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The Real Las Vegas: Life Beyond the Strip

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What images come to mind when you think of Las Vegas?
Mobsters and showgirls, magicians and tigers, multimillion-dollar poker games and prizefights; towering signboards that light up the night in front of ever more spectacular casino hotels.
But real people live here, too--over a million today, two million tomorrow. Greater Las Vegas has long been the fastest growing metropolitan area in America. And almost every aspect of its citizens' lives is influenced by the almighty power of the gambling industry.
A team of fifteen reporters led by David Littlejohn, together with prize winning photo-journalist Eric Gran, studied the "real" Las Vegas--the city beyond the Strip and Downtown--for the better part of a year. They talked to teenagers (whose suicide and dropout rates frighten parents), senior citizens (many of whom spend their days playing bingo and the slots), Mexican immigrants (who build the new houses and clean the hotels), homeless people and angry blacks, as well as local police, active Christians, city officials, and prostitutes. They looked into the local churches, the powerful labor unions, pawn shops, the real estate boom, defiant ranchers to the north, and dire predictions that the city is about to run out of water.
Proud Las Vegans claim that theirs is just a friendly southwestern boomtown--"the finest community I have ever lived in," says Bishop Daniel Walsh, who comes from San Francisco. But their picture of Las Vegas as a vibrant, civic-minded metropolis conflicts with evidence of transiency, rootlessness, political impotence, and social dysfunction.
In this close-up investigation of the real lives being led in America's most tourist-jammed, gambling-driven city, readers will discover a Las Vegas very different from the one they may have seen or imagined.

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