of Latino Health & Culture



*“He never  
hesitates for an  
instant...  
in the promptness  
with which  
he decides every  
point.”*

— *Los Angeles Times*, March 7, 1885

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# REGINALDO F. DEL VALLE

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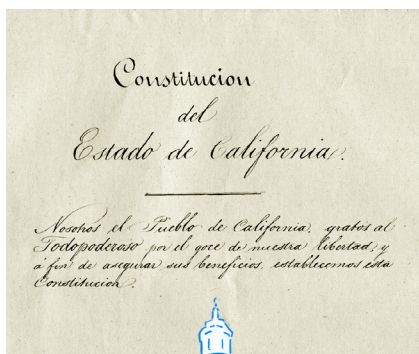
**REGINALDO F. DEL VALLE** was born in 1854 in Los Angeles at his family's adobe house, four years after California became a state of the United States. He was the eldest son of Ygnacio del Valle (1808–1880) and Ysabel Varela del Valle (1836–1905). His father came to California in 1825 from the Mexican state of Jalisco; at the time, Alta California was also a state of Mexico, so Ygnacio del Valle was simply a Mexican citizen moving from one state to another. Ysabel Varela was born in California, and therefore was also a Mexican citizen.

At the end of the Mexican-American War (1846–1848), however, Mexico ceded nearly half its territory to the United States, an area comprising the modern U.S. states of California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, and parts of Colorado and Wyoming. By the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo which ended the war, all Mexican citizens who chose to remain in those areas—and most did—automatically became U.S. citizens. This territorial expansion and the discovery of gold brought hundreds of thousands of immigrants to California from 1848 on, the majority from the Eastern and Midwestern states of the U.S. Within just a few years, the laws, culture, and society of California were radically transformed.



As a result, although his parents were not immigrants, Reginaldo del Valle lived an experience similar to that of over half the children born in California since 2001: that of a U.S.-born, English-speaking Latino with Spanish-speaking (immigrant) parents. He grew up bilingual and bicultural, at home in both Latino and Atlantic-American civil society.

# THE FIGHT FOR BILINGUAL CALIFORNIA



## ELECTED AS A CALIFORNIA STATE

**ASSEMBLYMAN** from Los Angeles in 1879, Del Valle began his freshman term in office at the start of 1880.

The original State Constitution of 1849 had been abolished and a new one written during the previous legislative term, in 1879. Among other things, the new Constitution did away with the old Constitution's requirement that "All laws, decrees, regulations and provisions, which from their nature require publication, shall be published in English and Spanish." Instead, from now on, all government business was to be conducted entirely in English.

Among the first business taken up in the 1880 session were various bills meant to put this new English-only policy into effect, for example Assembly Bill (AB) 184, "An Act to Provide for the Keeping of Accounts in the English Language." Opposed to the abolition of bilingualism in California's government, Del Valle tried to render the bill ineffective by amending it to strike out its enacting clause in AB 184. His motion, however, was voted down.

# UCLA'S FOUNDATION

**AS A STATE ASSEMBLYMAN** from 1880 to 1881, then as a State Senator from 1882 to 1886, Del Valle was largely responsible for the legislation establishing and funding the State Normal School at Los Angeles, and giving it an independent administration.

Early in 1880, a fire had destroyed the State Normal School (the publicly funded teachers' training college) in San José. While that institution would be rebuilt, California's legislature seized the opportunity to expand publicly funded higher education in the state. Barely two weeks after the fire, at the urging of former California Governor John G. Downey, Del Valle introduced a bill to establish a Branch State Normal School in Los Angeles. He and Downey agreed that securing this institution would provide a much needed educational and economic boost for their community.

Yet he was not the only legislator trying to secure such an institution for his community. Del Valle faced an uphill fight, for, at the time, most of the state's population was concentrated in northern California, and so were all of its public institutions. But as young as he was, Del Valle was a good negotiator and a master of parliamentary strategy. When his own bill seeking to secure the Branch State Normal School for Los Angeles was defeated in the Assembly, he persuaded a fellow Angeleno colleague in the State Senate to introduce

a virtually identical bill in that house. After the Senate passed that bill, Del Valle then successfully guided it to approval in the Assembly as well; and on March 14, 1881, "An Act to Establish a Branch State Normal School" in Los Angeles was signed into law. At the opening ceremonies of the Los Angeles State Normal School the following year, Del Valle proudly noted that this first state institution in southern California was not "an asylum or a State prison, but a place where persons can be trained to teach our children."



