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Applied Theater: Giving Voice to Low-income Teenage Immigrants Through Theater

*A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Liberal Studies*

by

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April, 2014

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Chapter 1- Immigration Stories

*“Help us love even those who hate us,
so we can change the world.”¹*

- Cesar Chavez

Fifteen years ago, my immediate family and I moved from Colombia to the United States in search of safety and opportunities. I experienced firsthand the struggles faced by someone who leaves everything behind: belongings, culture, language, friends, family.² We left behind our lives, as we knew them. We arrived with a couple of bags and hearts full of hope. We didn't know how things “worked here.” Everything was new: roads, laws, customs. We couldn't continue with our education, or at least not the way we wanted or imagined we would. My younger sister went to public school, forced to attend classes that were way beneath her grade level; meanwhile, my older sister and I were denied the right to attend college due to our immigration status. We were not allowed to work. My mom worked in odd jobs unrelated to teaching, which was what she had done for most of her life, and for several months we lived with my sister's in-laws. Those were hard times. It was difficult to adjust to a new life far away from friends and comfort, in an unknown place where “starting a life” seemed like an unattainable dream. We had several advantages, however; we had a support system in and outside the United States. We managed to get the money to pay for an attorney who could help us with our immigration case and money to pay for the paperwork fees. Also, we all had the advantages of a good education. My sisters and I had attended a well-known private school in Bogotá and my

¹ Cesar Chavez, “United Farmworker's Prayer,” *National Farm Worker Ministry*, accessed April 1, 2014, <http://nfwm.org/2009/04/united-farm-workers-prayer/>

² Although one does not necessarily abandon one's culture or language upon migration, one does enter a new country with a new language and a new culture, and in this sense one leaves both of them behind.

mom had a post-graduate degree. We all spoke English, so as soon as we were allowed to, we all began to work. In a few months we had already moved out of my sister's in-laws' and rented a small place. My mom began teaching again. Soon we bought a house and my sisters and I began attending college.

In Bogotá, I had worked a little bit as a translator and as an English teacher. I had also worked in theater. Theater was truly my passion, but not knowing how to get an acting job in the United States, I had to settle for a job as a receptionist in a lawyer's office, which would later turn into a paralegal position. During my first three years in the United States, I worked for an immigration attorney. Every day for these three years, I heard the most incredible and distressing immigration stories. Unlike my immigration story, these stories did not come from a place of privilege. Most people hadn't arrived in an airplane after a short flight like I had; they had crossed the desert or rowed a boat for days, while losing friends and family members in the process. Most hadn't attended private school or learned English like I had. Many lacked education. They struggled to learn a new language and some were even illiterate in their own. They didn't have jobs where they could take breaks or sit comfortably all day. They had physically demanding jobs that put their lives and health at risk. They struggled to survive on low wages. They worked long hours, sometimes even two jobs, but they could barely afford the immigration fees required to process their paperwork. To make matters worse, many had lost the little money they had managed to save in scams that promised to "quickly fix" their immigration status. Some people, for instance, fell victim to fake attorneys, who promised a solution to the immigration problems of their clients, charged upfront, and then disappeared. The victims were left penniless and confused, staring at an empty

office which just last week had an “Immigration Attorney” sign. No matter what these people did, it was like the whole world was determined to make their life miserable.

Every day I met one or more individuals who personified tragedy, injustice, and suffering. Some had lost husbands, wives, mothers and other relatives and friends during the dangerous journey that they were forced to take in order to come to the United States. Some had left their children behind, and some children behaved like adults because at age ten they had already crossed the desert alone and were working in hopes to help alleviate the financial difficulties faced by their families. Some were lawyers scrubbing toilets and some picked fruit in the fields for less than minimum wage. Most had been tricked, robbed, or attacked both on foreign soil and after they arrived in the United States. Their stories seemed surreal. They were disheartening and shocking, and yet these were the most hard-working, kind, and humble human beings I had ever met. Neither my heart nor my ears could believe the resilience exhibited by these amazing individuals, who seemed to have all odds against them. I was deeply touched and appalled. It was all so similar yet so different from my story. We were all the same: immigrants, human beings searching for a better life, but privilege had given me a head start.

The stories I heard during my time at the attorney’s office did not appear in the news. These people were practically invisible and definitely voiceless. Sadly, twelve years later, many immigrants still have no voice. Despite the growing “immigrant movement” and the current push for comprehensive immigration reform, many still struggle with the same issues and are ignored. Low-income and undocumented immigrants are perhaps one of the most vulnerable and oppressed populations in the country. In the United States there are approximately 11.7 million undocumented

immigrants³ who live in the shadows, despite the fact that they work, pay taxes, and contribute to society as much as anyone else. Most of these 11.7 million undocumented immigrants are alienated, unjustly treated, made into scapegoats, and dehumanized by the media, politicians, and much of the populace of the entire nation.

In the United States, immigration is feared, criticized, and highly misunderstood.

Popular conservative pundit Ann Coulter for instance, notes that:

Instead of helping America, our immigration policies are designed to help other countries solve their internal problems by shipping their losers to us. The problem isn't just illegal immigration. I would rather have doctors and engineers sneaking into the country illegally than have legally arriving ditch-diggers . . . 85 percent of legal immigrants have come from the Third World. They bring Third World levels of poverty, fertility, illegitimacy and domestic violence with them. When they can't make it here, they just go on welfare. And sometimes, they strike out at Americans.⁴

In another article named *When did we vote to Become Mexico?* Coulter adds: “The reason a country's average immigrant matters is that the losers never go home -- they go on welfare. (Maybe if they had to work, immigrants wouldn't have as much time to build bombs).”⁵

The current debate around immigration relies on and reinforces anti-immigrant sentiments like those voiced by Coulter. This debate is terribly flawed. It completely ignores the root causes of immigration and especially ignores the role of the United States

³ “As of March 2012, 11.7 million unauthorized immigrants were living in the United States, according to a new preliminary Pew Research Center estimate based on U.S. government data.” Jeffrey S. Passel, D’Vera Cohn, Anna Gonzalez-Barrera, “Population Decline of Unauthorized Immigrants Stalls, May have Reversed,” *Pew Research Hispanic Trends Project*, accessed Nov 23, 2014, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/09/23/population-decline-of-unauthorized-immigrants-stalls-may-have-reversed/>

⁴ Ann Coulter, “The Problem Isn’t Just Illegal Immigration, It’s Legal Immigration, Too,” *Ann Coulter Official Home Page (Archives)*, accessed March 4, 2014, <http://www.anncoulter.com/columns/2013-04-24.html>

⁵ Ann Coulter, “When did we vote to Become Mexico?,” *Ann Coulter Official Home Page (Archives)*, accessed March 4, 2014, <http://www.anncoulter.com/columns/2013-05-22.html>

in the migration phenomena. In addition, it misguidedly insists on presenting immigrants as a population that takes advantage of governmental assistance and does not contribute anything to society or the economy. Moreover, this debate unjustly criminalizes immigrants while overlooking the atrocities that immigrants are subjected to. Furthermore, it insists on referring to a nonexistent “back of the line” where undocumented immigrants “have to go,” and ignores the 1.8 million undocumented children who now live in the United States.⁶ Sadly this rhetoric is *not* harmless; on the contrary, it negatively impacts the lives of 11.7 million human beings.⁷

⁶ Roberto G. Gonzales, “Young Lives on Hold: The College Dreams of Undocumented Students,” *College Board Advocacy*, accessed March 20, 2014, <http://professionals.collegeboard.com/profdownload/young-lives-on-hold-college-board.pdf>

⁷ Examples of this “usual immigration debate rhetoric” can be easily found in the media. Here are some links to different news stories in a variety of media outlets and stations that illustrate my point:

“The Immigration Debate,” *NPR: National Public Radio*, accessed March 5, 2014,

<http://www.npr.org/series/5310549/the-immigration-debate>

“The Immigration Bill Threatens America’s Principles,” *Glen Beck Page*, accessed February 28, 2014,

<http://www.glennbeck.com/2013/06/17/glenn-the-immigration-bill-threatens-america%E2%80%99s-principles/>

Ann Coulter, “When did we vote to Become Mexico,” *Ann Coulter Official Home Page (Archives)*, accessed March 4, 2014, <http://www.anncoulter.com/columns/2013-05-22.html>

Ann Coulter, “The Problem Isn’t Just Illegal Immigration, It’s Legal Immigration, Too,” *Ann Coulter Official Home Page (Archives)*, accessed March 4, 2014, <http://www.anncoulter.com/columns/2013-04-24.html>

“Room for Debate: Immigration,” *The New York Times*, accessed March 2, 2014,

<http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/topics/immigration>

“Immigration Debate,” *USA Today*, accessed March 2, 2014, <http://www.usatoday.com/topic/5500b3e7-2bf4-41e9-b940-eec95ff82606/immigration-debate/>

“Ann Coulter at CPAC: Democrats want Immigration Reform for ‘Warm Bodies, More Votes,’” *Huffington Post*, accessed March 6, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/03/08/ann-coulter-cpac_n_4926558.html

“Boehner: Immigration Debate ‘is not about me,’” *CBS News*, accessed March 6, 2014,

<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/boehner-immigration-debate-is-not-about-me/>

“Ann Coulter Suggests Creating ‘Death Squads’ if Immigration Reform Passes,” *Colorlines*, accessed March 6, 2014,

http://colorlines.com/archives/2014/03/ann_coulter_suggests_creating_death_squads_if_immigration_reform_passes.html

“Bill O’Reilly and Gerardo Rivera angry fight Immigration,” *Fox News*, Video via *You Tube*, accessed March 10, 2014, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z3U9ENaTPLY>

Susan Davis and Alan Gomez, “GOP Unveils Immigration ‘Principles,’” *USA Today*, accessed January 30, 2014, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2014/01/30/house-gop-principles-immigration/5052407/>

Most people ignore the root causes of immigration; consequently, they fail to understand why people can't stay in their countries or why they make the hard decision to leave everything behind and trade their family, land, and culture⁸ for an "American dream." Many also ignore (and would rather not learn) that the United States plays an important role in the reasons why people immigrate, and that for millions, once in the United States, the "American dream" is anything but dreamy. The current immigration debate neglects to mention the factors that influence immigration such as lack of jobs, extreme poverty, violence and armed conflicts, political turmoil, hunger, and inequality.⁹ It is seldom mentioned that people leave their countries in desperate situations, and it is never mentioned that many times the United States has something to do with these situations. It may surprise many to learn that the United States' corporations and economic/foreign policies promote migration and immigration. Colombia and Iraq are good examples of how the United States has fueled migration and immigration. United States military aid has wreaked havoc in both these countries. In Colombia, the "War on Drugs" and the "Plan Colombia," had devastating consequences for farmers, farmworkers and residents of rural areas. In addition, the 1.6 billion dollars given to Colombia by the United States in military aid perpetuated and worsened Colombia's civil war, contributing to massive destruction, the death of millions of people, and the migration of millions more into the already crowded big cities in Colombia or to another country, such as the United States.¹⁰ Likewise, the Iraq war has created more than two million refugees

⁸ See footnote 2.

⁹ "Farmworkers and Immigration," *North Carolina Farmworker Institute*, accessed Jan 24, 2014, http://saf-unite.org/sites/default/files/SAF_Fact_Sheet_IMGRN.pdf

¹⁰ Noam Chomsky is one of the leading authorities on U.S. foreign policy and its effects. For more information on "Plan Colombia" and other devastating consequences of U.S. policy in Latin America, see Noam Chomsky's *Rogue States: The Rule of Force in World Affairs* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2000).

who were left homeless.¹¹ In fact, in 2012, Iraq was one of three leading countries for refugee admissions in the United States, with 12,163 people.¹²

One of the best examples of how the United States has sparked migration and immigration is the devastating consequences of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in Mexico.¹³ NAFTA promised to strengthen the Mexican economy and close the wage gap that existed between workers in Mexico and those here in the United States, thereby decreasing migration and immigration; however, this was not the case. NAFTA negatively impacted Mexico's local businesses and had a devastating effect on their agriculture. NAFTA gave extraordinary protections to corporations while excluding protections for workers, the public, and the environment.¹⁴ Imports of highly subsidized agribusinesses from the United States made it impossible for local products to compete, thus forcing millions of Mexican farmers out of rural areas and leaving many permanently homeless and unemployed.¹⁵ In addition, "the Mexican minimum wage dropped 20 percent in NAFTA's first decade, and the price of tortillas—Mexico's daily bread—rose more than 500 percent."¹⁶ After NAFTA, poverty and unemployment increased in Mexico and so did emigration: the number of Mexicans leaving their country and coming into the United States more than doubled.¹⁷ "A record

¹¹ "Iraq Index," *Saban Center for Middle East Policy*, accessed Jan 25, 2014, <http://www.brookings.edu/about/centers/saban/iraq-index>

¹² "Annual Flow Report- Refugee and Asylees: 2012," *Department of Homeland Security*, accessed Jan 26, 2014, http://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ois_rfa_fr_2012.pdf

¹³ I must clarify that NAFTA included not only the U.S. and Mexico, but Canada as well. However, in this paper, I will only focus on the U.S. and Mexico.

¹⁴ Jeff Faux, "NAFTA at 10," *Global Exchange*, accessed Jan 25, 2014, <http://www.globalexchange.org/news/nafta-10>; "Disposable Workers: Immigration after NAFTA and the Nation's Addiction to Cheap Labor," *Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA)*, accessed Jan 25, 2014, http://longislandfed.org/sites/longislandfed.org/files/disposable_workers_0.pdf

¹⁵ Faux, "NAFTA at 10."

¹⁶ "Mexico: Roots of Immigration," *Global Exchange*, accessed Jan 27, 2014, <http://www.globalexchange.org/mexico/campaigns/migration>

¹⁷ "Disposable Workers."

33.7 million Hispanics of Mexican origin resided in the United States in 2012 . . . This estimate includes 11.4 million immigrants born in Mexico and 22.3 million born in the U.S. who self-identified as Hispanics of Mexican origin."¹⁸ There is no doubt that the impact of NAFTA has contributed to such large numbers of Mexican immigrants in the United States. It may seem contradictory, but the corporate, economic, and foreign policies of the United States fuel the drive for migration and immigration, while the country's domestic policy makes it harder and harder for these very same migrants and immigrants to live, work, and integrate into society. Ignorance of the root causes of immigration has led to people's judgment, lack of compassion and lack of understanding towards immigrants, especially those who are undocumented, and the proliferation of myths about immigrants and how they negatively affect the United States.

Undocumented immigrants are often accused of "draining the system."

Immigration opponents argue that undocumented immigrants take millions of dollars from the government by using federal and state benefits and they give nothing in return.¹⁹ However, undocumented immigrants cannot use or benefit from programs where being a "legal resident" or "citizen" is a requirement, such as Medicaid, social security, food stamps, or other forms of welfare.²⁰ In addition, contrary to popular belief, undocumented

¹⁸ Ana Gonzalez Barrera and Mark Hugo Lopez, "Mexican-Origin Hispanics in the U.S.A.," *Pew Research: Hispanic Trends Project*, accessed March 19, 2014, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/05/01/a-demographic-portrait-of-mexican-origin-hispanics-in-the-united-states/>

¹⁹ It is important to clarify that since health facilities that receive federal assistance must provide service regardless of the patient's ability to pay or their immigration status, undocumented immigrants can receive emergency medical care. *Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act (EMTALA)*, Section 187 (a) of the Social Security Act.

In addition, since states may not exclude children from public education based on immigration status, undocumented children can receive education until high school. *Plyler v. Doe*, 457 U.S. 202 (1982).

²⁰ Social Security Administration. <http://www.ssa.gov/> Accessed Jan 28, 2014; "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)," *United States Department of Agriculture: Food and Nutrition Service*, accessed Jan 23, 2014, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>

immigrants *do* contribute to state and local taxes. They pay sales and excise taxes, and they directly (or indirectly as renters) pay property taxes. In addition, at least half of them pay income taxes. In fact, in 2010 alone, “undocumented immigrants paid an estimated total of \$10.6 billion in state and local taxes.”²¹ Moreover, although the taxes paid by undocumented immigrants may appear small in comparison to the overall tax collections, “their effective rate is close to taxpayers in similar income situations and, in many states, can be higher than the effective tax rates paid by upper income taxpayers.”²² Additionally, since many pay using a fake social security number or a TIN number, they are unable to claim income-tax credits. They also contribute towards social security that they can’t use, thus contributing money to the pensions of native-born and naturalized citizens.

In addition, immigration opponents treat undocumented immigrants as scapegoats, and frequently blame them for a weak economy and loss of jobs. In reality, immigrants, documented and undocumented alike, make great economic contributions as workers, consumers, and business owners.²³ Furthermore, immigrants do not necessarily take native-born jobs, since they customarily fill different kinds of jobs with different skills. This is especially true for farm working jobs; natives do not take these types of jobs even in times of high unemployment rates. This was recently demonstrated by

See also, “Separating Fact from Fiction: Refugees, Immigrants and Public Benefits,” accessed Jan 25, 2014, <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/docs/RefugeesImmigrantsandPublicBenefits9-8-08.pdf>

²¹ “This includes \$1.2 billion in personal income taxes and \$1.2 billion in property taxes. Sales and excise taxes account for 77 percent of their state and local tax contributions, amounting to more than \$8 billion.”

