

Issue  
#5

2002-2003

# 52nd



The  
Literary  
Magazine  
of The 52nd  
Street Project

"EVERYTHING  
IS RELATIVE"  
The Family Issue

# FIVEY



Smart Partners is the one-on-one educational tutoring/mentoring program of The 52nd Street Project. Fivey is the program's literary magazine.

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*Front cover: Ariana Casablanca, Mordecai Santiago, Crystal Toro, Alex Tomas, and Samantha Padilla portray an Italian wedding party, ca. 1925.*

## Everything is Relative

What does family mean to you? That's the question I asked the Project kids and adult volunteers for this issue of *Fivey*, and I was thrilled with the variety of answers I received. I should have guessed that for such a creative crew, the definition of family would be anything but narrow. Family can be conjured by a favorite Spanish recipe, like Samantha Padilla's "Penil." Family can be the nickname your father gave you when you were just a hyperactive toddler—did you know that Michael Velez is known at home as Choo-Choo? Family isn't limited to your blood relatives. It is present in both the strange and familiar faces of Hell's Kitchen where you grew up (check out Ariana Casablanca's many photos). It is also found in the memory of Puerto Rico

or the Dominican Republic, where you were born. For Smadult Moira MacDonald, it is somewhere in Sitka, Alaska. For Jaymaree Rosado, family is defined by the mother she lost and her



GRB

Liz Bell, Editor

guardian angel Aunt Francisca, who remains on Earth to take care of her.

Turn the pages of *Fivey 5* to find poetry and prose, yummy recipes, a play, a comic strip, and even fantasy CD covers designed by Smart Pair Jazzy and Julia. Read on, and remember—everything's relative! 🐾

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# Portrait of My Aunt

by Jaymaree Rosado



I took this photo because I feel that my Aunt Francisca is a very important person in my life, and I think I should share that. When I asked my aunt to be in my photo she was more than thrilled about it. She was overwhelmed by the fact that I chose her. She had a smile on her face, which made me feel good.

I chose the roof, because I wanted my aunt in the picture and because at the same time I wanted people to get the feeling of where I live and where I was raised. I wanted the most important place and person in the same picture.



When I asked my aunt what was she thinking when I took the photo, she laughed because there were so many things going through her head. But she said the most important thing that was going through her head was my mother. She was also thinking how wonderful me and my brothers and sisters turned out and she wished that my mother was alive to see that. She was thinking that she's glad because her three kids came out wonderful also. My aunt said that she is happy because instead of getting three gifts from her kids on Mother's Day she now gets eight more gifts from all eight of us. 

# *What Family Means to Me*

*by Alex Tomas*

Family is something you cherish, you never let it go.

Family is someone you can trust and never take for granted.

Family can sometimes be difficult, but you still need them in your life.

Family is the cooking of Spanish food, Its smell roaming through the house. There is nothing left to lose.

But in one word, family is love.



*Alex T.: Photo by his Smart Partner Mike Stone*



*Family Portrait: Photo of a mom and son in Clinton Park by Ariana Casablanca*

On these pages, SmartPair Zebulun Santiago and Moira MacDonald reflect on where they come from.

## *Sitka, AK* by Moira MacDonald



My parents still live in Sitka, Alaska. Sitka is in the Southeastern part of Alaska in the section known as the panhandle. It is located on Baranof Island.

It is part of the Tongass National forest, a mid-latitude rainforest.



## *The Kushtaka*

by Moira MacDonald

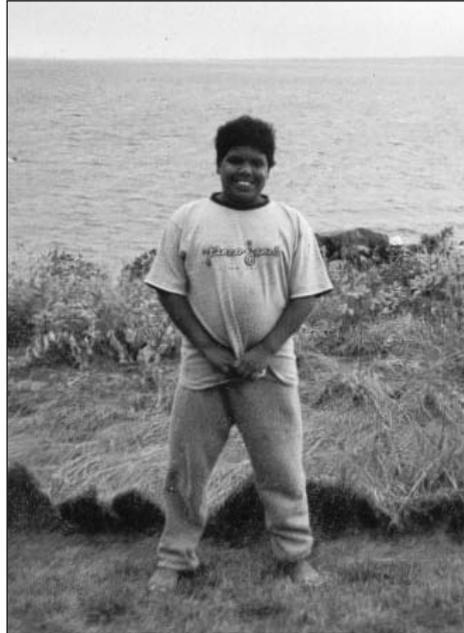
The Kushtaka is a mythical beast from Tlingit lore in Southeast Alaska. Kushtakas are half land otter, half human, and live in another realm, and occasionally kidnap humans and make them Kushtakas, too. Only Shamans are protected from their power.



# My Grandpa

by Zebulun Santiago

I remember as if it were yesterday. My grandpa making me dinner, ordering my breakfast and getting me my first ring that cost a lot of money. But now I don't have any thing to remember him by other than visiting him in the hospital and going to his house. I still pray and hope that he comes out of the hospital and gets his memory back.



**Zebulun on the Beach in Wareham, Massachusetts last year.** Could Zeb's grandpa have looked like this as a kid?

# The Chupacabra

by Zebulun Santiago

This is the Chupacabra. It is a made-up animal. This creature eats up goats and sucks cows' blood. It is usually found in the Puerto Rican jungles.



# *This is Just Tears For My Mom*

by Michael Feliciano

I say I love you, so proud. I wish I would have said that before you went up to the clouds. Before you left the ground when you were looking around. Before you went to sleep. Before you felt so weak. Before the kiss on the cheek. Your body was beautiful but they had to burn you. Wish I could remember the better days. But there ain't no memories. I'll tell you she's the honey of the bees, so sweet. How much can I take. Life is so hard. Come on God, give us a break, because I'm this close I think I might break. So much hate. How can I be great? I'm only being good because of you. Because one day I might meet up with you, and that's true, in a place full of grace. Do stuff at your own pace. Why I steal it? Because it's the case I got to deal with, now do you feel it? Yo, come back, when you left it had an impact, took out my whole back, and ya probably know that. Saw me suffering. You wasn't here so no hugging, and loving, and me just thugging. Though you're gone, you're like my icon. And I want you right in my palm. This is just tears for my mom. Tears for her. Tears probably got me closer. Now I understand, I'm much older. It just feels a little bit colder. Probably won't get her back no time soon. But if I die anytime soon, just look, if I die put all my stuff in a book. I think I could teach some people not to be shook. Sharp as a knife, but have no fear, it's just life. Everybody got their own sight, for fright, and knows what's wrong and right. Just let this be the song tonight. For a moment forget the one you're kissing, son, just remember the one you're missing, son. Though you're gone, you're like my icon. And I want you right in my palm. This is just tears for my mom. Don't be mad at me, just for a moment think about your family. Imagine subtracting one out, yeah, you just subtracted the fun out. All the love, I subtracted a dove out. This is real. Now you know how I feel. Though you're gone, you're like my icon. And I want you right in my palm. This is just tears for my mom.



