

Lua Arcos-Pangione

Honors Thesis Abstract & Keywords

SPRING 2018

Abstract

This 45 minute staged reading, Performative Radicalism Hea(l/r)ing the Latinx Historia, follows the narratives of 10 Latinx people living in the US today. It encompasses the hard and beautiful realities of being Latinx by exploring the themes of "Me/*Yo*", "Location/*Ubicación*", "Skin-Color/*Piel-Color*", "Tongue/*Lengua*", "Us/*Nosotros*." The 10 narratives are from real interviews Lua conducted for her thesis.

Keywords

Applied Theatre, Contract Major, Honors, Thesis, *Latinx*, Performative, Radicalism, Healing, Hearing, *Historia*, Strive, Me, *Yo*, Location, *Ubicación*, Skin, Color, *Piel*, *Color*, Tongue, *Lengua*, Us, *Nosotros*.

Youtube Link of Performance

<https://youtu.be/LRfqoH6MICw>

Script (Attached)

PERFORMATIVE RADICALISM

Hea(l/r)ing the *Latinx Historia*

By Lua Arcos-Pangione

Honors Thesis

Dedicación

This work is in collaboration with, and in honor of, all the human beings who shared a piece of themselves with me. It was an honor and privilege to hear such beautifully complex stories. If it was not for your contribution, this play would not be in existence. So, thank you for giving us a glimpse of humanity. Thank you for “being.”

Scenes

Me / Yo
Location / *Ubicación*
Tongue / *Lengua*
Skin - Color / *Piel - Color*
Us / *Nosotros*

Setting

There should be a bare stage with 10 chairs and 10 music stands placed all over the stage in random places. The actors will place the chairs and music stands where they should go at the top of the show.

Time

This play takes place in the here and now.

Location

This play is located in the United States of America.

Music

The music at the beginning of the show and at the end should be a collection of Latin music. It should range from popular songs of today, to older bachata and salsa songs of the past. Maybe there is Selena and *Aventura playing in the mix*. Make it enjoyable for the audience to listen to.

Los diez actores

MÍA (Brittany Hernandez) — Mexican & White. Mía is a poet and a leader but struggles to embrace her Mexican roots. Her identity has been questioned her whole life and the reasonings behind her fathers absence has lead her to question that identity even more.

GABRIEL (Danny Ramirez) — Puerto Rican. Gabriel commands the space with his wise and honest outlook on life. He understands his roots really well but struggled for a long time to understand how to use his anger for good. He is always seeking new ways of understanding his circumstances.

CAMILA (Crystal Vazquez) — Panamanian, Afro-Latina. Camila is the funniest out of the group. She is lighthearted and truly embraces everything she has been given. Comfortable in her own skin, Camila will be the first one to admit she would rather put a label to something even if it's only temporary.

CARLA (Gislaine Garcia) — Colombian. Carla is a bit more reserved in her expression about herself. She doesn't share much, but when she does share, her words stem from her desire to challenge the notion of justice and equity.

MIGUEL (Jeremy Bohorquez) — Colombian. Miguel is very vocal about his life and is not afraid to tell it how it is, even if that means shining a light on his family. One of triplets, he is the "older brother" and tries to uphold the "man of the house" ideal, all while having a very kind heart.

IRENE (Cory Sierra) — Venezuelan, Colombian & European. Irene is loud and proud of her Latin roots even though she struggles to embrace the generational trauma that was passed down to her. She uses her body to express her passionate self.

SARA (Gabriela Rivera) — Puerto Rican & Mexican. Sara is the shy one in the group. She has only ever known the US but longs to understand her Hispanic roots, even if that means walking around clueless until she finds it.

MARIANNA (Sara Gomez) — Dominican, Afro-Latina. Marianna is a soft spoken, soulful being who becomes almost a different person when she is reminded about how special her culture really is. The pact between two women has lead her to strive towards excellence even when she wanted to fall back into anger and destruction.

ALEJANDRO (Evelisha Martinez) — Colombian, Afro-Latino. Alejandro is a calm kind of guy who hasn't paid close attention to his identity until now. Due to his ambiguous features and desire to let go of his families past, it has left him at odds with himself and his identity. He has pretty much dropped his Afro-Latino roots for the "American culture."

ISIDORA (Genoveva Vargas Camacho) — Mexican. Isidora is a kind, sweet girl who is almost always nervous to express herself because she fears saying the wrong thing at the wrong time to the wrong person. As she has gotten older she learned to embrace her identity and all that came with it, even if that meant compromising her hearts desire.

Los diez actores continued...

All actors are dressed in their street clothes. These characters should not be acted out from preconceived notions of what it means to be “Latin.” These stories are taken from real experiences. Each character tells the complex realities and truths about what it means to be Latinx in the US today.

Los palabras

When words are italicized, outside of the context of *[brackets]*, it should be said with a general Spanish speaker dialect (not specific to Spain). When words are underlined, the actor should emphasize those words. There is flexibility with this. When sentences are repeated in Spanish into English or English into Spanish, divide the phrases amongst the actors. Some will say the Spanish version and the others will say the English version, some may not say anything at all. This should be discussed amongst the actors and director. Before starting each scene, the actors will say the scene titles in unison.

Cue music.

