



### **Sonja Diaz**

Founding Executive Director, UCLA Latino Policy & Politics Initiative (UCLA LPPI)

Twitter: [@SonjaFrancine](https://twitter.com/SonjaFrancine)

Organizational URL: <https://latino.ucla.edu>

### **Expertise**

- Civil rights law and policy
- Domestic policy, with an emphasis on urban issues (housing, schools, health access, jobs, policing)
- Voting rights and electoral participation
- Latino politics and Latino public opinion

### **Previous roles:**

- Regional Director, Democratic Party of Virginia, Clinton/Kaine 2016 Presidential Campaign
- Deputy Attorney General, Office of Attorney General Kamala D. Harris, California Department of Justice
- Voting Rights Attorney and Public Interest Law Fellow, UC Berkeley School of Law
- Legal Researcher, National Employment Law Project
- Voting Section Law Clerk, Civil Rights Division, U.S. Department of Justice
- Law Clerk, Mexican American Legal Defense & Educational Fund
- Justice and Regulatory Affairs Law Clerk, Domestic Policy Council, The White House
- Researcher, Center X, UCLA Graduate School of Education & Information Studies
- Special Projects Associate, Hispanas Organized for Political Equality (HOPE)

### **Biography**

Sonja Diaz is a practicing civil rights attorney and policy advisor. As Founding Director of UCLA Latino Policy & Politics Initiative (LPPI), Diaz co-founded the first multi-issue policy think tank focused on Latinos in the University of California. Diaz is responsible for overseeing all aspects of LPPI, including strategy, research, mobilization, and leadership. Prior to LPPI, Diaz served as policy counsel to U.S. Sen. Kamala D. Harris during her first and second terms as California's attorney general, managing legal and policy issues of statewide and national importance, including civil rights, consumer protection, criminal justice, immigration, and privacy and technology policy. During her tenure, Diaz served as co-counsel on an industrywide

investigation of for-profit online charter schools that garnered a \$168.5 million settlement from K12, Inc., was lead counsel on a voting rights investigative package, and directed all aspects of the attorney general's 21st Century Policing, Immigrant Rights, and Cyberexploitation working groups.

In 2016, Diaz directed a robust voter protection program to support Democratic candidates in Virginia as part of the Clinton-Kaine presidential campaign's battleground state apparatus, including a commonwealth-wide election monitoring program for language minorities. Diaz has also managed domestic policy portfolios at three California nonprofits, clerked in the White House's Domestic Policy Council under President Barack Obama, and supported litigation efforts at MALDEF, the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, and California's Bureau of Children's Justice.

Diaz routinely briefs state legislators and local elected officials from across the U.S. on evidence-based governance and emerging trends in domestic policy. Her research and commentary has been mentioned in major news outlets, including The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Los Angeles Times, NBC, NPR, Politico, and Univision. She is a contributing political analyst to KTLA 5, a benchmark of Los Angeles news television.

Diaz received her J.D. from UC Berkeley's School of Law, holds a M.P.P. from UCLA's Luskin School of Public Affairs, and a B.A. in politics from UC Santa Cruz. She is a University of Michigan Public Policy & International Affairs fellow, valedictorian of People for the American Way's Frontline Leaders Academy, and LatCrit's unanimous student scholar awardee for her paper on Latino voting rights.

#### **Recent Media Contributions:**

- **Op-eds**

- The Arizona Republic | [The 2020 election is a key test for Latinos. But so is the census and redistricting](#)
- The Sacramento Bee: [Communities of color face unique challenges during this pandemic. California must mitigate harm](#)
- NBC Think | [Coronavirus checks aren't coming for many in America's Latino and Asian communities](#)
- Cal Matters | [Pool of finalists for California redistricting commission lacks adequate representation for Latinos](#)

- **Profiles**

- Governing | [Immigrant Rights, Social Justice and Post-Pandemic Planning](#)
- UCLA Magazine | [Policy for the People](#)