# The Day I Thought I Killed My GrandFather!

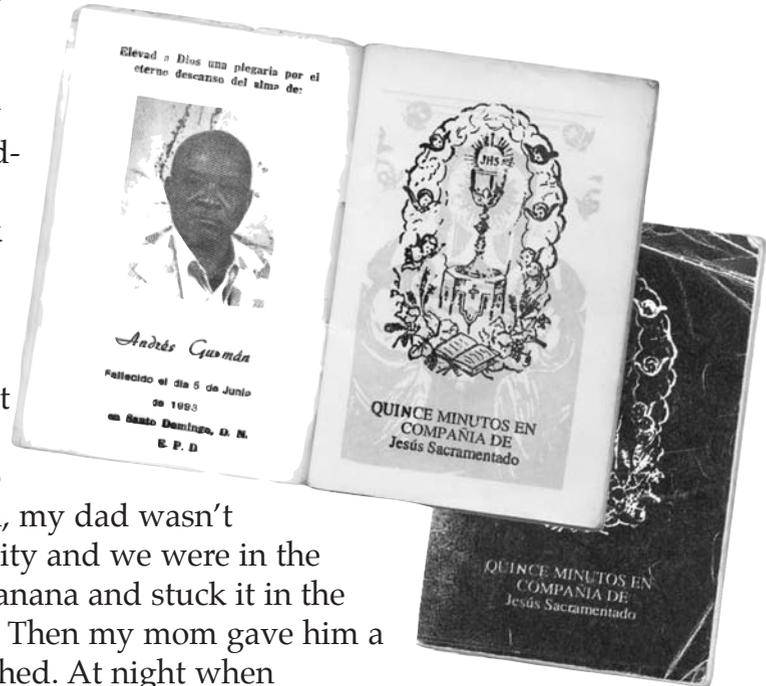
by Christopher Ramirez

Hi, my name is Christopher. I am eleven. I am going to tell you a story about when I think I killed my grandfather. Ok, this didn't happen at this time. Let's go baaaaack in time, back to the year 1993 when I was three.

Every time, my family and I used to stop in a store and buy fruit. So one day, I had the bag of fruit so I sat down in my grandpa's lap and I took a banana, to eat it, of course. So my grandpa was talking to my mom, my dad wasn't there because he was in New York City and we were in the Dominican Republic. So I took the banana and stuck it in the poor man's mouth. He was choking. Then my mom gave him a glass of water. Well this is NOT finished. At night when we were sleeping, the phone rang. Ring! Ring! Ring! Ring! And then the phone got picked up. My mom hates getting up when she is sleeping but she says that when the phone rings at midnight it means something is happening. So who it was, it was one of my grandma's family members. That person

told my mom something that shocked her. "Juana, please call Andres and tell him that his father died." "What?" my mom said. My mom thought for a minute, "Oh my God, I think Christopher killed the old man." Well, my mom called my dad and told him something that didn't give away to my dad that his dad was dead. So she said, "Hey Andres, your dad is really sick. Pack your stuff and come." My dad said, "I will come as soon as possible." My mom got angry and shouted through the phone, "Look, your dad is no longer living. He is flying his way to Heaven, so pack your stuff and come." When we buried him, my grandfather, everyone took some dirt and threw it out to the grave. That was the last goodbye.

After that day, I think I feel like I killed him.



Above: A prayerbook from the Dominican Republic with a picture of Chris' grandfather.



Chris at 3: Not that innocent.



*Not the house in Seaford, but the house from "Psycho." But you get the idea.*

# *The Ghost of Seaford*

*by Amy Murphy*

My Aunt Anne lives in Seaford, England, which is a small seashore town right on the water. When I finished college I decided to go to Ireland and England to visit my family. I ended up going all the way to Seaford to stay for a week. Although I have always liked my Aunt Anne, I also sort of found her to be kind of creepy. She is about eighty and quite odd. Her house is very old and made of stone. She has the rose garden and everything outside, but inside is cold, and a bit damp-feeling, with creaky floors and dark corners.

My room to stay in for the week was upstairs in the creaky house. My Aunt was in her bedroom downstairs and my awesome Grandma was in a room directly across the hall from me. My room had two beds, one of which was up against a very weird, tall attic door which was in the wall, not on the ceiling. As soon as I saw this door I had scary visions of ghosts coming out of it. So I picked the bed on the other side of the room.

One night I decided to hang out alone in my room, not much of a night life to partake in while in

Seaford, and after doing some exercises got into bed. I had brought along my walkman, seeing as I can't much live without music, and was listening as I was trying to fall asleep. The entire time you are in my Aunt's house there is an eeriness surrounding you and in the back of your consciousness. Back to the story, so there I am trying to go to sleep when the music on my walk man breaks to go to the next song. In the silence I hear a sound. It is like a woman groaning in two notes, emmmmmn ... emn... The first one seemed longer and higher than the second one... but they were both, nonetheless, super creepy. I felt my entire body tense up. My mind began racing. What is this noise? It must be my walkman. I talked myself into to believing this long enough to relax as the next song started and ended on my walkman. Once again in the silence between songs I heard the same groaning sound... emmmmn...emn. This time I ripped my walkman off my head and sat up. I sat there still as I could, my heart sounding as loud as a subway train in my chest. It felt like an eternity until I heard the noise again, but sure enough, without any walkman to blame, the scary melodic groaning came again... emmmmmn, emn. This time I flipped out. I stared at the attic door expecting to see some apparition

floating through it. I leapt out of my bed, flung open the door and ran to my Grandma's bedroom. I knocked on her door in fear. "Gram.. Gram..."

Finally my Grandma woke up.

"What Aim?" she asked as she opened the door.

"There is a ghostly noise or something in my room!" I said.

She said "What?"

I said, "Seriously, Gram, there is a ghost in my room. I hear it."

"Oh my God," she said with just as much fear in her voice as I had in my eyes. Then we both began to slowly go towards my room, walking on our tiptoes. We walked in and ran to the bed. We listened and just like before, in the same groaning, tortured way the noise came again... emmmn, emn.

"See," I said, "I am scared!"

"Jesus, Mary, and Joseph," my Gram said as she hugged me and started to pray. Well, apparently all the noise we were making woke up my creepy Aunt Anne who, without a sound of warning, was standing in the doorway of my bedroom.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

"Ahhh!!" I screamed, at

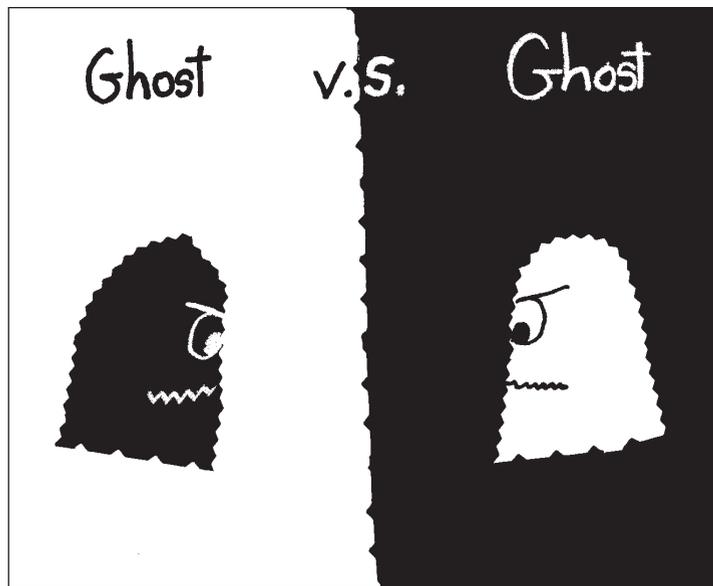
the sight of her.