The house lights fade, stage lights come up. I Carried This For Years begins to play by Ibeyi. Actors begin to pour onto the stage from different entrances. The entrance should follow the pace of the music. They rearrange the chairs and stands that are already on stage into a semi-circle. As Ibeyi ends, the actors stand up behind their music stands. The play begins.

This next piece should be broken up amongst the actors. Director & actors should divide up the following parts together.

ME / YO

GABRIEL. Where do we begin? [Pause.] We have to start somewhere, right? So, lets begin here. [Gestures to himself and they all nod in agreement.]

GABRIEL. I stand here knowing that there is more to my existence
I stand here understanding that my appearance is not the only thing that makes me “different”

ALL. I stand here and see how different I am.

CARLA. I listen just to hear the tones of those who do not get it
I listen to the way they walk through life
I listen and see that their ignorance persists even in the form of justice and “woke-ness.”

ISIDORA. I taste their misuse of my words
My language

ALL. *Mi idioma*

ISIDORA. Our language

ALL. *Nuestro idioma.*

CAMILA. I taste the patterns of their looks
I stand here listening to the taste of my color

ALL. *Mi color*

MARIANNA. Looking at my life through the life of my ancestors
Wandering through the planes of existence that only exist within my body
Embracing myself for the first time
As if I were a babe in the womb of my own arms.

MIGUEL. Cherishing the smile I see when I look in the mirror of my mother’s face
Seeing through the dark brown eyes that call me at night

MIGUEL. Whispering to me in beauteous tones that I once rejected

ALL. But do I still reject it?

IRENE. Watching the reflection of myself in all of us,

ALL. *Nosotros.*

SARA. Touching our reflection to make sure our eyes are not playing tricks on our hearts.

Scratching at our mind thinking about when we were hurt by the same tone, the same place, the same image.

MÍA. Bringing together these lives

Like a hive that only grows by acknowledging the development of one another.

ALL. We strive in the act of standing

We strive in the act of listening

We strive in the act of tasting

We strive in the act of touching

We strive in the act of seeing

ALL. We strive in the existence of our bodies

ALEJANDRO. Embracing what others have told us to reject

ALL. But we Rejoice!

In our laughter

In our smiles

In our eyes

In our walk

ALEJANDRO. We rejoice for being who we are and how we relate to this world
To the world that our ancestors inhabited.

IRENE. Invading our truth

So that our truths become the melody that carries us between and among
the lines that you create.

[Pause.]

MARIANNA & GABRIEL. We stand.

CAMILA & MIGUEL. We listen.

ALEJANDRO & IRENE. We taste.

CARLA & ISIDORA. We touch.

MÍA & SARA. We see.

ALL. We rejoice! We are.

MÍA. If you could sum up your existence in a few words what you would say?

GABRIEL. My life? Anger, love, misguided truth, darkness to light.

CAMILA. There are too many things for me to say so I will say them all. [*Reciting them as if it was a list.*] Constant unlearning & relearning. Something worth “the struggle.” My mom’s draft (it isn’t finalized yet). A global citizen, the world is my oyster. It’s still unwritten.

CARLA. I would have to say that my life is an ongoing rollercoaster with a lesson at every loop.

MIGUEL. A life full of good and bad detours. But working together gets you through it.

IRENE. Damn. I wrote a list. Survival, healing, love, struggle, ancestry.

SARA. My life can be summed up by the saying, ‘the independent investigation of the truth.’

MARIANNA. [*Pause.*] I had to erase my answer a few times because I wanted to get it right. This is what I have to say: My life is a series of dreams deferred and then reclaimed.

ALEJANDRO. A series of unpredictable, wonderful transitions. Is that right?

ISIDORA. Family comes first. Always comes first.
MÍA. For me? My life? I would say that for now, this is me.
ALL. Soy yo.

They all sit. Next scene.

LOCATION / UBICACIÓN

In this next section, the actors should stand up when they are sharing their stories. The other actors may mime the important sections of each narrative. Whatever brings justice to the story.

ALL. *[Every time the actors say this phrase they are either disgusted, doe-eyed, annoying, relaxed, etc. This should be continued throughout this section whenever these lines are brought up.]* Where do you come from? ¿De dónde eres?

GABRIEL. *[Stands up.]* If I lived in a perfect world, I would want everyone who is from a different nation to go back to their roots! If they could go to their countries for a year and then come back, I think they would have a different perspective on the world. I'm Puerto Rican and I lived there and here for a good portion of my life. It took me a really long time to realize that I'm not a kid from the projects, I'm Taino, I'm African, I'm Spaniard and all the other mixture of cultures that were happening at the time. My family's wealth comes from the land my laborer grandparents worked for, so they could pass it on to their kids. That's our wealth. It was so empowering for me to see who I truly was by asking them for their stories and visiting them at their house that sits on the edge of a mountain in PR. It was beautiful. I was able to go deeper by living there. *[Sits down.]*

ALL. ¿De dónde vienes?

MÍA. *[Stands up.]* I was born and raised in Florida but I would have been raised in Mexico if my family didn't need my mother's help in the US. She's white. My Mexican father was gone after the age of three. I moved to New York when I was a teenager but wish everyday I could go back and live in *México*. I constantly wonder if my white roots deflect my Latin roots. *[Sits down.]*

ALL. Where do you come from?

