

LA GENTE DE MUCHO MÁS ALLÁ:

*AN EXPERIMENTAL APPROACH TO SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION THROUGH
IMMERSIVE THEATRE AND GAMIFIED LEARNING*

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Submitted to the Board of Theatre and Performance

Conservatory of Theatre Arts

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Bachelor of Arts

Purchase College

State University of New York

May 2021

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Artistic Aims for *La Gente De Mucho Más Allá*

La Gente De Mucho Más Allá is an immersive living museum covering the topic of Latin American immigration in the United States in recent history. The project originally went up live for two performances with eight audience members a night, and was redesigned to exist in an online format for consumption by the general public due to the Coronavirus Pandemic. The project was designed with many ideas and intentions in mind, but the overarching goal was to create an experience that uses multiple artistic platforms to educate audience members about the realities of the immigration process in the United States and shine a light on the reasons why migrants don't "... just do it legally." This experience should educate without making audiences feel ashamed for a lack of knowledge and invite them to feel compelled to understand and take action to make a change. Additionally, this theatre piece should be accessible to much more than just the Purchase College theatre community. The concept was constantly reshaped and redrafted and reimagined from the moment it was born until it's live opening, and even further for it's digital debut. Needless to say, the creative team and I were more than happy with the end result.

I strive to create work that is doing something more than existing simply to enjoy as entertainment. As much as I am a fan of the standard Broadway musicals with all of their spectacle and flair, social justice is a passion of mine and I am happiest when I can combine my love for theatre and the need for change in the world to create something innovative and unique. *La Gente* is a great example of the kind of work that I would like to produce in the future. My hope is that *La Gente* will educate, impact and influence the Purchase College community (and those beyond the Purchase College "bubble") to

reevaluate any preconceived notions they may have about immigration, giving serious consideration to the circumstances that people who are just like them are going through. This theatre installation should prompt audiences not to pass judgement on the decisions that migrants make in regards to their journeys to the United States, but rather on the systems in place that leave them caught between a rock and a hard place, forcing them to make tough choices that many Americans couldn't even begin to imagine.

As mentioned previously, one of the main goals we aimed for when designing *La Gente* was educating the general public about what it really is like to immigrate legally into the United States of America and how grueling the process really can be. Despite everyone on my team being closely affected by immigration in some way, shape or form, none of us could actually identify as an immigrant to the country. We each had family members that had gone through the process, but couldn't directly connect with the subject matter in the way that we wanted to. This was tough for us at first because as easy as it would have been to tell a made-up story crafted by a playwright, we were striving for authenticity above all. One of the main reasons we were doing the project in the first place was to tell the real story of Latin American immigration so it wouldn't have made sense for us to use a fake story anyway. Our first impulse told us to interview as many people as we could and use first hand accounts to shape the stories that our living museum would tell. While conducting interviews, we also looked into what the ins and outs of the United States immigration process were to try to get a hold on what exactly we as a country are asking migrants to endure. Our end goal was to create a well informed "expectation vs. reality" comparison that would emphasize the fact that it

really is not as simple as just following the steps outlined by the lawmakers in Congress. After conducting our interviews, we found that one interview was especially eye-opening and contained a lot of material to work with. We decided to create a character that was very closely related to the interviewee and his experiences became the basis of the monologue that our main actor delivers during the experience. Because of the fact that our interviewee, Cesar, had very recently been through the system and was actually still dealing with some of the proceedings, the information that he shared with us was very fresh and very telling of what really happens when immigrating to this country.

My primary focus for this project was to remove “I didn’t know that was happening” as an excuse for people to use when asked why they haven’t taken action. Too often, people use their own ignorance as a justification for their lack of stance in social issues. Because of this, changes cannot be made because there are simply not enough voices to reach those in power. However, social media, the development of the internet and smartphones as well as instant global communication have all made it several times easier to access a wealth of information that wasn’t nearly as accessible 15 years ago. The only drawback to the “at-your-fingertips” world that we live in is that, when it comes to research, you are limited to the things that are on your radar. In other words, if you don’t know what to search up, you won’t get new information. My goal was to tackle this problem by doing a theatre installation like *La Gente De Mucho Más Allá* in a predominantly white community like Purchase College to be able to educate en masse. Unfortunately because of the pandemic, the in-person experience didn’t get nearly as much viewership opportunity as I had originally hoped for. However, the online version of the experience served to reach even further and cover more audiences than

the in-person experience could be by offering the luxury of being delivered directly to anyone in the school community who wanted to watch it. This leads me nicely into my next point.

Although much of the senior project process during the Coronavirus season was about rolling with the punches and being flexible, accessibility is immensely important to me and it was one of the few elements of my project that I was unwilling to compromise. An unexpected benefit from having to reconfigure the project to live online was its permanence. The longevity of the digital experience proved itself to be more beneficial than I had imagined as, even months after my production closed, I can pull it up on my computer and share the link with anyone who asks me for it and it is available to watch whenever it is convenient for them. This has allowed the material to have a more consistent viewing over the past few months, as opposed to going up for two nights one weekend and then only existing as a memory to those who were lucky enough to experience it in person. Another form of accessibility that I wanted to include was cultural accessibility. One of the reasons that the piece lives in the Spanish/English language binary is because the stories we are telling are those of Hispanic immigrants coming to the country. I didn't think it would be right morally to tell their stories in a language that isn't their own, but also wanted to keep in mind that if the piece was entirely in Spanish, the language barrier could disrupt the learning that we wanted to take place because of the audience that was viewing it. The final accessibility hurdle that I am still working on crossing is the one regarding disabilities such as visual and hearing impairments. Now that the project is available online for anyone to access, it came to my attention that there were some minor edits that need to be made in order for

everyone to be able to participate actively. Examples of these accommodations include captions on videos and voice overs on text-filled slides. Making little adjustments to my project in order to ensure that everyone can thoroughly enjoy it is important work in my opinion and I hope in the future it becomes a more common practice. I don't see a logical explanation in making educational and impactful theatre if it does not have the reach and the flexibility to teach as many people as possible.