“Undocumented Immigrants’ State and Local Tax Contributions,” *ITEP: Institute of Taxation and Economic Policy*, accessed January 24, 2014, <http://www.itep.org/pdf/undocumentedtaxes.pdf>.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ In fact, in 2007, about 18% of all small-business owners in the U.S. were immigrants. “Immigrant Small Business Owners,” *The Fiscal Policy Institute’s Immigration Research Initiative*, accessed Jan 26, 2014, <http://www.fiscalpolicy.org/immigrant-small-business-owners-FPI-20120614.pdf>

United Farm Workers' and Stephen Colbert's campaign "Take our Jobs," in which they invited unemployed Americans, as well as Washington pundits and immigration opponents to apply for agricultural jobs. Only 16 people took on the challenge.²⁴ This was also Colorado farmer John Harold's experience. In response to the United States' high unemployment numbers, Harold decided to offer his farm working jobs to local people instead of H2 visa immigrant workers as he usually did. However, it only took him six hours to realize he had made a great mistake. "Six hours was enough, between the 6 a.m. start time and noon lunch break, for the first wave of local workers to quit. Some simply never came back and gave no reason. Twenty-five of them said specifically . . . that the work was too hard."²⁵ Data show that "immigrants expand the U.S. economy's productive capacity, stimulate investment, and promote specialization that in the long run boosts productivity . . . [and] there is no evidence that these effects take place at the expense of jobs for workers born in the United States."²⁶ Moreover, little to no relationship between immigration and unemployment has been found.²⁷

Immigrants are continuously blamed for crime, and the undocumented are treated inhumanely under the excuse that they are criminals. However, being an undocumented

²⁴ One of these people was Stephen Colbert himself. See "Stephen Colbert & Farmworkers Take Fight to Congress," *United Farm Workers*, accessed April 1, 2014, <http://action.ufw.org/page/s/colbert92410> ; see also "Colbert, Immigrant Farm Workers Challenge Pundits And Unemployed To 'Take Our Jobs,'" accessed April 1, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/06/24/colbert-immigrant-farm-wo_n_624875.html

²⁵ Kirk Johnson, "Hiring Locally for Farm Work Is No Cure-All," *The New York Times*, accessed April 1, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/05/us/farmers-strain-to-hire-american-workers-in-place-of-migrant-labor.html?_r=0

²⁶ "The Effect of Immigrants on U.S. Employment and Productivity," *Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco*, accessed January 25, 2014, <http://www.frbsf.org/economic-research/publications/economic-letter/2010/august/effect-immigrants-us-employment-productivity/>

²⁷ "Untying the Knot Series: Unemployment and Immigration," *Immigration Policy Center*, Jan 27, 2014, <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/special-reports/untying-knot-series-unemployment-and-immigration>

immigrant does not make one a criminal.²⁸ In fact “most immigration violations are civil in nature and don’t result in criminal prosecution. Even the criminal charges that are sometimes used, such as ‘improper entry by alien’ (entering the United States without authorization), are generally misdemeanors.”²⁹ In addition, research has found that immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than the native-born and that crime rates have declined proportionately with immigration increase. In short, the problem of crime in the United States is not caused or worsened by immigrants (undocumented or not).³⁰

Undocumented immigrants also suffer from discrimination, racial profiling, harassment, and other criminal or human rights violations, a reality that is often denied, overlooked, or ignored. The lack of documentation can prevent people from being safe or getting justice. Violence and abuse often go unreported, as being undocumented is a significant deterrent from reporting crime, since people fear that when reporting to the authorities, they will get in trouble due to their immigration status. This is especially true for “undocumented women in abusive relationships. They fear being arrested if police respond to their domestic violence calls, and having to leave their children behind.”³¹

²⁸ I must clarify that this does not mean that if they were in fact criminals it would justify inhumane treatment. Crime should not be an excuse to treat anyone inhumanely. All human beings have rights, even if they have engaged in criminal acts.

²⁹ “Tackling the Toughest Questions on Immigration Reform,” *Immigration Policy Center*, accessed Jan 28, 2014, <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/special-reports/tackling-toughest-questions-immigration-reform>

³⁰ Rumbaut and Ewing present a compelling analysis of statistics and data to support their claim that immigrants have lower incarceration rates than natives, and that crime rates have decline as immigration has increased. Several studies support their claim as well. “The Myth of Immigrant Criminality and the Paradox of Assimilation,” *Special Report: Immigration Policy Center*, accessed Jan 27, 2014. Immigrants are less likely to be criminals than the native-born, see: “From anecdotes to evidence: Setting the Record Straight on Immigrants and Crime,” *Immigration Policy Center*, accessed Jan 27, 2014, <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/anecdotes-evidence-setting-record-straight-immigrants-and-crime-0>

³¹ “Immigration Crackdown Creates Insecure Communities,” *PBS*, accessed March 18, 2014, <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/need-to-know/security/video-immigration-crackdown-creates-insecure-communities/2964/>

For more information on “Secure Communities” per ICE see: “ICE: Secure Communities,” *U.S Department of Homeland Security*, accessed March 18, 2014, http://www.ice.gov/secure_communities/

Unfortunately, some government programs like “Secure Communities,” are only making matters worse.

Secure Communities relies on local law enforcement agencies to share their arrest data with the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE) . . . Congress appropriated funding for Secure Communities in 2008 as a way for police to help ICE prevent undocumented immigrants with serious criminal records from being released from jails. So far, the program has led to the removal of 47,000 people. But the government’s own data shows a quarter of those it helped deport — 12,293 people — were considered non-criminals. Others were picked up for relatively low-level offenses such as driving without a license or shoplifting and then transferred to ICE custody and removed. Because of the program’s failure to focus on high-level offenders, critics say it’s causing fewer immigrants to share information with police that can help solve cases or prevent future crimes.³²

The United States’ own domestic policy is ensuring that crime goes unpunished; it is making it unsafe not only for immigrants but for everyone in the community.

Human rights violations also go ignored and unprosecuted. Farmworkers are perhaps one of the most vulnerable immigrant populations when it comes to human rights abuses. Men, women, and children work in the fields under inhumane and unsafe conditions. Most farmworkers lack basic labor protections. They are excluded from the National Labor Relations Act, despite the fact that their occupation is extremely hazardous. They use heavy machinery, and they are constantly exposed to heat, sun, and dangerous pesticides.³³ Farmworkers are often denied water and/or shade breaks, so

³² “Immigration Crackdown.”

³³ For information about lack of basic labor protections for farmworkers in the United States, hazards of farmworking, details on substandardized housing and other human rights abuses, see: “A State of Fear: Human Rights Abuses in North Carolina’s Tobacco Industry,” *OXFAM*, accessed Nov 27, 2014 and Jan 25, 2014, <http://www.oxfamamerica.org/explore/research-publications/a-state-of-fear-human-rights-abuses-in-north-carolinas-tobacco-industry/>

“Like Machines in the Fields: Worker’s Without Rights in American Agriculture,” *OXFAM*, accessed Jan 28, 2014, <http://www.spnyc.org/fairfoodnyc/pdf/oxfam2006report.pdf>

“Fields of Peril,” *Human Rights Watch*, accessed Nov 27, 2013 and Jan 25, 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2010/05/05/fields-peril-0>

“Fingers to the Bone,” *Human Rights Watch*, accessed Jan 24, 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/06/02/fingers-bone>

many suffer from nausea, dizziness, heat exhaustion, heat stroke,³⁴ dehydration, and even death.³⁵ In addition, most farmworkers live in unsanitary and substandard housing, and have the lowest paid occupation in the United States. Poverty has forced families to rely on *all* members of the family to survive. Since Federal Labor Laws exclude farmworkers, they also exclude protection of working children, making it legal for children as young as 12 to work in the fields.³⁶ There is an estimated 500,000 children working in the fields in the United States, and these children are exposed to innumerable dangers and even death.³⁷ In addition, farmworkers face extreme violence and coercion. In fact, even those who have documentation, like those who belong to H-2 guestworker programs, which provide temporary work visas for foreigners, are subject to exploitation and abuses comparable to slavery.³⁸ In Florida, for instance, there have been several recognized “modern day slavery”³⁹ cases, in which documented and undocumented workers were

“Children in the Fields: An American Problem,” *Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs*, accessed April 1, 2014, <http://afop.org/children-in-the-fields/>

“Close to Slavery: Guestworker Programs in the United States. 2013 Edition,” (*SPLC*) *Southern Poverty Law Center*, accessed May 2, 2014,

<http://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/downloads/publication/SPLC-Close-to-Slavery-2013.pdf>

³⁴ “Although preventable, heatstroke is the leading cause of work-related death among farmworkers.” “A State of Fear.”

³⁵ Some crops are more dangerous than others. Tobacco workers, for instance, are faced with Green Tobacco Sickness, “a form of acute nicotine poisoning caused by absorption of excessive amounts of nicotine through the skin. The symptoms include dizziness, vomiting, weakness, coughing, and headaches.” *Ibid.*

³⁶ Employers welcome the extra set of hands and allow the children to work under an adult’s name. For more information about children working in the fields see: “Fields of Peril,” *Human Rights Watch*, accessed Nov 27, 2013 and Jan 25, 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2010/05/05/fields-peril-0> “Fingers to the Bone,” *Human Rights Watch*, accessed Jan 24, 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/06/02/fingers-bone>

“Children in the Fields: An American Problem,” *Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs*, accessed April 1, 2014, <http://afop.org/children-in-the-fields/>

³⁷ “Children in the Fields;” “Fields of Peril;” “Fingers to the Bone”

³⁸ The H-2 provides temporary working permits for foreigners, but does not provide or enforce all the legal protections associated with working in the United States. See “Close to Slavery: Guestworker Programs in the United States. 2013 Edition,” (*SPLC*) *Southern Poverty Law Center*, accessed May 2, 2014, <http://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/downloads/publication/SPLC-Close-to-Slavery-2013.pdf>

³⁹ The cases were of slavery, not just exploitation.

victims of indentured servitude, manipulation, violence, and threats.⁴⁰ Most of the fruits and vegetables in the United States are hand picked and most of the people who pick them are undocumented. Often, farmworkers have no other work choices and no opportunities to become legal immigrants.

In the current immigration debate, many politicians insist that immigrants who want to obtain a legal immigration status must submit an application and “go to the back of the line.” Republicans and Democrats alike use this rhetoric. During his speech on comprehensive immigration reform, President Barack Obama stated that the legalization process would include “passing a background check, paying taxes, paying a penalty, learning English, and then going to the back of the line behind all of the folks who are trying to come here legally.”⁴¹ Similarly, while defending immigration reform, Representative Marco Rubio also referred to a “line:” “You have to stand in line. You have to wait your turn behind everyone who applied before you legally.”⁴² Likewise, during a news conference on immigration, Representative Bob Menendez stated: “we will have a process where they'll have to wait at the end of the line.”⁴³ In the same way, during a debate, Mitt Romney made reference to the “back of the line:” “And then ultimately you've got to go home, apply for permanent residency here or citizenship if

⁴⁰ “Modern Day Slavery,” *Coalition of Immokalee Workers*, accessed Jan 27, 2014, <http://ciw-online.org/>

⁴¹ “Remarks by the President on Comprehensive Immigration Reform,” *The White House: Office of the Press Secretary*, accessed March 31, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/01/29/remarks-president-comprehensive-immigration-reform>

⁴² “Rubio Defends Immigration Reform Plan,” Interview by Sean Hannity, *Fox News*, Jan 28, 2013, accessed March 31, 2014, <http://www.foxnews.com/on-air/hannity/2013/01/29/rubio-defends-immigration-reform-plan>

⁴³ “News Conference on Immigration,” Transcript by *Micevhill.com*, accessed March 31, 2014, http://www.micevhill.com/attachments/immigration_documents/hosted_documents/113th_congress/TranscriptOfGangOfSixPressConferenceOnImmigrationFramework.pdf

you want to try and do that. But get in line behind everyone else.”⁴⁴ What this rhetoric obscures is that there is no “line” for undocumented immigrants to go to. Acquiring legal immigration status is difficult, restricted, expensive, and takes a great amount of time. The number of visas granted is limited, the fees are high, and people wait for years to just gain some type of legal status to remain in the country. After immigrants acquire a permit or visa, they have to wait again to become residents, and then they have to wait even longer to become citizens.⁴⁵ Immigrants wait anywhere from 3 to 23 years to become “documented immigrants,” however, in the current broken system, it has been calculated that someone who applies for a visa to live in the United States can expect to wait as long as 165 years.⁴⁶ Many undocumented immigrants have no possibilities to become legal immigrants; they do not even have a chance to apply for *any* type of visa. The metaphor of a “back of the line” reinforces

the fallacy that there is something that undocumented residents could have done before which they were simply choosing not to. It allows the anti-reform crowd to continue their standard line that we are “rewarding lawbreakers” who could have “done it the right way” without having to acknowledge that there never was a “right way” for upwards of 99% of the people now here undocumented to have done it.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ “Transcript of Second Presidential Debate,” *Fox News*, accessed March 31, 2014, <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2012/10/16/transcript-second-presidential-debate/>

⁴⁵ This is an excellent diagram describing the process of legal immigration. See Appendix E. Mike Flynn and Shikha Dalmia, “What Part of Legal Immigration Don’t you Understand?,” *Reason.org*, accessed Jan 23, 2014, <http://reason.org/files/a87d1550853898a9b306ef458f116079.pdf>

⁴⁶ “Estimates based on State Department “Annual Report of Immigrant Visa Applicants in the Family-sponsored and Employment-based Preferences Registered at the National Visa Center as of November 1, 2010 . . . Note that these numbers do not include petitions still pending approval or held at USCIS. Based on USCIS processing reports, three to six years of applications are not included in these numbers.” “Estimated Waiting Times for Visa Availability of Family Preference Petitions Filed After 11/1/2010,” *There is no Line: Deporting Immigration Ignorance*, accessed March 18, 2014, <http://thereisnoline.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/download-pages-1359428432.pdf>

⁴⁷ Matt Cameron is an immigration lawyer, creator of thereisnoline.com, a website that explains that there is indeed “no line” when it comes to immigration. See: Matt Cameron, *There is no Line: Deporting Immigration Ignorance*, accessed March 18, 2014, <http://thereisnoline.com>

The “immigration line” is a common metaphor that can be universally understood and is therefore used by politicians, however, this “line” is nonexistent. Reference to this line, even by immigration reform advocates, rather than recognition of the lack of legalization options and the brokenness of the bureaucratic system, does not contribute anything to the immigration debate and does not help find solutions. Instead, it is only damaging and deceitful.

The process of acquiring legal status is especially difficult when immigrants are kept uneducated and in poverty. Immigration status affects education. Until 2012, immigration status kept 95% of undocumented teenage students from attending college after high school graduation.⁴⁸ Sadly, almost half of undocumented students (49%) will become “drop outs,” compared to only 11% of native born students, and only 5 to 10% of undocumented high school graduates will go on to college.⁴⁹ Undocumented youth are consistently denied their right to education despite having excellent grades and a burning desire to learn, and in many cases, the desire to be the first one in their family with a university degree. No higher education means that most of these teens remain trapped in low-wage jobs, unable to break the cycle of poverty and ignorance from which they cannot escape.

To listen to Cameron’s interview on NPR, see “Is There Really a ‘Line’ for Immigration,” interview by Michel Martin, *TELL ME MORE, NPR News*, Feb 27, 2013, accessed March 17, 2014, <http://www.npr.org/2013/02/27/173056252/is-there-really-a-line-for-immigration>

⁴⁸ On June 15, 2012, the Secretary of Homeland Security announced that certain undocumented people who came to the United States as children could apply for *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals* (DACA), which would allow them to remain in the U.S. temporarily, receive work authorization, and be eligible for in-state tuition and attend college. “Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Proceedings,” *U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)*, accessed Nov 22, 2013, <http://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-process>

⁴⁹ “Closing the Gap for Undocumented Students” *Golden Door Scholars*, accessed Nov 26, 2013, <http://www.goldendoorscholars.org/infographic.html>

Learning the reality of millions of immigrants in the United States was enraging, depressing, and shocking to me. Hearing their stories was an eye-opening experience. I realized that I was listening to the voices of a voiceless population oppressed by ignorance, hate, and senseless fear. I knew that I desperately wanted to do something to make those voices heard and also wanted to make sure that they knew that even though their political, economic, and social voice had been silenced, they still have other outlets of expression available to them. Their voice could still be heard. I knew that an effective way to do this was through theater.

Theater Chapter 2- The Baker's Son

"I have sincere respect for those artists who dedicate their lives exclusively to their art – it is their right or their condition – but I prefer those who dedicate art to life."⁵⁰

-Augusto Boal

After my work at the attorney's office, I became extremely interested in immigration policy and slowly began to look for ways to support the immigrant community. I started to volunteer with the Farmworkers Association of Florida in Apopka,⁵¹ teaching citizenship classes and helping people study for the citizenship test, despite the fact that I was not yet a citizen myself. A few years later I joined the Youth and Young Adult Network of the National Farm Worker Ministry (YAYA), an activist organization in which young people "work to change the oppressive social, political and economic conditions of farm workers."⁵² I began to seriously think about bringing art to underserved populations in 2006 (by then I was already working professionally in entertainment and performing arts) when I performed in the play *Esperanza Rising* at The

⁵⁰ Augusto Boal, *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed*, (Milton Park and New York: Routledge, 2006), 107.

⁵¹ "The Farmworkers Association of Florida (FWAF) was founded in 1983 in response to devastating freezes decimating the citrus crop in Central Florida and impacting farmworkers' livelihoods. The organization incorporated in 1986 and expanded statewide in 1992." Its mission is "to build power among farmworker and rural poor communities to empower them to respond to and gain control over the social, political, economic, workplace, health and environmental justice issues that impact their lives." *Farmworkers Association of Florida*, accessed Nov 20, 2013, <http://www.floridafarmworkers.org/>

⁵² *Youth and Young Adult of the National Farm Worker Ministry (YAYA)*, accessed Nov 29, 2013, <http://nfwm-yaya.org>. I have been actively involved in the immigrant and farm worker movement ever since.

Hope Community Center (HCC)⁵³ as part of the Orlando Latin American Theater Festival (OLA Fest). After the performance, some teens from the audience approached me crying, and told me that they could never fulfill their professional dreams because they couldn't go to school. Some of them wanted to be actors. I was saddened. I had just finished not one but two bachelor degrees, and could not imagine what I would have done if I had not been able to do so. It was incredibly unfair and oppressive. That day, even though I did not know where to start or how to do it, I made myself a promise: to teach theater in underprivileged communities.