CAMILA. *[Stands up. Laughs.]* Ok, ok. Lemme backtrack real quick. I'm the type of person who loves to categorize and put labels on things. Without it, I feel like I'm lost in the sauce. I'm not saying that every person needs a label because it can be a good or bad thing depending on who you talk to. But what I'm saying is that labels give you a gist of like whatchu are. If that makes sense? All my life I have said that I was Afro-Latina because I am a proud Panamanian. When I was younger, before people would define themselves as Afro-Latina because it was 'popular,' I would say, 'Yea, I'm Afro-Latina, I am Afro-Latina.' Because I knew deep down that's who I was. More recently I discovered that I also identify as Queer and I was like, 'What the heck?!' That is a whole other plethora of emotions and

experiences, it's so complex. A Queer, Afro-Latina who is also an existential Human Being. [Pause.] It took me a really long time to realize that I'm just that. I'm still building up on those experiences. [Sits down.]

ALL. ¿De dónde eres?

CARLA. [Stands up.] I definitely identify with being Hispanic and being Colombian. I was born here so I identify as American too but not more or less than I do Colombian. I'm between the two. I'm not completely American and I'm not completely Colombian. It's hard tho because when I to Colombia they know you're from the US and they treat me differently because of how you dress and look. It depends on the area you go to, but it's hard to live there and it's hard to live here. I'm both American and Colombian. [Sits down.]

ALL. Where do you come from?

IRENE. [Stands up. Cheerfully.] So, my dad is white from Europe, I think he's Irish and Italian. My mom and her mom were born in Venezuela but my mom's dad is Colombian. South American. He's from Spain and is Native American. I identify as Colombian and Venezuelan. My Grandpa denies the fact that he's Colombian and Native American. He likes to believe that he came from the elite Spanish and blah blah blah. My Grandma had a hard time with him when they first started dating. [Sits down.]

ALL. Yeah but like, where do you come from? ¿De dónde vienes?

SARA. [Stands up.] I'm a recent college graduate, I'm Hispanic, I do yoga and I'm Mexican and Puerto Rican. I'm the third generation of my family to live in the US. Most of my family is from California but I don't see them very often throughout the year. [Sits down.]

ALL. [The volume of these lines being to increase.] Are you here illegally?

MARIANNA. [Stands up.] I identify as a cisgendered Latino. I was born in the Dominican Republic. My mother passed away when I had just turned one after giving birth to my little sister. We're about a year or a year and a half apart. When my mom passed away, my aunt from my dad's side was in the DR at the time and agreed to take me back to the states to raise me. She already had two kids here and was living a life of poverty and struggle but brought me over to raise me as her third. That's what you do for family. Unfortunately, this separated me from my littler sister and we didn't meet for many, many years. And we still live very far apart. [Pause.] Anyways, my aunt adopted me here, but it's weird to call her aunt, she's mom and her kids are my brother and sister. There is no difference. I became a resident of the US when I was an older youth and did all of the steps to become a citizen. When it came down to the final paper work it was so anti-climatic. [Laughs.] After so many years of trying to get my papers I came into the office one day, they asked me a few questions, I signed some papers and asked me to wait outside for my name to be called. A tall white guy in a white suit and black shoes came out, said my name and gave me the certificate I just signed. He handed it to me, I didn't think anything of it and walked out. Later I found out I had become a citizen and no one told me. I went back to the DR a few years after that but not to see my sister. [Sits down.]

ALL. You don't belong here.

ALEJANDRO. [Stands up.] I'm Colombian American. [Uncomfortable.] I hesitate on the American side. The only reason I say I'm American is because I live in America and I've lived in America most of my life. I wasn't born to Colombian/American parents, just Colombian parents and I was born in Colombia too. I moved here when I was five but am

unsure why we moved here to begin with. I identify more with the American culture than with the Colombian culture, but what is American culture, right? *[Pause.]* That's why I hesitate to say that. I was born in a valley at the top of Colombia. *[Sits down.]*

ALL. *[Aggressive.]* Illegal immigrant!

ISIDORA. *[Stands up hesitantly.]* I came here from Mexico when I was 4. My grandfather already had his green card when my mom came here, but he couldn't sponsor her because she was too old. She married my dad and brought us here. I am one of the Dreamers but growing up my brothers and I never knew anything was off. I didn't realize we weren't documented until I was in high school when I was trying to get a job and my license. I couldn't get either. That's when I realized we weren't like everybody else. I don't want to brag but I never got in trouble with the law. I'm too good, too nice for any of that. I follow the rules. That's just the way I am. When he got elected last year it was scary. It was terrifying. My family and I had a plan just in case we got deported. But it was scary because even if we had to go or if we have to follow through with the plan, it wouldn't be the same. I've only ever known my life here. I visited the place where my family would have sent us in Mexico, but it's completely different. It's not like here. *[Continues to stand.]*

ALL. ... *[Pause. Everyone looks around waiting for someone to say something. Just as someone is about to open their mouth Miguel begins to speak.]—*

MIGUEL. *[Stands up confidently.]* — I'm Colombian. I was actually born there. I'm here under DACA. I'm a Dreamer too. *[Acknowledges Isidora who is still standing. They continue standing.]*

ALL (Except for MIGUEL & ISIDORA). Go back to your country!