I believe that *La Gente* is a phenomenal jumping-off point for the rest of my career, both as a director and as a professional. If nothing else, this project taught me just how important perspective is. I spent months trying to design an experience that I would be satisfied with while also catering to the needs of an audience. The next step in my career is in the field of Higher Education and Student Affairs, a field where conflict resolution, empathy, and equanimity are all necessary skills to have. Working on this project I learned about so many injustices that made me so angry. I found myself thinking things like, "It feels like common sense to not put a human being in a cage and yet there's still people making a case for it." Part of the reason that I believe this project is as successful as it is is that the foundation of this project is empathy. I made it a point not to create this work from a place of rage and instead focus on the intent to educate. This is a skill that I will continue to develop when I move forward in a field where I am guaranteed to be interacting with people from all different backgrounds on a daily basis.

When all is said and done, every senior just wants to create a senior project that they can be proud of and I fully believe that I did that. As grueling as the production process was, I would do it all again in a heartbeat. My team and I came together in a very challenging time and still put on a work of true theater magic that surpassed all of

my expectations. *La Gente De Mucho Más Allá* was educational, innovative, and I really believe that it captured the essence of the stories we tried to tell.

A Teacher, an Actor, and a Protester Walk Into a Bar...

In recent history, social justice has become much more prevalent in societal conversations. Police brutality and white privilege are now mainstream topics of discussion, where they used to fly under the radar. As people align themselves with different causes and tensions rise, the need for effective education is at an all time high. However, it is abundantly clear that our traditional sources of information and news are biased, tending to lean in one direction or another when covering certain topics. In times like these, it is more important than ever to find ways to educate and inform that are engaging, concise, efficient and effective. The lack of understanding a person's experience because it is different than our own is a fundamental pillar in the structure of our society that allows discrimination and oppression to run rampant. In this essay I will touch on social justice as a concept, immersive theatre and its origin, as well as the principles of gamified learning in the classroom. I will then move on to how I believe the three topics can be interwoven to communicate information and concepts in non confrontational ways more successfully than traditional news and media sources. Finally, I will discuss how I combined these three topics in my own project to create an exhibit designed to educate audiences on Latin immigration to the United States. Ultimately, I will argue that gamified learning and immersive theatre practices are more effective education tools than traditional media sources for social justice because they offer the flexibility and longevity required to provide information to large groups of people while also allowing engagement with the content on multiple levels.

According to *Social Justice: History, Theory and Research*, the definition of social justice is as follows:

“...a state of affairs (either actual or ideal) in which (a) benefits and burdens in society are dispersed in accordance with some allocation principle (or set of principles); (b) procedures, norms, and rules that govern political and other forms of decision making preserve the basic rights, liberties, and entitlements of individuals and groups; and (c) human beings (and perhaps other species) are treated with dignity and respect not only by authorities but also by other relevant social actors, including fellow citizens.”

In other words, the social justice movement is based on the principles of equity, equality, inclusion, as well as the belief that all people have basic human rights and should be treated with a certain degree of respect no matter what their background might be.

Strangely enough, social justice movements have come under fire for upholding and fighting for these beliefs. Christopher J. Lebron, author of *The Making Of Black Lives Matter*, describes #BlackLivesMatter[BLM] as a social justice movement created in 2013 by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman. He goes on to say that in his professional opinion, “‘black lives matter’ represents a civic desire for equality and a human desire for respect, the intellectual roots of which lie deep in black American thought.” The movement fights to address the unchecked injustice and brutality that black Americans face at the hands of law enforcement. Despite its noble mission, the organization has received extreme backlash from white supremacist populations and former president Donald Trump, who claimed that the movement was affiliated with Antifa. Other negative responses include the rise of the counter movements “All Lives Matter” and “Blue Lives Matter”. These counter movements were born in mockery and direct disrespect towards BLM because the message behind the BLM movement was skewed and misunderstood. Tensions in the country have been at an all time high in the past year because of a string of miscommunications between sides and a substantial lack of social education. With a strong plan to educate the masses, we could turn the tide and take the first steps in establishing a new sense of unity and togetherness in our society.

It is my belief that in order to discover the most effective ways to educate mass amounts of people in the shortest amount of time possible, there are two immediate places to look that come to mind. The first place one should search when trying to find effective education strategies is a public elementary school. We learn the foundations of every subject in these formative years of our childhood since everything we learn in our later school careers builds off of the basics of what we are taught early on. Retention is incredibly important for up and coming students which leaves elementary school teachers pulling out all of their tricks to help students remember all of the information they are taught. For this reason, it would be a misstep not to include both elementary school teachers and students in a conversation about effective education strategies. The other place I would seek input from would be the theatre and those who make theatre. Historically, theatre has served as a source of education and information across several civilizations. Additionally, theatre makers have addressed topics such as discrimination and oppression repeatedly in different forms as time has passed. Even further, immersive theatre practices take storytelling a step further by putting audiences in the middle of the action to engage more deeply with the content and gain a better understanding of the material. In plain English, if there is anyone who knows how to communicate a message to an audience, it would most likely be a theatre maker.

When it comes to education, there are about as many ways to teach something as there are things to teach. Jonathan Cassie, author of *Level Up Your Classroom: The Quest to Gamify Your Lessons and Engage Your Students*, believes that gamification of the classroom can "... leverage the Millennial mindset and the unique power of games to sustain interest and build commitment[,]" in students. Cassie developed eight

fundamental principles of the gamified classroom, placing emphasis on empowerment, engagement, and self-direction, among other important skills. Cassie also stresses the importance of having a preestablished learning objective when trying to build a gamified lesson. Learning objectives are crucial because a gamified lesson without a clear goal quickly regresses to a regular game. In addition, the teacher must be knowledgeable on their subject matter and intentional with their design in order to guarantee that the goals for their lesson are met.

