in American history) to win in the Electoral College despite losing the popular vote (the number of electors in a state equals its number of representatives in Congress plus its two senators, which favors less populated states by making their voters' votes count more). As Klarman underscores, the malapportionment of the Senate defies the modern principle of one person, one vote, with states of widely varying populations each having two senators so states with small populations exert much more than their share of influence in presidential elections.

These days, 230 years after the convention, the Constitution is still usually spoken about with reverence and interpreted as a document expressing legal and political philosophy. But Klarman argues persuasively that Americans must defend their political, economic, and social interests on the merits, not by invoking the Constitution as a sacred text. History warrants this realism, as he shows: the framers designed America's basic law to serve their sometimes undemocratic interests, rather than always making paramount the democratic ideals on which they founded the country. They did not intend that their intentions would bind future Americans.

Of equal importance, Klarman shows the framers' genuine capacity for compromise and how, through the centuries, the Constitution they shaped has been amended and interpreted to rid the document of its prejudices and provide a platform on which America has built progress. In the book's index, there are a score of entries for "democracy," but none for "republic." Yet the skepticism about providing unbridled power to the majority, which has led to, among other things, the protection of minorities, reflects the wisdom of the Republic that the framers both empowered and prudently constrained, with checks and balances.

Klarman ends with a thought from Thomas Jefferson, that each generation has "a right to choose for itself the form of government it believes most promotive of its own happiness." That understates what *The Framers' Coup* teaches. The Constitution was not inevitable. The progress that Jefferson envisioned has never been inevitable either.

Each generation has a duty to apply or amend the Constitution, so the Republic fulfills the commitments of the document's Preamble, above all to securing "the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity." Failure to fulfill those commitments would end or sorely test the great American experiment in self-government. The Constitution kindled its promise, but leaves in the hands of the People the full responsibility for its fate. ▽

Contributing editor Lincoln Caplan '72, J.D. '76, wrote "Death Throes," about capital punishment, in the November-December 2016 issue.

ALUMNI

Reports from the "New America"

A Latino-American journalist's sundry roles

by NELL PORTER BROWN

The pioneering media site LatinoRebels.com, founded in 2011 by Julio Ricardo Varela '90, criticized a Coors Brewing Company advertising campaign for linking Puerto Ricans to drunkenness; the ads were pulled. It published video of Puerto Rican independence supporters burning an American flag to protest an island visit by President Barack Obama—an act that LatinoRebels.com found "disgraceful." And Varela himself opposed a gossipy, homophobic puppet called La Comay, a modern fixture on Puerto Rican television, and promoted a social media campaign that helped push the doll off the air.

Then comprised of Varela and 20 bloggers (mostly his friends), the hub was modeled after *The Daily Show,* an outlet for raw opinions and frustrations. "I wrote what I wanted and followed my own stories," Varela explains. It quickly became a hot spot for other young, bicultural, bilingual Latinos, and, he adds, "a means of entering the 'national conversation' about what it truly means to be Latino *and* American in this country."

Still fiery six years later, Varela has waded closer to the mainstream media as senior digital media editor at Futuro Media. Founded by Emmy-winning veteran journalist Maria Hinojosa in 2010, the Harlem-based nonprofit organization produces *Latino USA,* which airs weekly on National Public Radio, as well as the PBS documentary series America by the Numbers; both explore diversity, often reporting on populations and stories missed or ignored by commercial national-news outlets. Varela, whose first career was in elementary-level and bilingual educational publishing, sees himself continuing to teach people as a journalist. But Futuro's "bigger mission," he says, is to amplify "intelligent voices outside of the Latino space and look more at the 'new America.' It's like Latino 2.0—now we are a more multicultural society, and how do we fit in?"

At Futuro, Varela is responsible for all digital and social-media content. His earthy laugh, quick opinions, and comedic timing (he has dabbled in improv) make him a natural on air, where he also appears as a commentator or host. In shepherding and co-hosting the organization's newest venture, the weekly political podcast *In the Thick,* he's "unapologetic" about featuring only journalists of color. "We couldn't wait anymore," he explains during an interview prior to an episode titled "That Mexican Thing" (after then-Indiana governor Mike Pence defended Donald Trump's rhetoric about Mexican "rapists" during the vice presidential debate in October). Launching into a critique of minority-news coverage and minority representation in newsrooms, he asserts that mainstream media "do not understand that the majority of Latinos are *English*-dominant, are *second-* and *third*-generation immigrants—I'm not even going to say 'immigrants'—are *Americans,* right? And

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[the media] don't want to know their track record has been pretty atrocious. The fact that you don't have a major cable news host who is Latino, and I'm talking about MSNBC and CNN—I would never expect Fox to do that—especially during this past election, is shameful."

He acknowledges that his role is fluid: media critic, advocate, agitator, and pundit. Since starting LatinoRebels.com, "I've been called everything—from a right-wing supporter of the death squads in El Salvador, to a sellout, to a leftist, radical Communist," he reports. "People often think I'm an angry person. I'm not. And as I get older in life, I don't really care how people label me, right? 'Cause I know who I am."

