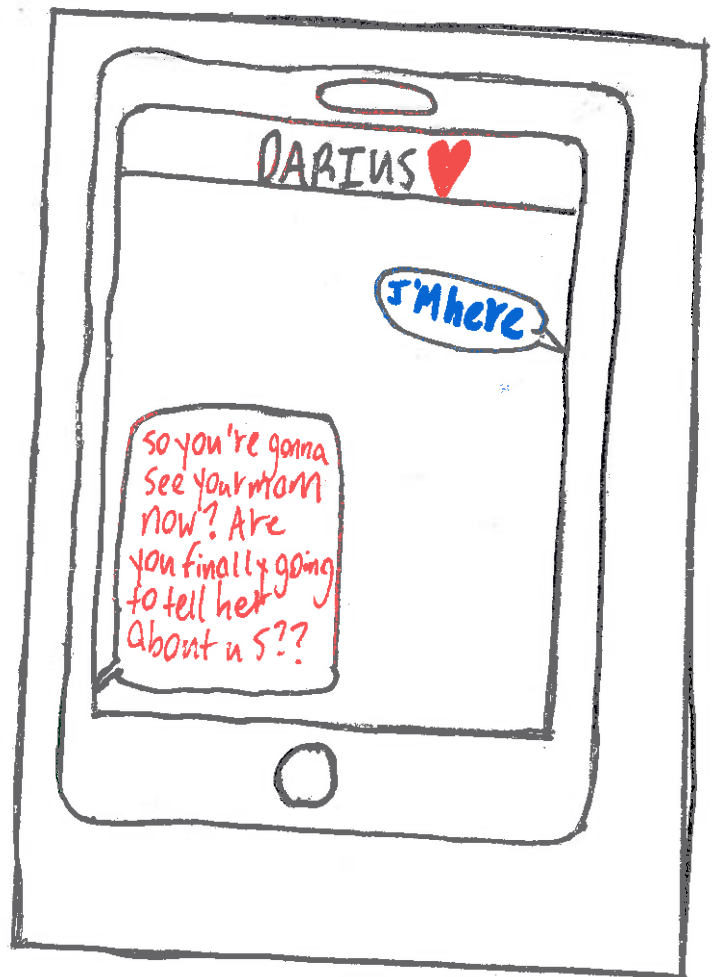
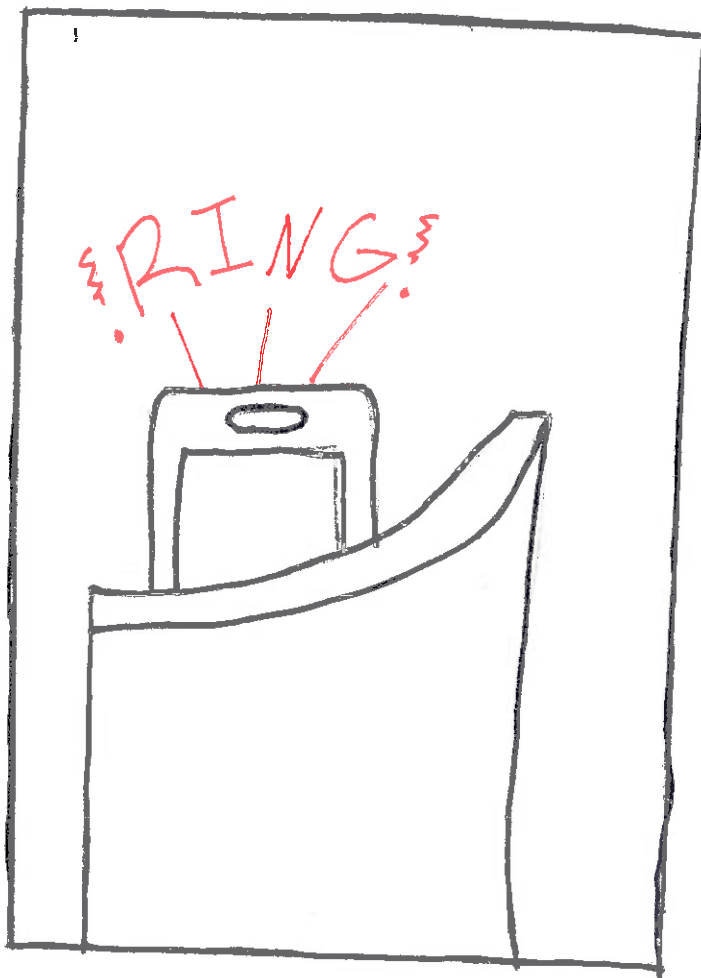
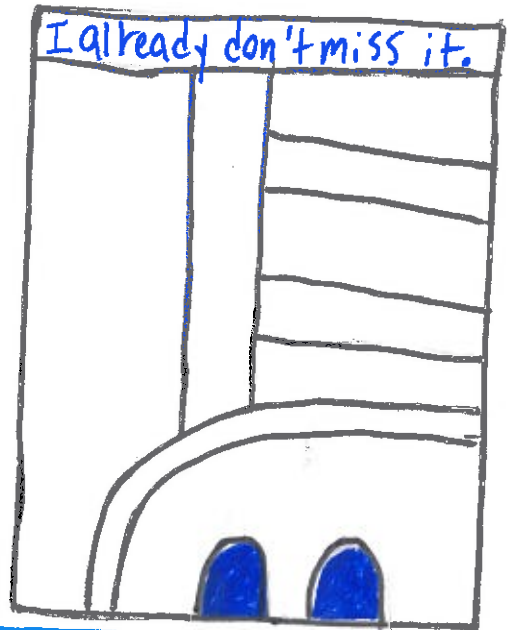