In general education, understanding and making sense of the information you are trying to share with your students is critical to its reception. Randall I. Charles and C. A. Carmel address this notion as the concept of the “Big Idea” in education. According to their entry in the *Journal of Mathematics Education*, “Grounding one’s mathematics content knowledge on a relatively few Big Ideas establishes a robust understanding of mathematics... Because Big Ideas have connections to many other ideas, understanding Big Ideas develops a deep understanding of mathematics.” To clarify, students are more likely to learn new concepts and retain information when it is taught in relation to something they have already learned. An example of this in mathematics is the idea that multiplication is essentially repeated addition. The “Big Idea” in that example would be something along the lines of, “Numbers can be combined with other numbers to create larger numbers using addition.” To teach a student multiplication, you would build off of their basic understanding of addition since it is already part of their skillset.

To frame this in the context of social justice education, I believe that in order to successfully communicate the intentions of social justice organizations such as

#BlackLivesMatter, a mutual understanding of the big idea that “People should be treated fairly” needs to be reached. The trouble with most political dialogue today is the descent into the back-and-forth battle of wits and insults. Words like “racist” enter these conversations too quickly and people immediately switch from trying to understand the systemic inequalities that they benefit from to defending themselves against an attack that wasn’t directed at them. By opening the lesson with a conversation on human rights and equity, it allows audiences of privilege to join the conversation in a way that is welcoming and inviting, as opposed to harsh and harrowing. I believe that the theatre is the most intuitive metaphorical space to hold public discourse on topics such as these.

For most people, the term “theatre” calls to mind images of stages, curtains, and dramatizations of stories that were made up in order to entertain. In reality, theatre has been used for much more. Although “invented” in multiple locations around the world around the same era, living newspapers were developed ultimately “so that ‘news could be made more accessible through dramatisation’” in the 1920s when public literacy was not yet commonplace. John W. Casson notes that “Living Newspapers kept their illiterate audiences in touch with the issues of the day.” In terms of social justice, it is helpful to think of the target population of a social justice exhibit as culturally illiterate, in that they lack a fundamental understanding of an experience that is not their own. Another form of theatre that could potentially contribute to a social justice exhibit is Augusto Boal’s forum theatre, a style branching from the Theatre of the Oppressed that invites audience members to actively participate in scenes to resolve the conflict presented to them. In an article on forum theatre, Paul Dwyer states, “There is a kind of knowledge—or perhaps, better, a will to knowledge and power—which is apprehended

in such circumstances and which is qualitatively different to knowledge acquired from sitting in your seat as silent witness. It is probably also fair to claim that spectators who see a fellow audience member taking to the stage are likely to be more engaged and critically conscious observers.” In essence, people will learn more effectively through immersion and collaborative problem solving, rather than simply being fed information. This ideology is semblant of one held by Felix Barrett, founder of Punchdrunk, who says in a quote, "In the theatre, you sit there closeted and you switch off part of your brain because you're comfortable. If you're uncomfortable, then suddenly you're eager to receive." This led to the birth of a theatrical phenomenon that would permanently alter theatre as it existed at that time.

Around the year 2000, theatre saw a shift in the boundaries that it had to live within. Up until this point in time, theatre had typically been established as a passive event— a theatre goer would buy a ticket, sit in a seat in a fixed audience facing a stage or performance area, and watch some degree of presentation. Barrett pioneered the movement of what came to be called “immersive theatre”, a style of theatre where audience members were active participants in the show, instead of passive viewers. The idea in essence is that audience members are buying tickets to an experience instead of a typical show. “Punchdrunk attract people who would normally run a mile from high-concept theatre[,]” according to Liz Hoggard, who interviewed Felix Barrett. In describing Barrett’s company’s process, Hoggard says, “They find empty buildings, fill them with richly detailed sets and performers and then set the audience loose – wearing masks. The thrill comes from not knowing what’s round the corner or how you’ll react when you find it.” This novel thinking and freeform theatrical structure brought in

nontraditional audience members who sought out adventure in the theatre. This style allows audiences to explore on their own and at their own pace, forming their own understanding as they go. Additionally, the anonymity of being masked for the duration of the experience allows audiences to drop the character of themselves and temporarily become somebody else or no one at all, ultimately freeing them of the social constraints that exist in the world outside the warehouse. In these circumstances, audiences are free to exist and learn without fear of judgement.

The environment that Punchdrunk establishes in their productions is almost ideal to what would need to exist in an educational experience designed for social justice education. The anonymity of wearing a mask upon entering the space would hypothetically allow an audience member to drop their ego and prejudices to really educate themselves without feeling like they are under public scrutiny. The value of the ability to educate oneself in a space that feels open and welcoming as opposed to the hostility that arises from most public political conversations should not be underestimated. I believe that the controlled environment of a space designed to share information without judgement would be invaluable in building an experience that brings people from different backgrounds with different beliefs together.

The combination of social justice, immersive theatre and elementary “gamified” learning strategies into a holistic experience designed to create mutual understanding across social barriers could be a powerful tool in communicating information effectively in ways that news stations and other media sources cannot accomplish because of a societal mistrust in the way the information is presented in mainstream media— “I tell you the news, you accept it as truthful”. News stations like Fox News have become

popularly associated with political parties and are more interested in sharing news from angles that support their beliefs and causes, instead of in full truth as the stories should be portrayed. In the book *Hoax: Donald Trump, Fox News, and the Dangerous Distortion of Truth*, author Brian Stelter goes in detail describing the ways that the news station played a critical role in allowing misinformation about the Coronavirus pandemic and its severity in the United States to spread without any regard for the damage or lasting effects it could have. Stelter goes so far as to include a quote in the prologue of his book from Donald Trump himself where he says, “I wish the news could be— could be real,” to a room of journalists, essentially invalidating their careers. Instances of misinformation in the news have created a need for Americans to watch the news, scrutinize the information being presented and make a personal judgement call to decipher what story is actually being told behind the cryptic messages. Furthermore, with the evolution of smartphones and social media as societal norms, having the news broadcast on the television is no longer necessary for a majority of the population. News networks have not risen to the challenge of meeting our society’s need to access truthful and unbiased information, leaving the population at a critical social disadvantage.

