



# Latinos and the Nation's Future

*Henry G. Cisneros*

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Whether the predominant ethnic group in baseball, the "swing vote" in various elections, or the people who introduced one of the country's most popular condiments, salsa, it is clear that the influence of Latinos is widespread and growing each year. The Census Bureau estimates that Latinos will grow by 63 million people or a stunning 48% of total growth to make up 25% of the United States population by 2050. Editor Henry G. Cisneros, the first Hispanic mayor of a major U.S. city and former HUD Secretary, says these numbers are not reversible by closing borders, they "are the simple demographic trajectory of people already living in the U.S."

In his chapter that opens this landmark collection of essays about the future of the U.S., Cisneros asserts that the country cannot continue its historic path of growth, progress, and greatness without substantial improvements in the Latino community's economic and educational status. The fate of the nation is inextricably linked to that of the Hispanic community not only because of its size, but also because of its relative youthfulness as other populations grow older and leave the workforce. There is absolutely no doubt that the success and well-being of Latinos or lack thereof will impact the country as a whole.

The outgrowth of a conference involving Latino leaders and exploring the impact of the dynamic growth of the Hispanic population in the U.S., *Latinos and the Nation's Future* contains essays by leading scholars, civil rights leaders and other professionals on issues impacting the advancement of Latino citizens and therefore, all U.S. citizens. University of Southern California professor and director of the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute Harry P. Pachon gives an overview of the rapidly growing Latino middle class; Tamar Jacoby, a former senior writer for *Newsweek* and deputy editor of *The New York Times* op-ed page, explores the highly controversial subject of U.S. government immigration policy reform; Sarita E. Brown, founding president of Excelencia in Education, takes an in-depth look at the issues facing Latinos in higher education; and Elena Rios, M.D., president and CEO of the National Hispanic Medical Association, presents a comprehensive view of Latino health issues.

Although the future is never certain, it is inevitable that the Latino community is destined to shape the future of the United States, and Cisneros contends, it is imperative that Americans accept this fact and work to harness its growth, develop its educational potential, engage its community-building energies, and transform it into the next middle class.

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