Julio Ricardo Varela

Varela was born in Puerto Rico in 1969, to an Italian-American mother from a political family in the Bronx and a Puerto Rican father. (The couple met on the island, where she was vacationing after graduating from nursing school.) At the time, his maternal grandfather, Mario Biaggi, a highly decorated New York City police officer and a lawyer, was running for U.S. Congress. "His notion of Puerto Ricans came from patrolling Hell's Kitchen in the '50s and '60s," says Varela: "It was like from *West Side Story*—Puerto Ricans were gangbangers, criminals. So the fact that my mother would marry a Puerto Rican and actually have a child with him—Ahhhhoohargh!!!" He utters an anguished, furious sound, raising his arms to the sky. "So when I was born she stayed in Puerto Rico, welcomed by my father's family with open arms." (Biaggi won the election, and held his seat as a hugely popular and influential Democratic representative until resigning amid scandals in 1988; Varela, then at Harvard, recalls walking by Out of Town News and seeing his grandfather's face on the front of the *New York Post*.)

He lived in Puerto Rico until age seven, although the family traveled to the Bronx periodically and helped in Biaggi's campaigns. During his grandfather's unsuccessful mayoral run in 1973, a photograph of him sitting on Biaggi's lap appeared in the Spanish-language newspaper *El Diario* (Varela has posted it on his Facebook page) and his father canvassed the city's predominantly Puerto Rican neighborhoods. "All of a sudden, being Puerto Rican wasn't a problem," says Varela."I was part of the political narrative."

His bilingual/bicultural heritage was not unusual at Fordham Preparatory School (which he thanks for a Jesuit education that taught him to "question everything!"). Only after arriving at Harvard did Varela begin to feel "different...not part of the community." His Latino identity solidified, influenced through classes taught by John Womack Jr. (then Bliss professor of Latin American history and economics, whose *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* Valera "devoured") and Madero professor for the study of Mexico Jorge Domínguez (also a graduate of Fordham Prep, who taught a "comprehensive" version of the Cuban revolution).

Varela concentrated in history and literature, focusing on Latin America (graduating cum laude), while working as a sports editor on *The Harvard Crimson* and promoting awareness of Puerto Rican culture on campus through La O. It was clear to him and other students of color at the time, he says, "that there was an inherent misperception that 'you're not good enough to be here.' So anytime we spoke out, we were seen as the radical ones." These views were updated during a May 2015 return to campus for a bilingual, Latino-centric graduation ceremony the day before Commencement: "I realized that my old uncomfortable home really was changing...was becoming welcoming and loving," he wrote in a subsequent LatinoRebels.com post, even though "our voices had been on mute (both imposed and self-imposed) for endless years" at Harvard.

A year out of college, Varela put his writing and Spanish fluency to work at Houghton Mifflin, developing and presenting bilingual materials in urban school districts across the country; he rose through the ranks and worked for similar companies until the 2008 recession.

By then he had married Sheila Egan Varela, now a school-committee member in Milton, south of Boston, and settled there. He moved around professionally: building up a Latino-American "content hub" called Publish; working as an independent education consultant for Univision; and then spending about a year as a contributor to NBC Latino, a branch of NBC News.com, and another 10 months as the digital producer of Al Jazeera America's *The Stream*, before he was among those the struggling network laid off in 2014. Having already founded LatinoRebels.com, Varela renewed his efforts there, and ultimately joined Futuro—in time to start covering the presidential race in 2015.

Varela jumped on Donald Trump's June candidacy speech, protesting its degradation of Mexicans and the candidate's tying

Photograph by Robert Adam Mayer

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inadequate immigration controls to terrorism; as the campaign wore on, he giddily predicted historic turnout among Latino voters—but according to limited data based on exit polls conducted soon after election day, that didn't really happen: about 48 percent of eligible Latino voters (there are an estimated 27.3 million) came out, only slightly more than in 2012, and Trump appears to have done better than expected among them. Varela is not alone in questioning the validity of exit polls, and he plans to evaluate the final voting data—which should reveal a more comprehensive picture of Latinos' political views—"to see why this happened and how we can progress." Still, the turnout and votes for Trump are "an 'inconvenient truth.' It's sad," he says. "I think the Republican Party has now learned 'We don't need the Latino vote; we just need to get enough white voters and enough Latinos in certain districts.'"

What's probably more critical for politicians and journalists to take into account moving forward, he explains, is that "Latinos" are not a monolithic demographic, as they are often portrayed—they come from more than 20 countries, have wide-ranging religious and political beliefs, and are assimilated to differing degrees.

He touts the potential power of younger Latinos to spur significant political and cultural changes. About one-third of the Latino population (17.9 million people) is under age 18, and another quarter are millennials—and that group, according to the Pew Research Center, based on 2014 figures, is the largest share of millennials in the American adult population. Many of those younger people, Varela maintains, are disaffected independents—they tend to be left-leaning, but that did not translate into votes for the Democratic party. "This is a defining time for Latinos in U.S. politics, but we don't know what we want," he asserts, and "we are still being represented by white males. There has to be a Latino-American agenda about how to achieve political power—now, more than ever....Latinos can't be satisfied with the current state of political representation. And if my role is to keep saying 'That's not good enough,' and if that's going to upset people, then I'm good with that."

