

## **An Initial Look at the Assessor-Recorder's Race, "Coattails", and Asian Bloc Voting**

David Latterman  
Fall Line Analytics  
dlatterman@flanalytics.com

### Background

2005 was the first year in which Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) was used on a citywide scale. Of the three candidate races in the 2005 San Francisco election cycle, only the Assessor-Recorder (A-R) race proved to be a relatively competitive. The A-R race saw three candidates: the incumbent, Phil Ting, Supervisor Gerardo Sandoval, and attorney Ron Chun.

Phil Ting was appointed by Mayor Newsom only a few months before the election. Politically, he couldn't really be called a staunch San Francisco moderate, but instead is somewhere between moderate and progressive. He is Asian, who served as the Executive Director on the Asian Law Caucus. He had also been appointed to the Building Inspection Commission by Matt Gonzalez a year earlier, and rumored to be interested in running for District 4 Supervisor in 2006. Ting had a professional background in real estate finance.

Gerardo Sandoval, a Latino, is the sitting District 11 Supervisor, re-elected only a year before. He ran under the Progressive mantle, endorsed by the San Francisco Bay Guardian and the Tenants Union, as well as the more progressive Supervisors. Sandoval didn't have any direct Assessor experience, but he had served on the Budget Committee and been a Budget Analyst. More than any other candidate, Sandoval used to the idea that "he'd fight downtown" as a campaign theme.

Ron Chun ran in the March 2002 A-R primary, finishing a close third behind Mabel Teng and Doris Ward. He is also Asian, and the only real moderate/conservative in the race. He had true tax assessment experience, having worked in the A-R office, but ran into trouble during the this campaign as there were concerns about his residency status.

### Results<sup>1</sup>

Although the results aren't yet official, Ting is going to win the race based on the redistribution of third place finisher Ron Chun's second choice votes. Table 1 shows the vote results.

---

<sup>1</sup> All data from SF Dept. of Elections, November 11-12, 2005

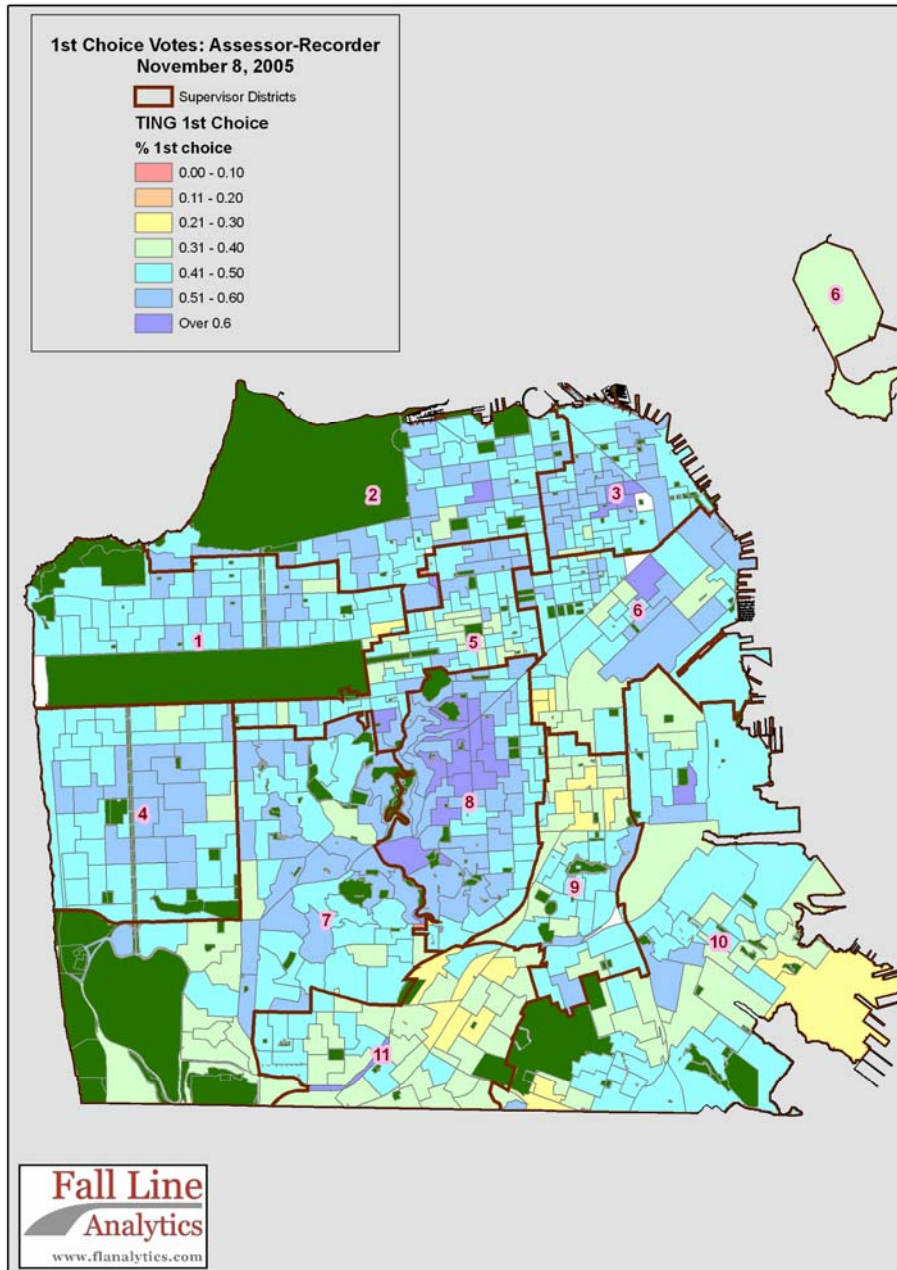
**Table 1: Preliminary A-R vote results**

