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Celebrating 65 Years In The Tampa Bay Area

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**County Charter Review Board
And Single Member Districting**

More than 20 years ago, Black Tampa voters grew tired of being left out of their city's political representation. So, they did something that Black Americans throughout the nation were doing. Black Tampan united, petitioned City Hall and with a resounding combination of statesmanship and voting audacity, wrested from a tight-fisted white Tampa tradition the right to create single member districts, thereby guaranteeing the presence of Black faces in previously all-white Tampa politics. But that was Tampa during the late 1970's. This is Hillsborough County. The date has shifted to the 21st century. And the complexion has transferred from Black to Hispanic.

Here recently, members of the Hillsborough County Charter Review Board was given the rare challenge of acting on a local Latin-Hispanic request to expand the 7-member County Commission to a 9-member commission, expressly for the intent to further guarantee the election of Latino County Commissioners.

In a close vote, Charter Review members decided to retain the County's 7-member commission status. The rationale was simplistic. In terms of ethnic equality, Hillsborough County has indeed, overcome. Has it really? Have County Latin Hispanics who are 30 percent of the county's population, really been politically overlooked? Only time will tell.

Submitted by
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8-16-10