MIGUEL. SARA. ISIDORA. CARLA. MÍA. *[They stand up.]* I don't know life outside of the United States of America.

ALEJANDRO. GABRIEL. CAMILA. MARIANNA. IRENE. Yeah but like, where do you come from?

MIGUEL. SARA. ISIDORA. CARLA. MÍA. *[Defensive.]* Why the fuck does it matter? I'm from here—

ALEJANDRO. GABRIEL. CAMILA. MARIANNA. IRENE. —And I'm from there!

ALL. *Pero, ni de aqui y ni de alla.*

MIGUEL. SARA. ISIDORA. CARLA. MÍA. Damn... *[They all sit down in defeat.]* Why did you think that was okay to ask?

[Pause. They all stand up on their next lines.]

ALEJANDRO. I'm Alejandro and I'm Latino.

MÍA. *Soy Mía y soy Latinx.*

GABRIEL. I'm Gabriel, *soy Latino.*

MARIANNA. I'm Marianna and I'm Latino.

ISIDORA. Isidora. Latina.

SARA. Sara, I'm Latina.

IRENE. *Soy Irene y soy Latin@.*

CARLA. I'm Carla and I'm Latina.

MIGUEL. Miguel, Latino.

CAMILA. I am Camila and *soy Afro-Latina—*

ALL. —And this is what it means to be Latinx in the US today.

Next scene.

Skin - Color / Piel - Color

MÍA. [*Moves chair and stand downstage.*] Tag you're it!

Except for Mía, the other actors pretend to run around the stage, acting like children playing tag while speaking Spanish and English. She begins.

MÍA. I remember those summer days in Florida when my *Abuelita*, *Tías* and Mom would sit around the table stuffing *tamales* in those big green leafs. While we all ran around them playing our games in bilingual tones. My *Abuela* would stop me and pull me aside from my running, as I looked at her longer than any 7 year old should. [*The actors stop running.*] She said to me in her Mexican Spanish, "*Ven aquí, hija.*" She proceeded to stuff the *tamale* while she lectured me in Spanish about how to properly stuff the meat into a corn hole. As she gave me the food that was yet to be cooked, I noticed the difference between our skin. [*All the actors begin to examine their skin as they walk back to their seats.*] As I always did. Her skin was old with veins sticking up from her hands and was a dark brown color, it reminded me of tenderness. My skin was young and was a pale olive color but darker than normal because it was summer. My skin juxtaposed to hers. To everyone in my family who came from *México*. [*Actors stop examining their skin and sit down. Mía continues standing.*]

ALL. [*Divide among actors.*]

Look at her fair skin.

You're so beautiful!

You look like an angel.

Eres tan hermosa.

Te ves como un ángel.

MIGUEL. [*Stands up.*] My moms is really old school. She brought all of her kids here, me my brother and sister. We're triplets. I'm the first one before my brother and sister but they're both darker than me. Like, way darker. People see my brother as Black, and my sister has curly hair which comes from our Afro side. But my moms is funny, she never really loved people of color and she's very stereotypical towards them. Saying they're loud 'n shit. Psht. I mean I understand that moms aren't always the greatest but that doesn't mean that every person of color is like that. [*Continues standing.*]

ALL. [*Everyone looks at each other with smug expressions. Actors break out into laughter and talking, being loud 'n shit.*] *Jajajajajaja!*

GABRIEL. [*Stands up moves chair and stand upstage of everyone, looking at them talking. Clears throat and everyone stops talking.*] I grew up in Queens, New York. I felt that there was something missing. I lived in the projects and I remember my greatest pastime was looking out the window and seeing people walk by, you know, because for me that was the greatest thing to do. Just seeing the people walking by and wondering where they're

going, what are they doing, what was happening. That was my escape because I always felt there was something wrong. I didn't understand what it was. [*Continues standing.*]

ALL. You don't look "Spanish."

CAMILA. [*Moves chair and stand downstage.*] When I moved away from Georgia, there was a different demographic of people. I was surrounded by people who were from Mexico, South America, the Caribbean and Jamaica. It was beautiful! It was also a culture shock at first because I was seen as the Oreo girl. I was more proper and wanted to excel in my academics. It separated me for a while from everyone else who looked like me. Everything was just so different. [*Continues standing.*]

ALL. But I'm not Spa—

MIGUEL. —It's funny because when we went to the dermatologist my moms claimed that she had a spot on her body that was darker than the rest. [*They all point to a spot on their body.*] She said to the doctor, "It's darker here but it wasn't always. I'm not black." And I'm like, what? Why would you say that? Like, yes, you are. My mom's not white. I told her that if you were back in the sixties, you would be considered a slave.

ALL. [*All clap their hands.*] Ouch. [*Everyone touches the part of their body they were just poking at, as if they were hit by something.*]

IRENE. [*Stands up.*] I have a lot of beef with my grandpa. I don't talk to him because of what he did to my mom and grandma. My grandma's mom died when she was very young and her dad dipped. She was raised by her grandma who was a black woman. When my grandpa started getting with my grandma, he didn't want to be seen with her family in public because they were black. He actually abandoned my mom and my grandma when my mom was five so he could marry into a really elite white South African family. He didn't pay child support and would even tell my mom things like, "your lips are too big." Like, I have big lips too just like my mom but I'm visibly white and I have to be aware of my whiteness all the time. It was hard for me growing up knowing that's what he did to them. [*Continues standing.*]

ALL. Yeah, but you're not like them. You're not like most Spanish people.