A couple of years later a friend introduced me to the ABC program at the Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida. The Art by Coalition Children (ABC) is a “volunteer-based program that pairs professional artists in the community with children living at the Coalition. Artists work with the kids to create a wide variety of art.”⁵⁴ I began teaching theater workshops for children and teens.⁵⁵ The experience quickly gave me the strength to teach in other places and sparked in me the desire to look for ways to incorporate art in my activism, as arts can be effectively used to educate, to make political and social statements, to tell personal stories, to raise consciousness, and to promote social change. I began working with undocumented students in the Deland YAYA chapter. It was here that I realized the severity of the issues faced by undocumented/low-income teenagers. After graduating high school, these teens had no options, no opportunities, and no chance to move forward. It quickly became obvious that

⁵³ *The Hope Community Center* serves farmworkers and low-income families. *The Hope Community Center*, accessed Dec 2, 2013, <http://hcc-offm.org>

⁵⁴ *Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida*, accessed Nov. 23, 2013, <http://www.centralfloridahomeless.org/help/families-abcs.cfm>

⁵⁵ Working with the homeless population is another one of my passions as homelessness (especially of children) is a big problem in Colombia, and I grew up seeing children my age living in the streets.

as a nation, the United States was closing the door to knowledge and crushing the dreams of its children, its future. I kept hearing comments like "I'm never gonna make it," "why work hard in high school if I am stuck afterwards?" or "I'd rather not think about it, or pretend I don't want to go to school rather than tell people that I can't." I was working with teenagers who had practically given up on life. It was heartbreaking. These teenagers were smart, good children, and instead of finding opportunities in the "land of opportunity," they found barriers, and were condemned to stay in an exitless cycle of low-wage jobs, poverty, and ignorance.

After I set out to teach theater in underprivileged communities, I quickly learned that theater was not for everyone. Unlike me or my fellow actors, most of the teens and children I worked with were not fond of public speaking, let alone performing. Acting appeared like an intimidating monster that many were not interested in facing. I quickly realized that as much as art can be empowering, it can also be alienating. I recognized that I needed to include other forms of art in order to appeal and speak to everyone. I introduced fine arts and crafts in my workshops, and my experience with puppetry allowed me to introduce this tool as well. Unfortunately, the use of theater became limited. Although I could play theatrical games with everyone, we couldn't move on to actually produce a theater piece, as this would have required everyone in the group to feel comfortable performing. Moreover, I was not really sure how to guide the group in the creative process of a piece that was truly their own. I knew that if I wanted to continue using theater, I was going to need to find another method.

As an activist with YAYA, I often attended workshops, seminars and forums on social justice. In one of these occasions, I was introduced to Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of*

the Oppressed.⁵⁶ Later on I was introduced to Augusto Boal's *Theater of the Oppressed* (T.O.).⁵⁷ It was a superficial introduction, but it was enough to make me curious about Boal's method. I bought a couple of books and began to do some research. *Theater of the Oppressed* seemed like the perfect tool to apply theater in my work with actors and non-actors alike; but the books only gave me theoretical knowledge. I had never seen a *Theater of the Oppressed* play, had no idea what the actual application of the method would be like, and there was nowhere in Central Florida where I could go see this type of theater in action. During my research, I found information about Boal's Center for the Theater of the Oppressed (CTO) in Rio de Janeiro. The CTO offered workshops and a theoretical and practical International Residency for foreigners. I decided to fly to Brazil and participate in the International Residency for two months. By doing so, I gained additional knowledge and new tools to work with non-actors, and I deepened my knowledge and understanding of *Theater of the Oppressed*.

Augusto Boal is an internationally recognized theater authority. Playwright, director, writer, and creator of the *Theater of the Oppressed*, Augusto Boal's efforts to use art to transform society have been acknowledged around the globe. He was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2008, and in 2009 the UNESCO appointed him World Theatre Ambassador, the first Brazilian to ever receive such honor.⁵⁸ Augusto Boal got involved in "political theater" during the 50's and suffered the effects of the

⁵⁶ Although Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was influential on Boal's work, for the purpose of this paper, I will not examine Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in detail. However I will touch briefly on some of his influences. For more information on Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* see Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (New York and London: Continuum, 2010).

⁵⁷ Boal named his book *Theater of the Oppressed* as homage to Freire. "Famed Brazilian Artist Augusto Boal on the 'Theater of the Oppressed,'" Interview by Juan Gonzalez, *Democracy Now*, June 3, 2005, accessed March 1, 2014, http://www.democracynow.org/2005/6/3/famed_brazilian_artist_augusto_boal_on

⁵⁸ "Augusto Boal," *CTO: Centro de Teatro do Oprimido*, accessed February 28, 2014, <http://ctorio.org.br/novosite/quem-somos/augusto-boal/>

Brazilian dictatorship; his plays were censored and he was imprisoned, tortured, and exiled. Boal transformed every life event into a learning opportunity and a creative chance. His experiences shaped and strengthened his ideas about popular and political theater and are reflected in the work he developed throughout his lifetime. It is impossible to talk about *Theater of the Oppressed* without talking about its creator Augusto Boal and his life story.

Augusto Boal was born in 1931. He was the son of a baker and was raised in his place of birth: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.⁵⁹ Even though he showed interest in theater from an early age, influenced by his father, he decided to follow his siblings' path and pursue a career that would give him the title of "doctor." He attended the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, UFRJ (then known as URCA) and graduated in Chemical Engineering. His friendship with Brazilian playwright Nelson Rodrigues led to his involvement with performers, and to his participation in the theater group *O Teatro Artístico do Rio de Janeiro* as a dramatist. In 1953 he embarked on a journey to Columbia University in New York City to study with U.S. writer John Gassner, who had taught Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams, among other famous playwrights.⁶⁰ While in New York, he attended sessions at the Actor's Studio as an auditor, where he studied Stanislavski's Method Acting. Also while in New York, he wrote and directed his first play: *The House Across the Street*.⁶¹ Upon his return to Brazil in 1956, Boal began to work with the *Teatro de Arena* (Arena Theater) in São Paulo, and from then on he dedicated himself to being a

⁵⁹ "Augusto Boal," *CTO*.

⁶⁰ Augusto Boal, *Hamlet and the Baker's Son: My Life in Theater and Politics*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 75-125.

⁶¹ For details see: Augusto Boal, *Hamlet and the Baker's Son: My Life in Theater and Politics*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 129, 135-138.

playwright and theater director. The *Teatro de Arena* revolutionized theater in Brazil, as it focused on a truly Brazilian dramaturgy and employed innovative methods and aesthetics.⁶²

In 1964 a coup began to spread all over Brazil. In the year before the coup, left-wing President João Goulart's program of social reform generated fears of a communist takeover. Hundreds of thousands protested his plans in São Paulo. Because of this, the right-wing military understood that they could depose Goulart without igniting a civil war.⁶³ "From March 31 to April 4, 1964, conservative political forces and the military forced progressive President Goulart into exile and established the first of many U.S.-allied military dictatorships in South America."⁶⁴ This takeover was initially considered a temporary solution, but instead it lasted for 21 years from 1964 to 1985. "The military government is accused of killing and 'disappearing' more than 450 people and torturing

⁶² The "Arena Theater" wanted to combat the Italianism and self-centeredness of other groups such as the *TBC (Teatro Brasileiro de Comedia)*. For details on their work see: Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, "Development of the Arena Theater of São Paulo. (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1985), 157-166; "Augusto Boal," *CTO: Centro de Teatro do Oprimido*, accessed February 28, 2014, <http://ctorio.org.br/novosite/quem-somos/augusto-boal/>; Augusto Boal, *Hamlet and the Baker's Son: My Life in Theater and Politics*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 140- 230.

⁶³ Dom Phillips, "As Brazil marks 50th anniversary of the coup, more people open up about the dictatorship," *The Washington Post*, accessed March 31, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/as-brazil-marks-50th-anniversary-of-the-coup-more-people-open-up-about-the-dictatorship/2014/03/30/ea259678-b6ae-11e3-8cc3-d4bf596577eb_story.html

⁶⁴ "Declassified documents show that Washington offered explicit military support to the coup, if needed." Vincent Bevins, "Brazil's military to cooperate in dirty war investigation," *Los Angeles Times*, accessed April 2, 2014, <http://www.latimes.com/world/worldnow/la-fg-wn-brazil-military-dirty-war-20140402,0,290916.story#ixzz2xqAZ2Yhc>

"Brown University and the State University of Maringa in Brazil have begun releasing thousands of State Department and declassified CIA documents that show the extent of U.S. logistical and political support for the coup." Dom Phillips, "As Brazil marks 50th anniversary of the coup, more people open up about the dictatorship," *The Washington Post*, accessed March 31, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/as-brazil-marks-50th-anniversary-of-the-coup-more-people-open-up-about-the-dictatorship/2014/03/30/ea259678-b6ae-11e3-8cc3-d4bf596577eb_story.html

and exiling thousands.”⁶⁵ The dictatorship ordered the arrest of any “politically or socially active” individuals including artists. Boal, along with his group, was forced to cease theatrical activities, burn “subversive books” such as those by Marx and Engels, and seek shelter throughout the country.⁶⁶ “The dictatorship’s first measure was a cultural one: the banning of the Centres of Popular Culture throughout the land, as well as all the peasant leagues, the trade unions, the student unions, any form of dialogue.”⁶⁷ The Centres of Popular Culture existed everywhere before the coup. These were places where people got together to teach one another and engage in social discourse. It was there where Boal began thinking about the *Theater of the Oppressed* method.⁶⁸ “[At first] the coup was not deadly. They imprisoned, but torture had not yet been instituted as the usual method of interrogation: the armed forces still displayed tenuous vestiges of civilization.”⁶⁹ Thus, although challenged by censorship, Boal shortly resumed his theatrical activities.

⁶⁵ The 50th anniversary of the coup was on April 1st, 2014. On this date for the first time the country’s armed forces pledged to cooperate in examining human rights crimes committed during the dictatorship. “Under a 1979 amnesty law, no one has ever been tried for the human rights abuses committed during Brazil’s dictatorship.” Vincent Bevins, “Brazil’s military to cooperate in dirty war investigation,” *Los Angeles Times*, accessed April 2, 2014, <http://www.latimes.com/world/worldnow/la-fg-wn-brazil-military-dirty-war->

See also: Dom Phillips, “As Brazil marks 50th anniversary of the coup, more people open up about the dictatorship,” *The Washington Post*, accessed March 31, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/as-brazil-marks-50th-anniversary-of-the-coup-more-people-open-up-about-the-dictatorship/2014/03/30/ea259678-b6ae-11e3-8cc3-d4bf596577eb_story.html

⁶⁶ “Augusto Boal,” *CTO*; Boal, *Hamlet*, 221-230.

⁶⁷ Boal, *Hamlet*, 232.

⁶⁸ Morelios, Ronald, *Como Querem Beber Agua: Augusto Boal and the Theater of the Oppressed in Rio de Janeiro*, Documentary (1994; Educating Imagination, 1994.), DVD.

⁶⁹ Boal, *Hamlet*, 232.

During a production of *Zumbi*,⁷⁰ Boal invented what was perhaps the most important step towards the development of his *Theater of the Oppressed* method: the *Sistema Coringa* or *Joker System*, where all actors played all characters; actors passed the characters from one to another.⁷¹ In *Zumbi*, the *Coringa*, or wild card, could play any character and explained hidden meanings by interrupting the show and conversing with the spectators. This was the beginning of a “dialogue with the audience” which Boal would later incorporate in his *Theater of the Oppressed*.⁷² During this period, Boal and his teammates in the *Teatro de Arena* also developed *Newspaper Theater*,⁷³ one of the six main forms of T.O., as a response to the censorship they faced. Unable to give the population the artistic production, Boal opted to give them the “means of production.”⁷⁴ *Newspaper Theater* criticizes the media’s monopoly on communication and its manipulation of information; it makes news from the newspaper into theater scenes.⁷⁵ Boal invited “non-actors” to perform these scenes because he believed that anyone could act on stage: “We work with everybody because we believe that everybody can do theater.”⁷⁶ For Boal, everyone was an artist: “Art is immanent to *all* men, and not only to a select few.”⁷⁷ Boal and the *Teatro de Arena* developed several groups that did *Newspaper Theater* about their own problems in places like factories and churches.

⁷⁰ *Zumbi* was artistically polemic and successful. It broke all rules, percepts, and formulas and was extremely important as it enabled the creation of one of the main elements of *Theater of the Oppressed*: the *Joker System*. Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, 166-172.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* For additional details on the “Joker” see also pgs. 173-190.

⁷² Boal, *Hamlet*, 241-242.

⁷³ For more information on *Newspaper Theater* see: Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*. (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1985), 143.

⁷⁴ “Famed Brazilian.”

⁷⁵ Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, 143; “Famed Brazilian.”

⁷⁶ “Famed Brazilian.”

⁷⁷ Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, 109.

Through this type of theater, Boal and his group “democratize[d] the means of production”⁷⁸ of theater.

By 1968 the dictatorship was in full force. Soldiers and marines surrounded the theaters in São Paulo and impeded any performances or any kind of work. Courageously, Boal and his team began to present somewhat clandestine and partly improvised performances. It was during this time that physical aggression began; there were kidnappings and raids. “The dictatorship dressed its savagery in the livery of legality. It called its sordid *coup* a ‘Revolution.’ We, the legalists, were called subversives. They justified censorship by calling it law. It had to be obeyed, just or iniquitous.”⁷⁹ This was a time of fear for actors and audience members alike. Actors found themselves carrying loaded guns in their pockets during performances as a method of self-defense, and audience members monitored every movement off and on stage.⁸⁰

Fears of violence were not unfounded or mere paranoia. In 1971, two men in a VW Beetle kidnapped Boal. He was imprisoned, and underwent periods of solitary confinement, as well as mental and physical torture. The news that Boal was being held captive by the dictatorship quickly spread around the world after his brother Albertino found out about it. The news sparked objections all over the globe, including some from international figures such as Arthur Miller. Despite the opposition, Boal remained in

⁷⁸ “Famed Brazilian.”

⁷⁹ Boal, *Hamlet*, 267.

⁸⁰ “Augusto Boal, Founder of the Theater of the Oppressed, Dies at 78,” Interview by Amy Goodman, *Democracy Now*, June, 2007, accessed Feb 26, 2014, http://www.democracynow.org/2009/5/6/augusto_boal_founder_of_the_theater. In his autobiography, Boal tells the story of a grenade that was placed on stage during a performance. Objects rolling on the floor constantly alarmed people. Upon seeing an unidentified object someone shouted and the lights were turned on to inspect. This particular time it was a grenade, “fortunately, being *Made in Brazil*, [he writes sarcastically,] it did not explode.” Boal, *Hamlet*, 264-268.

prison for four months. During his time in captivity, Boal made drawings to help him remember episodes to write about, and he sent them home weekly with his mother, under the excuse that the drawings were for his child. Once free, Boal used the drawings to write the novel *Milagre no Brasil* (*Miracle in Brazil*) and the play *Torquemada*.⁸¹

Boal's experiences in prison had a profound impact on him and his work. "Metaphorically, the *Theater of the Oppressed* was born in prison."⁸² Boal's body was captive, but not his imagination or his memory.⁸³ Boal was forced to reflect about things he had never thought of before. During his time in solitary, for instance, for the first time, Boal listened to silence. "I had never listened to silence. I listened to sounds. . . . In that moment, I learned. I learned that in that moment of silence, your thoughts, they become more concrete, almost objects."⁸⁴ Then, when he was moved to a cell with other political prisoners he learned another important lesson: "that when we are free in space, we are arrested in time. We have to go look at the watch. It's what time? And we have to go here, we have to go there. We are arrested in time. And when we are arrested in space, we have the free time. We have the liberty of using our time."⁸⁵ Prison was a period for reflection and learning. A time to think about the space and time we inhabit and how we relate to these concepts. In *Theater of the Oppressed*, "the citizen – in the present – studies the past and invents the future. The stage, the arena, like the cell or the prison yard, can be a place of study; and the theater can be a fit instrument, a proper language for that discourse, that quest for oneself."⁸⁶ *Theater of the Oppressed* emerges in Boal's

⁸¹ Boal, *Hamlet*, 284-293.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 298.

⁸³ Boal, *The Aesthetics*, 109.

⁸⁴ "Founder of the Theater."

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Boal, *Hamlet*, 298.

mind during his captivity. Before the final sentencing, the judge granted permission for Boal to join his cast at a festival. Boal signed a document and promised to return, but he never did. He left the country and remained in exile even after amnesty was granted in 1979.⁸⁷

While Boal was in exile, he lived in Argentina, Portugal, and France, and traveled extensively. His years in exile were crucial to the development of his method. Four out of the six forms of *Theater of the Oppressed* were born during this period: *Invisible Theater* was born in Argentina, *Image Theater* and *Forum Theater* were born in Peru, and *Rainbow of Desire* was born in Europe. On the other hand *Legislative Theater* was born in Brazil, upon his return.⁸⁸ Boal lived in Argentina from 1971 until 1976. While there, he worked as a teacher. As part of one of his classes, he prepared a scene about an obscure Argentine law that allowed people in need to go into any restaurant and eat for free. The group wanted to show its support for the law, and planned to perform the scene as a piece of “street theater.” The problem was that Argentina was also in political turmoil; people were getting arrested constantly and citizens of other countries were immediately deported. Boal knew that in Brazil people were not arrested twice; the second time, they were simply killed. He couldn’t take the risk. Simona, one of the actresses, had the idea of playing the scene inside a restaurant without people knowing it was theater.⁸⁹ The actors sat at tables and ate their lunch throughout the restaurant and one of them revealed to the “real” waiter that he couldn’t pay the bill. The actors

⁸⁷ Boal, *Hamlet*, 294.

⁸⁸ The sixth form is *Newspaper Theater*, which was born at the “Arena Theater” in São Paulo, Brazil, and which we already discussed. For the purpose of this paper, out of the six types of theater under T.O., only *Forum Theater* will be discussed in detail.

