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**Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Race: A Choice of Substance Over
Symbolism (& Trick-eration)
Between the Lines
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For the first time in 16 years (and only the second time in 40 years) the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisor Seat in the second district has a vacancy. The L.A. County Board of Supervisors is one of the three most powerful seats in America, serving as *both* executive and legislative with no "check and balance" oversight. Each supervisor has two million residents, which is the near equivalent to three Congressional Districts, and is responsible for the carrying out the state of California's health, public safety and social welfare. With most political seats requiring majorities of 218, 51, 41, 21 at the federal and state and still require executive approval, the Board of Supervisors only have to count to three, and it's done. Thus, legendary activist publisher, Charlotta Bass, of the now defunct *California Eagle* first dubbed them over 50 years ago "the five Kings." The power and authority of the Los Angeles County of Supervisors is legendary. In a day when politics are mostly pandering symbolism, and most politicians engage in constant acts of largely symbolic gestures, in a community that needs so much after being ignored for so long, this office needs a person of substance.

In the race to replace Supervisor Yvonne Braithwaite Burke, who is retiring after a distinguished career in public service across several federal, state and local offices that represented a number of many "firsts," the residents, businesses and community stakeholders will have two separate and distinct choices (of the major candidates in a field of ten). State Senator Mark Ridley-Thomas and Councilman Bernard Parks have spent the last six months presenting their "credentials." I'm convinced in the last

couple weeks (and next few months if it goes to a run-off), the race for this office is going to come down to one thing, trick-eration. The sophistication of the voters in the second district will be tested in this race. In fact, the trick-eration has already started as the attempts to make the voters think the problem in the district is about one hospital or one shopping mall. Barack Obama has every candidate (and their Mama) talking about they're the change candidate. Change can be a funny thing. In the black community, the more things change, the more they tend to remain the same. In fact, some of the same things we saw forty years ago, some folk are trying to run past us again (that's another race - and story altogether). In the County Supervisor, however, change will be more than generational. It will be as clear as night and day as the choices being presented reflect "night" and "day." Only one candidate will try to tell you that it's night when it's day.

One candidate is a demonstrated activist and social reformer, a political idealist with proven progressive bridge-building credentials. The other has been a status quo bureaucrat, serving through the most abusive time of the most abusive police department in modern American annals, who ran for office out of revenge for losing his job. One is a proven public servant, having brought millions of new economic development and a model for constituent involvement that is now the prototype for neighborhood empowerment over his seventeen years of public service. The other has been more of the same over the past five years. One made a career creating change in every community capacity he has served. The other made a career, looking the other way, serving in a police department that has refused to change. These differences will evidence themselves as part of the "record." As long as the voters don't allow the tricks to get in the way.

The trick-eration will come in the machinations of the campaign. We've seen it take place in the national presidential campaign. It is no different in local campaigns of political significance. The very thing machinations that are being called out against Barack, are being waged against of candidates of consequence, namely Ridley-Thomas. The only thing we can advise second district voters is not to be tricked. Change is more than spending tens of thousands of dollars on the tallest Christmas tree or handing out dozens of proclamations weekly. The substance of politics is in the legislative results and the tangible outcomes in the community. And change is more than trying to blame others for conditions you, yourself, could not change. By now, you certainly know who I'm for (Ridley-Thomas), but you also know what I'm against (trying to manipulate voter sentiment through false and disingenuous claims). Tricking voters changes nothing.

The trick here, is to find out who the "trick" is and why they feel you need to be tricked. The choice of such a powerful seat requires an informed voter - a sophisticated voter who knows the right questions to ask. Not one that can be easily tricked. Just know, the trick-eration is in effect, and we have to ask those behind it, who is the "trick" on? Those who say they want substance, or those who claim change as more of the same. The trick is in the games people play to get their way. "Their way" is a symbol for why we can't change. The change drum can't be beat by someone who has never played drums.

Vote June 3rd and tell the tricksters that trick-eration is dead in our community.

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