



## 2022 LA County Sheriff Candidate Questionnaire

### Background:

Briefly describe your educational and professional background.

#### Eli Vera

I graduated from Union Institute and University with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Criminal Justice Management. My career with the Sheriff's Department began in 1988. I've been promoted up every rank through division chief. I am a former SWAT commander and tactical expert.

I have accumulated more than 100 different accolades that recognize my work ranging from supporting at-risk youth to organizing drives for community members in need to promoting de-escalation techniques. I was an original member of the Commander Management Task Force, which identified and implemented many changes that occurred because of the largest scandal in the department's history. The task force implemented numerous changes that were later recommended by the blue panel Citizens Commission on Jail Violence.

#### Cecil Rhambo

I am currently Chief of Police of Los Angeles World Airports, the largest airport police agency in the U.S. For decades, I served as a deputy for the Los Angeles Sheriff's department, eventually rising to the rank of Assistant Sheriff. I specialized in community partnerships, emergency management, municipal patrol, and union relations.

Additionally, I served as City Manager of the City of Compton from 2017 to 2019 and Assistant City Manager from 2014 to 2017. In these capacities, I oversaw the city budget, built crucial relationships for Compton, and worked on economic development projects.

I received my Bachelor's degree in Sociology from Humboldt State University

and my Master's degree in Organizational Leadership from Woodbury University.

### **Robert Luna**

I have worked in law enforcement for 36 years, and have been promoted through every rank of the Long Beach Police Department. For the past 20 years, I served in executive level positions including Chief of Staff to the Chief of Police, Deputy Chief, and acting Chief of Police. For the last seven years, I served as the Chief of Police of Long Beach, the County's second largest police department.

I have extensive educational experience in law enforcement executive management including a Master's in Public Administration from CSULB, an executive certificate from Peace Officer Standards and Training, and graduating from Harvard University's Senior Executives in State and Local Government and USC's Delinquency Control Institute.

### **Alex Villanueva**

#### **Education:**

- Associate degree in Liberal Arts from San Bernardino Valley College
- B.A. in Liberal Arts from Excelsior College, University of the State of New York, Regents College
- Master of Public Administration from California State University, Northridge
- Doctorate of Public Administration from the University of La Verne.
- My dissertation focused on leadership diversity in law enforcement.

#### **Work Experience:**

- Custody Officer; Century Regional Detention Facility
- Patrol Deputy; East Los Angeles
- Drill Instructor at the Sheriff's Academy Training Bureau
- CA Army National Guard, Lieutenant (2nd Battalion, 144th Field Artillery Regiment, 40th Infantry Division).
- Sergeant; Lennox and Carson Sheriff Stations
- Watch Commander; Pico Rivera Sheriff's Station.
- Adjunct Professor of Criminal Justice at CSU-Long Beach

## Goals: If elected, what are the three/four most important goals you hope to accomplish?

### Eli Vera

1. Increase public trust in LASD and improve public safety to combat rising crime rates. My vision for the LASD is that it is accountable to the community, transparent about its work, and provides excellent public service.
2. Re-Establish relationships with partners like the Board of Supervisors, Office of Inspector General, and Civilian Oversight Commission wherein they help hold the department accountable, make internal reforms to increase transparency of the department's work and eliminate the current gang culture, and make strides on non-violent policing techniques.
3. I want to improve the Department's Homeless Response Team (HRT) and coordinate the Homeless Outreach Services Team (HOST) with the Mental Evaluation Team (MET) to connect our homeless veterans with healthcare and housing.

### Cecil Rhambo

1. Reforming the LASD and ending deputy gangs, secret police, and corruption. This includes embracing oversight and collaborating with the LA County Board of Supervisors, County Inspector General and Sheriff's Civilian Oversight Commission to reform the LASD.
2. Enforcing the vaccine mandate for county staff, including and especially Deputy Sheriffs.
3. Enacting real criminal justice reform, ending the school to prison pipeline, and implementing 21st-century policing.
4. Joining forces with other county agencies to solve our homelessness crisis, and to prioritize mental health, apprenticeship programs, job-training, and drug diversion programs. We must bring compassionate and effective solutions to this emergency.