⁸⁹ “Famed Brazilian.”

(pretending to be mere costumers) intervened. They talked about poverty and criticized wages. Then everyone in the restaurant became involved, even non-actors. The actor became the spectator and the spectator, the actor.⁹⁰ They were not one or the other, they were both; they were spect-actors. The line between actor and audience began to disappear. *Invisible Theater* was born.

The birth of *Image Theater* was somewhat similar, as it was born out of “necessity.” For several years Boal traveled around the Americas. He did lectures in universities in the United States, and he also worked in Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela, and Peru. As part of a governmental literacy program, Boal taught theater workshops in Peru in 1973, where he worked with people from all over the country. Many of his students were indigenous people. They spoke a total of forty-seven mother tongues. Spanish was their second-language (same as for Boal). Communication was difficult. In order to understand them, Boal asked them to do images instead of talking.⁹¹ “Words are only vehicles which convey meanings . . . which are not necessarily the same for everyone: *the word spoken is never the word heard*. . . . We have a denotation which can be found in dictionaries and a connotation which can only be found in the hearts of each one of us.”⁹² Images allowed Boal to see the connotation. “You don’t have to explain the image.”⁹³ You can communicate freely and in a non-conventional expression. The image

⁹⁰ Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, 143-147

⁹¹ Boal, *Hamlet*, 308-310.

⁹² Augusto Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-actors*, (Milton Park and New York: Routledge, 1992), 174.

⁹³ *From Forum to Legislative Theater with Julian and Augusto Boal, 14th annual Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed* (2007; NSM Productions / Creative Training, 2007.), DVD.

goes beyond words. “As they made images, the techniques were born,”⁹⁴ a “new language” appeared, and *Image Theater* was developed.⁹⁵

Besides *Image Theater*, Peru also witnessed the birth of *Forum Theater*, one of the most practiced and celebrated forms of *Theater of the Oppressed*. While in Peru, Boal implemented a technique that he called *Simultaneous Playwriting Using People’s Real Experiences*. It involved doing plays up to the “crisis point” and then letting the audience intervene. This technique came from a lesson he learned while performing a play about peasants. In his early years, Boal believed that as an artist he was somewhat superior to the oppressed people around him. He thought that through his plays he could *teach* others what they needed to do. One day he learned he did *not* know more than they did about their circumstances or their reality:

I was working for peasants in the northeast of Brazil, and I was doing a play in which the protagonist said, at the end said, ‘We have to spill our blood to save our land.’ And then we were all singing, dressed like peasants. We were not peasants; looking like peasants, but we were not peasants, and saying, ‘You have to spill your blood, our blood, to save our lands, to reconquer.’ And then a peasant came to us and says, ‘Well, you think exactly like we do. So why don’t you take your rifles,’ because we had rifles on stage, very beautiful, colorful rifles, and he said, ‘Why don’t you come with your rifles, and let’s go to fight against some landowners that occupied our land. We have to spill our blood.’ And then we said, ‘Forgive us, but our rifles, they are not true. They are fake. They are setting rifles.’ And he said, ‘OK, the rifles are not true. They are not real rifles. But you are sincere, so you come, because we have rifles for everybody. Let’s fight against them.’ And then we said, ‘No, we are truly artists, not truly peasants.’ And he said, ‘When truly artists say, ‘Let’s spill our blood,’ you are talking about our true blood of truly peasants and not about yours.’ So I understood that we could not give a message to women, because we are men; to blacks, because we are

⁹⁴ Boal, *Hamlet*, 310.

⁹⁵ For more on *Image Theater* see: Augusto Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-actors*, (Milton Park and New York: Routledge, 1992), 174-215; Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*. (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1985), 135-139; and Augusto Boal, *Hamlet and the Baker’s Son: My Life in Theater and Politics*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 308-310.

white; to peasants, because we live in the city. But we can help them to find their own ways of fighting.⁹⁶

Stories like this show Boal's incredible capacity for introspection. They are also important because they show the relevance of true solidarity when working for social change. An ally joins the struggle as an ally, and not as an expert or savior. After this experience, Boal decided that instead of telling the audience what to do, they would end the play at the "crisis point" and ask the people to suggest what they themselves deemed most appropriate to do. The actors would then act it out; it was *simultaneous playwriting using people's real experiences*.

This *simultaneous playwriting* however, was still not what we know today as *Forum Theater*. *Forum Theater* was born during a performance in Chaclayo,⁹⁷ where *Simultaneous Playwriting* was being used. After the play ended at the "crisis point," a woman from the audience told the cast what to do and although the actors tried it repeatedly, she was "never satisfied with [their] interpretation."⁹⁸ Realizing that they were being ineffective, Boal saw no other option than to invite the woman to go on stage and do it herself. Realizing how different their interpretation was from her words and actions, Boal understood that the audience's participation was crucial for a true understanding and performance of their suggestions.⁹⁹ He began to implement that in a theater form he called *Forum Theater*. *Forum Theater* presents a social problem. The oppressed fights for his/her desire, but at the end he/she always loses. Then, the audience is invited to come on stage to replace the protagonist and act out their

⁹⁶ "Founder of the Theater."

⁹⁷ Chaclayo is a community in the outskirts of Lima, Peru.

⁹⁸ Michael Taussig, Richard Schechner, and Augusto Boal, "Boal in Brazil, France, the USA: An Interview with Augusto Boal." *The Drama Review* 34 no. 3 (1990): 56.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

suggested alternative courses of action.¹⁰⁰ It was here in Peru that Boal used his new-found techniques to begin practicing what he called *Theater of the Oppressed* and wrote a book by the same name.¹⁰¹

Boal spent several years of his exile in Europe. There he perfected his techniques and developed the fifth form of *Theater of the Oppressed: Rainbow of Desire*. While in Paris, Boal began to teach classes, and in 1979 he founded the *Centre du Théâtre de l'Opprimé* (Theater of the Oppressed Center). During his time in Europe, Boal realized that while oppression in Latin America included strikes, shortage of water, hunger, and violence, in Europe, oppression included loneliness, isolation, emptiness, and lack of communication. He noted that people in Scandinavia, for instance, were committing suicide at an alarming rate, much higher than the people in Latin America, who were victims of violence and dictatorships. From this, Boal deduced that while in Latin America the cops hold a gun to your head, in places like Europe, they exist *inside* your head. Boal developed introspective techniques that use psychoanalysis to try to understand and fight these forms of oppression.¹⁰² These techniques became known as *Rainbow of Desire*¹⁰³ and are now practiced all over the world.

Boal returned to Brazil in 1986 to direct the *Fábrica de Teatro Popular* (Popular Theater Factory). Later on, with the help of popular artists, he created the Center for the Theater of the Oppressed (CTO) in Rio de Janeiro, with the purpose of proliferating the *Theater of the Oppressed* in Brazil. He was Artistic Director and mentor of the Center for

¹⁰⁰ Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, 139.

¹⁰¹ Boal, *Hamlet*, 309.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 324.

¹⁰³ For more information on *Rainbow of Desire*, see Augusto Boal, *The Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theater and Therapy*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

twenty-three years. Here he worked in a variety of projects with NGO's, universities, municipalities, trade unions, and other groups. In 1992, he ran for councilor of the city of Rio under the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (Working Party) and he was elected.¹⁰⁴ During this time, Boal implemented *Legislative Theater*, the sixth form of *Theater of the Oppressed*. Using theater as politics, Boal transformed his constituents in legislators. *Legislative Theater* is a symbolic legislative session. A problem is presented; the audience members propose solutions including possible laws. There is a debate (usually people in favor and people against the proposal). The people vote and if the proposed law wins, it is presented to a politician who can then introduce it as legislation.¹⁰⁵ In four years, Boal and his team “formed nineteen groups that did theater as politics . . . [and] presented thirty-six bills, and promulgated thirteen laws”¹⁰⁶ in Rio de Janeiro. After his return, Boal remained in Brazil and continued traveling extensively around the globe teaching his techniques. Among many other places, he taught at New York University, Harvard University, and the *Université de La Sorbonne-Nouvelle*. Boal worked with groups from a wide variety of ages, races, and backgrounds. He practiced his methods with women, people with disabilities, actors, peasants, unions, health workers, mental health patients, and more. He wrote 22 books, including the posthumously published *Aesthetics of the Oppressed*, which he finished writing right before his death on May 2nd, 2009 at the age of seventy-eight in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.¹⁰⁷ Boal's *Theater of the Oppressed* has changed the lives of many worldwide. He developed incredible techniques that revolutionized theater. His methods, which are practiced around the world, carry

¹⁰⁴ “Augusto Boal,” *CTO*.

¹⁰⁵ Morelios, *Como Querem Beber Agua*.

¹⁰⁶ Boal, *Hamlet*, 325.

¹⁰⁷ “Augusto Boal,” *CTO*.

with them the legacy of this great man's incredible capacity for empathy and care, his endless creativity, and his revolutionary spirit.

Chapter 3 – *Que Son Como Yo*¹⁰⁸

“Artists are witnesses of their times: they should not impose on their public their own view of society, their own understanding of human beings, or their own way to make decisions, but, after speaking their speech, having their say, giving their testimony, delivering to us the product of their art and their craft, they should help others to stimulate inside themselves the artists that lie within, underdeveloped and timid as they may be, shy thoughts still unborn and fragmented, the delicate sensibility that has been blunted.”¹⁰⁹

-Augusto Boal

Theater of the Oppressed is the ideal type of theater for my work because it is inclusive; it includes not only the non-actor, but also those who are by definition left behind, the oppressed. *Theater of the Oppressed* belongs to everyone, anyone can be part of it, and it seeks to give back to the people the means of artistic production so they themselves may use them. It aims to recuperate the channels of expression (word, image, and sound) that are controlled by the media and the elite.¹¹⁰ It offers an opportunity for dialogue where everyone has a chance to participate, not only the rich or the powerful or the privileged, but also the oppressed. Through this type of theater, the oppressed can

¹⁰⁸ That they are like me.

¹⁰⁹ Boal, *Games*, 17.

¹¹⁰ For more information about word, image, and sound see: Augusto Boal, *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed*, (Milton Park and New York: Routledge, 2006).

reassume their protagonistic function in society. Theater is placed at the service of the oppressed, so that they can discover new concepts, ideas, and tools to deal with oppression and oppressive situations, all while discovering new ways to express themselves.¹¹¹

Theater of the Oppressed operates under the belief that everyone is an artist. No art, including theater, is the property of a select group. “We believe that everybody can do theater. Everybody can do what one person can do, . . . but not the same way, not with the same skills, but everyone can do it with the same sincerity and same means of expression.”¹¹² I chose *Theater of the Oppressed* because I, too, believe that art belongs to us all, not just to “artists” or the upper classes. I believe we are all creative beings; we are all creators. Access to art is crucial and should be available to everyone. Having attended an upper middle class school while growing up in Bogotá, Colombia, I constantly questioned why I had so much more access to art than other children my same age. The *Colegio Rochester* (Rochester School) was known in Bogotá for excelling in sports, cheerleading and arts. I grew up singing, dancing, and acting. I couldn’t help but wonder why others did not grow up doing the same. Arts are so universal, yet we as a society have managed to make them exclusive: only the privileged have access to art. Through his *Theater of the Oppressed*, Augusto Boal returned art to the masses.

Through his method, Boal offers an opportunity for direct action, a real chance to start a dialogue and to generate social change. *Theater of the Oppressed* truly embodies activism in art. *Theater of the Oppressed* perfectly fits my stance on the role of art in

¹¹¹ Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, 119, 121.

¹¹² “Famed Brazilian.”

society because it promotes social change; it is active. It is a type of theater that transforms reality. Augusto Boal believed that all human activities are political, thus “all theater is necessarily political.”¹¹³ *Theater of the Oppressed* is political in the most “active” way: it is a rehearsal for future actions, for transformation of reality. As such it is a weapon, “a very efficient weapon”¹¹⁴ that should be used by the people. Unlike Aristotle’s *Poetics*, *Theater of the Oppressed* does not offer a catharsis where the audience is “purged.”¹¹⁵ Boal believed that what gets “purged” by Aristotelian catharsis are the sentiments needed to fight, to revolt, the desire to change society.¹¹⁶ So, instead of catharsis, *Theater of the Oppressed* offers a chance to discuss, to invent, and to try.

Theater of the Oppressed breaks all boundaries and walls; everyone participates. *Theater of the Oppressed* transforms the spectator from a passive observer into an active being. The spectator no longer just watches the play and leaves, he/she participates actively and is prompted to take action in real life. Boal believed that in Aristotle’s *Poetics*, the spectator delegates all his/her power to the character, which is why the character acts and thinks for the spectator. He also believed that Bertolt Brecht’s theater had made great advancements against Aristotle’s *Poetics*. For Boal, in Brecht’s *Poetics*, the viewers delegate power to the character to act for them, but reserve their right to think on their own, and they often do it in a critical way and in opposition to the character. In this type of theater, there is an “awakening of critical consciousness.”¹¹⁷ However, Boal believed this was not enough. In his *Poetics of the Oppressed*, Boal proposed for the

¹¹³ Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, XI.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ For a complete argument against Aristotle’s *Poetics*, please see Augusto Boal’s *Theatre of the Oppressed*.

¹¹⁶ Taussig, Schechner, and Boal, “Boal in Brazil,” 50-65. For more information see also Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*. (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1985), 106.

¹¹⁷ Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, 122.

spectator *not* to give away *any* of his/her power to the character or the actor, but instead to partake in the action. The audience “assumes the protagonic [*sic*] role, changes the dramatic action, tries out solutions, discusses plans for change – in short, trains himself for real action.”¹¹⁸ The “spect-actor” is incited to act in the theater and beyond, in real life. “*Theater is action!* . . . [Theater is] a rehearsal for revolution.”¹¹⁹ Actors and non-actors, on and off-stage, are active participants in the artistic piece and the social dialogue. The spectator abandons his passive role and reclaims theater as a means of expression and as a way to create change.

In order to put into practice what I learned during the International Residency at Augusto Boal’s CTO in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, I decided to work with one of the most vulnerable populations I have encountered during my activist and volunteer work: low-income documented and undocumented teenage immigrants. The particular vulnerability of this group deeply touched me. Teenagers are already a vulnerable population. Often, teen behavior is impulsive and excessively emotional. It takes about 25 years for the brain to fully develop, and a great part of this development occurs during adolescence. This can explain teenagers’ unpredictable and risky behavior, as the prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain that controls reasoning and impulses, develops last. During adolescence, hormones also play a part in overly emotional, unpredictable and risky behavior.¹²⁰ Teen years are marked by confusion brought on by numerous physiological and psychological changes. Teenage immigrants not only have to face all this, but also the innumerable difficulties of being an immigrant, and those that are undocumented and/or low-income

¹¹⁸ Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, 122.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 155.

¹²⁰ “Why do Teens Act this Way,” *A parent’s Guide to the Teen Brain*, accessed Dec 2, 2013, <http://teenbrain.drugfree.org>

have an even greater struggle. Adolescents are extremely impressionable and are in need of good role models and strong support systems. I was convinced that theater could be beneficial and useful for them. They have a great need to find a voice, their own voice, and I knew that through theater, I could facilitate this process.

I decided to go back to the Hope Community Center (HCC), the place where I first encountered teenagers who, although interested in theater, were oppressed and unable to pursue their dreams. HCC serves Central Florida's immigrant and working poor communities in Apopka and Central Florida. Among the many activities offered by the center is the youth group *Sin Fronteras* (Without Borders). Every Wednesday approximately 80 teenagers between the ages of 14 and 18, come from three nearby high schools to discuss, plan communal activities, share, and learn lessons on empathy and respect. I attended the youth group for several weeks. I observed, participated, and even conducted some warm-up/ice-breaker games, before I mentioned the start of a theater group. I did this because I did not want to be an outsider. I wanted the teens to know me a little so that they would feel comfortable around me. I proposed the theater group only after I noticed that the teens began to recognize me, greet me with a kiss,¹²¹ and even talk to me. Everyone in the youth group was invited to join in. The teens were informed that a series of theater workshops would culminate with a *Forum Theater* piece they would create based on their own experiences, and perform in front of their peers and community members. The teens were encouraged to attend the workshops even if they did not wish to act in public since they could still be part of a performance in other ways, such as sound, set and props, writing, and costumes. I offered these opportunities since, as

¹²¹ A kiss on the cheek is the typical Hispanic greeting.

mentioned before, I have learned that performing can be very intimidating. I wanted to give everyone a chance to experience the workshops without feeling the pressure of performing.

This project's main objective has been to give voice to the oppressed, in this case low-income documented and undocumented teenage immigrants, rather than to provide acting training to produce superb actors or to create a masterpiece. Through the process and through the final piece, these teenagers are able to find new ways to express themselves and communicate. They are able to talk about the oppressions that they face, gain a better understanding of oppression and oppressive situations in their lives, and encourage themselves and one another to find and practice ways of dealing with these oppressions and/or stop them. In addition, the teens learn life skills such as team building, teamwork, creativity, and problem solving. Furthermore, the process and activities promote self-reflection, self-discovery, and personal growth, thus the workshops have a positive impact on the individual and therefore the community. Through the workshops, the teens also become aware that they can use theater to express themselves, tell their stories, and in turn generate social change.

The theater workshops began with two-hour meetings on Saturdays. During the first few weeks the attendance fluctuated. There were anywhere from 15 to 24 participants, both English and Spanish speakers. Thus the workshops were conducted bilingually. The first few meetings focused on exercises and games aimed at helping the teens feel comfortable with each other so that they could work well together, and could later share their personal stories at ease and without hesitation. In addition, the workshops focused on encouraging the participants to get to know their bodies, feel comfortable with

them, and use them in new and non-conventional ways without fear of judgment.