In 1919, the assets of the Los Angeles State Normal School were transferred to the Regents of the University of California, and provided the institutional platform on which was founded the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), whose Westwood campus was dedicated in 1930.

# NOT SPANISH, BUT MEXICAN

## AFTER UNSUCCESSFUL CANDIDACIES FOR A SEAT IN THE U.S. CONGRESS IN 1884

and for Lieutenant Governor of California in 1890, Del Valle remained active in Democratic Party politics but did not seek political office again. Respected for his legislative skills, he was a lecturer on parliamentary law at the Southern California College of Law in 1892, and practiced law for most of his life. Although many of his cases involved paying clients, he also represented some economically disadvantaged Latinos free of charge. His equal fluency in Spanish and English enabled him to understand and argue their cases effectively in the English-speaking legal system. The Latin Protective League recognized his *pro bono* legal work with an award in 1925.



Bilingual and bicultural, he was prominent in southern California's Atlantic-American society and a sought-after figure at social events, and at the same time belonged to many Latino organizations, such as La Junta Patriótica de Juárez, the Original Young Spanish Americans, and the Club Cura Hidalgo. He was a popular speaker at Cinco de Mayo and Mexican Independence Day celebrations, and a source for historical societies and newspaper reporters interested in the real history of Latino California.

By the early 20th century, due to tremendous migration from the East Coast and Midwest, Atlantic-Americans had come to make up the majority of California's population. These new arrivals knew little about the state's history and for various reasons

held romanticized notions about its 18th- and 19th-century past. They preferred to think of the Latino settlers of California before 1848 as "Spanish dons"—that is, people of white European descent like themselves—who used to lead carefree lives of fiestas and bullfighting.

On hearing such descriptions of "the good old Spanish days," Del Valle's blunt response often was "That's a lot of bunk!" He objected when Atlantic-Americans referred to him or his ancestors as "Spanish," and would explain that the Californios were Mexican, not Spanish. He was annoyed by the newcomers' anglicized pronunciation of "Los Angeles," and liked to demonstrate how it easy it was to say the Spanish name: "Just say Los Ang-hell-ess. Everybody ought to be able to do that."

# — WATER TO — LOS ANGELES

**THE FINAL IMPORTANT POSITION DEL VALLE HELD, FROM 1908 TO 1929,** was on Los Angeles's Public Service Commission, which was responsible for water, power, and other public services. It was the ancestor of today's Department of Water and Power (LADWP). Del Valle was President of the Commission for much of that time, overseeing the Los Angeles Aqueduct's chief engineer, William Mulholland, in the development of the water supply system that made possible the city's exponential growth during the 20th century. During the Owens Valley water wars of the 1920s, when enraged ranchers seized and blew up the aqueduct that was diverting water from their lands to Los Angeles, Del Valle used his political skills to broker a peace that allowed the aqueduct to be repaired and the project to go forward.

Although the Los Angeles Aqueduct was controversial, without it and other public infrastructure works undertaken during Del Valle's time on the Public Service Commission, Los Angeles never would have grown from a 19th-century frontier town into the metropolis it became during the 20th century. Del Valle was so influential in these developments that, just after his death, a memorial piece in the *Los Angeles Times* declared, "To him, as much as to anyone, Los Angeles owes the mighty aqueduct that was built to tap the water sources of the Sierra. His twenty-one years of service with the municipal agency responsible for our water and power development attest the esteem in which his fellow-citizens held him."





# LUCRETIA DEL VALLE

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## THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE DEL VALLE FAMILY IN

**POLITICS** and public life continued in the 20th century. Their contributions formed a legacy that joined with the contributions of other Latinos from all walks of life in shaping California.

Del Valle had married Helen M. White Caystile in 1890.

Their daughter, Lucretia del Valle (1892–1972),

after a youthful career as a stage actress,

followed her father into politics and became

a Democratic Party leader, at a time

when it was unusual for women to be

prominent in politics. She was a

California delegate to Democratic

National Conventions in 1928,

1936, 1940, and 1956, and

vice-chair of the Democratic

National Committee

in 1937. She also

accompanied her diplomat

husband, Henry F. Grady

(1882–1957), during his

service as United States

Ambassador to India

and Nepal, Greece, and

Iran in the 1940s and 1950s.

While in Iran, she was known for

promoting women's rights.