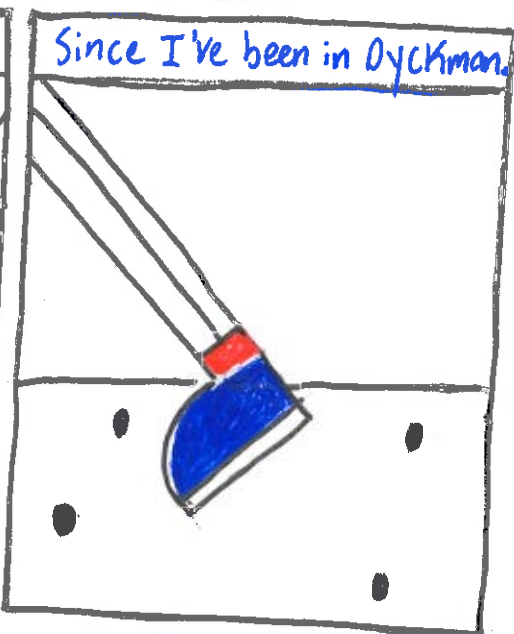
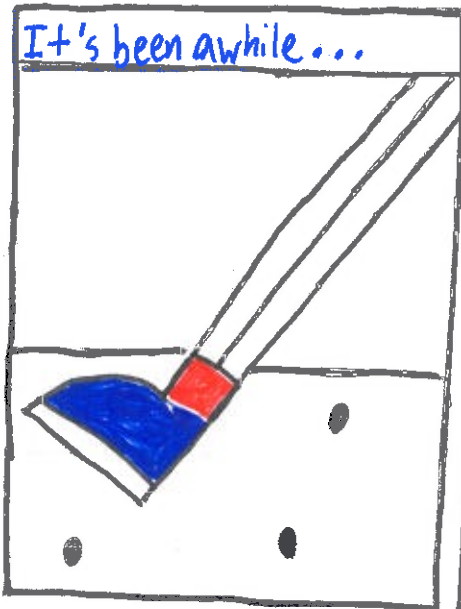