In order to prepare people for the stage, Boal developed a series of exercises and games that are used in all six forms of *Theater of the Oppressed*. Drawing from Freire, Boal integrated pedagogy and reciprocity into his work. He believed that theater games served a pedagogical function, helping people learn by themselves through processes such as asking questions.¹²² In addition, the learning process is reciprocal. The teacher and the students play both roles simultaneously, and the oppressed actively participate in the revolutionary process/change.¹²³ Boal developed several exercises that aim at getting a better understanding of the body, its mechanisms, limitations, and capacities. He also developed and “borrowed” several games that deal with the “expressivity of the body as emitter and receiver of messages. The games are a dialogue, they require an interlocutor. They are extroversion.”¹²⁴ He divided these games and exercises in five categories: *feeling what we touch, listening to what we hear, dynamising [sic] several senses, seeing what we look at, and the memory of the senses*. “In the first category the aim is to bridge the gap between feeling and touching. In the second, between listening and hearing. In the third, to try to develop several senses at once. In the fourth category, to try to see what we look at. Finally, the senses also have memory – in the fifth category, we try to awaken it.”¹²⁵

During the workshops, the teens and I practiced games and exercises from Boal’s five categories, and added some of the principles and ideas that I learned through my training in improvisation. I believe it is important for the participants to feel supported

¹²² *From Forum to Legislative Theater with Julian and Augusto Boal, 14th annual Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed* (2007; NSM Productions / Creative Training, 2007.), DVD.

¹²³ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (New York and London: Continuum, 2010), 72, 80, 127.

¹²⁴ Boal, *Games*, 48.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 50.

and not feel judged at any moment. From my improvisational training, I brought to the workshops the main rule of improvisation: “yes and.” The participants were instructed to always accept other people’s offers without hesitation or judgment. Whatever choices they made, no matter what, were always valid. There is never a wrong choice in improv. This encouraged the teens to make offers without fearing that the others would reject such offers or would criticize them. In addition, I instructed the group to embrace and celebrate their own and each other’s mistakes. Although all offers are welcomed, there are some rules that apply to games or scenes such as following a pattern, in this sense someone can make a “mistake.” While doing improvisation, my instructors encouraged me to abandon the fear of failure. I encourage my students to do the same, and in addition I encourage them not just to embrace, but also celebrate failure. Every time someone makes a mistake in a game or exercise, the participants are instructed to applaud their teammate and to cheer with excitement for them. In the same way, the person who “made the mistake” is instructed to show excitement and pride, and to celebrate said mistake as if it were the greatest triumph. We live in a society that constantly shames people for making mistakes, but mistakes are very important: it is the way we learn. Brain cells “are constantly adjusting their connections to reflect reality. Every time you make a mistake or encounter something new, your brain cells are busy changing themselves.”¹²⁶ The neurons incorporate new information, “turning a negative feeling into a teachable moment . . . they are a crucial source of wisdom.”¹²⁷ A mistake can turn into the greatest discovery. Embracing and celebrating mistakes encourages the teens to try new things, in and outside of the workshops, even if they experience failure.

¹²⁶ Jonah Lehrer, *How we Decide*, (Boston and New York: Mariner Books, 2010), 41.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 41.

A few weeks into the workshops the meeting time increased from two hours to three. In addition, the group became smaller with an average of eight to ten participants,¹²⁸ most of them Spanish speakers, thus the workshops were conducted in Spanish from that point on. Despite the fluctuation in attendance, it was evident that the workshops had achieved their purpose of making the students feel comfortable around each other. Even though the participants all came from the youth group, many of them had never really talked to each other or spent time together. They were also neither close to me nor knew me well. Participating in activities that enforced trust and encouraged the teens to be themselves without fear of judgment helped them open up to the group and to me. At the beginning of the sessions I always do a “check-in” with the group,¹²⁹ where everyone has the opportunity to talk about their week and share something exciting that is happening in their lives and/or challenges that they are facing. This is a great opportunity to bond and for their teammates and me to show interest and respect. Though the teens seemed reserved during the first few workshops, after a few weeks they began sharing more. Many talked about school and academic difficulties while others talked about more personal things like family and love interests. In addition, trust and comfort became visible in the games. Many of the trust games we played were difficult for many at first since they required that the participants abandon fears while placing trust in others. For instance, we played “Joe Egg (aka trust circle)” a game where one participant enters a circle, and with his/her eyes closed and body relaxed, is gently pushed around the

¹²⁸ Later on in this paper, I will talk about the challenges we faced, which were the reasons why the group became smaller.

¹²⁹ I observed Neta Kirby, a Sand Therapist and educator in Australia, practice “check-ins” with kindergarteners, and thought that was a great way to include everyone while bonding, and showing interest and respect. I’ve been practicing it with my groups ever since.

circle.¹³⁰ Many teens had a very hard time playing this game the first time, but as time went by, they all began feeling comfortable participating. The teens noted how difficult it was for them to keep their eyes closed, and in general to trust others. With time, they began feeling more comfortable playing the games that required them to have their eyes closed. During one of the workshops we played “The Blind Bus,” a variation on “The Blind Car.”¹³¹ In this game, all participants stand in a line connected by their arms on the shoulders of the person in front. They all close their eyes except for the last person who will “guide the bus.” He/she does so by tapping the person immediately in front (on the right to turn right, on the left to turn left, on the head to go back, on the center to go straight, and breaking contact to stop). The command is passed from person to person. In this particular workshop there were two relatively new teens. While playing this game, another student arrived late. He stood by the door and watched from a small window. Once we finished, he came into the room and “called out” the students who had at some point opened their eyes. I immediately noticed that the students who had opened their eyes were the new ones. We all discussed how working together for several weeks had enabled us to trust our teammates, and many of the teens admitted being surprised at themselves and their ability to do so.

Perhaps the major proof of the trust built among the group was when one of the students who usually never spoke began to talk about how he had felt impotent the week before when his mother had threatened to leave home and take his little brother with her. He spoke briefly about the situation at home, which was tense, difficult, and worsened by

¹³⁰ See Augusto Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-actors*, (Milton Park and New York: Routledge, 1992), 62.

¹³¹ See Augusto Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-actors*, (Milton Park and New York: Routledge, 1992), 121.

an alcoholic father. Since I realized something important was happening, I approached the student after the workshop. We spoke more about his situation at home, and he told me that he feared that his brother was going to commit suicide. He said he found a note and a knife. I told him that we needed to find help for him and his brother so he agreed to allow me to contact the appropriate people at HCC. When I contacted the people who oversee the youth program, they had an idea of this teen's situation at home, but they did not know anything about the possible suicide attempt.¹³² Theater proved to be a powerful tool to build trust and to allow these teens to truly open up, share, and reach out.

Trust and comfort are crucial to sharing, and in order for the teens to talk about their stories and the moments in which they had felt oppressed, we had to define oppression and clarify the term. When asked about the meaning of oppression, the teens confused the word with depression and pressure.¹³³ As mentioned, one of the objectives of this project is for the teens to be able to identify and talk about oppression and oppressive situations in their lives. Recognizing oppression will allow the teens to help both themselves and each other find and practice ways of dealing with these oppressions and, when possible, even stop them. I explained oppression in simple terms, using the same definition as Augusto Boal's son, Julian Boal:

Oppression is a concrete relationship between individuals who belong to different social groups. It is a relationship that benefits one group at the expense of the other. Oppression goes beyond individual relationships. It cannot be reduced to one-on-one relationships . . . The relationships between individuals can only be understood within the systems, often invisible, that determine it. The relationship between a worker and a boss cannot be understood without understanding capitalism, or the relationship between a Black and a White person without recognizing racism, or the relationship between a man and a woman without considering patriarchy . . . Being an oppressor or an oppressed is neither a matter

¹³² The staff at HCC found help for this young man and his family, including therapy sessions and parenting classes.

¹³³ The word *opresión* (oppression) in Spanish sounds similar to the word *presión* (pressure).

of individual options nor a moral matter. The nature of oppression does not intrinsically lie within a person, but rather within the relationships between social groups. It is a historical matter . . . Since we are part of different social groups, we can be both oppressors and oppressed at the same time.¹³⁴

In addition, we talked about how oppression is not a fight between good and evil. The oppressor is not necessarily mean or bad,¹³⁵ and it is precisely when the oppressor is “nice” or “benevolent,” that it is the hardest to recognize and/or confront oppression. The oppressor can use his/her power in “nice” ways.¹³⁶ A master who feeds his slave from his own table is nonetheless an oppressor. To define an oppressed, I also used the simple definition employed by the CTO when explaining this term to the audience of a *Theater of the Oppressed* play: the oppressed is a person who has a desire or a want, and who struggles and fights to get this desire or want, but despite his/her efforts cannot do it either because of social structures, someone else, or even him/herself. The oppressor is someone who uses his/her power to deny these desires or wants. I also clarified that the oppressed is different from a victim, because the oppressed fights while the victim cannot fight any longer either because there is nothing he/she can do, or because he/she has given up. This is an important clarification, since we were creating a *Theater of the Oppressed* piece. In order for the audience to think about alternatives, the protagonist of a *Theater of the Oppressed* piece must be an oppressed, not a victim.

In order to aid the understanding of oppression and oppression dynamics, we practiced some exercises and games that helped illustrate it. We played “Colombian Hypnosis,” which is a game originally designed to help the participants restructure their

¹³⁴ Julian Boal, “Opressão,” *Metaxis: Teatro do Oprimido de Ponto a Ponto*, no. 6, (2010): 124-126. Original in Portuguese.

¹³⁵ Julian Boal in *Como Querem Beber Agua*.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

muscles.¹³⁷ In this game, partners alternate being ‘hypnotized’ by the other’s hand and follow it with their face. We used this game to help us see the power dynamics often found in oppression. The teens noted that the power could shift, “sometimes I am at the top, sometimes I will be on the bottom;” “sometimes I guide, most times, I follow;” “some people feel more comfortable in charge, others prefer to follow, and there are a few who feel comfortable doing both.” We also employed *Image Theater* and created images prompted by words such as family and immigration. We examined the images and identified the oppressors and the oppressed. The teens enjoyed creating the images very much and among other things, they noted that “everyone has a different view of family” and that “many see violence, but others can help them see other things.” I instructed the students one at a time to change one thing about the images. Then we analyzed how each change had affected the oppressed, the oppressor, and the image in general. One of the teens noted: “If you change a small thing, you can change the big picture.” It is noticeable that the teens now have a better understanding of what oppression is and they even feel comfortable using the term. In response to a story told by Sister Ann, one of HCC’s founders and directors, about a woman who was suffering at the hands of her family, one of the teens said: “That’s oppression, Sister Ann. Oppression! We are learning all about it.” The teen accurately identified an instance of oppression, and for the first time, used the word outside of the classroom.

In order to write the theater piece, the youth shared some of their experiences as immigrants and children of immigrants and talked about moments in which they had experienced oppression. When we started talking about personal stories it was important

¹³⁷ See Augusto Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-actors*, (Milton Park and New York: Routledge, 1992), 50.

to me that the teens knew that no one was forced to share anything that they did not want to, and that they would speak only when, and if, they wanted to.¹³⁸ As we began to talk, it was evident that the teens felt comfortable sharing with their peers and with me. The teens spoke of the oppression they are subjected to at home, in school, and in society in general. They talked about their parents, many of whom are overworked and underpaid, and how some lack understanding and are unsupportive. They spoke about their uninvested teachers and how education back in their home countries was different in comparison to the one they are receiving in the United States. They also talked about the difficulties they face because of the language barrier, and they talked about the anti-immigrant sentiments to which they are subjected, both in school and outside of it. We also talked about internalized oppression, “the manner in which an oppressed group comes to use against itself the methods of the oppressor . . . Members of marginalized groups [begin to] hold an oppressive view toward their own group, or start to believe in negative stereotypes of themselves.”¹³⁹ We also discussed how internalized oppression was related to the stories they told, especially when they talked about Latinos oppressing Latinos. When talking about their stories, it was obvious that the teens were deeply impacted by “anti-immigrant myths” and the “immigration debate rhetoric,” which dominates the media and impacts the way others see them and the way they see themselves.

In every *Theater of the Oppressed* workshop that I have attended, a *Forum Theater* piece is created through *Image Theater*. Usually, the participants create images of oppression and little by little, through different exercises, these images begin to take

¹³⁸ See consent form for parents and teens in appendix D. Please note that the informed consent form was provided in English and Spanish, but only the English version has been attached.

¹³⁹ *Sociology*, (Boundles, 2013), 460.

on life and a story begins to unfold. Improvisation is a key element in this process, as the participants will reach a final piece through the improvisation of movements and sounds and/or dialogue. As mentioned before, I worked with the teens in *Image Theater* and they did a fantastic job; however, when the time came to improvise movement, sound, or words, the teens were extremely uncomfortable and did not know what to do. This was mostly because theater is very foreign to many of them, and although we had established trust and a safe environment where the teens could be themselves and try new things, this particular age group is in many ways extremely self-conscious. They will try new things, but require very specific instructions. Although *Theater of the Oppressed* is an excellent method to work with non-actors, improvisation through *Image Theater* was not an adequate method of reaching a piece for this particular group. I recognized this and decided to change the process. Since the teens had joined the theater group with interest in working on different aspects of the performance, I reached out to those who had an interest in writing. Based on the stories shared, the group came to the consensus that the story would talk about the oppression that the teens feel as non-English speakers. I met with two girls who expressed interest in writing the script. We discussed the parts of the script and important aspects of the storyline in a *Forum Theater* piece. Neither one of the girls had ever written a theater script before, so I gave them specific technical instructions but still gave them creative freedom. They decided to work on their own instead of working on one script together. The next week, only one of the girls had brought a written proposal. She produced a wonderful script, which she titled *El Sueño Americano (The American Dream)*. The girl had beautifully captured the stories told by the group and had paid special attention to the instructions I gave her. She surprised her teammates

so much that the other girl that had wanted to write felt it was unnecessary to produce another script. We all discussed the script, and as a group, made changes and edits until we reached a final copy. The title of the play is now *Jaguar You?* (the Spanish word *jaguar* is pronounced very much like the English words “how are”).¹⁴⁰ The play narrates the story of Flor, a girl who recently immigrated to the United States and is determined to succeed academically, but who has to face many challenges, including racism and discrimination at school, especially from other Latinos like herself, a father who doesn’t support her, and an uninvested teacher who makes it seemingly impossible for Flor to reach her goals.

After we finished writing the play and entered into the rehearsal process, we increased the workshop time to four hours and added extra meetings. It was during these rehearsals that the challenges that my students face became more and more obvious. When we met for regular workshops, it was never really a challenge when one of the teens did not attend, but as soon as rehearsals began, the whole group was impacted if one of them was missing. During the rehearsal process it was extremely difficult to get everyone to be at rehearsal at the same time. We also lost several actors who could not return for various reasons. The teens face many issues that keep them from participating in extra curricular activities including lack of transportation, economic hardship, and family obligations. Transportation is a particularly vexing issue. Many of the teens’ parents are undocumented, which means that most do not have a driver’s license. Many states, including Florida, require proof of legal immigration status in order to obtain a driver’s license. It is extremely risky to drive without a license, especially now that there

¹⁴⁰ See script in appendix C.

are programs in place such as Secure Communities that allow the police to send immigration information to ICE. This means that making a mistake while driving or getting into an fender bender could turn into a much more serious problem, like deportation. This is a risk most parents have to take in order to go to work and provide for their families, but which they must minimize in every possible way. Many of the teens are not old enough to drive, and those who are do not have a car. The Center and I have taken on the task of picking up and dropping off several of the teens so that they can attend the workshops.

Economic hardship is also a barrier. Many immigrants, especially the undocumented, hold very low-paying jobs such as farm working. This means that they need all the help possible to make ends meet. Several teens were forced to stop attending the workshops because they needed to work instead. This included 14-year-old boys who either had to go to work with their parents or had to find a job on their own to help the family. One of these boys was the narrator in the play. He had never done any kind of theater before, but he was extremely excited to try it. Sadly, he had to stop attending workshops when he began working at a nursery: “I love it, but I am sorry, I need the money and my mom is in a hard situation and I need to help her.” He was so disappointed that he suggested changing rehearsal dates and doing one-on-one rehearsals.

Unfortunately, changing the workshop day did not work out for the other teens and the group agreed that doing one-on-one rehearsals instead of group rehearsals was not beneficial for the piece.¹⁴¹ Also, as a consequence of their families’ economic hardship, communication is difficult. I have to remind the teens frequently about our meetings and

¹⁴¹ I explained to the teens that the group belongs to them, not to me, so they (not I) make all decisions.

I touch base with them weekly via phone. However, many times communication has been impossible because their phones get cut off due to lack of payment. The teens are continually phoneless and/or change phone numbers on a regular basis. They are teenagers who need constant attention; not having a phone makes it impossible for me to keep in contact.

Since these families are forced to work long hours, many of the teens, especially the girls, have to take on extra responsibilities at home. Many times, the teens have brought their younger siblings to rehearsal because they are the ones in charge of childcare during the weekend and after school. Many of the girls have mentioned how they have to cook after school and clean the house over the weekend. In fact, one of them was unable to continue assisting the workshop because her father believed that "theater was taking too much time away from her responsibilities at home," which included cleaning, cooking and taking care of her siblings. She was unable to continue attending workshops and we had to find a replacement for her in the play. This was especially sad because this particular girl was very dedicated and eager about acting and working on the music for the piece. Even though she did not own any instruments, she knew how to play several of them. I had suggested we get at least one of these instruments so that she could play it during the performance. She was very excited by this idea and was devastated when her father denied her that opportunity. In addition, this particular girl was the one who started the conversation that inspired one of the scenes in the play in which the father, who displays great amounts of *machismo*, oppresses the daughter. Due to the issues that the teens face, we had to modify the play by removing one scene, since one of the actresses couldn't attend the workshops anymore and we didn't have anyone who

could play her part, as most of the actors were already playing multiple characters. We also had to replace the narrator several times until we decided not to have a new narrator, but to simply divide the lines among the performers and rotate the role. In addition, one of the teens' little brother took on a role. Although he is not part of the youth group (he is only 11), he had been attending the workshops and was available.