| <b>Candidate</b> | <b>Round 1</b> | <b>Number of Chun's Valid 2<sup>nd</sup> Choice Votes</b> | <b>% of <i>eligible</i> Chun 2<sup>nd</sup> choice votes</b> | <b>% of <i>all</i> Chun 2<sup>nd</sup> choice votes</b> |
|------------------|----------------|---|--|---|
| Sandoval         | 51511 (37.5%)  | 5062  | 32%  | 23%   |
| Ting             | 64198 (46.7%)  | 10728   | 68%  | 49%   |
| Chun             | 21787 (15.8%)  |   |  |   |

Ting received over twice as many of Chun's second choice votes as Sandoval, which wasn't surprising based on one, they are both Asian candidates; and two, are more closely politically aligned than Chun and Sandoval. It is also interesting to note that 28% of Chun's second choice votes became exhausted (invalid), which is a relatively high number – higher than any of the numbers we saw in the 2004 District RCV races. Further work needs to be done by the proponents of RCV and election workers to examine why this number was so high.

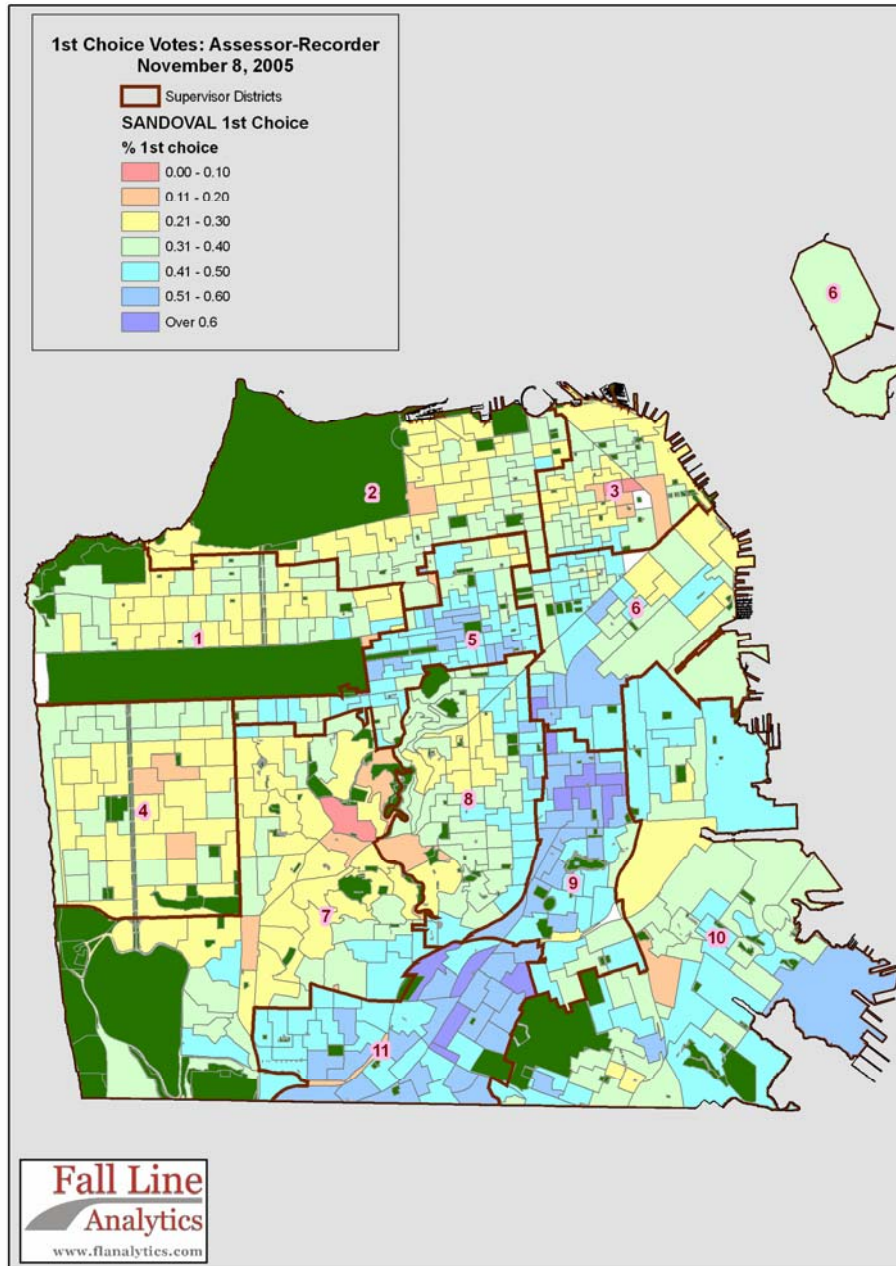
The following maps of each candidate's first choice results come from the ballot detail of the San Francisco Dept. of Elections, as of 11/11/2005. This is prior to the official Statement of Vote, but will be close to the final results and good enough to see the voting trends, which in this case are pretty clear. The following three maps use the same scale for reference.