For a comprehensive list of my priorities to bring real justice and reform to the LASD, please visit <https://www.rhamboforsheriff.com/priorities>

### Robert Luna

1. Reduce Violent Crime
2. Address Homelessness
3. Restore Public Trust in the Sheriff's Office
4. Reform and Modernize the Sheriff's Department and Jails
5. Improve Deputy and Employee Wellness

### Alex Villanueva

Last cycle I ran to reform, rebuild, and restore the LASD. For too long, Paul Tanaka and Lee Baca regimes ran a corrupt department with cronyism, corruption, and a lack of accountability to both the community and the rule of law. Now Tanaka and Baca are back in the form of Cecil Rhambo, Eli Vera, and the others running against me. They want their toys and their candy back. But we have moved on and are creating a culture of accountability, fairness, and community engagement.

In my next term, I want to focus on:

1. Reducing homelessness by expanding our successful co response Homeless Outreach Services Team (HOST),
2. Reduce crime. Partly by ...
3. Restore our budget to hire more personnel to reduce crime by ending the anti-law enforcement the Board of Supervisor's "hiring freeze" they have imposed on our department (they are sabotaging public safety as part of their orchestrated campaign against me.
4. I also want to expand our public integrity unit to address corruption in LA, currently ranked #2 in the nation in corruption.
5. Unlicensed and illegal marijuana grows and dispensaries.

### Homelessness and Housing:

**•Homelessness is skyrocketing to crisis proportions. What are your priorities for addressing our current homeless crisis and preventing more people from becoming homeless? What have you done historically to combat homelessness?**

### Eli Vera

I believe in ensuring that our community members have a roof over their head. The complexity of this issue is no excuse for the current inaction that allows this human tragedy to continue. We need to stop treating homelessness as a monolithic issue and start offering targeted solutions to get our unhoused off the streets. Proper enforcement, long-term housing, and providing better services all have a role in fixing this problem.

Moreover, through my service over the past 33 years I've learned about the intersection of those experiencing homelessness and having a mental illness. To solve this crisis, we need to both house our community members and look at the root issues beyond a lack of housing that perpetuate homelessness.

### Cecil Rhambo

We must address this crisis with compassion and urgency. As Chief of Police at LAX, I've implemented a model that has reduced the number of unhoused individuals living in the airport from over 100 to less than 15 at any given time. This model is compassionate, built on relationship building, and contracts with a homeless service provider and a mental health clinician. Furthermore, we work with a City Prosecutor who focuses on quality of life issues while still holding resistant unhoused individuals accountable for problematic actions. This model provides people with opportunities to avoid criminal penalties by participating in rehabilitative, housing, and mental health services. I have previously implemented similar practices in the LASD, and I hope to do so again if elected Sheriff. Additionally, as an Assistant City Manager, I administered an employment "one-stop" program out of the City of Carson and worked with the Workforce Investment Board on Transitional Subsidized Employment to provide good paying jobs and on the job training to the formerly incarcerated, thus allowing them an income to afford basic needs such as health benefits, shelter, food, clothing, etc. As a City Manager, I worked to bring in affordable low income housing units to Compton using available home funds to incentivize developers to develop such housing. My administration also administered a section 8 housing program and worked with landlords to incentivize them to use section 8 programs to provide clean, decent housing to eligible tenants.

As the Sheriff, my department will be responsible for the execution of the civil processes following court ordered evictions. I intend to create a "housing in reach" unit that will make every attempt to connect those facing eviction with bridge housing prior to eviction as well as work with those that are incarcerated but re-entering the community to housing, rather than being released to the streets. I also plan to have a team work with local municipalities and regional collaboratives to address the homeless issue on a much larger and systematic

manner.