I am confident that combining elements from the areas of social justice, gamified learning and immersive theatre is an innovative strategy for effective education on human rights because I myself made an attempt at it with my own project, *La Gente De Mucho Más Allá*. The piece was a living immersive museum that existed both in-person and online designed to inform and educate audience members about the injustices and realities of Latin American immigration to the United States in recent history. The piece

included four “rooms” spread out across an open area, each sharing something significant from the bigger picture that makes up the experience of being an immigrant to the United States and using a unique form of media to engage the audience in a way that was different from the room before. Attendants to the in-person experience cycled through listening to the varying reasons why immigrants had made the decision to leave, a movement piece detailing the separation of identity that immigrants experience when leaving their homes behind, a monologue of an immigrant sharing his experience in the United States after immigrating, and watching videos of I.C.E. agents wrongfully brutalizing immigrants while standing in a “cage” made of chicken wire. The experience was designed to allow participants to form their own understanding of the materials presented to them by immersing them in the reality of immigration and promoting active intake of the information.

According to the author of “Level Up Your Classroom”, one of the eight principles of Gamified Learning is that “gamified instruction empowers students to their own learning.” I used this principle in my project by engaging the sense of wonder of the audience as soon as they entered the space. There were no walls between rooms in the experience, so participants could see all four areas of the experience at the same time. Their curiosity was immediately piqued because although they could see each space, there was no clarity as to what was going on in each one or what would be expected of them. Inclusively, audience members could watch each other react to the content of a room they had yet to see by simply looking across the space. This allowed them to not only actively engage with the material being directly presented to them, but also keep their interest up in anticipation of what they would experience next.

Though the production had to be structured differently to accommodate the needs of an online audience, I still used principles of gamified learning to create the online edition of *La Gente De Mucho Más Allá*. The principle “self-direction is obligatory in a gamified classroom” took the lead spot in the development of the online edition. While the in-person experience followed a predetermined path with four different starting points, the online experience was much more free-form in that audience members could choose which room to start in and each room they visited after. This format resulted in 24 potential viewing sequences of the exhibit, allowing variety and uniqueness in each audience member’s interaction with the piece. The project’s initial design included audience members having the agency to choose their own path through the four rooms. This had to be modified given COVID-19 restrictions at the time so I was grateful to be able to reincorporate the design choice in a different way.

All things considered, I am aware that the proposition to use immersive theatre and gamified learning practices to educate the general population on social justice and basic human rights is a somewhat idealized solution to the problems of systemic racism that we face in our society. I do not expect a theatrical production to end racism by any means. What I am arguing is that combining the techniques discussed above could prove to be immensely beneficial in starting the battle against the widespread lack of motivation in our culture to avoid the taboo of systemic racism. The United States is in desperate need of content that will engage and empower groups of people from varying backgrounds and cultures to come together and support each other in making systemic changes for the better. I gather that the right team of professionals could design an

experience that provides this exact content, and there is no time like the present to do just that.

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Technical Essay for *La Gente De Mucho Más Allá*

La Gente De Mucho Más Allá is an immersive living museum covering the topic of Latin American immigration in the United States in recent history. The project originally went up live for two performances with eight audience members a night, and was redesigned to exist in an online format for consumption by the general public due to the Coronavirus Pandemic. The project was designed with many ideas and intentions in mind, but the overarching goal was to **create an experience that uses multiple artistic platforms to educate audience members about the realities of the immigration process in the United States and shine a light on the reasons why migrants don't "... just do it legally."** The concept was constantly reshaped and redrafted and reimagined from the moment it was born until its live opening, and even further for its digital debut. The timeline of the project spanned from its conception in July 2020 to the opening of the digital exhibit in the last days of November 2020. Although I had directed scenes in classes prior to my senior project, taking this project on was very different from any of the work I had done previously. I spent the five months constantly learning new things about what it meant to hold the title of director in a theatre piece, especially during a global pandemic.

In early July of 2020, Jack Tamburri (who would later be the producer of the Fall Festival) organized a meeting with all of the seniors who were supposed to do senior project productions in the fall to inform us that due to the coronavirus pandemic, we weren't going to be able to approach senior projects the same way as we would in a regular year. After hearing about all of the restrictions and obstacles, my collaborators decided that it would be best to come up with a new project to work on for the semester

instead of our original idea because it would have been too large of a production to successfully put up. Our original idea was to do a production of *Runaways* by Elizabeth Swados, doubling the senior project as a homelessness relief fundraising effort inspired by the content of the musical. Finding a new project was a separate, difficult task but we were confident in our abilities to pull something together. Mutually agreeing that we wanted to keep our original intentions of making a theatre piece that would have a social impact, we got to digging. Sadly, we came up empty handed. We opted to create an original piece for our senior project, which was new territory for all of us.

It wasn't until one of our August meetings that the beginnings of a concept for *La Gente* popped into my head. The original concept was a nonlinear exhibit that existed throughout five separate rooms that would allow participants to use different forms of media to engage with the stories of different people going through immigration. Ultimately we decided to focus more on Latin immigration so that the piece could hold some uniformity. The original structure allowed free reign in how you wanted to experience the piece, however with Covid-19 restrictions we had to change this. We decided that we wanted the piece to live closer to the world of documentary theatre, where all of the source material is fact-based. This meant that we had to do a very large amount of research in a very short time, given that we came up with the idea in August and the performances were scheduled for November.

Since we wanted primary sources like interviews to be our main source where we pulled from creatively, we decided that interviewing the people in our lives who had gone through the system and experienced it first-hand would give us the most immediate and gratifying payoff. Unfortunately, only one of our interviews really had

workable content since the other two interviewees had passed through the system decades before and we were looking at the system in recent history. On the bright side, the successful interview contained so much functional material that it gave us many options to choose from when deciding the direction that we wanted to take the project in. This interview became the basis of our first room and main character, José Luis Juárez, who is one of three personified characters in the exhibit and was played by Gabriel Aponte.