She said again, "What are you two doing?"

I told her that we were convinced her house was haunted and that there was a horrible groaning woman noise and to listen for herself, which she did.

Again, without fail, the noise came. I held my Gram tightly as I was so scared.

My Aunt Anne turned she looked at us and said very dryly, "That's the lighthouse, my dears, the sound of the fog horn. You are on the ocean. Goodnight." My Gram and I, still hugging each other in fear, started to laugh and laugh out of relief. We felt very foolish, but hey, when you are in Seaford, in a creepy, creaky old house... anything can happen...



*Ghost vs. Ghost: Artwork by Spencer Lopez*

## *Supplease, please!* Liz "Superchunk" Bell



*Liz starts her Supplease...*

Christmas at the Bell household was always very loud. Our house was filled with a beautiful cacophony of the shouting voices of my grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, the low din of the football game on television, the clinking of ice cubes

in glasses, carols on the record-player, and kids playing with recently unwrapped toys. At that point, with the day at its loudest, my sisters and I were in the kitchen helping my mom and her mother, Grandma Tozzi, make dinner for everyone. The huge meal we would prepare was always a repeat of the traditional Thanksgiving table—turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, candied yams, pumpkin pie. But my favorite part was the appetizer. This was a special Tozzi family recipe, called supplease—our version of the Italian rice ball. To be honest, I don't even know if I'm spelling it right! The recipe was taught to my German-Irish grandmother, Eleanor Scott, by the mother of her Italian husband, Anthony Tozzi. She became an expert at it, and to this day, we try very hard to make it exactly like she did. During Christmas at the Bell's — which is

much quieter today, with the moving-away of relatives and the passing on of grandparents — we stand around the kitchen and bicker. We argue over how much cheese we should use, my Dad attempting to unload the entire bag of grated parmesan/romano blend into the pot. We debate how much salt should be added, my Uncle Scott sneaking the shaker over the cooling supplease. We agonize over how long to deep-fry them — I like them extra crispy. Somehow it's never quite the same as when Grammy made it. I don't know that I would want it to be. There are some things at which your Grammy Tozzi should just be the best.

Here's the recipe. Please don't be alarmed by the first ingredient. You don't even taste it, I swear!

Buy a few chicken livers (just trust me) at the butcher's, and finely chop them until you have about 5 table-spoons-worth. We dice them so finely that whoever gets stuck with this job sits for about 45 minutes.

In a big saucepan, lightly brown the chicken livers in olive oil—not too much, though, or the liver gets tough.

Stir in two tablespoons of marinara sauce.

Add a few grains of



*...2 hours later.*

granulated cloves.

Stir in 2 cups of rice —my Grandma preferred the brand River rice because it makes for the best consistency.

Here it gets a little exhausting. Add 1/2 cup of water and stir with a wooden spoon until the water is absorbed. Repeat this process of adding the water and stirring until it is absorbed, for at least an hour... Look, no one said this was an easy recipe.

When about an hour has passed, the rice should be soft. Taste it to be sure.

Add 1/2 stick of butter (ok, no one said this was healthy, either) and stir in until it melts.

Add 1/2 cup of blend of parmesan and romano cheeses and 1 and 1/2 teaspoons of salt.

For this part, you need two people. One person breaks an egg into the concoction, while the other, as my mom puts it, "stirs wildly" so that the egg does not scramble. Stir until blended into the mixture—it helps to bind it.

Remove the mixture from the heat and spread it on a platter to cool for 40-45 minutes.

Separate mixture into tablespoon-sized, oblong shapes.

Roll rice balls in Italian bread crumbs. Deep-fry them until golden-brown. Salt to taste!

## "Penil" by Samantha Padilla



I enjoy this dish Penil very much. Penil is a Spanish dish. It means "pork shoulders." My mother cooks it, but I never helped her make it before. I only saw her make it a few times. When I go to my cousin Rosie's house I eat it there. She's a good cook.

Penil has a very tasty and strong smell. If you know how penil smells you could smell it all the way down the hall. It looks burnt like a roasted turkey, and it still has the skin of the pig on it. When you take the fat off of it, it is sticky, but it tastes good. You don't put any kind of sauce on it, because it already has taste in it. I eat it with yellow rice, with a little beans in the rice, or corn.

I asked my mother if she could give me the recipe and I recorded it. Here is what she said:

You have to wash the five-pound Penil. You take one and a half heads of garlic, and smash it right up. You take three teaspoons of salt, a teaspoon of oregano, and less than a half a cup of vinegar. Add salt, oregano and vinegar together. Punch holes around the Penil so that it adds flavor when you marinate it. Pull back the skin so you can put inside the ingredients and massage them into the skin. Put it in an aluminum pan and then put the pan in the refrigerator. Marinate it overnight for the best flavor. After the next day, put the oven to 350 degrees. Leave it in the oven for four to five hours. And that's it! Eat it with rice, potatoes and whatever you want. It's a great dish. I hope you enjoy it!

# Safe

by Megan Sandberg-Zakian

I love the way it is in front of Ariana's building. Just walking down the street, she'll say hi to everyone who passes. She always makes sure to look in the window of the laundromat next door, and her neighbors nod hello to her as they wait for their clothes to dry. She waves and smiles. I can tell she feels safe here.



**Neighborhood Guys:** Photo by Ariana Casablanca

When I was thirteen years old in Seattle, Washington, it wasn't like this: we did the laundry in the basement of our house, and I usually played in the backyard with my little brother Eric, my big shaggy dog Mischa, and my lop-eared rabbit Leo. On spring weekends, my dad would make grilled cheese or my mom

would make hot dogs (but never the other way around) and we would eat lunch outside on the deck. I only saw my neighbors on the street occasionally, though I did know a few of them. Juliet lived across the street (I was envious of her because even though she was a year older than I was, I had to start wearing a bra first. I felt bad when I slide tackled her in a soccer game years later and broke her ankle... but not that bad). Justin lived next door to Juliet. He was also a year older. I always thought I would marry Justin after the time I saved his life.

Here's what happened: we were at the bus stop, waiting. There was a tree that had a long branch hanging down over the sidewalk. Justin, being very dashing and brave, would climb into the tree and swing high out over the street. I watched, nervous, sure that he was going to fall and his brains would spill out on the sidewalk. Until one day, it actually happened: the branch broke, and Justin came crashing down onto the sidewalk, smacking his head on the concrete. No brains spilled out, but he seemed foggy, disoriented. He staggered around, insisting that he was fine and that he would get on the bus and go to school. Everyone else seemed to think it was okay. But I, being the most alarmist of sixth graders, knew something was wrong. I ran all the way back down the block, past the playground, past the scary house that looked haunted, past the traffic island with tulips growing in it, up the stairs of Justin's house. I

pounded on the door and yelled for Justin's mom to come with me, quickly. We ran together to the bus stop, where everyone was just filing onto the bus. Justin's mom dragged him out of the bus as I got on and took my seat. I watched them through the window as we drove away, him protesting, but leaning heavily on her as they walked. That night she called to tell me that she drove him right to the hospital, and when they got there five minutes later, he was unconscious. If he'd gotten on the bus, she said, who knows what could have happened? The bus ride was 40 minutes long. By the time we got to school...