### **Robert Luna**

To address growing homelessness, I will support the creation of multi-disciplinary and data-driven approaches. In Long Beach, I worked with our Health and Fire Departments to create alternative responses to non-life-threatening emergencies. We need a well-trained team of social service providers and housing navigators to fully solve homeless. I look forward to partnering with other organizations and departments to create similar alternate-response programs.

I will also advocate for homelessness prevention through the creation of wrap-around social services to help individuals get the help that they need before falling into homelessness. And, I will also advocate for the creation of more bridge, affordable, and supportive housing so that individuals have somewhere to go once they are connected with a service provider.

### **Alex Villanueva**

We have led the most successful model to helping the homeless find the housing and help they need. Our HOST team places homeless in shelter and / or treatment daily. We are in the thousands by now. We have helped homeless reunite with family across the country and even helped a missing persons from London return home. We partner with the Dream Center, LAHSA, and a variety of service providers.

There is a lot of misinformation out about our work. I encourage you to come to a visit to see for yourself.

Our Homeless Outreach Service Team (HOST) was created to exemplify the county's efforts to combat homelessness and preserve public safety. When I became Sheriff the HOST team had 5 members. I increased the HOST team to 25. Two Hundred (200) Would be a better number, given the size of the problem. The Board praises this team and model, yet refuses to fund it. They want to take pictures with the host team, but not expand it.

Through our contacts with thousands of homeless neighbors, HOST has earned a reputation for being compassionate, accountable, innovative, and bold. HOST has transcended the role of

traditional law enforcement. For years, HOST has accomplished the mission with zero uses of force and will continue to do so if I'm re-elected. But we need to expand this team.

**Priorities:**

My priorities for addressing homelessness is ensuring public dollars directed towards combating homelessness actually are utilized for that purpose, instead of enriching non-profit executives with exorbitant salaries. While many services providers are essential and vital to our collective efforts to end homelessness, there are also a handful of executives who earn a small fortune with a limited track record of success. In many cases those executives are supporters, friends and donors of the County Board members. We will release this soon. Trust your eyes. Your instincts are correct.

Something is not right with the billions we are putting to solve this issue. We help the homeless every day with compassion AND accountability. Those screaming “compassion” passing out water bottles are allowing our fellow humans to die (5 each day) on the street. That is not compassion, it is neglect. But for their allies, it is a profitable neglect.

**When homeless “tent city” camps are dismantled, the homeless very often return quickly. What’s your stance on this? What services are offered simultaneously, and what do you believe the city/law enforcement needs to do to enable the homeless people to use the offered provisions.**

**Eli Vera**

Tent cities exist due to years of government failure to provide options of affordable, secure housing and health support for its residents. If the dismantling of tent cities came with a simultaneous increase in services provided such as temporary/emergency housing, Navigation Centers, mobile hygiene centers and permanent supportive housing, then the homeless would not return as quickly. The Dismantling of tent cities comes forcibly by way of public safety order when instead, the issue should be handled as a public health order. Law Enforcement should change the way they frame the issue, so the focus is not just on clearing the streets, rather the focus is on supporting the health of the homeless and directing them towards the services provided.

**Cecil Rhambo**

Clearing out encampments is both ineffective and cruel, and we must turn to solutions that work with, not against, unhoused individuals. As stated in my previous response, I believe in a comprehensive approach to homelessness that brings together the LASD, county agencies, mental and public health providers, and community groups to deter punishment and get folks access

to the services they desperately need.

I have worked with the homeless almost two decades now. I implemented mobile “wrap around” services to assist the homeless in my role as a law enforcement professional and city administrator. First, law enforcement should not be the organizer nor first responder to addressing homeless issues. Now that there is funding, capacity in the form of actual service providers: homeless outreach specialist, dept of mental and physical health professionals, and public works/sanitation personnel should be available (24/7). Law Enforcement should be a last resort in the event that the outreach teams are confronted with violence or there is a need to address a criminal matter during a contact.

