

Two weeks after leaked tape exposed racist statements

Kevin de León and Gil Cedillo refuse to step down from Los Angeles City Council

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Two weeks after audio recordings were released exposing racist comments by Los Angeles, California City Council members Gil Cedillo and Kevin de León, both politicians have rejected calls from outraged community members to resign from their positions.

Since audio of the October, 2021 backroom meeting held at the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor offices was made public, protesters have demonstrated outside City Hall and the home of de León, the former president pro tempore of the Californian State Senate and a 2016 speaker at the Democratic National Convention, demanding his and Cedillo's resignations.

Last Tuesday, police in riot gear manhandled and assaulted protesters gathered outside City Hall. In a blatantly undemocratic action, the police prevented the public from entering the Council chamber as members held a virtual meeting. The police cited the danger of COVID-19 exposure as a pretext to block entry.

With the November mid-term elections just over two weeks away, the exposure of the reactionary logic of the racial and identity politics promoted by the Democrats, compounded by the refusal of Cedillo and de León to resign, has exacerbated an already severe crisis within the Democratic Party in Los Angeles, the country's second most populous city, and California, the most populous state.

In an attempt at damage control, President Joe Biden has personally intervened and called on all the Council members involved in the leaked discussion to resign. Other leading Democrats, including the current mayor of Los Angeles, Eric Garcetti, Senator Alex Padilla and

Representative Karen Bass, who is running to replace Garcetti as mayor, have also called on de León and Cedillo to resign.

Former Council President Nury Martinez and L.A. County Federation of Labor President Ron Herrera resigned shortly after the contents of the hour-long meeting were exposed. The conversation, filled with racist remarks, revealed the crass and money-driven social character of the Democratic Los Angeles City Council and the highest levels of the trade union bureaucracy.

The discussion concerned "redistricting," the process by which the politicians representing the city's elite divide the population into racial enclaves and distribute the spoils of government power.

On the tape, Martinez insulted nearly every ethnicity in Los Angeles and even fellow Council member Mike Bonin, who is gay and has an African-American son.

At one point Martinez called Bonin a "little bitch" who was raising his son "like a white person." The City Council president offered to "beat" the two-year-old African-American child, whom she called, in Spanish, a "little monkey."

De León joined with Martinez in insulting Bonin's son. After Martinez said Bonin was using his son as a fashion "accessory," de León compared it to when "Nury brings her Goyard bag or the Louis Vuitton bag."

De León continued to attack Bonin, who is white, calling him the "fourth black member" of the council and complaining that he "won't f*cking ever say peep about Latinos." He continued, "He'll never say a f*cking word

about us.”

None of Martinez or de León’s comments drew a rebuke from others in the meeting.

Since last Tuesday’s City Council meeting, de León has embarked on a media tour, giving multiple interviews insisting that he will not resign his well-paid position, supposedly in the interests of his “constituents.”

“If I were to step down, then [my constituents] would have no voice in City Hall,” de León, who drew a government salary in excess of \$217,000 in 2021, claimed in a Friday interview with ABC7 Los Angeles.

In another interview Sunday with NBC4 Los Angeles, de León said the only way he would step down is if he were forced out in a recall election. De León’s seat, which he assumed in October 2020, will not be up for re-election until 2024. Cedillo, who is also refusing to step down, lost his primary earlier this summer and will be leaving the Council in December.

Deadline reported this month that Council members “make over \$228,000 in annual salary—or more than \$8,700 every two weeks.” It added, “De León and Cedillo are continuing to collect paychecks as long as they stay in office.”

The *Los Angeles Times* reported last week that spokespersons for the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor have demanded that the Los Angeles Police Department open an investigation into the unknown person, or persons, who leaked the audio and prosecute them.

Federation of Labor spokesperson Justin Wesson previously told the *Times* that the recordings were “illegal.” Exemplifying the thuggish character of the trade union apparatus, the Federation claimed it had been responsible for getting the Reddit user who initially posted the audio file of the meeting suspended from the social media platform.

Wesson, who has not responded to recent interview requests from the *Los Angeles Times*, is the husband of Alexis Wesson, chief of staff for former council president Martinez.

The crisis within the City Council and the Democratic

Party as a whole is finding expression in the mayoral race. Rick Caruso, Republican-turned-Democrat and billionaire real estate magnate, has used Bass’s connections to several of the people on the call and her decades in the Democratic Party to cast himself as the “outsider” willing to take on the racist “establishment.”

Caruso has been endorsed by Elon Musk and Kim Kardashian and praised for his plans to hire thousands of police to attack homeless people. According to recent polls, in the wake of the scandal, and with the benefit of a multi-million-dollar ad campaign, Caruso has managed to close the gap with Bass.

In recent interviews, Bass has been at pains to denounce her fellow Democrats. Speaking to student journalists at *Boyle Heights Beat*, Bass admitted, “I’ve known Kevin for almost 20 years, I’ve known Gil for 40 years. Nury and Ron [Herrera] are relatively new to me. So it hurts when you hear people you know... Ron and Nury were involved in my campaign.”

Bass added that she met “Gil... when we were barely out of our teens,” adding, “We have long histories together.”

Asked what she thought of the fact that de León has yet to resign, she said it “broke her heart,” and that “Kevin and I served in the State Assembly together.” Bass made no attempt to explain why or how her long-time colleagues were so saturated with racism and elitism.

That is because she herself is a part of the same social layer, consumed with racial politics as a means of advancing selfish self-interest and dividing the working class.



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