# LAS FAMILIAS OLVIDADAS

By Leonel Martínez

# Walking thru Dyckman



There are things that've remained unchanged.

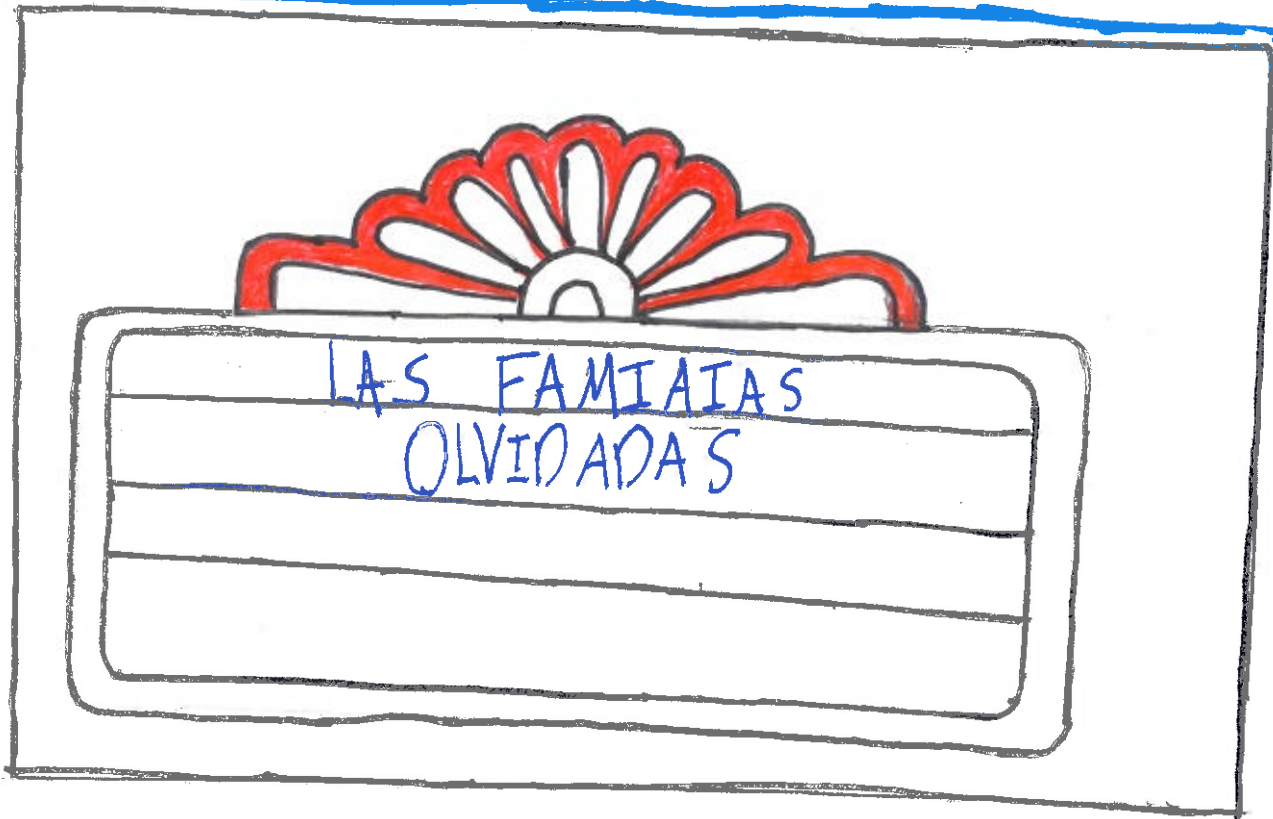


But there are things I'm surprised to see too.



## ② Where I've Been

For the last five or six years, I was acting in a touring company. It was the big break I was waiting for. We brought the smash-hit musical, Las Familias Olvidadas, from the Broadway stage to stages across the states.