Municipalities also need to build physical housing capacity so that the homeless service providers have bed space for them. I visited an excellent site in the City of Pomona that was a communal setting with space for pets, offices for service providers, facilities to prepare meals and storage lockers for each resident. NIMBY issues must be faced with courage and I believe that municipalities can also look at underused or renovate and repurpose condemned municipal properties for such housing until permanent supportive housing can be constructed.

Throughout my time in public service, I have practiced “community activism” from the inside by championing community engagement, working with the most vulnerable residents in our communities, and embracing intervention and prevention programs through partnerships with faith based organizations, youth foundations, parks and recreation, and urban peace initiatives.

## **Robert Luna**

As the County’s law enforcement service provider, the Sheriff’s Department is responsible for implementing encampment cleanups or anti-camping ordinances under the direction of the Board of Supervisors. However, it is imperative that these enforcement measures be combined with the services and housing needed to end someone’s homelessness forever. As services and housing are provided, I will

work with other government departments to think of creative strategies to prevent encampments.

### **Public Safety:**

**Crime is a growing concern in the City of Los Angeles, especially “smash and grab” thefts, follow-home robberies, and public safety in parks, beaches, libraries, and schools. Also, there are significantly more hate crimes based on religion or race than ever before. What is your plan to increase public safety, particularly in your district/jurisdiction?**

#### **Eli Vera**

The rising crime rate presents itself as the number one public safety concern at this time. I am committed to hiring more highly trained and qualified police officers when I am elected. I will also make it a priority to strategically place more patrol officers in areas where these specific crimes are taking place. It's critical that we have officers in place before crimes happen.

Throughout my career, I have gained recognition for the use of nonviolent de-escalation techniques. We need additional training and education to ensure the use and implementation of such techniques. If elected, I will expand the use of non-violent policing methods, mental health resources, and support for at-risk youth in order to curb the rising crime rates and increase public safety long-term.

#### **Cecil Rhambo**

Under my administration, the Sheriff's Department will work to ensure that our communities are safe for residents to live, work, and play in. A key way to do this is to engage with communities to build trust and increase security. I have experience in forming, sustaining, and working with community organizations to address violent crime, traffic complaints (street take-overs, speeding, etc.) and hate crime. Regarding hate crimes, given that police officers are oftentimes the first responders to these acts - when they are reported - we must ensure that officers are given the best trauma-informed care practices and resources to support survivors. When I led the Asian Crime Task Force, and the Hate Crimes Task Force, I helped create an award winning anti-hate crime training video for

middle school aged youth and worked closely with the County's Human Relations Commission and the Museum of Tolerance on the production of the learning platform, which won the Sherwood Award for fighting hate.

Again, working with the local municipalities and community leaders under my jurisdiction will be mandated for each Station Commander, Division Commander and Patrol Division Chief. I will insist on quantifiable programs, community organized events, efforts to assist and sustain block clubs and work with the local youth to create an overall safer community regardless of socio-economic conditions.

To address multi-jurisdictional serial crimes such as organized smash and grabs, follow home robberies, and serial burglaries, I will work with multi-jurisdictional task forces to address these. I have years of experience effectively managing such task forces.

### **Robert Luna**

As Sheriff, I will make sure that each captain of each station is accountable for crimes committed within the communities that they serve to protect. I will analyze each station's crime data, their communication to local stakeholders, and their responses to crime to ensure that the Sheriff's Department is meeting the needs of the community.

There is no place in our community for hate crimes. Law enforcement employees must be trained to thoroughly respond and investigate hate crimes. And, LASD must collaborate with the community to educate them on what a hate crime is and what to do if they witness a hate crime. I will also work with the DAs office to get special enhancements on hate crimes; and I will not hesitate to get the state or federal government involved.

