

BIOGRAPHY
SONJA FRANCINE MARIE DIAZ, FOUNDING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
UCLA LATINO POLICY & POLITICS INITIATIVE

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. LPPI addresses the most critical domestic policy challenges facing Latinos and other communities of color through research, advocacy, mobilization, and leadership development to expand genuine opportunity for all Americans. The UCLA Voting Rights Project is the flagship project of LPPI aimed at creating an accessible and equitable system of voting through impact litigation, research, and clinical education. Diaz is responsible for overseeing all aspects of LPPI, which has cultivated the largest concentration of Latino policy experts of any research university in the nation to advance evidence-based governance.

Prior to LPPI, Diaz served as policy counsel to Vice President 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.

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's Justice & Regulatory Affairs office under President Barack Obama, and supported litigation efforts at MALDEF, the Voting Section of 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 Los Angeles Times, NBC, NPR, Politico, CBS, and The Washington Post. She has published commentary on civil rights, law of democracy, and equitable policymaking in the Sacramento Bee, Salon, Univision, Morning Consult, NBC Think, and the Arizona Republic.

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.