Las Familias Olvidadas is a speculative musical about the "forgotten" family members, specifically the mothers, wives, aunts, and nieces, of Sebastián Lemba, Bartolomé de las Casas, Enriquillo, men known for their transgressions against the norm. The composer, a dominicana, said she wanted about the lives of these women.



Lemba

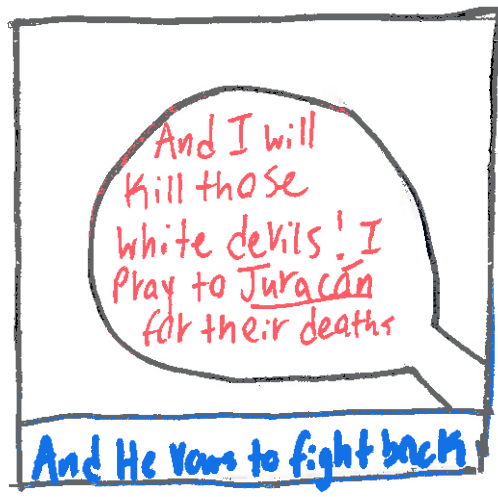
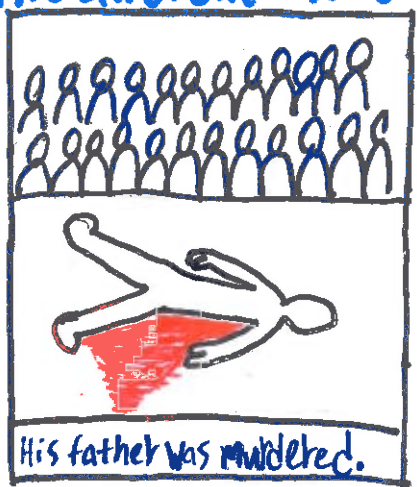