In the end, Justin was fine. But that day was the first time I felt really connected to my neighborhood. I always thought of my family as being behind the fence in the backyard – my brother, my parents, my dog, my rabbit – people (or animals!) who were close to me all the time. But deep down, I think I really knew that family meant someone whom you know you can count on, no matter what. That day I realized that Justin and his mom could count on me. After that year, Justin and I didn't take the bus together anymore, so we didn't really talk. But I felt safer in my neighborhood, knowing there was someone right across the street I could count on. A few years later, I was coming home from school on a sunny day. As I was walking up to my back door, I saw a strange man running out the front door carrying our video camera.



**Ariana and Megan:** Photo by Liz Bell

Calmly, I turned around, and walked as fast as I could across the street to Justin's house. When I got inside (ever the alarmist) my calm turned to hysteria. "Call the police!" I shrieked to Justin's mom, "Someone is robbing my house!" But Justin's mom called my house number. Maybe she thought the robber would pick up? Instead my father picked up the phone. It turned out that he was lending the video camera to one of his students, who had just come over to pick it up. How was I supposed to know that, though? Justin's mom was very nice about the whole thing (unlike my father, who laughed at me when I got home). I felt silly, but in some way, I also felt relieved – like that day had been a test, and I passed. I felt almost totally sure that if something bad really did happen, I would still be safe.

I can't imagine what it must be like to have so many people around who you can count on, like Ariana does on her block. It must be nice. I think she's very lucky.



*Editor's note: All the spelling in the following piece is intentional. Michael wants the reader to pronounce words like "our" and "used" the way kids in Hell's Kitchen would say it.*

## *Back in the Day*

*By Michael Feliciano*



*Michael, back in the day, literally.*

CHORUS:  
Back in the day we use to  
be friends  
Back in the day we use to  
play pretend  
Back in the day never  
thought it would end

We use to hang out late nights  
We use to hate fights  
We use to raise heights  
over the limits  
Now it's over, we did it  
Same age, both born in the eighties  
Went to parties and got all the ladies  
Me and you had the same dream  
Every time, we always played on the  
same team  
Don't worry, I'll live on and fulfill are  
dream  
A lot of birthday cakes  
I remember when we first got are  
roller skates  
Went down the highest hill  
We made the nicest deal  
Whoever got rich will support the  
other  
Don't worry, I got you brother  
We're not blood  
But you still my best bud

We played baseball football basket-  
ball  
Never knew there would be a tragic  
fall  
My life was too great  
I guess you never know until it's too  
late  
Time is fast  
1 minute that's all it needs for one life  
to pass  
One righteous path  
Because of some hit man or thug  
that send you to the big man above  
I remember your words, Always have  
trust and never lose your faith  
I'm still searching for my grace  
So I stay in the race

(CHORUS)

Today  
New day  
Why this block was so hot  
and my friend had to get shot  
Law enforcer, better known as a cop,  
couldn't make this stuff stop  
Can't live on if I know somewhere  
your body rot  
We walked that block every day of are  
lives  
Looked into the stranger's eyes  
That day, I guess that's where the  
danger lied  
There is nothing more powerful or  
demanding than a gun  
The only one that come up to it is the  
guy who is holding one  
I wish they would stop it  
Clock tic  
to blast like a rocket

Can't catch it  
Rash, you can't scratch it  
It's all instinct  
You can't think  
You're stressing when the gun is on  
your head pressing  
The lead rushing  
Maybe in heaven I'll see you  
Then we could go over all we been  
through  
I tell you my time was hard  
You'll tell me your time with God  
We'll be friends forever  
Wherever  
Whenever  
Weather the weather  
We'll be friends forever and ever

(CHORUS)



## *Name Poem*

*by Harlo Ulloa*

Yo Ronald, you like  
to eat McDonalds.  
Ronald said, Harlo I'll  
see you tomorrow.  
Orlando lost his candles.  
Johnny said, He is a liar.  
Johnny turned Lainey's hair  
on fire. Lainey is so  
kind. Ronald lost his  
mind. This is the end  
of the rhyme. Harlo said,  
Goodbye.

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## *Family is About Care*

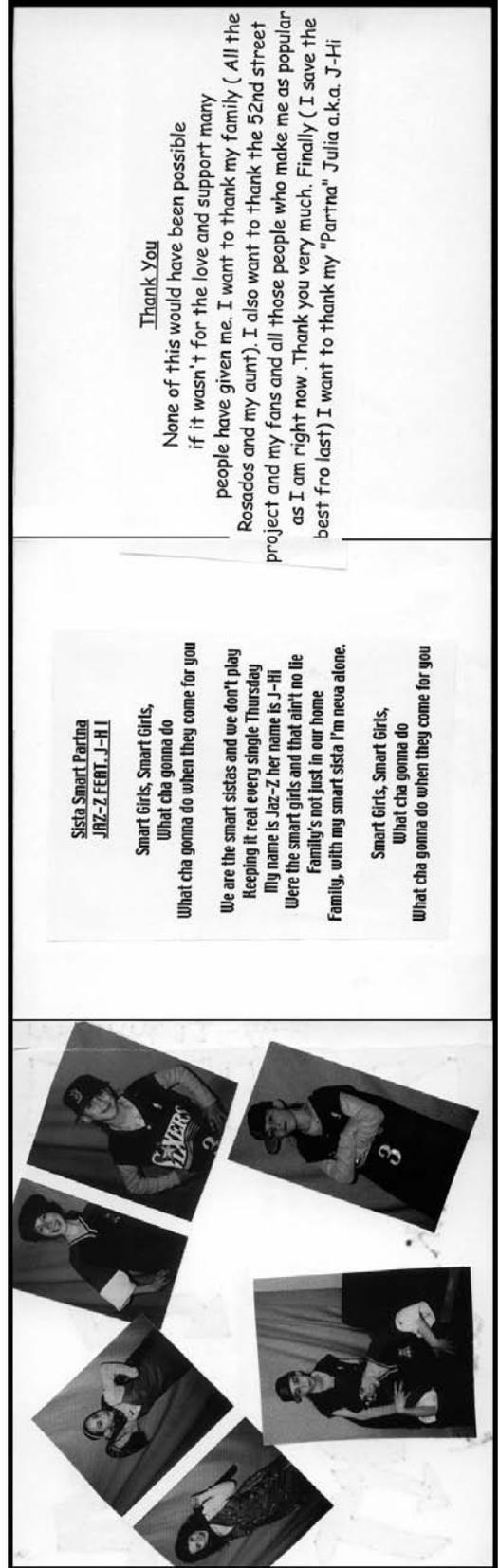
*Jonathan Rosario*

Family is about care. Is good that  
you have a mother because she cooks  
for you. Is good that you have a father  
because he paints the house. Is good  
that you have a sister because she  
cleans the dishes. Is good that you  
have a brother because he screams for  
help. Is good that you have Jonathan  
because he is a crazy boy.