As a consequence of the difficulties during rehearsals, the performance date has been pushed back several times. At the time of this writing, the performance has still not happened. Despite the fact that the teens have not yet performed, they have benefited greatly from this process. I have noticed great growth in all workshop participants, especially in those who have become regular attendees and are currently working on the theater piece. Every week I see how they get more and more comfortable with their lines, their characters, their bodies and each other. The workshops have positively impacted different aspects of the teens' lives in both obvious and subtle ways. For instance, one of the participants has begun to show confidence in her English speaking abilities. When we first started the workshop, this student never spoke in English. Once we finished the script, I assigned her a role without thinking about the fact that the character had several lines in English. Since I want to make sure the students feel comfortable, we changed a few words and made sure she felt able to perform her lines. However, I also wanted to challenge her, so we left several lines as they were. The student was very hesitant at the beginning of the rehearsals, but with time she has become more confident and in the last few classes, she has spoken in English outside of her character. This has pleasantly surprised us all. Another one of the teens mentioned how last year, she had failed one of her classes because she refused to do an oral presentation. She said that after this

experience she felt she could participate in public speaking. This process has provided an opportunity for the teens to grow and gain confidence. This is crucial to me, as I believe that what we do during the workshops can serve a larger purpose. The workshops have a direct impact on the participant and his/her life on a broad scale, not merely as an activity.

Theater parallels life in many ways, therefore theatrical activities and all their nuances can be applied to daily life. During the workshops, I made sure that we discussed aspects of the activities that specifically spoke of our experiences outside the classroom and that we became aware of the lessons that the theater games and activities could teach us.¹⁴² The teens reflected on how the activities could be applied to their daily lives, and maintained an awareness about the many lessons they could learn from the games, the process, the group, themselves and others. In order to assess the impact of the activities and the process, the teens were given surveys after each workshop.¹⁴³ These measured how much they believed they could apply the workshop's activities to their daily lives. In addition, the teens were given an opportunity to share their feelings and thoughts. The surveys included the following questions:

1. Today's activity/workshop was easy to understand.
2. Today's activity/workshop helped me learn something about me.
3. Today's activity/workshop helped me learn something about others.
4. Today's activity/workshop helped me realize or think about something I hadn't realized/thought about before.
5. I can apply one or more of the things we did today to my life.

The teens could choose how much they agreed with the statement by selecting strongly

¹⁴² I say "we" and "us" because I too was learning during these workshops. They were based on "reciprocity." Often the teens would bring up things I had not thought about or considered. I was constantly surprised and touched, and frequently learned new things.

¹⁴³ The survey was provided in English and Spanish. See appendix B (Survey in English only).

agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree. In some of these questions they had the option to write specifically what it was that they learned or realized. They also had a space to write what they thought was the main lesson from that day's workshop and a space for comments. The surveys were anonymous, and in addition to feedback in general, they allowed me to see new ways in which the workshops impacted the teens. Also, the responses helped me find ways I could adjust the activities to better meet the workshop objectives. The surveys also gave the teens a space to freely express their thoughts and feelings.¹⁴⁴

From a total of 100 surveys,¹⁴⁵ 54% of the teens strongly agreed and 44% agreed with the statement "Today's activity/workshop helped me learn something about me." Sixty (60) of the respondents wrote down what they had learned. Several respondents mentioned that they had learned about trust and working with others. Here are some of the things that the teens learned about themselves:¹⁴⁶

I can trust myself.
 That I can see with my eyes closed.
 That I can overcome my fears.
 That there is no need to be so shy and that I can trust others, get to know them.
 Now I am starting to let my self go and act silly.
 I am capable of working with people I don't know.
 I can laugh about my own character and I can do lots of things acting.
 That now I am not as scared to speak in English.
 I am more familiar with the word "oppression" and I used it with the Sister.
 That I can sing.
 That I can get along with people.
 I can be multiple characters, not just myself.
 I can listen to others.
 That it doesn't matter if what I do is right or wrong, I have to try.
 That I am very imaginative.
 I am a leader <3.

¹⁴⁴ Sadly, these surveys also revealed the teens' poor literacy levels in both English and Spanish.

¹⁴⁵ Please refer to appendix A to see all survey results and corresponding graphs.

¹⁴⁶ Some of the answers listed were originally written in Spanish.

In addition, 56% strongly agreed and 42% agreed with the statement “today’s activity/workshop helped me learn something about others.” Fifty-nine (59) of the respondents wrote down what they had learned. Several respondents noted that they learned that others are like them; they also feel shy or nervous, for instance. This is important because feelings of loneliness, isolation, and inadequacy are common both during adolescence and for immigrants in general, especially those who are low-income/undocumented. Through the activities, the teens were able to see that they are not alone; others share the same feelings. Here are some of the things that the teens learned about others:

When we get confused our friends can help.
 That we have to let go of fear.
 That they have the same feelings that I have.
 Those of us who started the workshop ended up trusting more.
 That other people can do a good and fun job.
 Learn more about their personalities.
 With work you can achieve.
 That is hard to agree.
 That they are like me.
 We don’t all think alike.
 They are becoming more comfortable.
 That they are friendly.
 Learned about their problems and how they dealt with them.
 That they too have fears like I do.
 Others can feel shy or nervous like me.

Furthermore, 49% strongly agreed and 49% agreed with the statement “today’s activity/workshop helped me realize or think about something I hadn’t realized/thought about before.” Fifty (50) of the respondents wrote down what they had thought of/realized. In this answer, several respondents again noted that they learned or realized that others are the same as them. They also responded that it was important to be

themselves, that they can have fun doing activities together, and that people have different views. Here are some of the new things that the teens realized or thought about:

We learn a lot by just observing others.
 That we are all the same.
 I'm starting to trust other people.
 Everyone has their own problems.
 Every day I learn more to improvise.
 That there are things that we didn't know or had never done, but which are fun.
 That sometimes you want to do something, but something is in your path.
 That I am lucky to have come to this country so young because I learned the language early.
 That we are not so different.
 I don't need to be shy. I can talk.
 I don't need to hold the script while practicing.
 Be yourself no matter what.
 That we have to live in the moment.
 I realized that we have become sort of a family and we feel more comfortable with each other.

Moreover, 57% of the students strongly agreed and 42% agreed with the statement "I can apply one or more of the things we did today to my daily life." This is important because it shows that the teens were able to connect the activities with their life and learn from them. In the space provided for the lesson of the day, the teens listed different things that show how the workshop sparked introspection and reflection. Here are some of the things that the teens listed as being the lesson of the day:

To learn to see people in the inside instead of just the outside.
 To see things from another point of view.
 To be a better thinker.
 To learn about myself and to understand others.
 To relate to and share with other people.
 To trust others.
 To practice and pay attention.
 Creativity and memory.
 Focusing on others.
 To work together!
 To learn about oppression.
 It taught us to have fun and lose the shyness.
 That we must learn to listen and wait for our turn to talk.

To act foolish and be yourself.
 To pay attention to others and your surroundings.
 Respect.
 To learn from life and change bad things.
 To expect unexpected things.
 Changing one thing in your life can affect everything else.

The teens' responses show that the workshops have definitely had a powerful impact on the participants, and this last comment in particular, "changing one thing in your life can affect everything else," truly embodies what Augusto Boal intended with his *Theater of the Oppressed* and what I tried to accomplish via the reproduction of his method: to make a difference through a seemingly insignificant thing like theater. "Theater is a form of knowledge; it should and can also be a means of transforming society. Theater can help us build our future, instead of just waiting for it."¹⁴⁷ Theater can transform the world we live in; it can transform lives. This process has touched the lives of teenage immigrants, the oppressed, in a small way, but it has made a big difference.

In the United States, immigration is feared, criticized, and highly misunderstood. Undocumented immigrants are alienated, unjustly treated, made into scapegoats, and dehumanized. Despite the present "immigrant movement," the current immigration debate is terribly flawed and relies on, and reinforces, anti-immigrant sentiments. This rhetoric negatively impacts the lives of 11.7 million people including the teenagers at the Hope Community Center. These teens suffer the consequences of racism, discrimination, and internalized oppression. They have to live with the stigma associated with being immigrants, and even worse, undocumented and/or non-English speakers. They experience barriers at school and at home. The difficult situation in which they live

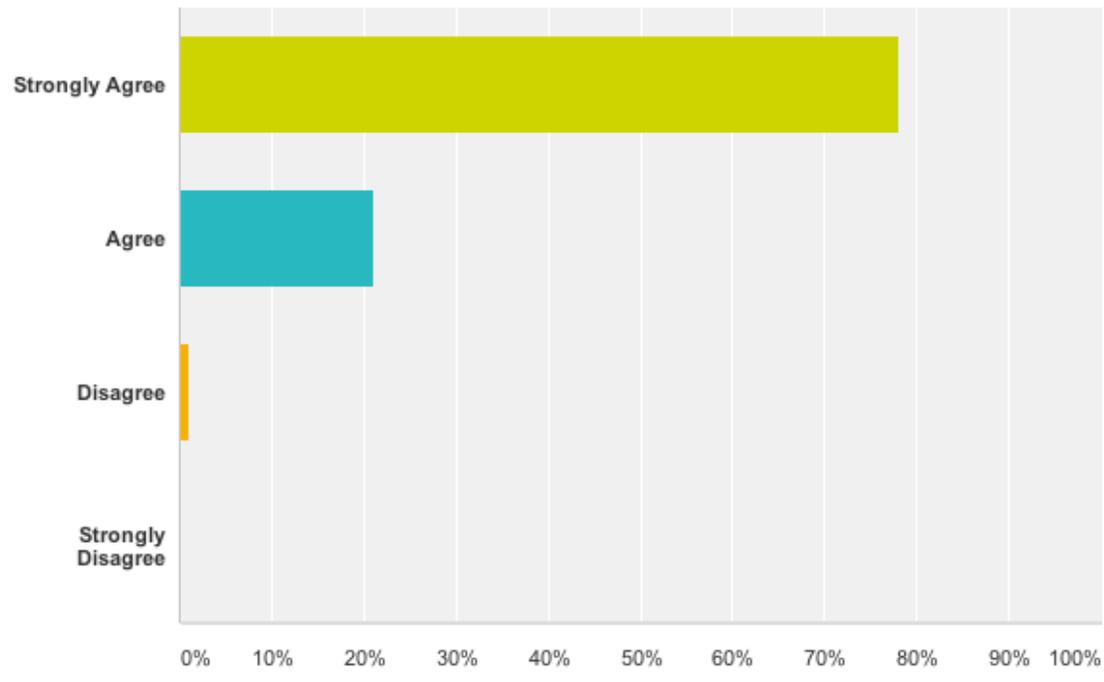
¹⁴⁷ Boal, *Games*, 16.

makes it hard for them to break the cycle of poverty. Extra-curricular activities such as theater are not a priority for them or their families, as they struggle to survive. Through Augusto Boal's *Theater of the Oppressed* the teens have been able to find their own voice. They have recuperated the means of production of theater and have used it to express themselves, talk about their own issues and discuss the oppression they experience. Through the workshop's activities and the creative process, the teens learned life skills such as team building, teamwork, creativity, and problem solving. Furthermore, the process and activities promoted self-reflection and personal growth as evidenced by the stories I have told here and the responses provided in the surveys. The pedagogical effect of the workshops can also be seen in the way the participants talk about them. When asked by Sister Ann to explain what we did in theater class, one of the participants described it the following way: "We meet every Saturday, we have fun, and we learn life lessons." Even though we had discussed things we could learn or apply to life, we had never used the term "life lesson" during the workshops; this student came to this conclusion on his own. In addition, through these workshops, the teens became aware that they can use theater to express themselves and tell their stories. This process has had a profound and positive impact on the individuals and will certainly, in turn, influence and better their communities and our world.

Appendix A - Survey Results' Graphs for questions 1 through 5

Today's activity/workshop was easy to understand

Answered: 100 Skipped: 0

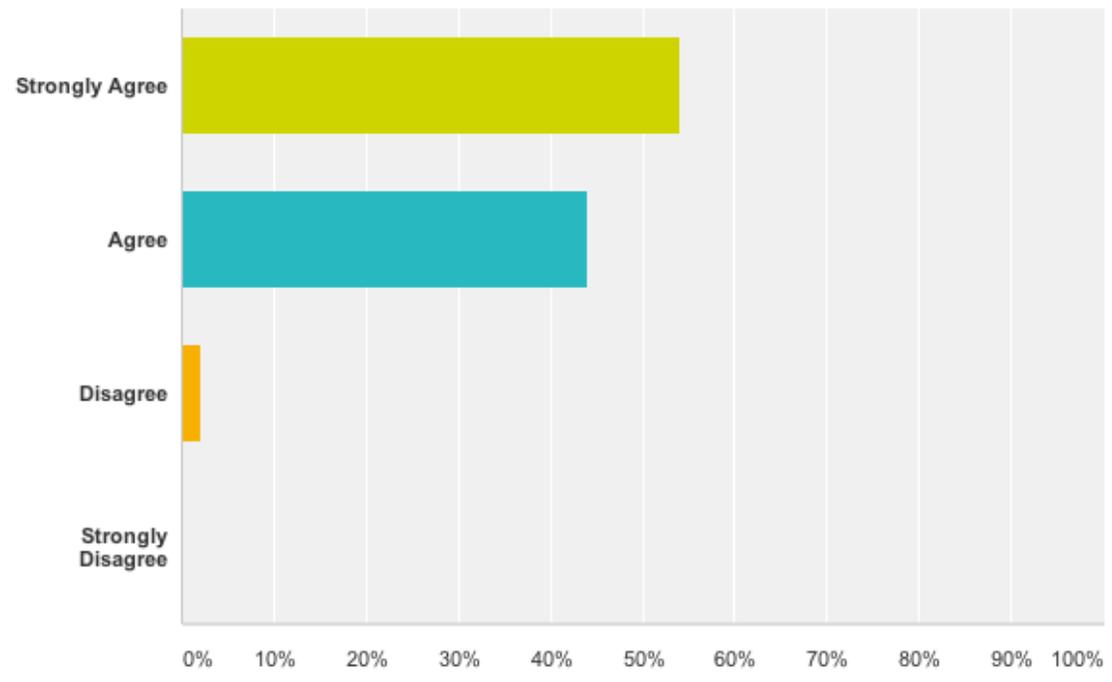


Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	78.00% 78
Agree	21.00% 21
Disagree	1.00% 1
Strongly Disagree	0.00% 0

Total Respondents: 100

Today's activity/workshop helped me learn something about me

Answered: 100 Skipped: 0



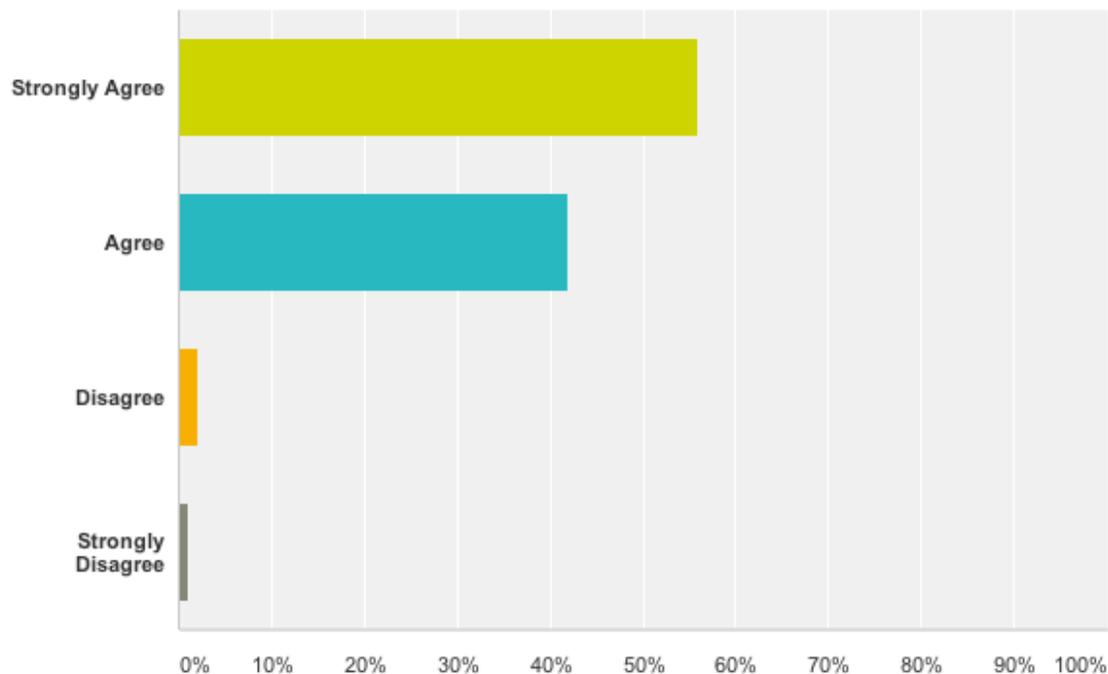
Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	54.00% 54
Agree	44.00% 44
Disagree	2.00% 2
Strongly Disagree	0.00% 0

Total Respondents: 100

[Comments \(60\)](#)