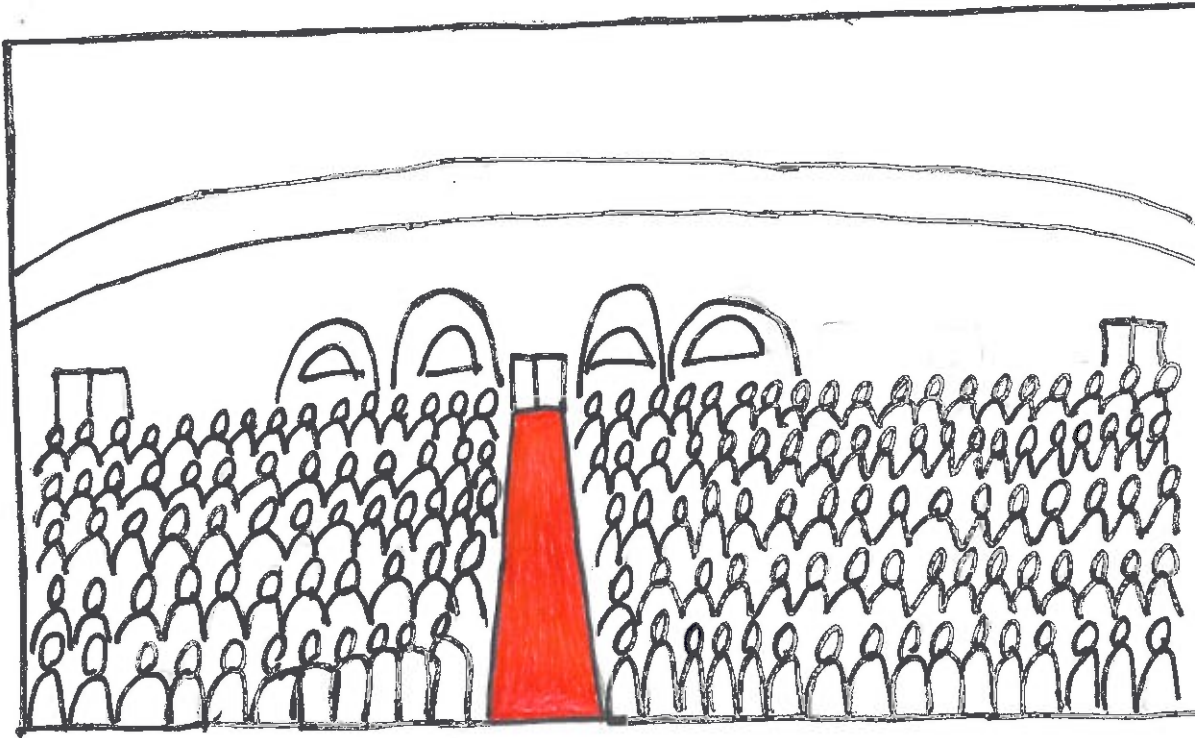
de las Casas



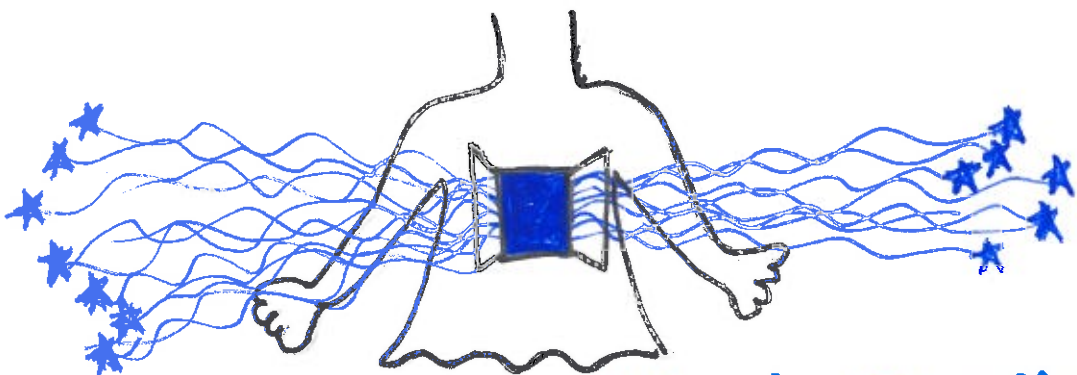
Enriquillo

I played Enriquillo. Although I was barely in the musical since the focus was on the women, I loved playing him. This was my favorite scene. The audience loved it. They clapped so much. But I never return after the sea.





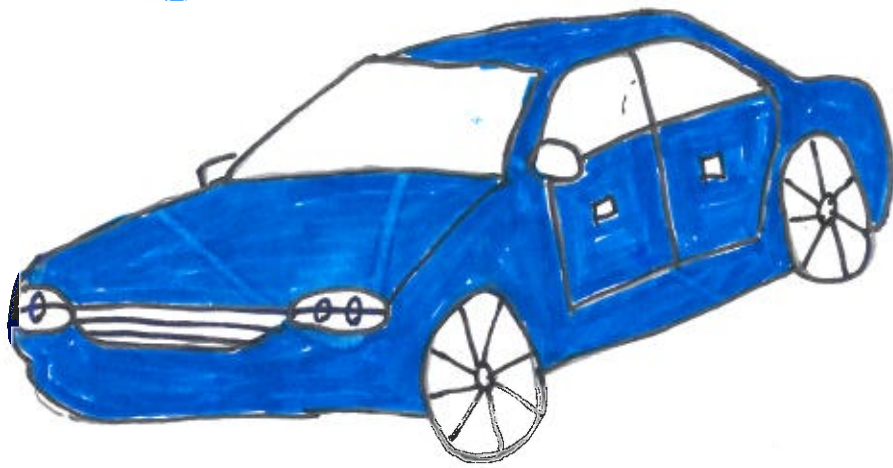
Touring the country was great and all, but I loved the experience the most of finally being seen and heard back home, it was hard to feel visible. That's why I needed to leave the Heights. But now I'm back. Maybe for good. Shit.