**Boys & Dog in Clinton Park:**  
Photo by Ariana Casablanca

# CD Album Cover by Jazzy Hernandez





- This Is Me Later...*
- 1) Mama's Breath 2:35
  - 2) Red Headed Rumba 1:59
  - 3) Hammock Song 3:09
  - 4) Long Distance Love 4:28
  - 5) Then Rockin' Russians 3:13
  - 6) Sista Smart Partna feat. Jaz-Z 5:16

# JAZ-Z

a.k.a. Julia



## THIS IS ME LATER...



### Sista Smart Partna JAZ-Z FEAT. J-HI

Smart Girls, Smart Girls,  
What cha gonna do

What cha gonna do when they come for you

We are the smart sistas and we don't play  
Keeping it real every single Thursday

My name is Jaz-Z her name is J-HI

Were the smart girls and that ain't no lie

Family's not just in our home

Family, with my smart sista I'm neva alone.

Smart Girls, Smart Girls,  
What cha gonna do

What cha gonna do when they come for you

### Thank You

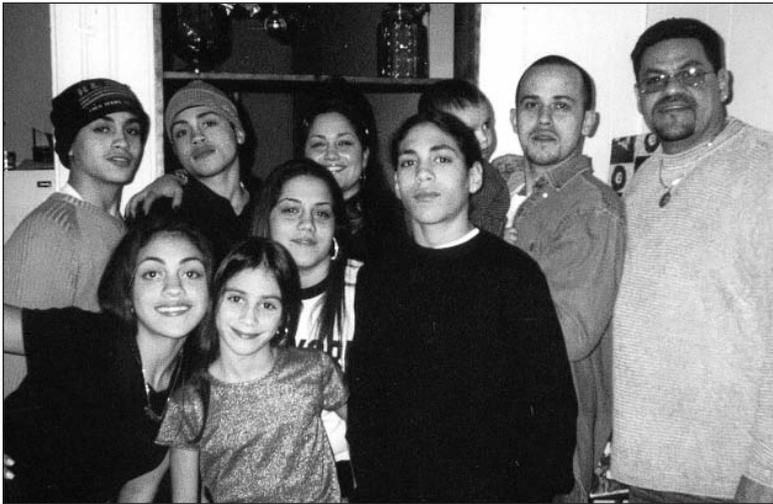
All my love goes out to those who have and continue to support me. I'd like to thank my family, all those back home and my new extended family here. Love to my fans, and of course all my gratitude to my Sista Smart Partna Jazzy a.k.a. Jaz-Z.

CD Album Cover by Julia Walk-Miller

# *My Guardian Angel*

*Jaymaree Rosado*

I am a New Yorker. My name is Jaymaree Angelique Rosado. I've lived in New York City all my life. Born and raised in Hell's Kitchen. I am one of eight children and part of a large Puerto Rican family. Even though I have a large family there's something missing, and her name is Gladys. She's my mom.



*The Rosado Clan: That's Jaymaree in the lower left-hand corner. Jazzy and Jaya are right next to her. Jaysunn is behind Jaymaree and Jayme is in the center. Their dad is at the right.*

My mom passed away when I was seven years old and I remember her death like it was yesterday. It was May 20, 1995, and it was 12:00 in the afternoon when my aunt Francisca sat me down and said in Spanish that my mother died. Actually I thought I mixed up the words. I was hoping I had but I didn't. She went on and told

me that my older brother Neko woke up to our dog howling and it was because my mother was having an asthma attack in the middle of the night. My brother then rushed her up the block to the hospital in his arms. But it was too late.

So it was the day of the wake, and the moment I saw my mother laying in the casket with a lot of makeup on and a white dress, her death finally seemed so real to me. I got this feeling in my stomach that I still get to this day when I think about her. I went to my aunt and sat on her lap and started crying for the first time. Right then and there I knew my mother was dead. I think the hardest part of it all was the cemetery when I had to watch her go down that big hole. Right there, I knew it for sure that she was never coming back and I wouldn't ever see her again.

I knew I had to get over the loss of my mother, but to this day I haven't. Since my mom passed away she did leave something very special behind, and that's her sister Francisca, who is also my guardian and has custody of all eight of us. She's like a mother I

always wanted. After my aunt raised her three kids she never thought she was going to raise eight more. All my aunt's friends say she's an angel, I agree....

Soon after my mother died my aunt made a point to surround us with our family for support. She let us clean out her things with her to help us find closure. At night when we would wake up crying from dreaming of my mother, she would let us sleep with her and she would hold us until we fell asleep again. My aunt is so very caring, nice, loving, motherly, the list can go on and on. She has taught me how to be an unselfish per-

son, and how to get through the hard times. She's very important to me and the rest of my siblings.

I'm glad to say that my aunt was not the only one there for me. There were also my seven brothers and sisters. Each one of them is unique and has affected my life in different ways (it would take me all the pages in the Sunday New York Times to describe how.) But my aunt was the one who kept us all together which was just what we all needed. Where would we be without her? My mother left us in good hands, the hands of a guardian angel.



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## *Where is that Dress?*

*Carol Ochs*

This is a picture of my mother and father (couple on the right) before they were married, going to a dance at my mother's college. The other woman is Betty Magee (Rusty's mom) who was my mom's college roommate. She is with a date she did not marry. My mom got married not long after this picture.

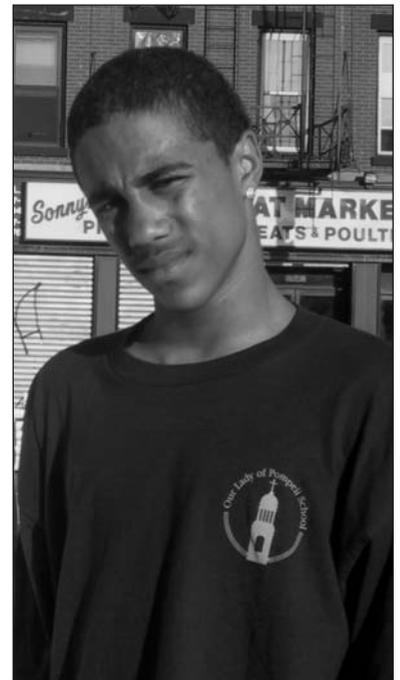
I love this photograph as it captures my parents so beautifully. My dad died when I was nine and this photo is a memento I treasure. But what I really want to know is where is that dress and why wasn't it passed down to me?!?! 