After listening to the transcripts of the interview, the next step in our production process was to find a writer who could turn the transcripts that we had into an actual theatre script that could be performed. I had the great fortune of knowing an incredible screenwriter and playwright, Janelle McNeil, that I knew could take the project and work magic with it so I got her on board as soon as possible and let her know what type of script I was looking for. Communicating the fact that she would be writing a script that would be used in several different forms of media proved itself to be just as challenging as it sounds but ultimately we ended up with a working script that allowed us to start rehearsal. Because most of the project was designed to be more of an exhibit that you walk through than a show that you watch, the script looked different than most scripts would to everyone involved in the project and it took some adjusting. Luckily, we didn't have very many design cues to worry about so our "installment script" did a wonderful job of getting us through rehearsals, tech, and eventually the show.

Another huge resource that aided us in picking the stories that would exist in our space was the news coverage. We did a thorough search into what various news stations were sharing and how much of the story they were choosing to share. I was not

too surprised to see mostly videos of people being brutalized by ICE agents, accompanied with claims of how the individual had a criminal record with “misdemeanor” charges in a sad attempt to justify the rough way in which the person was being treated. We used both footage that we had found and broadcasts that we remembered watching to inspire the stories that corresponded to the artifacts that existed in “El Museo”, a sound-based room. Some of these videos were also seen in “El Jardín”, a room where in-person audience members stood “fenced in” on three sides and watched videos of ICE detainments.

Our last room housed a movement piece detailing the experience of an immigrant leaving behind his home country and coming to America. We were so lucky in that the man we interviewed and based José Luis off of was a queer dancer in real life, which checked off a lot of boxes in terms of the intersectionality we were trying to convey. Though I have experience in movement and dance, there was something that felt untruthful about me choreographing a piece to tell a story that wasn’t mine, so I asked our interviewee and his partner if they could choreograph a piece that would be incorporated into our final project. They agreed and we got a beautiful piece that I performed in our last room, “El Baile”.

As much as I would have loved to celebrate the successful opening and closing of our in-person exhibit for a little longer, recreating an equally successful exhibit online proved to be the thing I needed to knock me down a few pegs. I was very focused on recreating the exhibit that existed in-person exactly in a digital medium but kept running into walls and got very frustrated. It wasn’t until a close friend and fellow theatre person asked me a very simple but loaded question in talking about my senior project that my

online vision for the piece was formed. She said, “At the end of the day, the people who watch your thing online are never gonna get the same experience as the few who saw it in-person. They’re just not. So why not just take all your materials and design a new experience?” The concept of reworking my already existing project to change shape again to accommodate online audiences hadn’t even occurred to me — which is strange, considering I spent the entire semester molding and twisting and altering my preexisting concept an infinite number of times — but as soon as it was mentioned, I was able to remaster it to live in a Prezi format, where it still exists months after for public consumption.

Upon reflection I have found that in regards to my project, there are some choices that I would stand by every time, and there are some that I would change in a heartbeat if I could. Below you will find a list of Successes and Setbacks, with reasons why I labeled them as such.

Successes

1. Concept Execution: I felt as though my project did an excellent job of presenting the stories of Latin immigrants using varying artistic mediums in a way that was evocative and effective. in-person, the variety of sensory elements allowed audience members to immerse themselves and engage with the material on multiple levels. Online, the piece again used different strategies to present relevant information that kept audiences engaged.
2. Integrity: The original concept of the piece was to tell Latin immigration stories without the sugar coating that mainstream media typically provides. The piece

did justice to the vulgarities and obscenities that occur outside of the public eye, yet still maintained a sense of beauty and dignity for those Latin immigrants whose stories were being told. I wanted audiences to feel empathy during this experience, not pity, and I feel as though the line was not crossed.

3. Rehearsal for Actor: The time I spent working with Gabriel Aponte on his monologue for the show was very intentional from start to finish. I am aware of my tendencies to “make it up as I go” and I really wanted to avoid that for such an important piece. Each rehearsal was scheduled in advance and I came in with a list of goals to accomplish by the end of our sessions and really stuck to it. The time that we spent was well used, I only wish there was more. *see Setbacks #1*

Setbacks

1. Self Casting: My biggest regret about this piece is that I chose to cast myself in it. In the early stages of the project, we were advised to use as few people as possible because of the pandemic and I thought that having myself in it would be beneficial to the project because it would lower our numbers of total people involved and scheduling would be easier. As the show approached, however, I realized that being in my own show meant **I couldn't watch it**. In the beginning of the piece it wasn't a big problem but as opening night approached I realized several things at the same time: a. I hadn't dedicated enough rehearsal time to myself because I was so focused on other parts of the piece, b. It takes twice as long for half the work when you're directing yourself because you have to record and watch everything back instead of seeing it real time, and c. I couldn't do a full walkthrough of my final piece because I was part of it. If I redid this project, I

would absolutely outsource and find a movement artist to take my place in “El Baile”.

2. Follow-Ups: I didn’t do a very good job of following up with people about my project when it came to production needs, both because I was not organized enough and because of my anxiety asking for things. I learned very quickly as a director that if you do not ask for the things you want and make sure they are available, you simply will not get them.
3. “King-of-the-Hill” Mentality: Looking back, I realized that there were times that I assumed “too much” responsibility as the director of my piece and I took on many things that could have been delegated to my collaborators or other people. The combination of wanting things to be done a specific way and not wanting to be judged for being behind schedule made me assume singular responsibility for everything that happened surrounding my project instead of relying on my peers to support me.

Of course, there were more successes and setbacks than those mentioned above, however, these were the most impactful in teaching me lessons about being a better director.