### **Alex Villanueva**

Los Angeles is the only government that has not reversed its failed “defund the police” policy. From New York to Portland, it has been exposed that when you take law enforcement off the streets, criminals feel empowered. In my opinion, young, idealistic, and opportunistic “social justice warriors” are being taken advantage of by private corporations that are looking to gain government contracts for public safety, especially on buses, trains, parks, school, colleges, and more.

Private contracts are part of the solution, but not the solution. In a county with millions of guns and a track record of violent and deadly crime, Democrats need to be FOR a position on public safety that is effective. IF not, the pendulum will swing back to tough on crime.

Our plan is to lead our department to a place where community engagement, and relationships are more valuable than racking up arrests. We need to rebuild trust and retrain our deputies to be guardians more than warriors. I have a track record of this.

Our body-worn cameras are on all patrols and will soon be in the jails. All new applicants must now have an AA degree, and no deputy qualifies for promotion until they have completed four years of patrol minimum. We also now have standardized and blind testing to end the cronyism and nepotism of the past. As a result women, people of color and LGBTQ deputies are dominating new promotions.

These are all facts, but ones you do not read in the Anti-Latino LA Times, or the unethical board of supervisors who have decided that I am not an adequate steward of the lies, inefficiencies, and failures of LA County government.

**Wildfire risk and evacuation safety are growing concerns in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones of your district/jurisdiction. How do you plan to address those life-threatening concerns in light of recent legislation and efforts to increase housing density?**

**Eli Vera**

The answer to growing concerns over all extreme weather conditions such as wildfires is our governments (from the local level to the international level) need to make greater efforts to move us away from coal and oil and toward wind and solar energy sources. This will require both regulatory changes and greater public investments. By changing the course of climate devastation, we can significantly reduce the high fire hazard in our district. Until California transitions to alternative energy sources, the LASD must work closely with the fire department to have a good response plan intact to save as many homes as possible, especially with housing density steadily increasing across the county.

**Cecil Rhambo**

While it is not in my purview as Sheriff to determine housing or land use/zoning policy, I will certainly use my platform to advocate for policies that address our affordable housing crisis without putting already-vulnerable communities at greater risk of being impacted by climate change. Our department will also need

to plan ahead, creating contingency plans for direct communication with residents, rapid evacuation, and emergency response preparedness. I have years of experience working with communities on Citizen Emergency Response Team (CERT) formation in collaboration from the LAFD.

Additionally, under my administration, I will promote green policies and reduce our own carbon footprints in order to mitigate the impacts of climate change and stave off the worst crises. Examples being replacing inmate transportation buses and all “pool” vehicles to be hybrid or electric. Additionally, I will work with the County Internal Services Department to have as much drought tolerant landscaping on all Sheriff’s facilities as possible. Increased wildfire risk is an unfortunate part of our reality, and we must prepare now.

**Robert Luna**

As we have seen fire intensity and frequency increase over the past decades, we need to treat these disasters not as a matter of if, but when. As the Sheriff, I will actively build relationships with all partners throughout the County to ensure that every neighborhood is safe from all hazards (crime, homeland security, fire, earthquakes). I will work with the appropriate partnering entities to make sure that neighborhoods have the information and the resources needed to evacuate, if needed. And, I will make sure that employees within LASD’ Emergency Operations Bureau undergo continuous training.

**What is your jurisdiction within the City of Los Angeles, and how do you plan to work cooperatively with LAPD?**

**Eli Vera**

I am running to be elected as the next Sheriff for Los Angeles County, so the City of Los Angeles is directly related to this jurisdiction. Realizing that the City of LA has their own police department and jurisdiction for serving the public, I will happily work with them and have my department collaborate with theirs on many issues that arise. The dedication and commitment to serving the public does not only belong to one area or jurisdiction of law enforcement. As I have said repeatedly throughout my campaign, I plan on being a collaborator and unifier for the people of Los Angeles County. This means working with any and all law enforcement agencies and departments as deemed necessary.