Ideally, he favors an "ambi-cultural" society, in which communities of color coalesce, or at least share in a more explicit solidarity. That's already under way, he says, especially in the country's urban areas, and was evident even when his own parents met and married. "Will we go through a messy, ugly process to get to this utopian vision? Yes," he continues. "Do I think it will be violent and tragic? There's a part of me that thinks that will happen, although I don't want it to. I try to have faith in people—but it's a tough call."

As for representation in the newsroom, Varela acknowledges that whatever strides were made to diversify staff were undermined by the recession and the financial decimation of the industry—largely as a result of the rise of online media. (The same Internet, he admits, also popularized LatinoRebels.com.) During the last three decades, the number of Latino journalists in print media has risen by only 1 percent, and by only 3 percent in broadcast newsrooms, according to "Good News, Bad News: Stormy Seas for Latino Journalists," in the winter 2016 issue of *Latino* magazine. More bluntly, the article reports that according to the American Society of News Editors, there has been an overall "net loss of 721 Latino journalists since 2002." (Print newsrooms have shed tens of thousands of employees since then.)

Varela readily tangles with questions about the need for specifically "Latino journalists," and assertions that such ethnic or racial affinities bring inherent biases to news coverage. "There's no such thing as a journalist who is not biased," he answers. "If people have a problem with that [statement], they can disagree with me." Even raising that question "is part of the problem: people don't hear voices like mine in the mainstream media, so I come across as antagonistic." White journalists have been covering white politicians and white social issues since America was founded, he points out, and their inherent "bias" is not disputed. In fact, he adds, one of "my biggest problems with political journalism right now is that a Donald Trump is put on the same plane as a Hillary Clinton because you're supposed to be 'balanced and unbiased.'"

Journalists of color are often put in difficult binds; they are called to report on topics perceived as relevant to their identified groups—"boxed into" talking about "Latino" issues, Varela says, in order to "get my voice out there"—when, in fact, he's "sick of talking about immigration and Donald Trump." Yet as an advocate, he feels compelled to do it, and at the same time cor-

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The Buddies in the Boat
In this year's Head of the Charles, one alumni crew celebrated 50 years since their first regatta outing.
harvardmag.com/boatbuddies-16

A Women's Weekend

Harvard's first University-wide Women's Weekend drew more than 400 alumnae and friends to campus in November to network, get reacquainted with people and places, and educate themselves during often pointed and personal panel discussions and workshops that touched on sexuality, race, work-life balance, public service, and women's health and rights across the globe.

Addressing attendees at an evening reception in Harvard Business School's Spangler Center, President Drew Faust celebrated the "once unimaginable" gathering of women at Harvard—or at any number of universities that had barred their entry: "When I was in college I was not allowed to wear pants to class. I would not have been able to apply to Princeton or Yale, or get a credit card without a male co-signer." (Read more on her remarks and other weekend events at **harvardmag.com/womens-weekend-16.**)

The three-day program, organized by the Harvard Alumni Association, was developed in partnership with similarly focused Shared Interest Groups. Not on the weekend agenda, but prompted by events, was sharp discussion of sexist behavior by some of Harvard's men's sports teams; see page 23.

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rect misinformation, falsehoods, and stereotypes. "I come from a family of fighters—on both sides," he says, and is heir to historically very different immigrant experiences.

Varela's paternal grandfather, Juan Varela, completed only elementary school yet became a successful fabric-shop owner; Mario Biaggi was the son of Italian immigrants, a charwoman and a marble cutter. While Varela was at Harvard, Biaggi was among those swept up in the series of New York City corruption trials that dismantled the Bronx political establishment and aided the rise of then-U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York Rudolph Giuliani (another son of Italian immigrants); Biaggi was

"…if my role is to keep saying 'That's not good enough,' and if that's going to upset people, then I'm good with that."

convicted and served prison time for taking an illegal gratuity, and for his role in the Wedtech racketeering scandal.

Varela sees the prosecutions as politically motivated, and is proud of "being the grandson of a great man." The congressman was a working-class hero and stood up for human rights in Northern Ireland when others stayed mum, Varela explains; he realized the full impact of that only after meeting his "Boston Irish" wife. "Everyone in that Boston community appreciated and knew my grandfather," he recounts. "Tip O'Neill would call him 'Marty.' They were old-fashioned, constituent politicians. The last of a breed."

Varela's own teenage children are now busy finding their own voices. "They're in the Milton schools' French-immersion program," he says, laughing, but have assured him they will learn some Spanish at some point. "Are they influenced by the work I do? Do they know why I take the positions I do? Yes," he says. "There's no lack of opinion in our household, that's for sure," he adds. "But they are new Americans—tri-cultural. And then whoever they marry will make them 'sext-cultural,' or whatever it will be called."

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