One choice that my team and I received some questions on was the inclusion of our “Secretary from Hell”, played by our dramaturg, Spencer Strong. She performed two main functions in the script that made her essential to the overall success of the piece. Her first role was to facilitate transitions and keep traffic flowing in the 20 second transition period we had built in to ensure that the entire experience stayed on track. The secretary was the voice that called out to change rooms when time was up, without

regard for whether or not the material in each room was actually finished. in-person, she gave minimal direction when audience members first came in and then they were at her mercy for the rest of the experience. Online, her indifferent attitude made it very clear that all though she was a “help resource”, she was entirely uninterested in being helpful. Her other role in the piece was to add to the feeling of dehumanization that the audience felt as soon as they walked through the doors/played her first video. We wanted to demonstrate the idea that immigrants often come to America with little knowledge of what the process looks like and are met with harsh treatment and little regard for their humanity. The secretary role was designed to be improvisational and I directed Spencer to belittle audience members during transitions as often and as cruelly as she felt was appropriate. The Secretary from Hell added a necessary dynamic that I personally feel elevated the piece greatly.

All this to say, I believe that *La Gente De Mucho Más Allá* accomplished exactly what it set out to do. It was innovative, informative, but most importantly, it was educational. It was a doozy of a project and unlike anything I ever thought I would create, but I learned so much from this process and I could not be more proud of the work that everyone put into it.

Director's Workbook

“La Gente De Mucho Más Allá”

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Actor Scene List

Secretary From Hell	Jose Luis Juaréz	Movement Artist	Voice of Juana	Voice of Gustavo	Voice of Valentina
Phase 1: Booking					
Phase 2: Naturalization (Transitions)					
	Phase 2: Naturalization (El Cuarto)				
			Phase 2: Naturalization (El Museo)	Phase 2: Naturalization (El Museo)	Phase 2: Naturalization (El Museo)
		Phase 2: Naturalization (El Baile)			
Phase 3: Assimilation	Phase 3: Assimilation	Phase 3: Assimilation			

Not Listed: Phase 2: Naturalization (El Jardín)

French Scene Breakdown

Scene	Description	Characters
1- Booking	SFH assigns participants to starting positions.	SFH
2- Rooms (A-D)	Actual production content (specifics below)	SFH (transitions) JLJ Mover
2- El Jardín (A)	Participants step into a cage unit and watch videos of I.C.E. agents brutalizing immigrants.	
2- El Cuarto (B)	JLJ tells his story living in the U.S. after the imm. process in a monologue.	JLJ
2- El Museo (C)	auditory experience; participants scan QR codes assoc. with artifacts. Each scan gives audio of an immigrant's reason for immigrating to America.	Juana (voice actor) Gustavo (voice actor) Valentina (voice actor)
2- El Baile (D)	Part one: movement piece detailing the identity crisis that comes with immigration. Part two: academic "seminar" on the conditions/stipulations that come with immigration.	Mover
3- Talk-Back	SFH, JLJ, and Mover host a talk back discussing responses to the exhibit, sharing more information that couldn't directly be included in the piece, and	SFH JLJ Mover

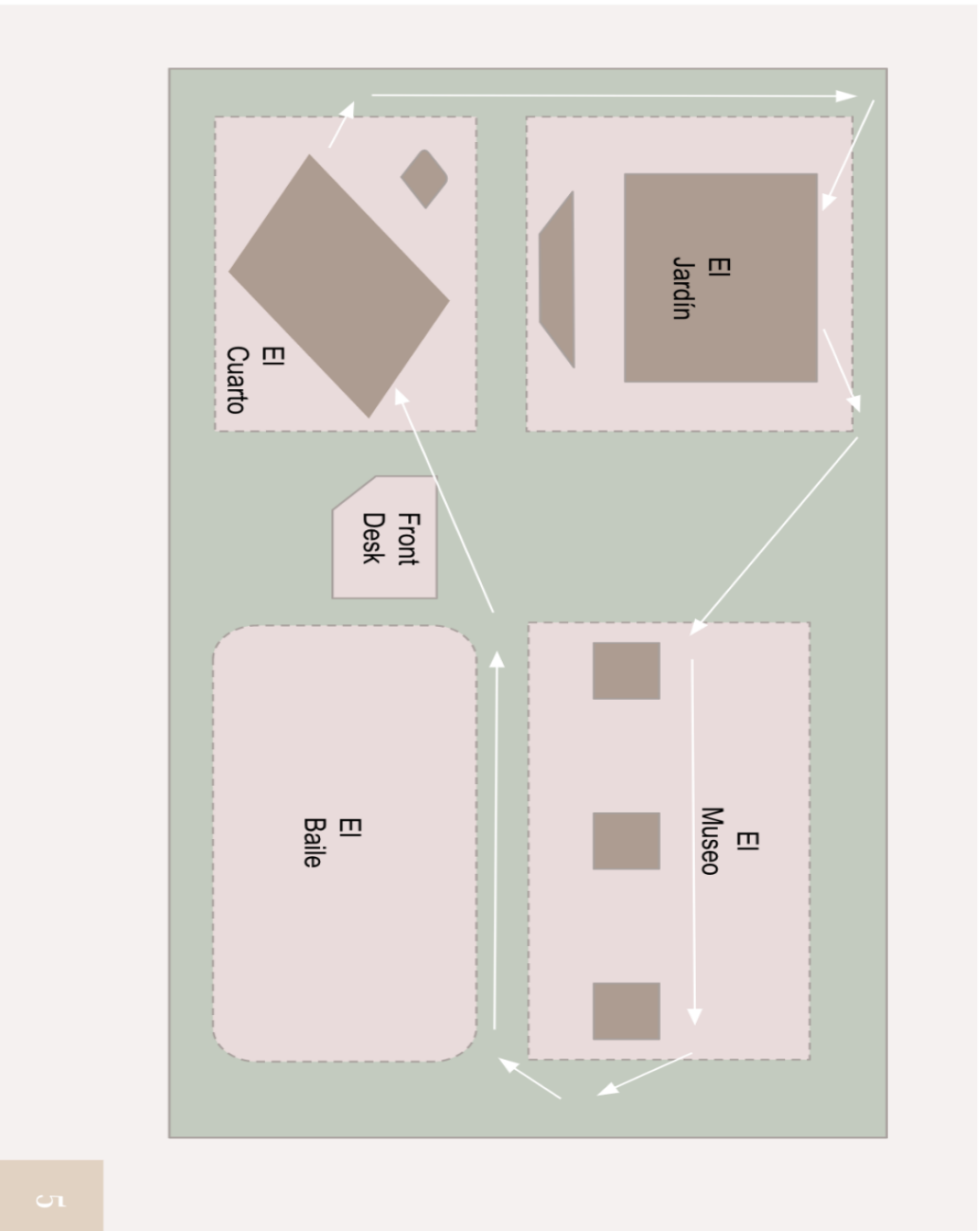
	asking participants questions from the actual US Citizenship test to see if they know the answers.	
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Rehearsal Planning Breakdown