### **Cecil Rhambo**

The LASD serves the unincorporated parts of LA County, along with over 40 of the 88 cities within the County, Los Angeles Community College District, several custodial facilities within our county, as well as all County operated public parks, Hospitals, Health Clinics, and recreation facilities. Many of these locations border the City of Los Angeles or are within the policing jurisdiction of the City of Los Angeles. I have had a strong working relationship with LAPD in the past and currently work collaboratively with LAPD in my capacity as the Chief of Police for LAX and Van Nuys airports. I consider the LAPD a valued partner in keeping all of the residents of Los Angeles County safe.

### **Robert Luna**

As Sheriff, I will partner and communicate with the LAPD and LA County Chiefs to ensure that we are coordinated and successful in our work. One of my first priorities is to rebuild the fractured relationships with partner departments. As the previous Western Representative for the Major City Chiefs Association, a member of the California Police Chiefs Association and the board chair of the Joint Regional Intelligence Center, I have long-standing relationships with law enforcement professionals and their executive teams throughout the US. I will establish open channels of communication with other offices to address rising crime rates by utilizing best practices and data because crime cannot be solved just by one agency alone.

### **Alex Villanueva**

We work with them each day. I speak to Chief Moore regularly and we have signed support MOU on a variety of issues including emergency response and more.

**What is your stance on District Attorney Gascon's policy of nonviolent petty crime offenders being released without bail? – if this description of his policy isn't quite accurate, please correct and describe your stance.**

Eli Vera

I am against the removal or reduction of sentencing enhancements for prior convictions.

Cecil Rhambo

I support ending cash bail for the vast majority of nonviolent and victimless crimes. The existence of bail does not reduce or deter petty non violent crimes, victimless crimes, or even serious crimes such as murder. If the perpetrator is wealthy enough, regardless of the crime committed, they can “bail out”. Flight risk and public safety should be considered when setting bail, particularly for violent offenders. In non-violent property crimes, the ability of the perpetrator or his/her family to put up bail should be considered. This will reduce the number of low level offenders awaiting trial in custody and make room for violent offenders that must be housed for the public’s safety.

In the event that the non-violent perpetrator commits further similar offenses (petty theft) upon release, consideration should be made to make additional offenses a felony with stiffer sentences to deter further crimes. Additionally, it should be noted that offenders that enter locations with the “intent” to commit such crimes has committed a felony (Burglary), not a petty theft. Those perpetrators should be charged appropriately.

At one time, petty theft with a prior conviction was a felony. I support a revision of the law to make repeat offenses a felony. Perhaps the threshold should be 3 or more convictions and/or a cumulative dollar amount within a 5 year period of time.

The current bail process still does not prohibit a non-violent offender from possibly being released without bail through the bail deviation process, simply posting bail or by order of a judge. While it’s abundantly clear that we must address inequities in our incarceration system, violent, premeditated crimes like sexual assault, kidnapping, armed robbery, car jacking, and others, must be taken very seriously, and any effective reform to our bail system to replace it should include a system that doesn’t release dangerous criminals back out onto the streets. These situations are extremely sensitive and delicate for the survivors of these crimes, and as public servants, we must do our due diligence in ensuring that violent criminals with malicious intent are not given easier

opportunities to depart from jail before sentencing.

**Robert Luna**

Although I believe in criminal and social justice reform, I also am a firm believer in victim's rights. I believe in holding violent criminals and habitual offenders accountable for their actions. And, I also believe in restorative approaches for non-violent offenders and individuals with mental health and substance use disorders.

**Alex Villanueva**

In certain cases, I support that. But I would be more specific. For example people who have jobs, are students, first time offenders, etc. Remember, one of the recently murdered people in LA was killed by someone who had been arrested and released in late last year.

I will also have you know that I reached out to Gascon early on to build a relationship. He replied to one text and never once reached out again. I believe Gascon is trying to make a political statement, not protect angelinos.