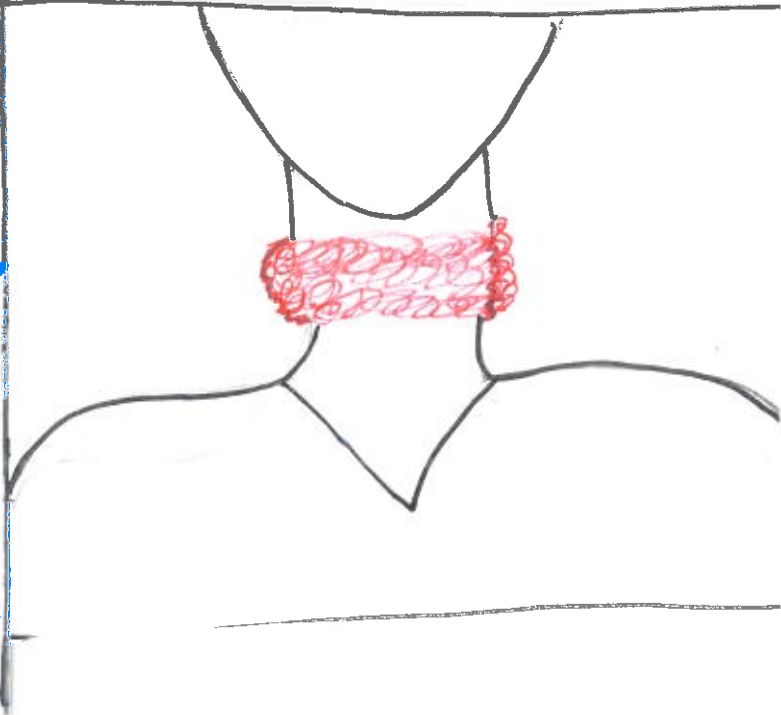
I opened myself every night and I was accepted.

### ③ Seeing the mother

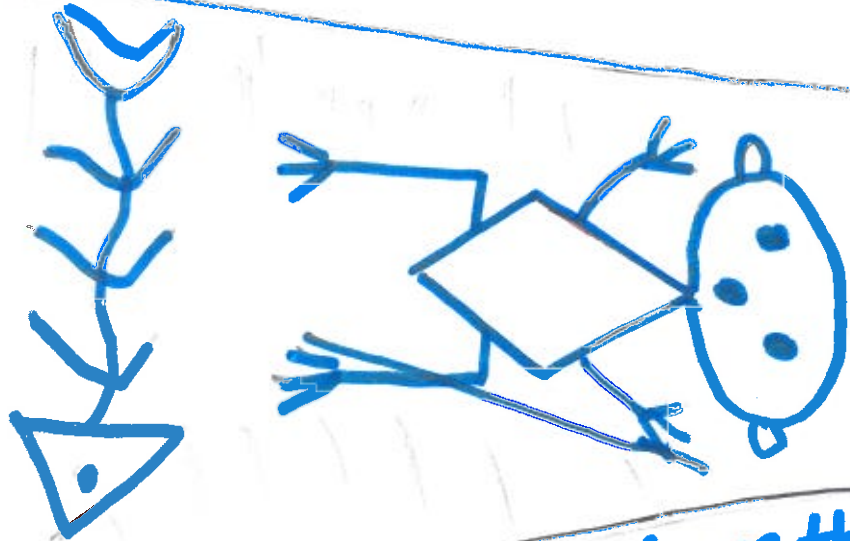
I suppose I dread coming back to Dyckman is because I have to tell my mom about Darius. Me and Darius met before I left and we maintained a relationship. Then he proposed. I said yes and promised to tell my christian, Dominican, unhappy mother. Fuck me.



My mother has always driven a taxi to support her only son. She drove for so much of my childhood. And I couldn't wait to leave Dyckman because of her. I knew she couldn't accept my queerness. But I see her blue taxi now. And I feel a lump in my throat.