# *I Know This Might Sound Stupid but it's What My Heart's Saying to You.*

*by Justin Aponte*

I am telling you something about this girl that I'm talking about.  
She's like everything to me, no doubt.  
She's the one who made me smile when I was sad,  
She's the one who made me happy when I was mad.  
And there's no other girl that could make me feel like she could.  
There's no other girl that could take my mess and still stay for good.  
She's always been there for me,  
There were days when I treated her like nothing, and she still took  
me.  
I was sad when I was by myself, I was so weak and she gave me  
health.  
Now tell me she doesn't sound good, this girl, this is my life to me,  
And I'm talking crazy about her and I'm only 15.  
So don't tell me that I don't know love cause trust me, she gives me  
enough.  
It's been a year now and I still fear now  
That one day I could lose her and never  
see her again  
Or she could lose her feelings for me, and  
just want to become friends.  
That my worst nightmare, and it could hap-  
pen any day,  
And as my heart gets bigger, more fear I  
gain.  
Why am I saying this,  
Because I want this girl,  
To become part of my life.



*Justin: Photo by Ariana Casablanca*

# The Flags

By Ariana Casablanca and Megan Sandberg-Zakian

As I walk down my school block I always take a look inside the gate.  
*I always look at the skinny legs and arms flying around, tossing the basketball,  
hitting each other.*

When I see it I always have a good feeling of laughter around the painting,  
*Even when there's no one in the yard,  
and it's empty and locked.*

You could always feel a laughter of playing,  
*Of being free for a few minutes from  
the dark hallways and classrooms,  
Of saying to yourself, "What a breeze."  
The painting is so bright and colorful –  
yellow, red, blue, bright white,*

Like it feels so right to be an American,  
to show your true colors about life,  
to show who you really are, where  
you're really from.

*But I wonder: Can a flag really represent me? Who I am, what do I believe in?*

But I know that every flag have a secret toward everybody as if I see a person I never met before, I'm going to be thinking that she's Puerto Rican when really she's Cuban.

*When I go to buy things around the neighborhood, people start speaking to me in Spanish. I understand them, mostly. But I answer in English. Because I'm not Latina. I'm Armenian. But if someone spoke to me in Armenian, I wouldn't understand them at all.*

I understand what you mean because to me I have the same problem as I don't speak Spanish that much but I understand every word they say.

*How do you feel when you understand but you can't answer very well?*

Sometimes I feel ashamed because it feels as if I'm dissing on my own culture, knowing where I'm from but really feeling as I am not Puerto Rican.

*I think we're both re-defining what it means to be proud of your culture, to figure out who you are, and who you want to be.*

So now we end this poem softly as it began. We close the gate and walk away. 



**The mural in the schoolyard that inspired the poem: Photo by Arian Casablanca**

# *Limits*

*Jeremy Butler*

I can only extend my limits so far.  
I am not Superman,  
You think I'm Superman?  
I could fly.  
I could jump over a building.  
I could move faster than a speeding bullet.  
Stop a locomotive with my hands.  
Well, I'm not Superman.

# *Ideas*

*Jeremy Butler*

Ideas,  
I have no ideas.  
My mind is blank.  
My mind is gone.  
I try to get ideas like a blind man trying to see.

# *Food Haiku*

*Jeremy Butler*

Food is delicious.  
I have more than one stomach.  
I am a cow. Moo.



*Poet Jeremy Butler:  
Photo by his Smart  
Partner John Sheehy*

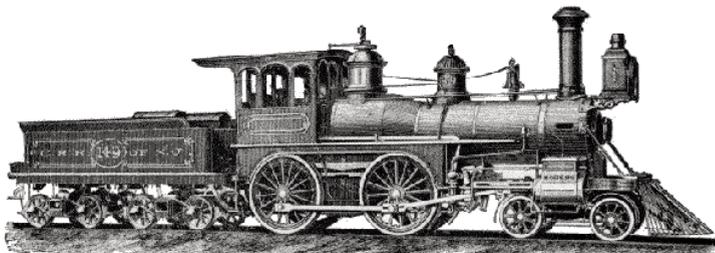
# *Choo-Choo the Nickname*

*Michael Velez Perez*

I'm crazy like a bee,  
like a train.  
My mom says, Oh no,  
please don't let it rain.  
Father looks at me  
like I'm silly,  
because I run around  
like a silly billy.  
Father thinks of a name,  
cause his boy is his only fame.  
He says, Hey Choo-Choo.  
He looks at me like I'm coo  
coo.  
I smile at him.  
He smiles right back.  
I'm always right on track.  
I'm crazy like a bee,  
like a train.



*Michael Velez when he was known as Choo-Choo*



# *Funny and Licker Meet Player's Family*

## *A Play by Jonathan Rosario*

Player: Do you want to meet my family, Licker and Funny?

Funny: Ok.

Licker: No.

Player: Why not, Licker?

Licker: I have busy things to do.

Funny: Just let's go without her, Player.

Player: Ok.

*Narrator: Funny and Player are at Player's house.*

Funny: Is this your house?

Licker: Let's start working. Gotta clean the house.

*Narrator: Licker is not at Player's house.*

Player: This is my family, Funny. I would like you to meet Big Momma and Big Poppa.

Funny: OOOKKKAAAAAYYYY!

Player: Funny, wait! Don't you know how family is important? They take care of you. They make you. They don't want nothin' to happen to you. Sometimes family can be really crazy. But it's really nice of them to take care of us. That's how families are.

Funny: Cool.

Licker: The house is clean! I'm gonna go watch t.v. now.

Funny: Can I go to my house now?

Player: Yes, you could.



**Jonathan and his Smart Partner Erica Schmidt play basketball: Photo by Ariana Casablanca**

*Narrator:* Licker goes to Player's house.  
*Licker:* What's up Player?  
*Narrator:* Funny came back to Player's house.  
*Funny:* I'm sorry, Player, for being rude.  
*Player:* I would like to introduce you to Big Momma and Big Poppa.  
*Licker:* Those are really nice names.  
*Player:* Thank you.  
*F & L:* It was nice meeting your parents.  
*Funny:* Let's go to the park.  
*L & P:* YES!

**THE END**

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## *The Baby*

*By Ariana Casablanca*

The Love  
The cheer  
The joy  
The hugs  
The kisses  
This is my family

As the baby is 5 months old he has a  
passion of laughter that enjoys  
everybody's heart.

As the baby got diamond eyes as the  
sea there's a beauty in him.

But what I see there's a baby that has  
love with a passion that I can't resist. 