Scene	One Character	Two Characters	Three Characters
1- Booking	SFH		
2- Rooms (A-D)			
3- El Jardín (A)			
4- El Cuarto (B)	JLJ		
5- El Museo (C)			Juana, Gustavo, Valentina
6- El Baile (D)	Mover		
7- Talk-Back			SFH , JLJ, Mover

Subject to Change

Ground plan/ Set Design



Story Breakdown

<i>Costume Prop Set</i>	Scene Name	Where	What	Music/ Sound	Mood	Who
<p><i>Secretary From Hell (SFH)- plaid blazer and skirt (office attire), glasses, short heel</i></p> <p>SFH- book at desk</p> <p><u>OPEN ROOM DIVIDED INTO SECTIONS BY LIGHTING;</u></p> <p><u>Front desk- standalone desk with aged computer and chair;</u></p> <p><u>El Jardín- a cage unit made of chicken wire, with a TV unit outside the fence;</u></p> <p><u>El Cuarto- a chair and a floor lamp, two chairs for audience</u></p>	1-Booking	Surreal, nondescript Immigration Office	A nightmare-ish iteration of an immigration office. This place exists outside time and space.	Droning, factory vents and ambient noise, loud enough to notice but not distract (plays in background experience) [abv. droning]	Cold, unfamiliar, tense	SFH

<p><u>seating; El Museo- 3 pillars, one with a butterfly pendant, one with a men's wedding ring, and one with a baby photo, paired with a QR code; El Baile- an easel brought out after the movement piece</u></p>						
	2- Rooms (A-D)	Surreal, nondescript Immigration Office	A nightmare-ish iteration of an immigration office. This place exists outside time and space.	Droning	Cold, unfamiliar, tense	SFH (transitions) JLJ Mover
<p><u>A box-shaped cage unit made with chicken wire wrapped around the frame on three</u></p>	2- El Jardín (A)	Garden of Human Condition	A "garden" of human condition where the reality of the lives that many Latin immigrants are living	Video montage of I.C.E. attacks	Somber	None

<u>sides, a TV unit is outside the fence on a box where the video will play; POTENTIAL : fake vines and flowers woven through fencing</u>			in America with the I.C.E. raids that took place.			
<i>JLJ- chacabana style shirt, khaki pants</i> <u>A chair and a floor lamp in one corner for JLJ, two chairs for audience</u>	2- El Cuarto (B)	JLJ's Room	Jose Luis' room in America. It's small and humble, but it is his.	Droning	Nostalgic, hopeful	JLJ
Three jewelry boxes, three QR codes, a butterfly pendant, a men's wedding ring, a baby photo, 3 pillars equally spaced apart	2- El Museo (C)	Museum of Collective Consciousness	A space where one can listen to the stories attached to any artifact they find. This place holds the universal experience of immigration.	*in ear audio* -Story Valentina -Story Juana -Story Gustavo No order	Serious, Mournful	Juana (voice actor) Gustavo (voice actor) Valentina (voice actor)
<i>Mover-white</i>	2- El Baile (D)	Outdoor "pocket	The movement	"Un Dia Me Voy A Ir"-	Uplifting, then	Mover

<p><i>button up shirt, tan pants, bare feet</i> Easel, presentation pad with immigration policy information <u>Easel brought out to mark slightly right of center after movement piece</u></p>		<p>dimension " on the border between the U.S. and Mexico</p>	<p>piece details the back and forth of cultural identity caused by immigration. The seminar takes place in the time just before an immigrant turns themselves in to border patrol.</p>	<p>Julieta Venegas</p>	<p>serious</p>	
<p><u>House Lights and Room Lights FULL, officially out of the world of the experience</u></p>	<p>3-Talk-Back</p>	<p>Theatre E at Purchase College</p>	<p>The space where the production is being presented. This is an out of world part of the exhibit.</p>	<p>none</p>	<p>Comfort, education space, social</p>	<p>SFH JLJ Mover</p>

Transition Breakdown

“Rooms” have no walls and exist in an open floor plan where the entire play space can be seen at once.

All Phase 2 rooms occur simultaneously, four times in succession.

Scene	Music/Sound at start of scene	Music/ Sound During	Music/Sound at End	Lighting	Actors Present
Phase 1: Booking	Droning, factory vents and ambient noise, loud enough to notice but not distract (plays in background experience) [abv. droning]	Droning	Droning	Room Lights FULL House Lights 50% *red/blue lights from El Jardín not on yet	SFH
Rooms (A-D)	N/A	N/A	N/A	Room Lights FULL	SFH, JLJ,