Of course my mother gives me a big hug and kiss. But after her mini stroke, she is much more quiet than the force of nature she was in my childhood. But I don't understand why she still drives that car when she's sick. Anyways, she sees my tattoo and kinda freaks out. She hates it, saying only criminals get them.



But I tell her that it's from the story. Enriqueillo would have had markings on his body. So I wanted to tattoo one on me before I left. She accepts it eventually, giving me hope that she can accept me fully. Then she says she wants to drive me around like when I was a kid. And I agree.



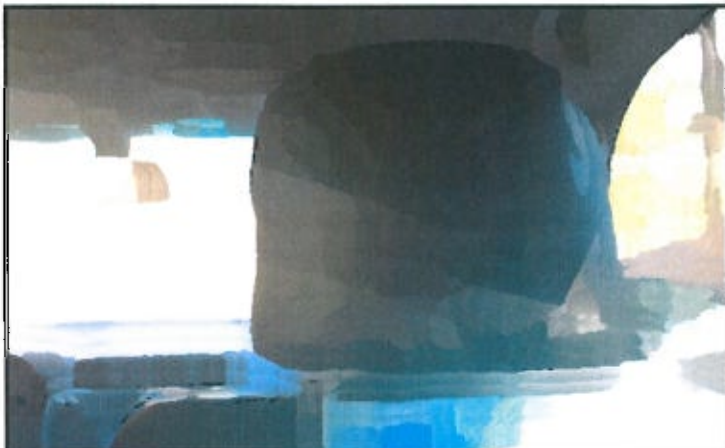
# ④ The Coming Out Scene



We drive upstate to look at the leaves change color. She must be nostalgic after not seeing me for five years.



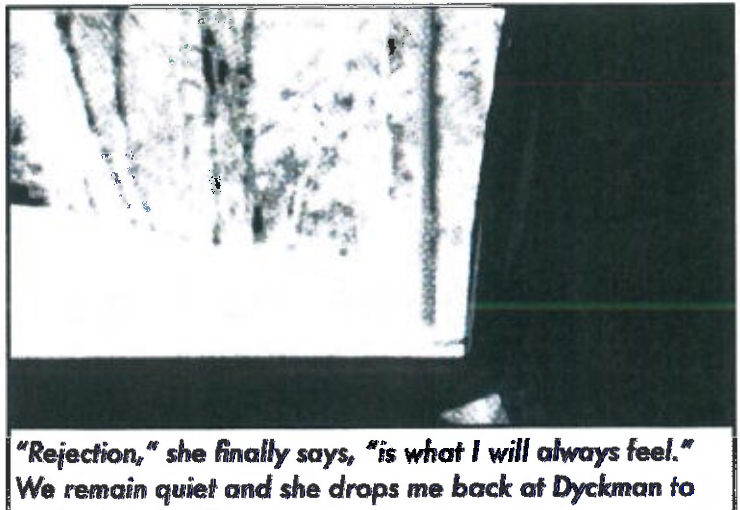
She used to drive me up here when I was kid and said that we would get a house where we can see the leaves change color.



And I see this as a chance to come out and tell her about Darius. I have to get it off my chest.



"Ma, I have a boyfriend," I say, "And I love him—a lot." She doesn't say anything.



"Rejection," she finally says, "is what I will always feel." We remain quiet and she drops me back at Dyckman to go back to work.

"But I'm not surprised she said that. I mean it hurt, sure, but I also didn't imagine her being totally happy about it, about us. I can only hope that she will get over it... somehow... Yeah I'm on my way to your place now... I might try to audition at some different places tomorrow... I need to get back on the stage, that's way... But look, Darius, thanks for listening to my story... It meant a lot to me... OK sure I'll call you later. Bye. "

—THE END

Leonel Martinez

Prof. Rosario

December 4, 2017

### Artistic Statement

Ever since I read *Fun Home* in high school, I have been interested in the graphic ways, such as Alison Bechdel used, to convey a personal story about queerness, acceptance, dysfunctional families, and healing. It was so novel to me that I began to have a secret wish to draw and write my own graphic novel about my life and my family. I thought it could be a way to heal about my childhood as a Dominican who never felt Dominican. But because I couldn't draw well, that dream was just a dream.