Today's activity/workshop helped me learn something about others

Answered: 100 Skipped: 0

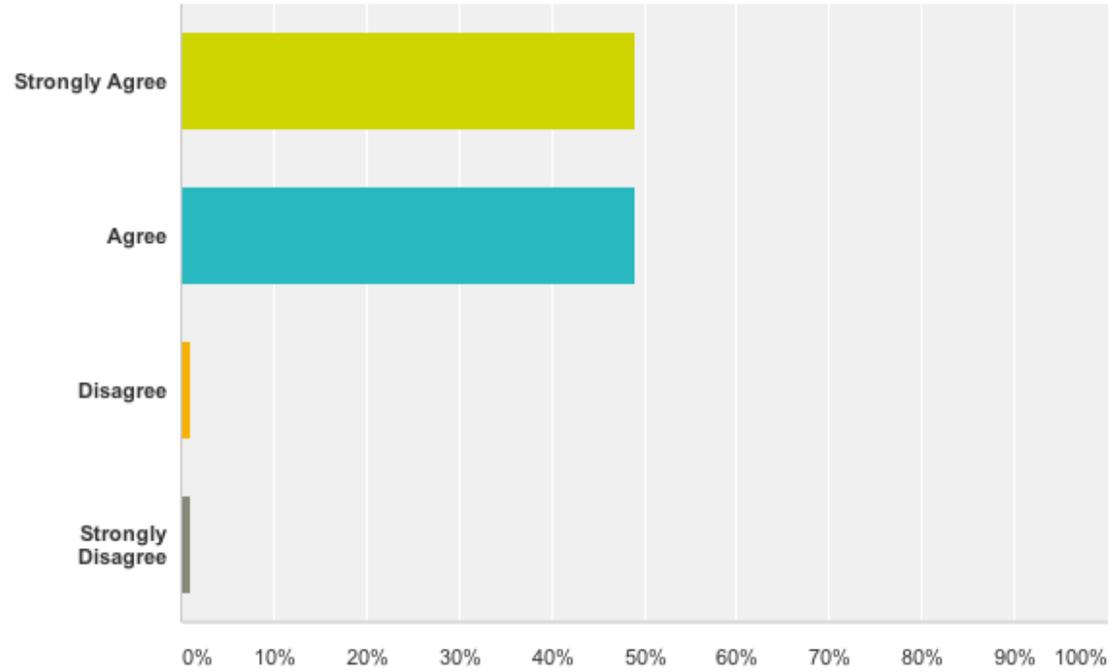


Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	56.00% 56
Agree	42.00% 42
Disagree	2.00% 2
Strongly Disagree	1.00% 1
Total Respondents: 100	

[Comments \(59\)](#)

Today's activity/workshop helped me realize or think about something I hadn't realized/thought about before

Answered: 100 Skipped: 0



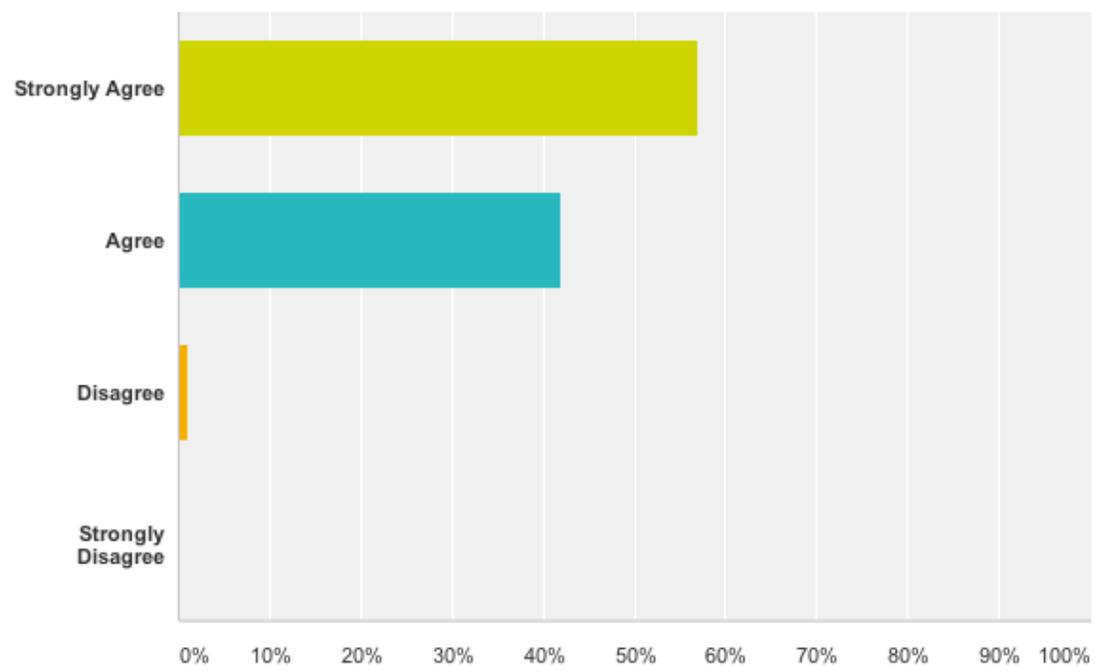
Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	49.00% 49
Agree	49.00% 49
Disagree	1.00% 1
Strongly Disagree	1.00% 1

Total Respondents: 100

[Comments \(50\)](#)

I can apply one or more of the things we did today to my life

Answered: 100 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	57.00% 57
Agree	42.00% 42
Disagree	1.00% 1
Strongly Disagree	0.00% 0

Total Respondents: 100

Appendix B- Workshop Survey

Date _____

Age: _____

1. Today's workshop was easy to understand

Strongly Agree ___ Agree __ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree ___

2. Today's workshop helped me learn something about me

Strongly Agree ___ Agree __ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree ___

What? (optional)

3. Today's workshop helped me learn something about others

Strongly Agree ___ Agree __ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree ___

What? (optional)

4. I can apply one or more of the things we did today to my life

Strongly Agree ___ Agree __ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree ___

5. Today's workshop helped me realize or think about something I hadn't realized/thought about before

Strongly Agree ___ Agree __ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree ___

What? (optional)

6. The main lesson from today's workshop was:

Comments:

Appendix C – Script

JAGUAR YOU?

Personajes: Narrador, Señora Gómez, Señor Gómez, Flor, Ariana, Marilee, Profesor(a), Eduardo, Susan, Hermano, Estudiante 1, Otros estudiantes

Narrador: Era un día común y corriente para los habitantes de Estados Unidos, El lugar dónde los sueños se hacen realidad, o por lo menos esos son los rumores que corren por los pueblos de Latino América, pero ahora la familia Gómez estaba a punto de averiguarlo, aquel lunes tan prometedor y lleno de nuevos sueños y esperanzas.

(Se abre el telón y aparecen dos mujeres poniendo la mesa)

Señora Gomez: ¡Ay Hija! Por fin estamos cumpliendo el sueño americano, tuvimos que cruzar la frontera y hasta perdí un zapato pero aquí estamos. (muestra la falta de su zapato)

Flor: (Riendo) mamá tu siempre tan graciosa. (se levanta y besa la mejilla de su madre) nunca cambies, siegue así de optimista, ya veras que en este país las cosas nos iran mejor.

Señora Gomez: Yo lo se hija, en especial porque hoy es tu primer día de escuela aquí en Los Estados Unidos de América. (dice con orgullo) vas a aprender y serás la más importante y exitosa de la familia.

Flor: Lo se mamá nuestras vidas están apunto de cambiar para bien. Mi meta es aprender Ingles, ser buena estudiante y encajar en este país. Y se que lo lograré!

(Entrá el señor Gomez)

Flor: Que bueno que llegas papá, quiero que los dos estén presentes para que me escuchen: Les prometo que voy a dar lo mejor de mi para encajar en este país. Seré una estudiante estrella! Quiero que se sientan orgullosos de mi!

Señor Gomez: lo se hija, yo confio en ti y se que nuestro sacrificio de cruzar la frontera y todo lo que hemos pasado vale la pena por ti.

(los tres se abrazan, después Flor toma sus cosas y sale a la escuela) (Se cierra el telón)

(Se abré el telón y aparecen varios jovene en un salón de clases. Hay desorden. Entra Flor y todos comienzan a murmurar. El narrador aparece como uno de los estudiantes)

Flor: (murmura para si misma) tranquila, tranquila. Tú eres nueva aquí, es normal que te miren así, solo encuentra a alguien que hable Español y todo estará bien.

Marilee: (mirando a Flor con superioridad) Look at that, fresh meat.

Ariana: Fresh meat? Where? I'm so hungry!!! (*mira alrededor buscando la carne*)
Dode?! (Luego diciendo para ella misma) Ay! Estoy a dieta, ya no quiero comer más vegetales!

Marilee: Oh lord Ariana! Why are you so slow?! I'm talking about her (señala a Flor)

Ariana: (Entendiendo) Ohhhhh.... (Luego hablando para ella misma) Y yo con esta hambre! Me emocioné!

(Aparece una chica cerca a Flor)

Susan: Hi, how are you?

Flor: (asustada) ¿Jaguar? Hay no me digas que se escapo un Jaguar!!! Tenemos que escondernos o hacer algo, no????!!!

Susan: (hace señas) Calm down. I don't know what you understood but everything is ok.

Flor: (se calma pero sigue alerta por si el jaguar aparece) uyy gringuita no se que esta diciendo. Como te digo que no hablo ingles? Ah, ya sé! Mi mamá me dijo algo así: (hablando a la joven y haciendo señas) "No pica Ingles"...

Susan: Huh?

Flor: yo - no - English"

Susan: I get it! You don't speak English! And I No hablo Español.

Flor: Hablas Español!!

Susan: Oh, ... no, no hablo... that's all I know...(smiles)

Alumo 1: (Llamando a Susan) Susan!

Susan: Hey, I gotta go...I'll be back.. (Flor stares confused).... Vol Vue Vol Bol Bul... Bulto! Bulto!

Flor: ¿Bulto? ¿Me llamó bulto? ¿Tan mal le caí?

(Flor continua caminando timidamente entre las sillas. Sus compañeros la examinan de arriba a bajo mientras la profesora se encuentra usando su teléfono celular. Pasa por el lado de Marilee)

Marilee: (to Ariana with malice) Check this out!
 (pone el pie para que Flor se caiga, la chica cae sobre su bolsa del almuerzo y se mancha la ropa y moja su cuaderno)

Estudiante 1: What happened to you? You were trying to cross the border and you fell?
(toda la clase rie)

Profesora: Ok, ok, that's enough. (Mira su reloj) Ok it's time. Let's start the lesson (mira a Flor) You must be the new student. I'm sorry what is your name again?

(Flor la mira sin entender y se queda callada)

Estudiante 2: (con acento Americano y burlándose) pobre inmigrante, ¿no entiendes?
(algunos de sus compañeros rien)

Profesora: Be nice! Oh I forgot you don't speak English (señala un lugar libre) toma asiento.

Estudiante 1: ugh! when are they going to stop coming? They don't even bother to learn the language!

Narrador: Flor toma asiento mientras la maestra comienza a leer la historia asignada, como es de esperarse Flor no entiende ni J; como dicen por ahí. Trata de llamar la atención de la profesora pero ella sigue leyendo. Mientras tanto la clase esta practicamente patas para arriba, para ser sincera sus alumnos podrían estar matandose y ella seguiria explicando la clase como si nada pasara.

Profesora: And now you will all have 5 minutes to answer the questions.

Narrador: Enserio, ¿quien quiere una profesora así? Jaja a mi no me engañan yo se que muchos de ustedes amarían un maestro así. Podrían comer en clase, textear con el novio o dormir en clase después de haber texteado con el novio toda la noche. Bueno creo que ya fue mucho enfoque en mi, sigamos con la historia de Flor.

(Flor desesperada saca su diccionario a ver si puede entender algo)

Profesora: (mirando el teléfono) Ok guys hand in your work now. I'll let you go early to lunch cause I have an emergency. Then you are free to go home (todos entregan su trabajo de clase y salen con excepcion de Flor)

Profesora: (mirando a Flor) ¿No me entendiste Flor?

Flor: No, lo siento pero no entendí lo que dijo.

Profesora: ¿Enserio? No puedo creerlo. ¿Cuanto tiempo tienes aquí?

Flor: (titubeando) Ahhh yo... Yo llegue hace un mes profesora.

Profesora: (En voz alta) ¿un mes?! Eso es suficiente tiempo para aprender lo básico. Dime, ¿que acaso no entiendes el posible significado de “I” “emergency” “go” “lunch” y ver que tus compañeros salen? Dije que vayan al lunch porque tengo una emergencia. So, adiós, ve a almorzar.

Flor: Pero.. pero.. yo no puedo salir... mmm mi almuerzo está en mi ropa.

Profesora: Wow what a weird way to bring your food... Well, I'm sorry but that's not my problem. Te tienes que ir. Lo siento. (Va hasta la puerta). (Flor va saliendo) Oh, y dame el trabajo que hiciste en clase.

Flor: Es que no lo hice porque se mojó mi cuaderno... además no entendí muy bien... por aquello del Inglés...

Profesora: Mira, voy a dejar que me entregues el trabajo la próxima semana, pero deja de darme excusas por que no las soporto! Especialmente la excusa del Inglés, ok?

(Flor sale cabizbaja.)

(Afuera, en el patio)

Flor: (hablando sola) piensa positiva, todo estará bien. Todo estará bien. Ya pronto harás nuevos amigos y todo va a estar bien...

Marilee: (con voz perversa) look at the new girl, so lonely, poor thing... well let's have some fun. You should start, I'll give you the honor. Let's see if you learned something from me.

Ariana: Me? What should I say? (Marilee whispers in her ear and she gets excited about the plan) oooohhh, Ok, ok!!! (camina en dirección a Flor) (con voz amigable) Hi beaner how are you? (proud, she looks at Marilee looking for approval)

Flor: (Sonrie) Hola, que gusto! me llamo Flor y tu?

Ariana: hmm.. why do you speak Spanish to me?

Flor: Hablame en español porfavor. Yo se que me entiendes porque no veo confusión en tu rostro y además me respondes. Estoy segura que tambien eres Latina.

Ariana: (Confused and in panic runs to Marilee) OMG! OMG! OMG!

Marilee: (Annoyed) What?! What?!

Ariana: She knows I speak Spanish!!!

BOTH: OMG! OMG! OMG!

Ariana: I didn't say anything I promise!!! (Realizing) Ah! She must be a witch! (freaking out).

BOTH: Aaahhhhhh!!!! OMG! OMG! OMG!

Marilee: You need (looking around)... you need... Here in my bag pack! (Searching bag) ... You need perfume!!!... your Latina smell is coming out!!! (she sprays her)

Ariana: (freaking out and "crying") I'm scared of witches!!!

(En escena aparecen Flor y Eduardo platicando)

Marilee: (Sees Eduardo and Flor) (telling Ariana to shut up) sh sh shush!!!!... Shut the front door! (looking at Eduardo and Flor)

Eduardo: Así que eres nueva aquí.

Flor: Asi es, pero por lo visto aquí no quieren mucho a los nuevos.

Eduardo: No te preocupes, es un poco difícil al principio pero te acostumbras, yo te ayudaré en lo que pueda, pasé por lo mismo. Cuando llegué no hablaba nada de Inglés.

Flor: (Emocionada) Muchas gracias! (lo abraza) (ambos se miran a los ojos por un Segundo. Los dos quitan la Mirada y miran al piso)

(Marilee los mira y "desmaya" en brazos de Ariana quien le da aire con sus manos)

Eduardo: Mira, hay un lugar a donde puedes ir a tomar clases de Inglés en las noches. Se llama Centro Comunitario la Esperanza. Si te animas, búscalo en internet. Dicen que está a cargo de unas monjas locas. Como que son buena onda.

Flor: (Riendo) Monjas locas?... Bueno, no tengo transporte, así que no sé, pero talvez en un futuro.

(Mientrastanto a lo lejos)

Ariana: Yup, that beaner is faster than you... (Marilee la mira con rabia)
(Asustada) oops I'll be quiet...

Marilee: (Celosa, enojada y dramática) No, Not my Eduardo!!! The beaner will pay, I'll make sure she goes back to her filthy country!

(Eduardo se va y Flor se sienta a estudiar con un diccionario)

Marilee: (To Ariana) Follow my lead...(se acercan a Flor)

Marilee y Ariana: (al unisono) ¿Hola chica que haces?

Flor: Ah... Hola estoy estudiando ingles.

Marilee: Omg estudias con un diccionario?! Eso es tan old fashion! El diccionario es prehistorico. No deberías usarlo te hace ver fuera de moda.

Flor: ¿Y entonces cómo estudio?

Marilee: Ay chica para eso nos tienes a nosotras (toma el diccionario y lo arroja detras de ella) ya no lo necesitas con nosotras aprenderas mucho más.

Ariana: Yo soy Ariana. Disculpa es que no se que me pasó antes y no me presenté..

Marilee: (Interrumpiendo) Es que tiene problemas mentales.

Ariana: (confundida) Si? Tengo?! Por qué nadie me habia dicho?!?!

Marilee: Obviamente... En fin, ella es Ariana y yo soy Marilee, mucho gusto (se saludan) bien, dime que quieres aprender.

Flor: Bueno, lo esencial. Quiero poder presentarme.

Ariana: Ah eso es fácil! Solo tienes que decir: Hi, my name is Flor.

Marilee: No Ariana así se dice de forma vulgar, no le enseñes eso

Ariana: En serio?! Lo he hecho mal todos este tiempo! Por qué nadie me habia dicho?!?!
(Marilee la mira incrédula)

Marilee: Escucha Flor, tienes que decir: I'm Flor the biggest bitch in town.

Flor: Tan largo?

Marilee: Así es el ingles, cuando se habla de manera formal, se usan más palabras. Ahora practicalo tú. Repite después de mi. I'm Flor the biggest bitch in town.

Ambas: I am.. Flor.. the biggest.. bitch.. in town.

Marilee: Ahora dicelo a él.

Flor: I am Flor the biggest bitch in town.

Estudiante 1: O-K... Congratulations then. You go girl (se va)

Flor: ¿Que dijo? ¿Su nombre es Yu-go?

Marilee: Si! y se tiene que ir a alimentar a sus gatos conra y tulations.

Ariana: Ay! A mi me encantan los gatos! Son tan cute!

Flor: Uy, el ingles si que es complicado! Pero bueno, muchas gracias por todo, nos vemos pronto tengo que ir a casa.