When Edward R. Roybal (1916–2005)

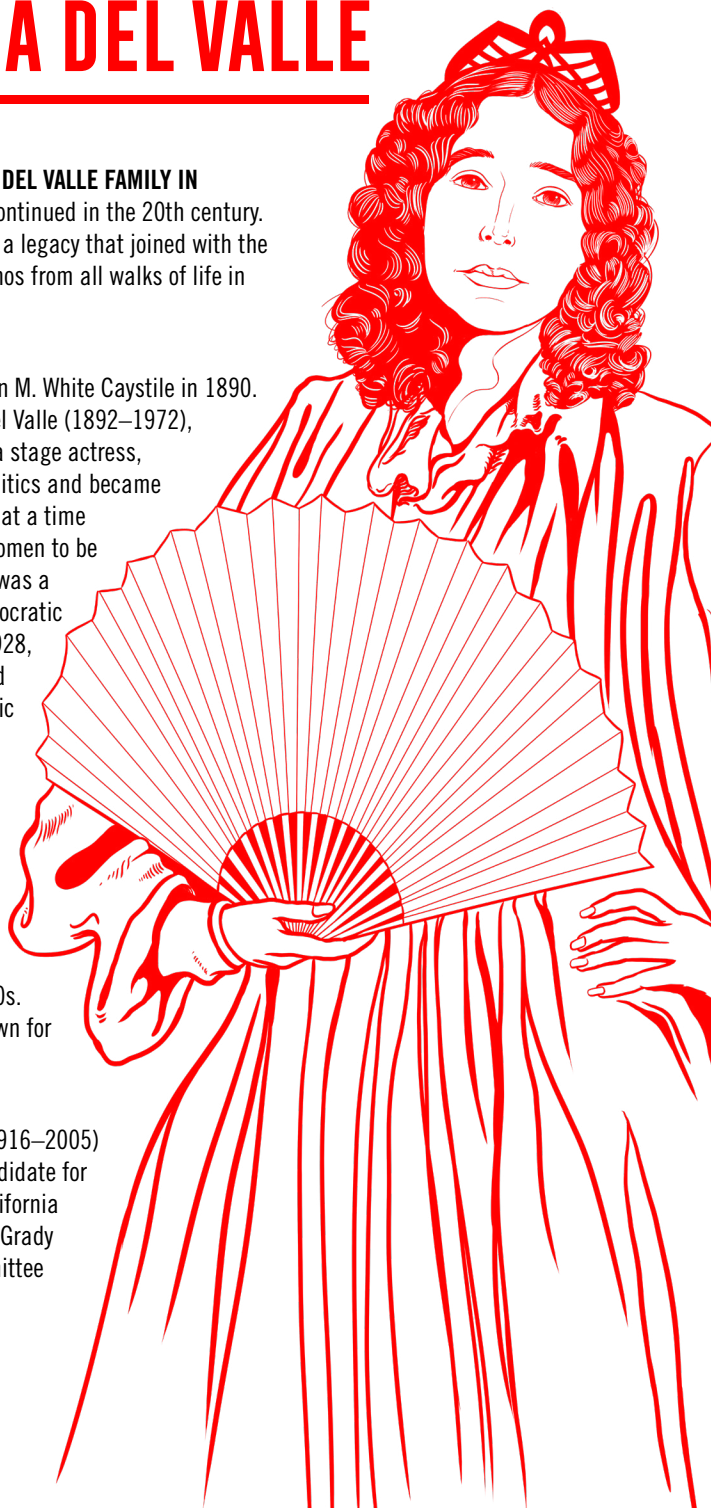
ran as the Democratic candidate for

Lieutenant Governor of California

in 1954, Lucretia del Valle Grady

headed the women's committee

working for his election.