				House Lights 0%	Mover
El Jardín (A)	Droning	Video montage of I.C.E. brutalization	Droning	Solid Red/Blue lights resembling police lights (no flashing), tv screen playing video montage House Lights 0%	N/A
Transition	SFH call to rotate	SFH herding audience	SFH call to start	Room Lights FULL House Lights 0%	SFH
El Cuarto (B)	Droning	Droning	Droning	Interior lighting; floor lamp, warm yellows, “home-y” House Lights 0%	JLJ
Transition	SFH call to rotate	SFH herding audience	SFH call to start	Room Lights FULL House Lights 0%	SFH
El Museo (C)	Droning	*headphones* -Story Valentina -Story Juana -Story Gustavo No order	Droning	Overhead white spotlight over each artifact, room dim but still semi-lit with yellow/white light House Lights 0%	None
Transition	SFH call to rotate	SFH herding audience	SFH call to start	Room Lights FULL House Lights 0%	SFH
El Baile (D)	“Un Día Me Voy A Ir” by Julieta Venegas	“Un Día Me Voy A Ir” by Julieta Venegas till half way through	Droning while Mover speaks	For movement: side lighting (blue/white) For spoken: Spot on easel House Lights 0%	Mover
Transition (after all 4)	Droning rises then stops	SFH, JLJ and Mover speak	None	All Lights OUT	SFH, JLJ, Mover
Talk-back	Call for Lights Up	None	None	Room Lights FULL House Lights FULL *red/blue lights from El Jardín not on	SFH, JLJ, Mover

Music Playlist

Ambience

1. Vent- Robert Rich and Ian Boddy
2. Lithosphere- Robert Rich and Ian Boddy
 - a. Washer/Dryer Sounds
 - b. Factory Ventilation Unit Sounds
 - c. Halogen Light Buzzing Sounds

Secretary From Hell

1. Devil Woman- Cliff Richard

El Jardín

1. Man Down- Rihanna
2. Tired- Kelly Price
3. How To Disappear Completely- Radiohead

El Cuarto

1. This Is America- Childish Gambino

El Museo/El Baile

1. Un Dia Me Voy A Ir- Julieta Venegas
2. Ti Moune- Once On This Island OBC

Rehearsal Details

1. Oct. 1, 2020: In-Person (Opening 6 weeks out)

This rehearsal functioned to help everyone involved in a new rehearsal process, especially after the period of inactivity we all experienced due to the pandemic. I asked my actor to read the monologue he would be performing ahead of time so that we could jump right into working but he hadn't gotten the chance to. I gave him some time to read while I organized myself. I then asked him to read it aloud a couple of times so he could understand the full arc of the piece before we focused on a specific section of the piece. I noticed early on that my actor's diction was not very strong and that I would have to drill diction every rehearsal to make sure that he would be prepared for opening. I then jumped into physicality because even though there wouldn't be a lot of movement in terms of staging, I wanted my actor to appear loose and comfortable while delivering lines. We did exercises that focused on him being light on his feet and commanding his weight since I noticed that he stepped very heavily and made a lot of noise when he walked. Overall, I felt it was

a very successful rehearsal. We planned to have an online rehearsal the following week as well as an in-person one.

- a. “Rehearsal started out with a discussion of how rehearsals will be run and What we want to do in this space. When Gabe showed up Andres and he spoke about the monologue he will be reading and what it stood out to him. Andres then had Gabe read the monologue a few times. After discussing some more, Andres had Gabe get on his feet and use a chair in the space and read again. Gabe read through the beginning of the monologue a few times with discussions with Andres between each. We took a short break then got back into running the beginning of the monologue and discussion. We took another break then went into a physical type of exploration. We found out Gabe has issues with skipping but found the suspension of breath in the exercise. Andres then had Gabe work a scene in a few different ways. Andres needed a small break to organize his thought then we continued right along with Andres having Gabe watch a dance that will be included in the piece.”

2. 10/7/20: Online

This rehearsal was scheduled as a precautionary rehearsal just in case we were forced to go back online with the pandemic looming. I wanted to make sure that we had a game plan in case we had to do our production from our dorms instead of in the theatre space like originally planned. We covered many of the same things that we covered in the first rehearsal, as well as establishing what space we would use for Jose’s room should COVID-19 pick up. I introduced the idea of doing an articulation warm-up every day and told my actor that I would prepare something for the rehearsal the next day.

3. 10/8/20: In-Person (Opening 5 weeks out)

I started this rehearsal with a list of tongue twisters. I knew that time needed to be dedicated to conscious work on his diction so I made a point to carve it out at the top of every rehearsal. After this, we moved into the script and I had him focus on phrases where he slurred. We then moved onto the monologue as a whole and started working it in its entirety. I began giving him the freedom to move as he spoke so that the

monologue could start taking shape, suggesting minor tweaks. We then ran it full through and called it a night.

- a. “We had a relaxing start to rehearsal discussing the show and worldly happenings with Andres. Gabe was late due to a chiropractor appointment. Once Gabe arrived Andres had him run some theatrical articulation exercises then had him move onto the phrases from his monologue. Andres had him moving around the space speaking the lines then started him working the monologue in full. We took a break after running the chunks of the monologue and returned to them after the break. Andres had Gabe run through the whole monologue and finish up working on the second part of the monologue. We then ended rehearsal and prepped from the Production Meeting tomorrow.”

4. 10/15/20: In-Person (Opening 4 weeks out)

Rehearsal on this day was much more focused on the production side of the show and the technicalities of what the next few weeks would bring. We discussed scheduling, the use of clear masks, and specifics of ground plan. After ironing out the details, I jumped into the diction work and later the monologue. At this point, conversations of memorization began to happen. Additionally, we began to cut certain parts of the monologue for time purposes.

- a. “Today we started out with check-ins and some vocal and language exercises. Andres had Gabe then jump into his monologue. We then took a break to talk through scheduling and the plan moving forward. After the break, we went back to working on the sections of the monologues for a while. Following our next break, Andres gave Gaeb all his notes and we ended rehearsal earlier.”

5. 10/27/2020: In-Person (Opening 2 weeks out)

This rehearsal was called to allow the actor to perform for someone else besides myself. I called in our other collaborator

Spencer to function as the other audience member and Gabe performed with two points of focus for the first time. I encouraged him to find moments to connect with each audience member. We also discussed the production and what job or jobs each of us would have during the actual performance.