At the same time, I was interested in myths like the Greeks and Romans. I loved reading these stories like the reason people or nature behave a certain way, who we are, and where we came from. So therefore, I logically thought about what were my culture's own myth and origins. So I searched. But it was difficult to find any; there were so few out there in the web. And I was disheartened that I couldn't find a story that represented my people and our mythology.

Then I walked into Drawing Democracy and I unexpectedly have the opportunity to use my visual voice to convey my personal history and personal mythology. Even though I thought comics was my preferred visual form, I have expanded to prefer collages and photos essays. And the content that generally interested me was the

tension I felt within myself: my Dominican identity, my queerness, my family, my childhood memories, intergenerational traumas, and the meaning of self.

At first I did use my mother as way to express my thoughts about self and the effects of intergenerational trauma. She was the easiest way to convey those feelings of frustration yet compassion. So my first few works were about my mother. It was the easiest way to discuss the topics without involving myself. But then I looked inward and tried to put myself or a version of myself more into my own narrative. Inwardly, I wanted to discuss feelings of the effects of trauma, inspiration, and hope.

Although I am more of a writer, it was difficult to use words. So I thought an interesting style to use would be Post-it notes. I was influenced by Junot Diaz's use of footnotes in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. Although the footnotes did not drive the plot, they enriched his world and I wanted to do the same thing with the notes. Because the world and the environment of the story is just as important as the plot itself.

Finally, with my final project, entitled *Las Familias Olvidadas*, I decided to draw a simple narrative of an actor coming back home and deciding to come out to his mother. But it involves about the Dominican identity in terms of acceptance of queerness, performance, personal and nationally histories.

## Notes on Craft

### Content

As my favorite mantra goes, the personal is political, and so I wanted to create a narrative about a personal story of a character I created. But also I wanted the story to be placed in the context of the histories, both personal and collective, because understanding and learning the past is necessary for a democracy. As democracies change and evolve, as it is now, a firm grasp of the past will help to center the message.

### Form

For my visual representation, I first knew that I would only use blue and red colors. Inspired by Cuba, My Revolution, I was interested in using the color of the Dominican and American flag to convey different moods. I also did not want to show my narrator's at all and I made a conscious decision to do so. The narrator doesn't feel seen. I also knew that, for the most part, I wanted a graphic narrative of the story. I drew and wrote most of project on paper. But then I pasted and cut the different sections because the narrator is trying to piece his life together. The cover is a simple collage of maps of the Americans from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. I want the first thing for the reader to think about is the past. I used Comic Life to create it. Finally, for the coming out scene, I had taken photos of my mom driving because I also knew that I wanted the coming out scene to be in car and photos could make the scene more impactful. I used Comic Life again to create it.

## Challenges

Because I'm not the best drawer, it was a challenge to draw some of these pictures. I wish that some of them were more life-like, but I was constrained by my lack of talent. Also, the blue marker I was using throughout the project ran out of ink, so I had to scramble and find another blue marker. That's why the exposition has different shades of blue. Also, I wanted to challenge myself by not using Post-It notes at all and draw more pictures.

Plot wise, it was difficult to come with any great arc about the narrator's coming out. There is so much detail that I wanted to put in about Darius and the mother, but I didn't know how to draw them or write them. So I felt like the plot of the project is weak on that part. And it ends rather abruptly because I wasn't sure also how to draw the narrator's pain. So I gave the project a slapped on ending to wrap everything up imperfectly.

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7. Photo of Fray Bartolome de las Casas outside the Museum of the Dominican Man, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Taken by John Mitchell.  
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