IRENE. What does that mean?

MIGUEL. Why though?

CAMILA. Because you don't see me as black?

GABRIEL. It is because I don't look Latino?

MÍA. I'm not like most Spanish people?

[*They all sit down.*]

SARA. [*Stands up.*] Growing up there were probably like two to five Hispanics in my class. I went to an all white school but that didn't make all of us come together or anything. It's not like we didn't talk to each other, but we didn't migrate towards one another, if that makes sense? [*All the actors move their seats away from Sara.*] The only interaction I got from people who looked like me were my family members. But even then we would only see each other during the summers for family reunions and stuff. I didn't always feel that close to my culture even though we would have Puerto Rican or Mexican food for dinner. [*Pause.*] I don't know, I definitely felt distant from my culture and other Latinos. I think it was a combination of being Latina and being denied that culture in my schooling because everyone was white. Sometimes I wouldn't feel a hundred percent like a Latina. If that make sense?

ALL. [*Nods in agreement.*] Mhmm.

CARLA. [*All make wind sounds.*] My family is from the capital of Colombia, and it's colder there. People usually have red cheeks because they're burnt from the high winds. People are also darker skin there too. But most people have pale skin and light eyes. It doesn't stop the racist stuff that happens there towards people who have darker skin. [*Stop wind sound.*]

ALL. You can't be Latino because, insert racist comment here.

ALEJANDRO. [*Moves downstage while the other 9 actors start forming 3 different "clicks" and talking amongst themselves.*] I know I'm Latino, you know, like I know it but I feel like I've spent most of my life trying to be "American." In middle school, when clicks became a thing, there would be the white kids table, the Hispanic kids, the black kids, and then you had the popular table. [*All the actors start bringing hands into fists.*] The Hispanic kids scared me. I didn't feel like I belonged with the those people in my school because they were always getting into fights and they were rowdy. [*They all begin to get aggressive.*] I wasn't like that. I didn't fit into that mold of Hispanic.

ALL. [*Angry, pissed, upset, rowdy.*] Ahhhhhhhh!

GABRIEL. [*Over everyone else.*] So hit me!

ISIDORA. MARIANNA. MIGUEL. MÍA. Some of us can't afford to be violent.

CAMILA. Growing up in the city was different. No one really cared about what you looked like because everybody looked like me. No one thought twice about it. Everyone's just like, this is how it is. It was cool.

ISIDORA. I once dated this Mexican guy who was into dating girls with blonde hair and blue eyes. I didn't know it at the time, but I realized later that he was trying to be something that he wasn't. He would always say that he was really scared that his kids would be really Mexican and he didn't want that. I asked him why he was ashamed of that? What was he trying to say about me and my dark skin? I get my skin color from my dad's family because they're indigenous, but I was always so confused why he would say those things while he was still dating me. One day he goes, "You're really dark." I'm like, "Is that a problem?" He just shrugged. I broke up with him after that.

ALL. [*Stage whisper.*] It's called self-hate.

ALEJANDRO. In high school I saw these different views of American life and I was just like, which one do I want to be a part of? I defaulted to wanting to be with the white kids because they were the nicest, they had big houses and I wanted to surround myself with people I wanted to be more like. AKA, more white. No one really knew how to identify me when they meet me. They don't really know what I am or where to put me. No one really knows if I'm Hispanic or black or something else. My personality in high school is definitely what labeled me.

CAMILA. I feel like they labeled me before they really got to know me.

ALL [HALF]. No pride.

ALL [HALF]. Not Latino enough.

GABRIEL. [*Actors start pushing seats and stands into a line and sit down.*] After I would look through the window I remember going out and being like, there's something wrong with the fact that we're living the way we're living or seeing people living the way that they're living. But when I watch tv—

ALL. [*As if they are turning on a TV with a remote.*] Click.

GABRIEL. —there's people of different colors living in a very different way. So how come we're living this way and they're not living that way? I didn't understand because I was so young. Around that time I moved to Puerto Rico.

ALL. I don't know where I belong.

MARIANNA. I love our culture so much! Not just the American culture, but the part of us that is Latin like my African roots. We have so much charisma, and our music? Ugh. Salsa and all of that? I love it! It's part of my heritage. It's in my blood! Although I love it, I'll go months without even thinking about that music, but the minute it comes on it brings something out of me. [*Cue salsa music. Everyone starts dancing in their seats or on their feet. Whatever works.*] I'm on my feet and I instantly start singing along. [*Sings along to song.*] It sings to my soul in a way that no other music can. I gravitate toward it! Even my fiancé, who is white, loves the fact that I have all of that culture as part of me. [*Pause.*] I'm very conscious of when we have kids because I need to play this music in the house. I need them to know that this is the truth that I grew up with. I'm very conscious of that fact. [*Music stops playing, actors take a seat.*]

MÍA. I rejected for a really long time my Latin roots because I never wanted to end up like my father. After I left white Florida and moved to upstate New York for high school, I felt like I finally belonged in my own skin. But it wasn't easy figuring out where I belonged within social settings because I looked very ambiguous and everyone had someone they preferred to talk to. Before high school I thought people who had brown skin were only Mexican. But I was so wrong!