# ¡SÍ SE PUEDE!

## **ROYBAL DID NOT WIN ELECTION TO STATE OFFICE IN 1954,**

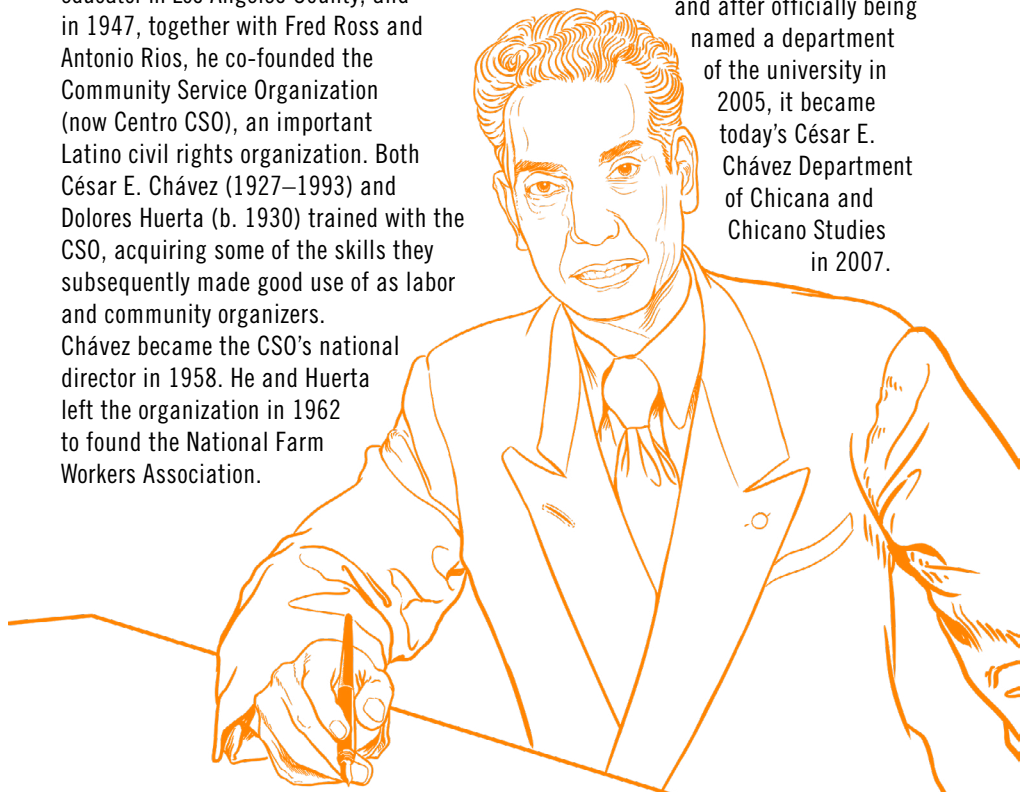
but he did serve as a Los Angeles City Councilman from 1949 until 1962, when he was elected to the U.S. Congress. He was regularly re-elected to his Congressional seat thereafter, until his retirement in 1993. While in Congress, he was a founder of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) and co-founder of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO). He was made an honorary alumnus of UCLA in 1990.

Prior to serving in elected office, Roybal had worked as a public health educator in Los Angeles County; and in 1947, together with Fred Ross and Antonio Rios, he co-founded the Community Service Organization (now Centro CSO), an important Latino civil rights organization. Both César E. Chávez (1927–1993) and Dolores Huerta (b. 1930) trained with the CSO, acquiring some of the skills they subsequently made good use of as labor and community organizers. Chávez became the CSO's national director in 1958. He and Huerta left the organization in 1962 to found the National Farm Workers Association.



In 1969, a research center for Chicano Studies was first established at UCLA.

After a student strike in 1993, it was renamed in honor of César Chávez; and after officially being named a department of the university in 2005, it became today's César E. Chávez Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies in 2007.



# ¡SOMOS UCLA!

**LATINOS HAVE BEEN INVOLVED WITH UCLA**, ever since Reginaldo del Valle guided the passage of the legislation which created the Los Angeles State Normal School in the 1880s. Through their presence, knowledge, and vision, Latinos at UCLA have contributed to the research, education, and public service that makes UCLA vital to our community and global society.

This legacy of participation in higher education and civic engagement is carried on by Latino alumni such as scientist and former Deputy Mayor of Los Angeles Grace Montañez Davis ('55), Professor Patricia Gandara ('69, Ph.D. '79), entertainment executive Moctezuma Esparza

('71, MFA '73), U.S. Poet Laureate Juan Felipe Herrera ('72), Los Angeles City Councilman Gil Cedillo ('77), former Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa ('77), Olympic athlete Lisa Fernandez ('95), U.S. Congresswoman Nanette Barragán ('00), and many others.

UCLA's Latino legacy deserves recognition. It will continue and grow, as Latino students, faculty, staff, and new generations of alumni go forward into a bright future.

**GO BRUINS!**



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**SPECIAL THANKS TO THE STAFF  
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LATINO HEALTH AND CULTURE.**



**"JUST SAY  
LOS  
ANG-  
HELL-  
ESS."**

**— REGINALDO F. DEL VALLE**