

## OUR PACIFIC DESTINY

By Eric Garcetti

Looking ahead, one thing seems increasingly certain: this is going to be a Pacific century. Most of the world's population growth and much of its economic dynamism is found along the shorelines of the Pacific Ocean.

This is good news for Los Angeles.

Our city's links with Asia are deep and old-as old as the city itself. Our region's first residents were Asian immigrants, most likely from Siberia. In 1781, a Spanish subject of Filipino heritage, Antonio Miranda Rodriguez, joined 43 other pobladores to trek to the area that became El Pueblo de Nuestra Senora, la Reina de los Angeles.

Throughout the spectacular growth of Los Angeles over the ensuing 221 years, we have been a Pacific city. Latin American and Asian nations provided important labor pools for an expanding California economy and generations of entrepreneurs from the Pacific Rim helped propel Los Angeles into its status of one of the world's great cities.

In the 21st Century, we have become the largest city on the eastern edge of the Pacific Rim. We are the "second city" outside their country of origin to Koreans, Cambodians, Mexicans, Vietnamese, Salvadoreans, Guatemalans, Thai, Filipinos, and Japanese. It is no wonder that Los Angeles, long home to a Chinatown and a Little Tokyo, has also seen a Koreatown, a Little Saigon, a Thai Town, and a Historic Filipinotown emerge more recently. A majority of the city's residents presently can trace their family ancestry back to another Pacific Rim country.

Other factors also position us well to reap the benefits of a Pacific century. First, our population is still growing at an ambitious rate. There is no other city in the so-called "developed world" that is growing at the rate of Los Angeles. While the populations of New York, Paris, London, Rome, even Tokyo have leveled off, we are growing at the rate of mega-cities like Cairo, Lagos, Calcutta, Nairobi, and Sao Paulo. This growth that certainly presents challenges, but that also adds tremendous economic dynamism to the region.

Second, we are blessed with a well-developed and extremely popular infrastructure, including the largest port, the largest point-of-egress airport in the country, and the recently-completed Alameda Corridor.

Third, we have a very diversified economy, with particular strengths in the area of international trade (where links between our diverse population and foreign countries continues to attract cross-Pacific trade) and in tourism, where visitors come to see our most famous export of all, Hollywood.

But despite these strengths, we can not count on, nor rely on, our size to strategically position ourselves as the eastern capital of the Pacific Rim.

Last year's trip to Mexico and the recent trip to Asia by the mayor, city councilmembers, city officials and civic leaders underscored the importance of creating, fostering, and growing our direct relationships with the countries of the Pacific Rim.

It is one thing to promote Los Angeles from afar, it is another thing to bring Japanese tour operators face-to-face with the Terminator, Arnold Schwarzenegar and Dodger ace Kazuichi Ishii over an intimate dinner.

From inking deals to improve the air quality of our city with some of the largest shipping companies in the world or spending time with Nobel Peace Prize winner and President of South Korea, Kim Dae-Jung, about how impressed he was by the progress Korean-Americans and African-Americans have made in mutual understanding since the civil unrest of 1992, we were able to think locally by acting globally.

In virtually every city that we visited, we were treated more like a city-state than a mere municipality, reflecting both our global stature and the fact that Southern California is the 11th largest economy in the world.

But leadership requires a two-way relationship. Beyond the 24 meetings, the 10 signed agreements, and the trade and tourism contacts we cultivated, we also brought back lessons for Los Angeles from Asia. These lessons include:

- Investing in physical infrastructure. The brand-new, world-class airports in places like Hong Kong and Seoul or the extensive subway and light-rail networks being built in Shanghai and Beijing should remind us of the need to invest more in a public transportation system for residents and visitors.
- Promoting sustainable development. Whether it is Tokyo's comprehensive recycling program, Beijing's ambitious plan to clean up its foul air, or new hybrid engines being developed in Shanghai to reduce port pollution, Asia is not only beginning to get it, but a small but growing generation of entrepreneurs is ready to help lead the green revolution. We have much to share on both sides of the Pacific.
- Fostering visitors. Through the development of tourist attractions, public spaces, and world-class events like the Olympics and the World Cup, Asia actively promotes itself as a destination. In Los Angeles, we must vigilantly attract

visitors, be they tourists, relatives, or business leaders: their presence is good for our immediate economy, but even better for our long-term economic development.

Mayor Hahn remarked upon our return from Asia that sometimes you need only step away from your home to realize what is great and special about it. Los Angeles has all the elements for continued prosperity: good weather, an intelligent and hard-working workforce, and the best brand in the world, Hollywood. But public policy must supplement these natural advantages by challenging us not to rest on our laurels and expect success to come as a simple byproduct.

In the next half decade, public policy leaders in Los Angeles must learn the lessons of the most rapidly-advancing Pacific nations and pursue public policy that strives for greatness, both in our physical and our human infrastructure. Most notably, we must:

- Leverage our creative capital. Los Angeles must position itself as the creative capital of the 21st century, a place where the most innovative ideas and idea-makers meet. By building livable communities enriched by arts, universities, and entertainment, we can continue to foster domestic creativity and better attract an international creative class from Asia and Latin America.
- Be strategic in our economic development strategies. While we focus on building more livable communities, we must not let livability come at the expense of economic growth. We need to focus on the growth industries of the future, like energy technology, biotechnology, and international trade with strategic government incentives and a "can-do" philosophy for navigating local bureaucracies.
- Invest in an educational system. We are finally beginning to build the schools necessary to educate the next generation of Angelenos. Our workforce development policies must connect with this expanding educational infrastructure to better connect young Angelenos with the entrepreneurial skills and opportunities that will continue to fuel economic growth in Los Angeles.

The November 5, 2002 election both reaffirmed our city's unity and its divisions, soberly reminding us of how important it is to focus locally, neighborhood-by-neighborhood, block-by-block on what we need to do to improve our city. But in focusing on the details, we must not lose sight of wider vision that brought our own ancestors to this city. No doubt, civic leaders need to keep their heads down and focus on the basics of city government in the months ahead, but also let us not forget to lift up our heads from time to time and look across the broad expanse of the Pacific Ocean that welcomes the setting Angeleno sun each evening. For our future, just as our past, is tied to the people and cultures who share those shores.