Magical Urbanism: Latinos Re-Invent the U.S. City
by Mike Davis
Verso Press, 2000
$19.00, hardcover
$13.00, paperback

Reviewed by Michael Pozo

Mike Davis presents a very brief introduction to some of the most pressing and contemporary issues concerning Latinos in the United States. Davis specifically focuses on the role Latinos will play as they surpass African-Americans and become the largest "minority" group in the U.S. and eventually, in certain cities, the majority.

Davis demonstrates a keen awareness of certain segments of the Latino population especially when he writes on the communities in Southern California. In his descriptions of the "Latinization" of the United States, Davis examines the political and social power Latinos have within their grasp. However, the figures he presents on education, poverty rates and illegal immigration still seem to maintain a scattered community from achieving collective, social power. These issues are part of larger challenges that will determine whether or not our numbers will bear positive results for us, as a whole-community.

However, Davis' portrayal may manage to convince its reader that the Latino population has few tales beyond the abyss of poverty and the struggles of illegal immigrants. Despite his staunch support and praise, Davis tends to generalize Latinos. There is little talk of an educated first and second generation Latino population which is indeed active in developing and re-invigorating the social and labor movements Davis so readily sees as key to the Latino community's future. It is clear, and admirable, that Davis has focused on the poorest and most exploited of the Latino community that still resides under the shadow of bigotry and misunderstanding. It is also clear that this still remains representative of our identity, as a whole, to a generally misinformed public.