## Ting 1<sup>st</sup> Choice Vote



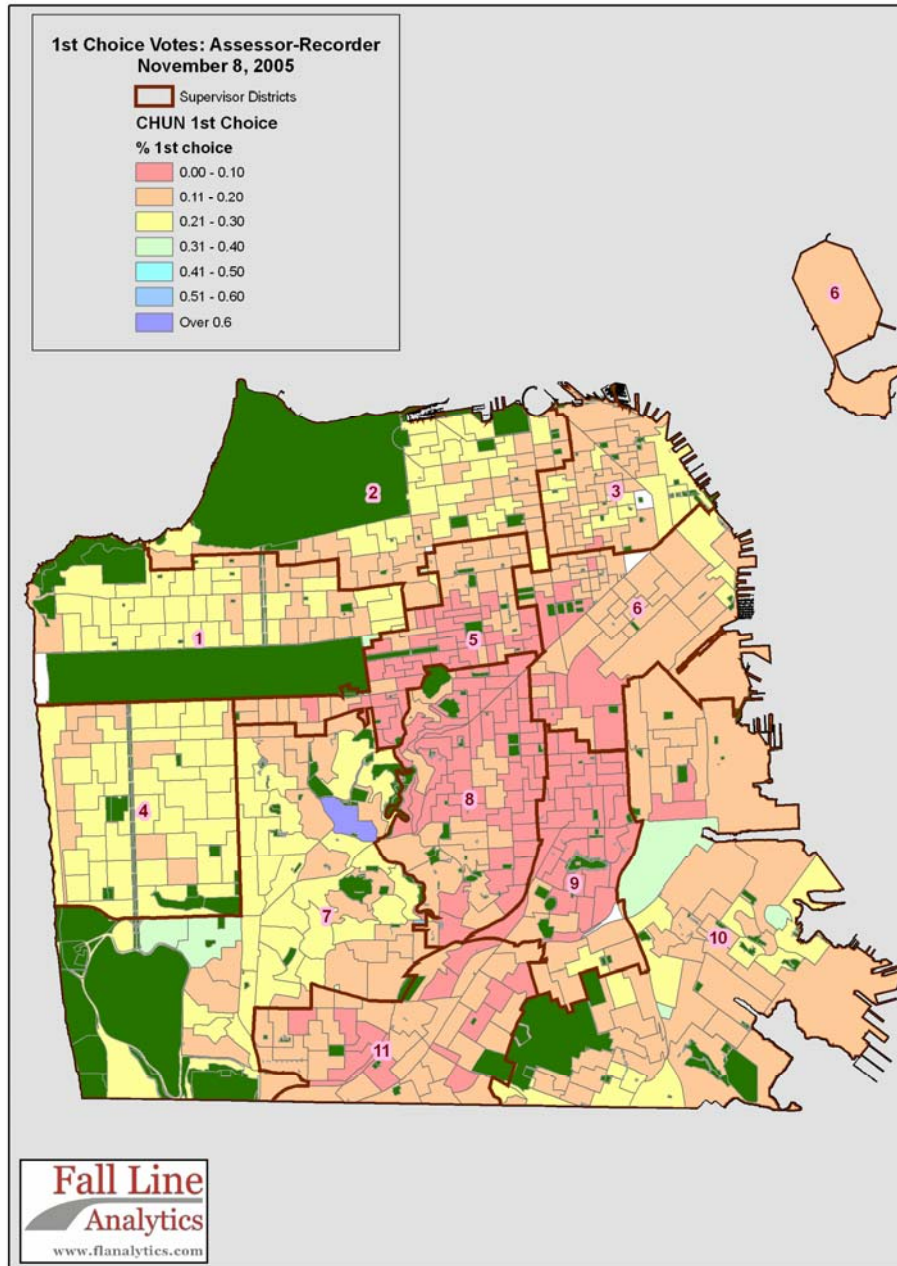
Ting did strongly throughout the city, but especially well in the Castro, Chinatown, the Sunset, the Richmond, and the Marina. The fact Ting did better in the Castro and parts of Noe Valley speaks to the coattail effect Mayor Newsom, who campaigned for Ting in these areas, has with the LGBT community. In short, Ting fared well in the more conservative and the more Asian parts of San Francisco.

## Sandoval 1<sup>st</sup> Choice Vote



Sandoval did well in the more heavily Latino parts of San Francisco – primarily throughout the Mission, and in the heavily progressive D5 (Upper Panhandle and the Haight). Sandoval did fair in D10 and in D6, but not as well as the normal progressive voting patterns of D6 would indicate – especially in the Tenderloin and SOMA. And of course, Sandoval did quite well in his own district.

