

DSA candidate Raman advances to Los Angeles mayoral runoff as Democrats seek new “progressive” face

Marc Wells
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The results of the June 2 Los Angeles mayoral primary will send two Democratic candidates to a November runoff. Incumbent Mayor Karen Bass finished first with 34.3 percent of the vote. City Councilmember Nithya Raman, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America and former Bass supporter, finished second with 28.5 percent, following a late-ballot shift. Right-wing reality television personality Spencer Pratt finished third with 25.8 percent.

Despite the framing offered by both the Democratic Party establishment and much of the mainstream media, which has presented the runoff as a contest between a tested “progressive” incumbent and a grassroots democratic socialist challenger, neither Karen Bass nor Nithya Raman represents the interests of working people in Los Angeles.

Bass’s record in office exposes the fraud of her “progressive” credentials. Her homelessness state of emergency and “Inside Safe” initiative funneled public money through hotels, security firms and contractors while leaving the housing crisis intact. She cut the fire department budget before the deadly Palisades wildfire, then fired the fire chief who had criticized the cuts.

Facing a billion-dollar deficit, she proposed eliminating 1,647 city jobs, cutting homelessness spending and increasing funding for the LAPD. She responded to Trump’s deployment of the National Guard by denouncing “chaos” while directing the LAPD to assist federal immigration agents, and in April intervened to block a massive school workers strike, helping produce a sellout agreement for teachers and support staff.

More significant, however, is the role of Nithya

Raman, which is part of a broader pattern of electoral gains by DSA members or DSA-backed candidates in several major US cities, most prominently New York, where Zohran Mamdani won the mayoralty last November. Similar candidates have advanced in Chicago, in the Minneapolis-St. Paul region, in Seattle, in Boston, and now in Los Angeles, where Raman’s 28.5 percent secured her the runoff slot against Bass.

The actual function of these figures in power, however, is to betray their promises and channel popular opposition behind the reactionary Democratic Party.

Raman presents herself as the “progressive” alternative to Bass. Her record on the Los Angeles City Council tells a different story. First elected in 2020 with DSA backing, amid the mass protests that followed the police murder of George Floyd, Raman ran on pledges to defund the LAPD, house the homeless and challenge the corporate-real estate interests that dominate Los Angeles politics. Her election was celebrated by the DSA as a breakthrough.

In office, however, Raman has adapted herself to the same political framework she claims to oppose. She has voted repeatedly to increase the LAPD budget, abandoning the “defund” language on which she campaigned, while the police continue to kill roughly 30 people a year.

On Gaza, Raman publicly repudiated the DSA’s own national statement after October 7, calling it “unacceptably devoid of empathy,” and later accepted the endorsement of Democrats for Israel-Los Angeles, a pro-Zionist formation aligned with the Democratic Party. DSA-LA formally censured her in 2024 over the endorsement, while maintaining its support for her City

Council reelection.

Her record on housing—the central issue in her campaign—reveals the same accommodation. Raman has embraced the YIMBY (“Yes In My Backyard”) framework of expanded density and zoning deregulation, presented as a solution to the housing crisis. Under capitalism, however, this does not mean housing as a social right. It means opening new fields for corporate developers, accelerating gentrification and displacement, and deepening the treatment of housing as a financial asset.

Raman also introduced legislation carving out developer exemptions from Measure ULA — the voter-approved “Mansion Tax” she had backed—and supported the fiscal emergency declaration that authorized mass layoffs of city workers.

Far from challenging the real estate interests that have made Los Angeles one of the most unequal and unaffordable cities in the country, Raman’s program integrates her more closely into their agenda.

Raman’s relationship to Bass underscores the fraud of the runoff as a “progressive” contest. She had been a Bass ally throughout the mayor’s first term, defending her policy framework and declining to publicly criticize her even after the Palisades Fire disaster. She broke with Bass only after the wildfire disaster and the mayor’s collaboration with Trump made the incumbent politically vulnerable, filing for the race in February 2026 just hours before the deadline.

The DSA-LA itself declined to officially endorse any candidate in the mayoral primary race, including either Raman or Rae Huang, another member of the DSA who received approximately 3 percent of the vote.

In its voter guide, however, the DSA-LA stated that it “recommended” a vote for Raman without officially “endorsing” her.

The three other DSA-affiliated LA City Council members—Eunisses Hernandez, Hugo Soto-Martinez and Ysabel Jurado—endorsed Bass. This is an expression of both the close integration of the DSA into the apparatus of the state in LA and the absence of any principled differences between Bass and Raman, who would have acted just as her colleagues on the City Council did if she had not decided to run herself.

Whatever the outcome of the run-off, the election in Los Angeles reveals the ever more central role the DSA plays for the political establishment and ruling class. In

New York, Mamdani began his administration by partnering with Donald Trump, retained the NYPD commissioner appointed by his predecessor, and is now preparing more than \$1 billion in budget cuts. He also helped sabotage the New York City nurses’ strike.

In Chicago, DSA-backed Mayor Brandon Johnson, who had campaigned on police accountability, deployed police SWAT teams against peaceful anti-genocide protesters. DSA-endorsed candidate Janeese Lewis George is competing for the mayoralty of Washington D.C. this month.

The DSA runs its candidates on the Democratic ballot line, supports the party’s pro-imperialist foreign policy and upon taking office governs in the interest of the same financial and real estate interests it campaigned against. It channels opposition not into a movement against capitalism, but back into one of capitalism’s two governing parties.



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