ALL. We're not all the same.

IRENE. Because I came into my womanly body at an early age I started venturing into this hyper sexual Latina identity. My culture presented to me this idealization of the Latina who was sexy, curvy and a ball of spit fire. That's what I embodied over time but that identity lead me into cycles of abuse with men, drugs and alcohol. I realized later that it wasn't necessarily me but my culture. This ideal was passed down through my ancestors all the way to me. It was traumatizing and it still is.

ALL. It's in our DNA.

[*No particular order. Depending on where they sit. One by one each actor tags the person next to them until they get to the end of the line.*]

MÍA. Tag you're it!

MIGUEL. Tag you're it!

CAMILA. Tag you're it!

CARLA. Tag you're it!

GABRIEL. Tag you're it!

ISIDORA. Tag you're it!

SARA. Tag you're it!

IRENE. Tag you're it!

ALEJANDRO. Tag you're it!

MARIANNA. Tag you're it!

ALL. Tag you're it?

CARLA. The way we point our fingers so easily at people for being white or being a person of color is not okay. Instead of blaming the system of power that favors certain bodies over others, we are quantifying inequalities and competing with each other over those inequalities. We're fighting each other which is wrong. There are different types of

inequalities that distinguish people in America. For example, a white woman is not just a white woman she can also be poor. We don't take that into consideration, do we?

CAMILA. SARA. True. But isn't being poor almost always equated to being black or brown in America? *[Pause.]*

ALL. It's systematic.

MIGUEL. My mom admits she's racist tho and laughs at it. I guess I'm still processing how we grew up and how she would call our friends "the brown one." Like why is that the only characteristic that you focus on? She still does it and she knows it's fucked up but it's still at the front of all of her interactions.

ALL. How would you describe me?

CAMILA & MÍA. By my skin color?

ISIDORA & MIGUEL. *Mi piel?*

IRENE & MARIANNA. *Mi color?*

ALEJANDRO. How would you describe me now?

ALL [HALF]. We are not just our color.

ALL [HALF]. We are our skin.

SARA & CARLA. It informs how we walk through this world.

ALL. When was the last time you thought about *tu piel, tu color?*

TONGUE / LENGUA

ISIDORA. GABRIEL. CARLA. Open up everyone! *[Everyone opens their mouth. Some stick out their tongue as if a doctor is looking down their throat. ISIDORA, GABRIEL & CARLA stand up and "examine" everyone's mouth.]*

GABRIEL. What language do you speak?

ISIDORA. Do you speak Spanish?

CARLA. *[In a gringa accent.]* Hola! Hablas ingles?

CAMILA. You don't sound Spanish. *[Everyone shuts their mouth and snaps their heads to the actors who just pressed them.]*

ALL. *[Actors make the sound of a car stopping.]* Let's change lanes real quick.

SARA. Switch it up so we keep your attention.

MIGUEL. But what is there to say?

CAMILA. Did you hear anything?

ALL. Did you hear everything?

IRENE. Has anyone ever questioned your tongue—

ALL. —*Tu lengua?* What's your native language?

MÍA. It was inferred once that I wasn't "*Latina* enough" because I didn't speak Spanish.

ALL. What language do you speak?

CARLA. Have you ever had to think about which language you were going to use during the day? *[Pause. Waiting for a response.]* I'll wait. *[Pause.]* I didn't think so.

ISIDORA. There's an insecurity that comes with speaking both languages, or just speaking only one, or speaking one language really well but the other kinda well, but not too well that you feel comfortable speaking it in front of other native speakers.

ALEJANDRO. You have probably heard these same stories over and over again. And of course you have, because these narratives continue to happen in Latin households throughout the US.

ALL. Our language is our own. But, our language is not our own.

GABRIEL. Some of us hold onto it and never let go.

MARIANNA. Many times we must reclaim it for ourselves.

ALEJANDRO. Other times we have been known to disown it because we were trying to fit in.

CAMILA. But did we ever truly fit in?

MIGUEL. What it comes down to is, who has the right to speak in our tongues—the tongues of our ancestors?

IRENE. We speak in the tongue of our oppressor.

ALL. Why do we do this you ask?

ISIDORA. It was our families story of survival.

CARLA. They had to speak in different tongues to survive so now we have to too.

ALL. We carried this on our backs for years. For centuries!

[Pause.]

SARA. [*Stand up.*] I was raised in a household where my parents spoke Spanish but never taught my siblings or I. As I get into the medical field, I see the struggle in my people who don't know the English language. I try my best to translate when I can, but even then there are not enough bilingual speakers to help bridge the gap between patients and doctors. I'm starting to learn more and more as I see the distance between languages. [*Sits down.*]

IRENE. [*Stands up.*] My mom would make us watch movies in Spanish. If I didn't respond to her in Spanish she would say nothing to me. [*Laughs.*] It was funny. Until there came a moment in my life when I refused to speak the language my mom forced me to. I was really ashamed of who I was because I finally made the connection that *Latinos* weren't welcomed in the United States. [*Sits down.*]

MÍA. [*Stands up.*] I'm pretty sure I was bilingual until the age of 3. That's when my dad was deported back to Mexico on the three strike rule.