## Chun 1<sup>st</sup> Choice Vote

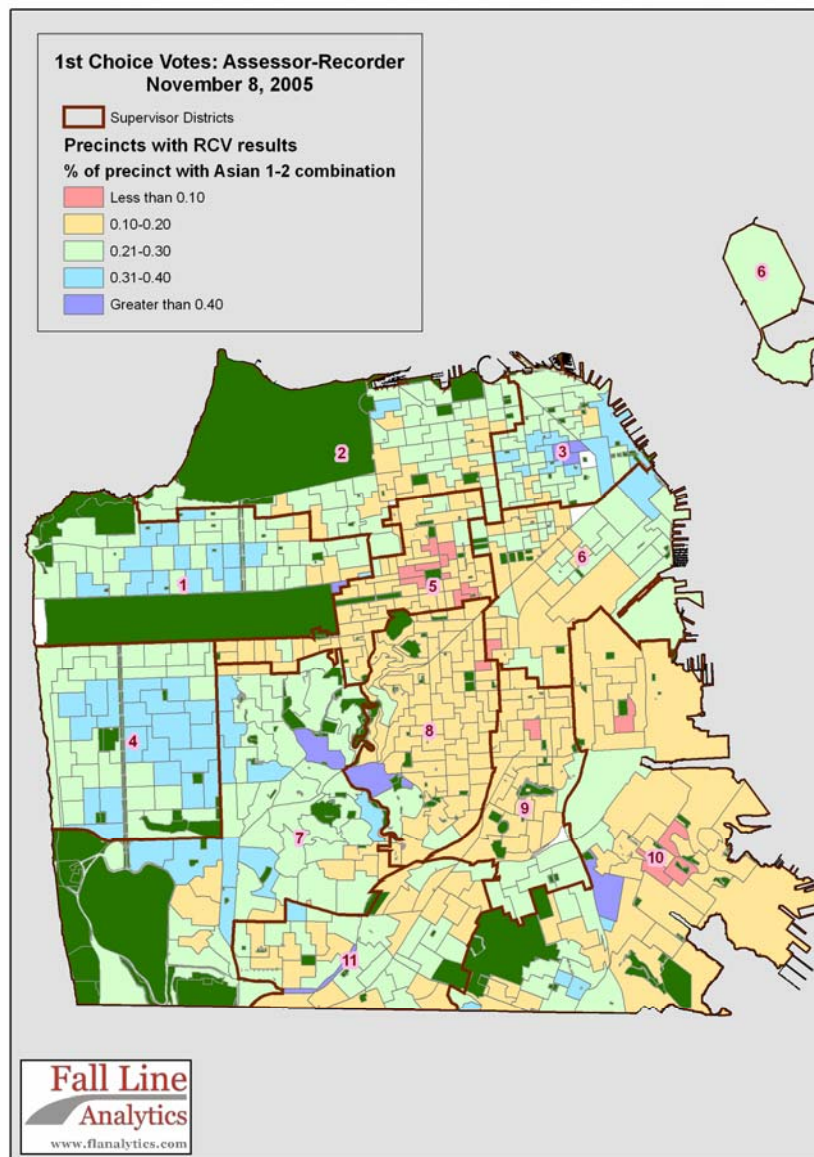


Chun, despite likely being the most experienced of the three candidates, did poorly throughout the City, except in the more conservative parts of San Francisco where he hovered in the 20-30% range. Chun had very little traction in the central part of the City, especially in D5, D8, and D9.

The Asian 1-2 vote

Because this was an RCV vote, it is possible to discern more complex voting patterns in a race. Here, because two of the three candidates were Asian, it is possible to infer the strength of the Asian voting bloc by looking at the first and second choice votes where applicable.

The following map shows, by precinct, the percentage of total ballots that had a Ting-Chun or a Chun-Ting first and second choice combination. This analysis isn't as sensitive as if there were several candidates to choose from, but it does give a sense of the Asian voting bloc that most election workers are believe exist, and which I have studied in past analyses.



Not surprisingly, the bloc seems strongest in Chinatown and the Sunset, with some strength in the Richmond. The Chinatown bloc is notable, because generally this part of San Francisco votes more liberally than the Sunset or even the Richmond. However, Sandoval had little penetration here, indicating – in this election at least – the strength of the Asian identity vote.

### Discussion

I didn't perform any other demographic or PVI analyses on this race as the results were relatively straightforward. Ting did well throughout the City, but especially in the LGBT and Asian parts of the City. Chun did fair only in the most conservative (and Asian) areas, while Sandoval gained votes primarily in the Latino and most progressive parts of the City.