(se cierra el telón)

Narrador: Un mes ha transcurrido en un abrir y cerrar de ojos. Flor seguía luchando fuertemente para alcanzar sus metas, siempre escuchaba música en ingles y cada vez pasaba más tiempo con Marilee y Ariana para poder aprender más rápido, ya que ellas siempre le daban una clase diaria (Narrador se aclara la garganta y mueve la cabeza). La verdad era que Flor sentía que esas clases no eran suficiente y quería seguir estudiando con su diccionario, pero no lo hacía pues quería ser aceptada en Estados Unidos y aparentemente en la sociedad Norte Americana no se usaban porque habían pasado de moda años atrás. Así que después de mucho meditarlo, se decidió a pedirle permiso a su papá de salir todos los días a clases de tutoria en el Hope community center, aquel del que Eduardo le había hablado, pero el problema era que tendría que regresar ya caído el sol y ella sabía que su papá jamás aceptaría tal cosa. Sabía que era difiicil pero haría todo lo posible por convencerlo ya que eso era lo mejor para ella.

(se abré el telón y aparecen flor y su mama en escena lavando platos y cocinando. Entra el padre)

Señor Gomez: (saludando dulcemente a su hija) Cómo está mi hija adorada?

Flor: Hola papi.

Señor Gomez: (Dirijiendose a su esposa y entregandole bolsas de mercado) Y mi bella esposita? Como está?

Señora Gomez: (Sorriendo pero sin dejar de hacer oficio) Bien, mi amor.

Señor Gomez: (orgullosa) Mira te traje mercado y además dinerito (le da el dinero y la mujer lo guarda en su blusa. El se sienta frente a la T.V.)

Flor: ¿Cómo estas papi?

Señor Gomez: Bien hija. Emocionado porque juega mi Mexico lindo!

Flor: (nerviosa) mmm quería pedirte algo.

Señor Gomez: Esta bien pero rápido que ya empezó el juego.

Flor: (hablando más rápido) Quería pedirte permiso para ir todos los días a un centro comunitario, ahí dan clases de ingles y me serviría mucho para poder aprender más rapido, las clases son de 5 a 7:30 de la tarde.

Señor Gomez: No querrás decir 7:30 de la NOCHE? Aquí en invierno oscurece a las 6 y mi hija no va a estar en la calle a esas horas de la noche. Las señoritas decentes no salen después de las 6!

Flor: Pero papá. Esto es una gran oportunidad, me ayudarán no solo con el Ingles si no también con mis tareas, dejame ir por favor.

Señor Gomez: De ninguna manera, seguramente solo quieres ir a verte con tu novio. Mejor olvidalo y dejame ver el juego tranquilo.

Flor: Yo no tengo novio! ...Y si lo tuviera qué?! Mi hermano tiene novia y a él no le dices nada.

Señor Gomez: Tu hermano es hombre y es diferente. Tener novia muestra que es macho.

Flor: Eres un injusto. Me estas negando mi derecho a aprender por tus absurdos pensamientos y costumbres raras!

Señor Gomez: A mi no me levantas la voz jovencita insolente. ¿Quién te has creído? Soy tu padre y me respetas. Deja de hablarme así. Mejor vete antes de que te enseñe quien manda aquí.

Flor: Pero papa yo solo quiero...

Señora Gomez: (Interrumpe) ven hija, no hagas enojar a tu papá. Esta cansado de tanto trabajar déjalo ver su juego tranquilo. (toma a su hija por el brazo)

Flor: Pero mamá, esto es algo importante. Yo solo quiero estudiar! Aprender ingles! Porfavor, mama! Ayudame!

Señora Gomez: Lo siento hija, pero sabes que cuando tu papá dice no, es no. Yo no puedo hacer nada para cambiar eso.

(Entra el hermano)

Hermano: Chao! Me voy a dar una vuelta con Luis. (sale)

Flor: Aghh No es justo! Por que él si puede salir de noche! Yo soy un año mayor! Mamá!!!

Señora Gomez: Así es la vida. Mi papá tampoco me dejaba salir de noche.

Flor: Yo solo quiero aprender Inglés y ustedes que son mis padres no me apoyan. Esto es tan frustrante! A este ritmo, tal vez aprenda ingles antes de pensionarme, si es que tengo suerte!

(Se va y se cierra el telón)

Narrador: Al dia siguiente Flor llegó a la escuela con más entusiasmo. Estaba decidida en aprender ingles y ser una persona exitosa a toda costa. Pero no se imaginaba que de entrada se encontraría con esta joyita (señalando a Marilee). (narrador toma el lugar de un alumno).

(Flor entra al salon y ve a Eduardo. Inmediatamente sonrie y Saluda con su mano. Eduardo la va a saludar también pero Marilee llega y no le deja subir su mano. Se la baja y se la toma. Eduardo baja la mirada y se va, pero antes de salir Marilee le da un beso).

Marilee: (Va a donde Flor) Hola Nopal! Solo vengo a decirte que las cosas van a cambiar de hora en adelante. Es hora que te ponga en tu lugar. Eduardo y yo ya somos novios así que no tengo por que pretender más que eres mi amiga.

Flor: (con sorpresa) ¿¡Disculpa!?! ¿¡Que te pasa Marilee!?!

(Llega Ariana)

Marilee: Tu nombre es Nopal ¿o no?

Flor: No. Me llamo Flor y tu lo sabes, creí que eramos amigas la verdad no entiendo porque haces comentarios tan desagradables creí que eras una buena persona.

Marilee: Oh I'm so sorry. Creí que tu nombre era "Nopal" ya que es lo único que florece en tu país. De verdad disculpame.

Ariana: (Inocente) Que es un Nopal?

Marilee: (Exasperada) Ariana por Dios!

Flor: ¿Porque se comportan así? Confíe en ustedes y ademas también son latinas como yo.

Marilee: No querida, no nos compares. Nosotras no somos iguales. Yo no soy Latina el hecho de que mis padres lo sean no me hace Hispana. Yo nací aquí. Yo soy Americana...

Ariana: Bueno, yo todavía no soy...(Marilee la calla con una mirada)

Flor: Pero Marilee... (Marilee la interrumpe)

Marilee: You don't belong here. Tu no naciste aquí. Tve eres simplemente una persona más de esas que viene a tomar ventaja del sistema. Tu no pagas taxes y vienes aquí con tu familia a tomar nuestros trabajos...Ja! Y Nisiquiera quieres aprender ingles!

Flor: (Frustrada y confundida) Pero si tu misma me estabas enseñando! Y para que sepas yo nisiquiera trabajo! Así que no le estoy quitando el empleo nadie!

Marilee: Pero seguro que tus papá sí! O es que él no trabaja tampoco?

Flor: Si, si trabaja...y pues no se...

Marilee: (interrupting and triumphant) Trabaja y no paga taxes.

Flor: Pero... pues no disque todos pagamos taxes?

Ariana: Bueno yo nunca he pagado nada de eso, a dónde se paga eso? (buscando en su bolsillo y sacando dinero) tengo dos dólares. Me alcanza?

Marilee: Ariana! Oh my Gosh!

(Susan watches from afar. Eduardo comes in)

Maestra: Ok, ok, enough! People let's start the class. Today is the big test.

Narrador: (Mientras el narrador habla, todos en la clase estan hablando y haciendo desorden) La profesora pasa unos papeles, escribe unas frases en el tablero y comienza a leer una historia. En multiples ocasiones Flor, Eduardo y Susan levantan su mano tratando de llamar la atención de la profesora, pero ella los ignora. (A los demás estudiantes no les importa). (El narrador ve a Flor quien trata de preguntar. Se acerca a la profesora y le dice:) ¿Esta ciega o de verdad no le interesa la educación de sus estudiantes? Osea Hello... Señora maestra bruja del 71, usted escujo esta profesión ahora ayude a sus estudiantes! Flor te va a tocar parate al frente a ella y hacer twerking! Depronto así te ponga atención ¡Hola! ¿Flor? Si, si te hablo a tiiiiii. Te estoy dando un consejo por lo menos mirame... Aiugh Olvidaba que no puedes verme... ni modo... Ok sigamos. (narrador toma el lugar de un alumno)

(Flor se levanta y va a donde la maestra)

Flor: Necesito ayuda, no entiendo esto.

Maestra: Lo siento pero no puedo ayudarte, es un examen.

Flor: Lo se pero es que no escuche la historia. Además está preguntando cosas de clases pasadas que usted no explicó. (Mirando a los otros estudiantes) No es justo con ninguno de nosotros!

Maestra: Es responsabilidad de los alumnos estudiar.

Flor: Si no me puede ayudar con las preguntas por lo menos présteme su libro para leer la historia y tratar de entender mejor.

Maestra: Que?! Que te preste el libro?! Lo siento pero no puedo, eso sería injusto! Yo soy MUY justa! Mira sería injusto porque sería privilegios para ti ya que nadie más tiene la historia mientras contestan las preguntas. Ves?

Flor: Pero yo no tengo la culpa de que toda la clase estuviera hablando. Yo quiero aprender, quiero superarme, debió decirles que por lo menos bajaran la voz....Además mi Inglés aún no es muy Bueno...

Maestra: El Inglés no es el problema. Si fuera en Español seguro que me dirías lo mismo... Y Bueno, no me vengas a decir cómo debo dar mi clase, ok?!

Flor: Lo siento yo...

Maestra: No más Flor...

Flor: Pero es que si no saco una buena calificación voy a perder la material...

Maestra: Te dije que no más! Vuelve a tu lugar y termina tu examen, ok?

(Flor regresa a su lugar y se sienta cabizbaja).

APPENDIX D -

CERTIFICATE OF INFORMED CONSENT

Please read the following information and, if you agree that your child can be part of the project, please sign and date this form, and have your child return it to Nadia Garzon at the *Hope Community Center*:

My name is Nadia Garzon. I am a local activist and performing artist. As part of my thesis for the *Master of Liberal Studies at Rollins College*, I am teaching theater workshops at the *Hope Community Center*. Your son/daughter has voluntarily signed up for this theater project. The theater workshops will culminate with a “Forum Theater” piece that will be performed in front of the teens’ peers and community members. The story will be created by the teens themselves and will be based on their own experiences. The teens can work on different aspects of the production: acting, sound, text, set and props, and costumes. The theater workshops will take place weekly for two hours, generally on Saturday from 1 to 3 p.m. It is possible that we need additional or longer meetings, plus one or two additional performance days. Participants must be willing to commit to the project and must attend ALL meetings. As part of the project, the participants will be asked to complete anonymous surveys to test the efficiency of the workshops, the process, and the performance. The survey results will be available to the general public in the written portion of my thesis and may be published online. This project will be beneficial to your child, as through theater the participants will learn life skills such as team building, teamwork, creativity, and problem solving. Furthermore, the process and activities will promote self-reflection, self-discovery and personal growth. No discomforts or stresses are foreseen due to the participation in this project. Theater work requires the use of the body and I am committed to minimize any potential risks by creating a safe environment. Participants are encouraged to partake and try all games and exercises, and they must commit to take care of each other’s body and their own to avoid any potential injury. Should a participant be injured, *Hope Community Center’s* standard protocol will be followed. Also, please be aware that the participants will be encouraged (but not forced) to share their personal experiences as immigrants in order to create the theater piece, and this might include sensitive information. However, know that all information shared by your child will remain confidential, and if it is used in the play or in the written portion of my thesis, it will be anonymous unless agreed otherwise.

I am very excited about this project and would like to THANK YOU for your and your child’s time, support and commitment!

I voluntarily agree to have my son/daughter _____ (minor’s name) participate in this project. I understand that commitment to attend the workshops and participate in the activities is imperative. I also understand that he/she can decline to answer any questions or share personal information without prejudice to him/her. I also understand that any information obtained from him/her during the course of his/her participation will remain confidential and if used, it will be anonymous unless agreed otherwise.

CERTIFICATE OF INFORMED CONSENT

Please read the following information and, if you agree to be part of the project, please sign and date this form.

My name is Nadia Garzon. I am a local activist and performing artist. As you know, as part of my thesis for the *Master of Liberal Studies at Rollins College*, I am teaching theater workshops at the *Hope Community Center*. You have voluntarily signed up to partake on the workshops and to be part of this theater project. The theater workshops will culminate with a "Forum Theater" piece that will be performed in front of your peers and community members. The story will be created by the group and will be based on your own experiences. You can work on different aspects of the production: acting, sound, text, set and props, and costumes. The theater workshops will take place weekly for two hours, generally on Saturday from 1 to 3 p.m. It is possible that we need additional or longer meetings, plus one or two additional performance days. You must be willing to commit to the project and must attend ALL meetings. As part of the project, all participants will be asked to complete anonymous surveys to test the efficiency of the workshops, the process, and the performance. The survey results will be available to the general public in the written portion of my thesis and may be published online. This project will be beneficial to you as through theater the participants will learn life skills such as team building, teamwork, creativity, and problem solving. Furthermore, the process and activities will promote self-reflection, self-discovery and personal growth. No discomforts or stresses are foreseen due to the participation in this project. Theater work requires the use of the body and I am committed to minimize any potential risks by creating a safe environment. Participants are encouraged to participate and try all games and exercises, and they must commit to take care of each other's body and their own to avoid any potential injury. Should a participant be injured, *Hope Community Center's* standard protocol will be followed. Also, please be aware that the participants will be encouraged (but not forced) to share their personal experiences as immigrants in order to create the theater piece, and this might include sensitive information. However, know that all information shared by you will remain confidential, and if it is used in the play or in the written portion of my thesis, it will be anonymous unless agreed otherwise.

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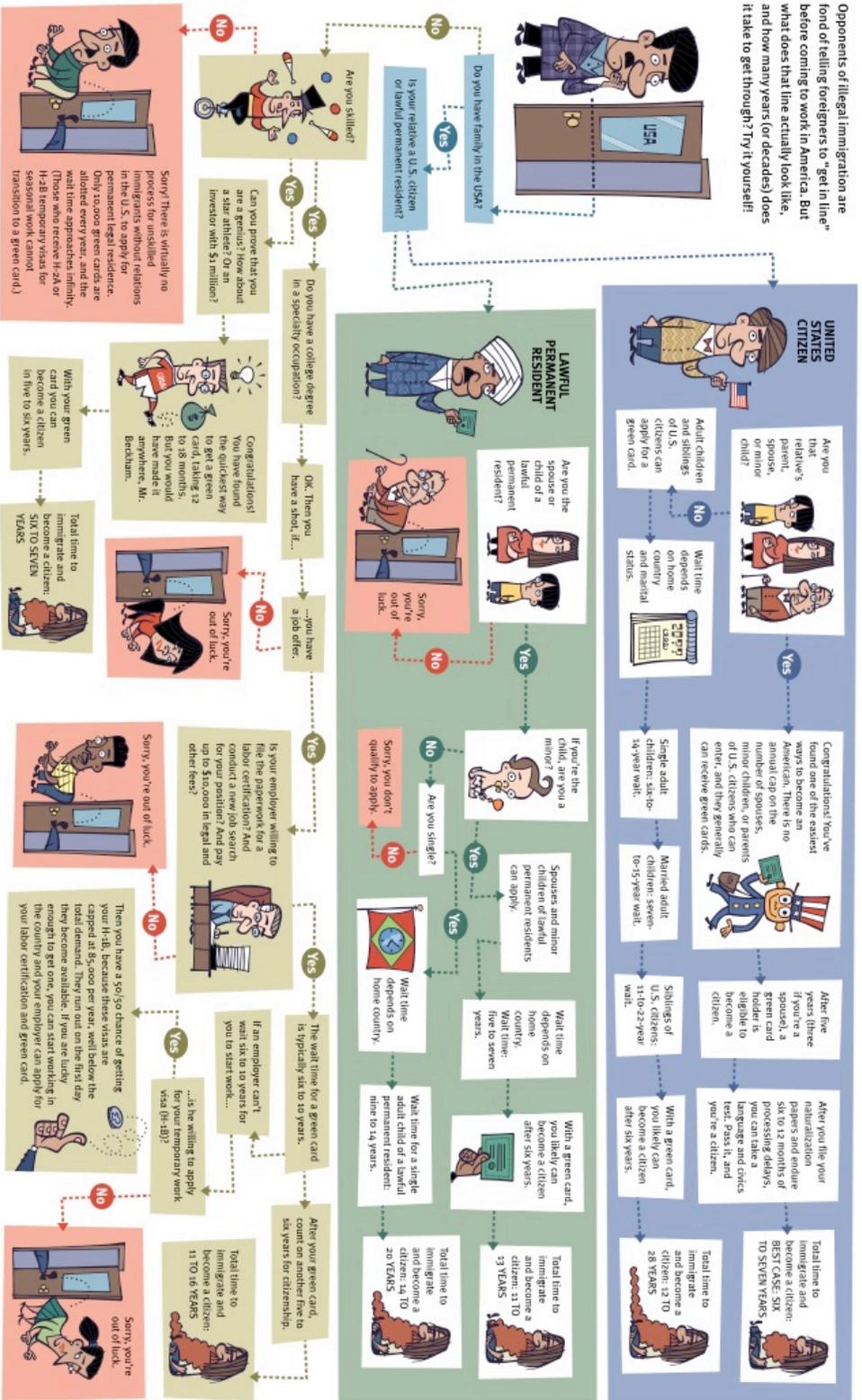
I (your name) _____ voluntarily agree to participate in this project. I understand that commitment to attend the workshops and participate in the activities is imperative. I also understand that I can decline to answer any questions or share personal information without prejudice to me. I also understand that any information obtained from me during the course of my participation will remain confidential and if used, it will be anonymous unless agreed otherwise.

What Part of Legal Immigration Don't You Understand?

Mike Flynn and Shikha Dalmia

Illustrated by Terry Colton

Opponents of illegal immigration are fond of telling foreigners to "get in line" before coming to work in America. But what does that line actually look like, and how many years (or decades) does it take to get through? Try it yourself!



(Flynn is director of government affairs and Dalmia is a senior policy analyst at Reason Foundation. This chart was developed by Reason Foundation in collaboration with the National Foundation for American Policy.)

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