ALL [HALF]. One. Two. Three.

ALL [HALF]. *Uno. Dos. Tres.*

ALL. Cue cuffs and jail cell. [*They all put their hands in front of them like they just got arrested.*]

MÍA. He struggled with addiction and being abusive towards my family. I never wanted to be like him so I guess subconsciously I stopped speaking his mother tongue to rebel against what he did. I have been trying to reclaim my tongue ever since but I find it hard when there are all of these negative associations attached to his language. As I get older and I think about how I want to create a different life for my kids, I think about how beautiful our language can be. His actions were shitty but that doesn't mean that I can't reclaim my 3 year old voice again. [*Sits down.*]

CAMILA. [*Jumps up in excitement.*] I loved languages so much that for the first Christmas we were here, I asked my family for a 12 piece casset tape set of English videos. I was so happy! [*Laughs.*] I was not like other 8 year olds. All I wanted to do was achieve and learn

more. I never understood why the other kids around me didn't want to learn like I did. They were all lazy. But I think it's funny because I never made it through all of the caskets. ALL. E.S.L.—English as a second language.

MÍA. [*Stands up a bit pissed.*] Raise your hand if you were ever put into a class to improve your English speaking skills? [*Waits for some people to raise their hands.*] Now, raise your hand if you were separated from your classmates because you couldn't read at the same grade level as your peers because you knew two languages and you were confused which one to use? [*A few actors raise their hands.*] Mhmm. [*Sits down.*]

ALEJANDRO. There was a switch inside me about a year after I moved to the states. All I wanted to do was speak English. I would go to school, English, I would go home and I would only respond to my mom in English even though she spoke Spanish. I lost it over time that now when I speak it I sound like a gringo. My little brother on the other hand speaks Spanish so well! I hope he never loses it.

CARLA. I was the girl in elementary school translating for my teachers. I would go to the office and they would ask me to translate things to parents. I'd always be the one helping out. So that put me in a high position compared to everyone else because I was bilingual. Everyone else just knew their basic language. I loved speaking both languages, I feel like it made me a better communicator especially when I got hired for jobs and they asked me to translate for them too.

MIGUEL. My first language was Spanish because we spoke it in the house. My parents only spoke Spanish, but I learned English from my cousins because they were older than us and were already in kindergarten when we were still at home.

MARIANNA. Because my mom didn't know the language I would be translating for her what was going on. Most of the time I would be translating law jargon that even I didn't understand. It definitely helped me but it comes out rough even now if I don't speak it for a long time. I hear myself and it is not smooth at all! I only sound "real" when my Dominican accent is replaced by a more neutral Spanish dialect. For me, I think it's important that I try to reclaim the Spanish language for future generations.

MÍA. We're stuck between languages and are not sure what to say.

ALL. Open up! *¡Abran sus bocas!* [*Everyone opens their mouth except for Carla. Every time a new actor speaks they close their mouth and begin their line.*]

CARLA. *Una vez mi abuela me dijo, "Hay que cuidar a tu familia de hoy, tu familia del futuro y tu familia y ancestros del pasado."*

SARA. In the moment, I only understood *familia y cuidado pero* I didn't understand the rest of the words. Later in my life I learned more Spanish and was able to figure out what she was trying to tell me.

GABRIEL. *Pero es muy difícil porque* how do I honor *mi familia* now, *mi familia* in the future *y mi familia* in the past?

MARIANNA. It's important to remember that *la historia* stays consistent and we must honor the *mujeres, hombres y personas* who came before us by speaking.

IRENE. *Pero el idioma es diferente para todos. Nunca equal, ni consistente. Debemos cambiar las normas para nosotros.*

ALEJANDRO. We must change the norms for ourselves so we can change the norms for our future families, while also remembering our ancestors who fought to be here.

MIGUEL. To speak the English language while also speaking—

CAMILA. —*Esta idioma.*

ISIDORA. *Somos de diferente países del mundo pero somos aquí. En este país. Con esta idioma.*

ALEJANDRO. *¿Somos iguales porque hablamos español?* [All shrug.]

ALL. *No sé.*

ISIDORA. *Pero aquí estamos con este idioma y con esta familia. Hablamos juntos.*

ALL. [To audience.] *Have we made our tongues understood yet?* [Pause.]

US / NOSOTROS

GABRIEL. *Where do we end?* [Pause.] *We have to end somewhere, right? So, lets end here.*
[Gestures to everyone and they all nod in agreement.]

GABRIEL. *I'll start by saying that we are here as a collective telling our stories of trauma and betweenness.*

*To tell these stories isn't easy or a full reflection of who we are,
But they are parts of us that make us whole.*

CARLA. *From the places we reside, to the skin we wear and the language we speak,
It can sometimes be traumatizing to exist within our bodies,
But even through all that we tell our narratives anyway.*

ALL. (HALF). *But now what?*

ALL (HALF). *Lets speak.* [Pause.]