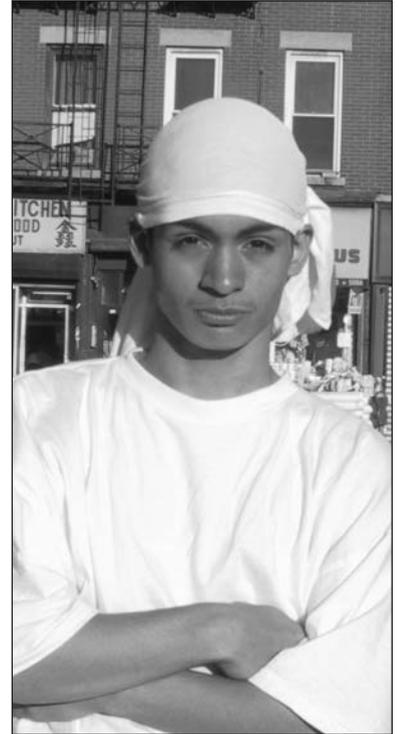


*Father and Baby: Photo by Ariana Casablanca*

# *Since I was Born*

*Michael Feliciano*

Yo, since I was born  
I was torn and warned I was in for trouble.  
But I never thought that stuff would double.  
I still kicked it with the stomach rumble.  
It was like an exploding bomb,  
but I was calm  
when I saw my mom.  
I won't go into detail,  
but she failed.  
But in the kingdom she leave a male,  
hoping he will never fail,  
never, ever go to jail,  
and probably go to Yale.  
But in the future I'm not gonna need institution,  
I'm gonna need bail.  
My mom failed.  
My dad failed and been to jail.  
I forgot the steps because I miss her, but I tried.  
Oh yeah, I also had a stepsister and she died.  
This ain't happening naturally,  
how all these people are dying in my family.  
Who makes the demands that God gives?  
Who makes the plans that I live?  
I'm not going in the right direction, why should I live?  
Many years I hid what was bothering me.  
God must really have a problem with me. 🙏



*Michael, as he is today.*

# Wandering OFF

Mordecai Santiago

Once upon a time there was a guy walking on the beautiful white snow. The man is looking for shelter. The man said, "It's cold out here." He is sad because his family left him. He sees a man walking too. He had a backpack full of quilts and other stuff. The man named Billy says, "can you please lend me a blanket?"

"Sure!"

"Thank you."

So they share water and food. "Why are you here alone?" Billy said.

"I ended up here because on an afternoon I was drinking cocoa and spilled it on my dad's \$400 tuxedo. He said, 'Get out of my house right now.' So I just went wandering off," said Mike. "So why are you here?" asked Mike.

"I'm here because I wanted to fly from Michigan to New Jersey. So I'm walking to my grandma's house. Do you want to be my friend?"

"Ok, I will," said Mike.

They two walk to the grand-  
ma's house.

...To be continued



*Editor's note: This story went on to become a play presented at the Replay readings in June.*



Mordecai: Photo by Wendy Ettinger

# Mayleen Cancel's Family Tree

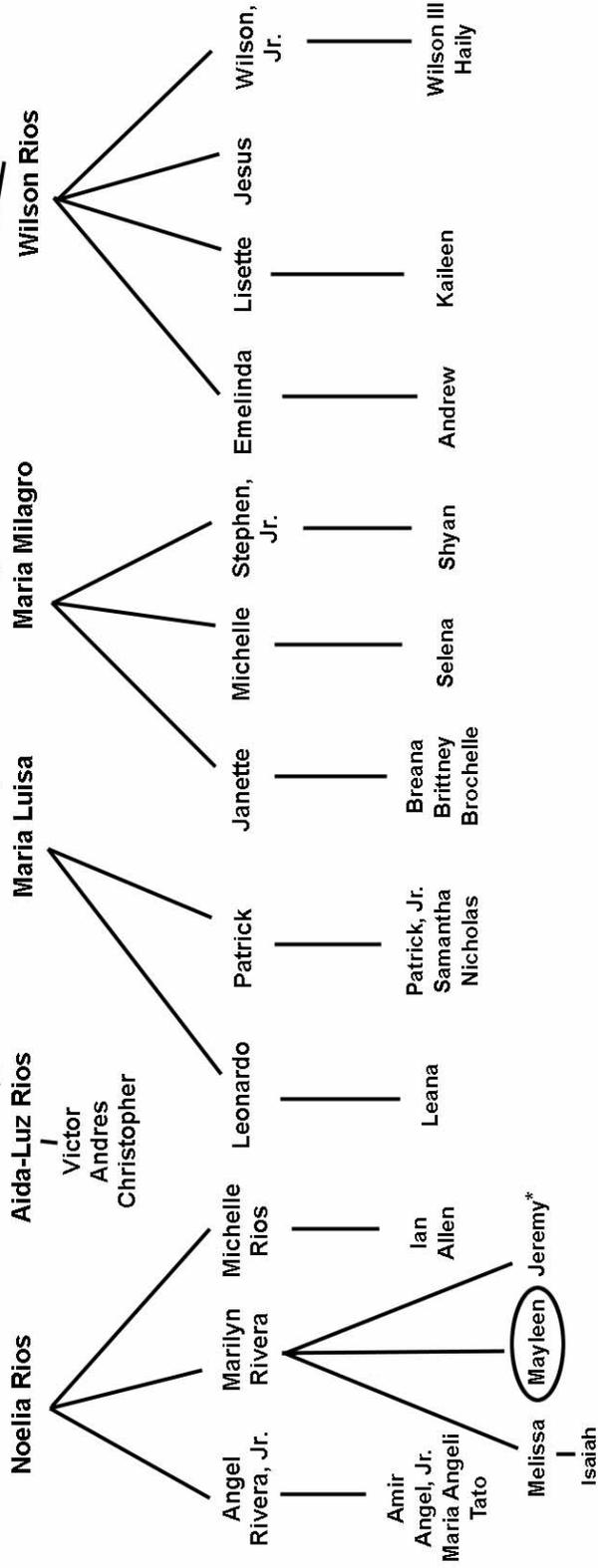


Manuela Nieves fled the Spanish Inquisition and went to Puerto Rico (Aquadilla). Manuela left without her parents. When her parents passed away, she was left with an inheritance, which was said to be a great treasure. But my great, great grandmother did not want to take the long boat ride back to claim her inheritance, so the treasure was lost, and my chance to be rich vanished along the family tree.  
 This is only a small part of my family tree!  
 — Mayleen Cancel

Manuela Nieves and Juan Feliciano  
 from Spain and went to Puerto Rico

Josefina Feliciano  
 and husband Patrick Torres-Rodriguez  
 (1800's)