The fact Ting did so well in the Castro speaks to Newsom's popularity among the LGBT community. This position, despite its technical nature, has been politicized for years. Therefore, it can be surmised voters were looking at political factors just as much, if not more, than technical ability. The race saw identity voting, both politically and ethnically. But since this was a political race, and Ting – the Newsom candidate – did so well, we can say that the Newsom coattail effect was probably in play with one of his candidates.

There was talk during the election of vote gaming, in which moderates may support Sandoval to get him off of the Board of Supervisors, and that progressives may vote against Sandoval to keep him on it. There isn't any empirical evidence for vote gaming from either side, though it is interesting to see how well Sandoval did in D11, even the non-Latino parts, with the voters knowing he'd no longer be their Supervisor if he won. Sandoval gained a higher first choice percentage of votes in this race than in his Supervisor race in 2004, roughly 53% versus 32%, respectively.

Looking at RCV itself, it can be noted that while RCV was primary advocated by the left, it made a difference in that it helped a more moderate candidate, based on the redistribution of the votes of a third "fringe" candidate. Coupled with the D7 2004 race, where Supervisor Elsbernd won with RCV where he may have gotten a battle in a runoff, RCV is so far playing into moderate hands in the races where it has made a difference. It also appears to help the incumbent by the power of name recognition alone, since a strong first choice showing is difficult to overcome for any other candidate.