IRENE: *If I can deny it then it's not a part of me. There came a point in my life where my culture saved my life. Like literally. And there was a moment when I was either going to hang on to my culture or live my whole life in something that wasn't me. It's like a rock that's always there, that will never go away. Nobody can ever take it away from me. They could take my money, they could take parts of my body, they could take my awards or diplomas, they can take away all of it. But they can't take my culture away from me because if they take that then there's no meat left.*

ALL (HALF). *Now what?*

ALL (HALF). *Hear us.*

ALEJANDRO. *My relationship with my Colombian roots is very distant. I mean don't get me wrong, it's a beautiful place and there's beautiful people everywhere. But a lot of the things that I've learned through my family and through past memories about Colombia just reminds me of so much hurt in my life. That's where I was born and that's where my family comes from and who my family is, who I am. But it still hurts. Being in America gives me the drive that I need. I want to do the best that I can possibly do because I am first generation. I want to show my mom like, yeah, you gave up being a lawyer, but you didn't do it in vain. I am proud to come from a different place but I'm not in touch with my Colombian heritage. It's just something that's happened over time.*

ALL (HALF). *Now what?*

ALL (HALF). *Understand.*

MARIANNA. Legend goes that on my mother's deathbed she asked my aunt, my mom, to take me and give me a better life here. On top of the fear of being deported when I was younger, there was also this lingering obligation that I had to this woman who I never knew. She asked this other woman to sacrifice so much for me so that I would do well and so I could be successful. Anytime I felt like I couldn't make it, like I was about to get into a fight, like I was going to give up, I couldn't because it was never about me. It was about her and about these two women who made this pact for me. I couldn't let them down. That was my agency. I couldn't not do well and I had to work really, really hard even when I felt like I couldn't.

ALL (HALF). Now what?

ALL (HALF). Don't judge.

GABRIEL. I was angry when I came back to live in the states. Everyone was in on jokes that I didn't understand because they were rooted in racism. I held onto that anger for a really long time and it festered and fueled how I interacted with the world. As I educated myself more about my people and my roots, the anger didn't go away it only increased. I had a key of knowledge but didn't know which doors to open or how to open them. It wasn't until I saw that my role wasn't anger but that it was light. I learned how to use that light to propel me forward so I could be a guiding force for myself. So I could be of full service to others. I had to resurface that wound of anger so I could nurture it and heal it.

ALL (HALF). Now what?

ALL (HALF). Be present.

MÍA. My identity has always been questioned. Even before I had agency over who I was. I constantly had to justify my being to others and to myself. I remember the first time someone just listened to my story. I was shaking and didn't know how they would respond. After I was done saying what I had to say they said, "Thank you for sharing. I imagine that was hard for you to tell me but that you trusted me enough to share." They continued on with our conversation without fixing my problems or analyzing what I had to say. I carried this with me for about week before I broke down and cried about it. For the first time ever, I was able to just be without having to justify myself or my circumstances to anyone else. I hope to be that person for others someday.

ALL (HALF). Now what?

ALL (HALF). Share.

CAMILA. One of the best things about being us is that we are so multifaceted. It's about being part of all of these worlds while also being present and active beings. To me, it's so rewarding. The con to being Latino is that you don't feel represented very often within media. But the less representation there is the more chances there are for you to represent yourself in your real life. And that's cool.

ALL (HALF). Now what?

ALL (HALF). Heal.

SARA. The opportunity I had to go to school and get a degree is something I am grateful for. I try to connect my culture to my work in the field of medicine as best as I can. However, it's challenging because I was so far away from my culture growing up. I felt isolated and I wondered what would have happened if I lived in a different spot somewhere closer. The separation I feel with other Latinos stems from me feeling like they're more immersed in the culture than I am. Now more than ever,—

ALEJANDRO. SARA. MÍA. —I am running towards my culture rather than away from it.

CARLA. Our culture is beautiful!

ISIDORA. We are beautiful!

MIGUEL. Just by existing in this country and performing within this space, we are challenging the notion of what it means to be Latin and that's a radical act.

ALL. [*Divid up amongst actors. Reference video for multiple ideas.*]

To exist and to not be apologetic for that existence is radical.

Naturally what you see of us is a performance.

Who we are with each other will be different than who we are when we are by ourselves

Our lives are forever a performance. Not good nor bad, it just is.

Within that performance, no matter what form it takes, it is revolutionary.

Therefore—

—We always strive in the act of standing

We always strive in the act of listening

We strive in the act of tasting

We strive in the act of touching

We strive in the act of seeing

ALL. We strive in the existence of our bodies

Embracing what others have told us to reject

ALL. But we Rejoice!

In our laughter

In our smiles

In our eyes

In our walk

We rejoice for being who we are and how we relate to this world

To the world that our ancestors inhabited.

Invading our truth

So that our truths become the melody that carries us between and amongst *nosotros*.

[*Pause.*]

We stand. *Permanecemos.*

We listen. *Escuchamos.*

We taste. *Probamos.*

We touch. *Tocamos.*

We see. *Vemos.*

[*Loud.*] We rejoice! *Nos regocijamos!*

ALL. [*Softer. They all look up.*] We are. [*They all close their books & look at audience.*]
Estamos.

Pause.

EL FIN.

Lights fade to black. Curtain call.