Francisca (Panchita) Rios b. 1924  
 and husband Agapito Rios

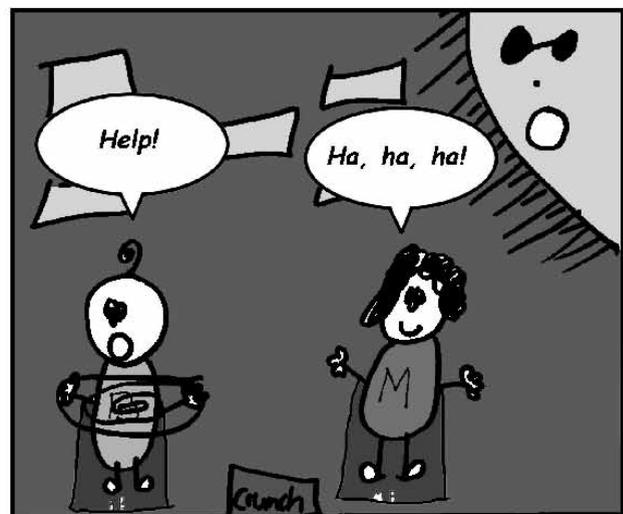
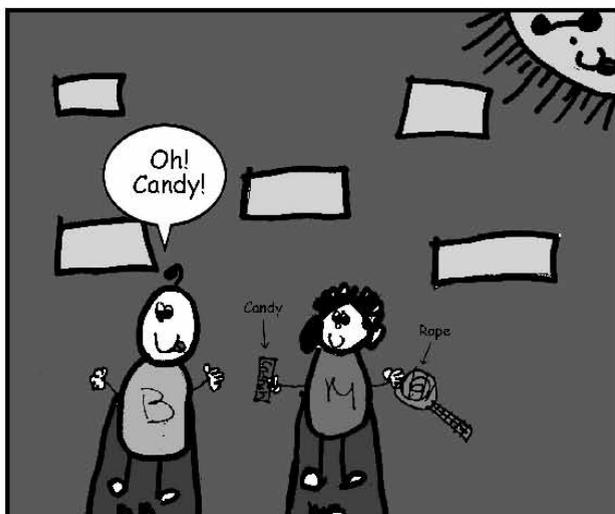
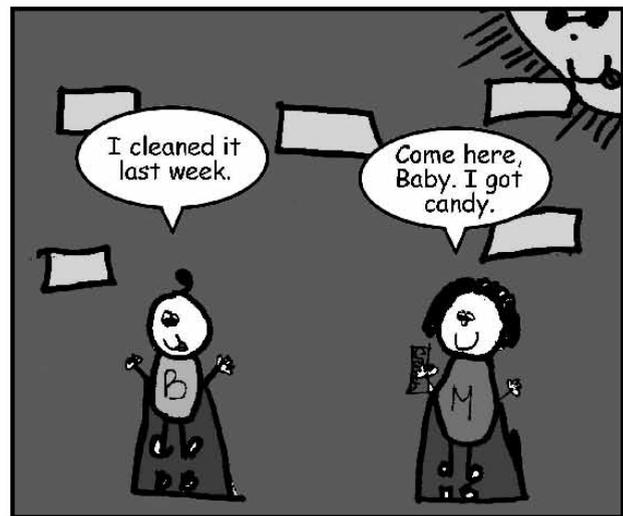
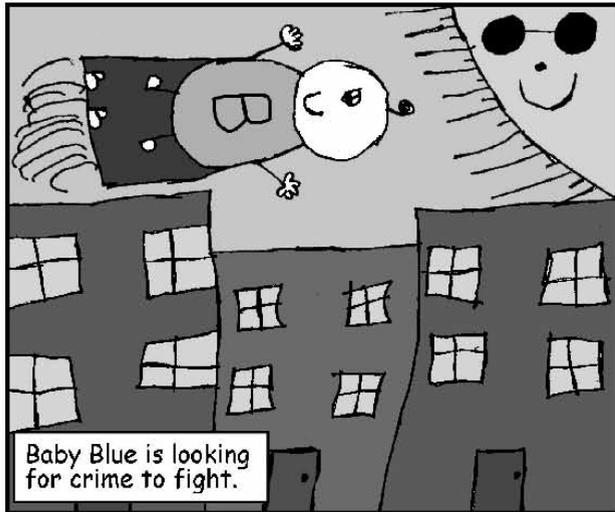


\*Speaking of families, Mayleen's brother, Jeremy Butler, is also a Project kid. See him elsewhere in this issue.

This comic strip was created last February during "Break It Up!: Comic Book Week."

# Baby Blue

by Chassity Damiani



# *Super Secret Sauce*

by Michael Velez Perez

The way the super secret sauce tastes is sweet and sour. It is amazing because it goes with many things like plantains, chicken (any kind), and french fries. The reason why the Super Secret Sauce is so good is because it is rich, thick, and tasty. The color of the sauce is pink like someone blushing. If you want to find out how to make the Super Secret Sauce then keep on reading...

The first time I tried the sauce I was sitting at my dining room table eating plantains when my mom came in and poured the sauce on my plate. The first time I saw the sauce it was oozing down like mud. I thought it looked disgusting but then when I put it in my mouth I felt like I just won a million dollars. My mama got it from her friend, Lulu. It tastes good because if you were to eat food plain then it wouldn't taste as good. When you have the sauce on it then it has a rich taste.



*But is it good on pizza? Secret Sauce expert Michael Velez*

## **How to make it:**

1. Take a spoon.
2. Take out ketchup and mayonnaise.
3. Take out a small bowl
4. Put ketchup and mayonnaise in the bowl and make sure it's the same amount.
5. Then mix the two sauces with the spoon until there's no more bumps in it and it's a light pinkish color.
6. Dip it in the plantains and eat it. Don't be afraid of it.
7. ENJOY!!!



# *Pie From a Lady*

*Perry Daniel*

*(Pie-lates instructor)*

To mark the passing of time, most people use minutes, hours, years, even nanoseconds. But not the Daniel family. Oh no. In our chocolate-crazed clan, life is measured not in minutes or feet, but with pies. Birthday coming up? Make a pie. Great Aunt Lulu died? Make a pie. Graduated with honors? You get a pie. Graduated without honors? You still get a pie. And not just any pie, my friend. DERBY PIE!

From proms to picnics, the Derby Pie has been the confection through which the Daniel Family has chronicled their lives. The story is simple. One hot South Carolina night, my mama sweet-talked the chef of the Gray Man Restaurant into parting with his pie recipe. The restaurant folded three months later, but their pie lives on. The Derby pie is the sweet sixth member of our family but can be adopted and adapted by anyone. So if you ever get the craving for a slice of warm chocolate pie, follow these oh-so-simple instructions. 



*Next time, Perry Daniel will share her recipe for foamcore pie.*

## **DERBY PIE**

- 1 Tsp. vanilla*
- 1/2 cup white sugar*
- 1/2 cup brown sugar*
- 1/2 cup flour*
- 1/2 stick salted butter*
- 2 eggs*
- 6oz. chocolate chips (though it never hurts to add more)*
- 1 cup chopped pecans*

Preheat oven at 325. Blend sugars, then the flour. Add melted, but cooled butter. Mix in your 2 eggs, followed by the chips, pecans and vanilla. Pour into prepared piecrust and bake for an hour.

*Best served hot with homemade whipped cream and/or ice cream. Sugar coma guaranteed!*



*Michael Bernard's dog Huckleberry isn't Remy, but he looks just like him.*

# Remy

*by Octavia Rodriguez*

One day I came home and my mom had a dog and I said, "Mom there is a dog in your hands."

She said, "Octavia, this is our dog now."

"Cool! What kind of dog is it?" I asked.

"It is a golden retriever," Mom said.

I said, "That is the dog that I told you that I wanted."

"I know," she said, "I got it for everyone and for Christmas."

"But Mom it is only December 15th."

"That's okay, it's an early present," said Mom.

Then I went to my room and was thinking for hours. Then I went to the living room and asked Mom when Remy was born.

"Remy was born October 12, 1997," Mom said.

"So he is only six weeks old, and he was born on my brother's birthday!" I said.

A year later Remy was really big. He knew how to play and he listened a lot. He is the best dog I have ever had in my life.



*Octavia and her Smart Partner Kim Sykes*



# More Members of the Smart Partner Family

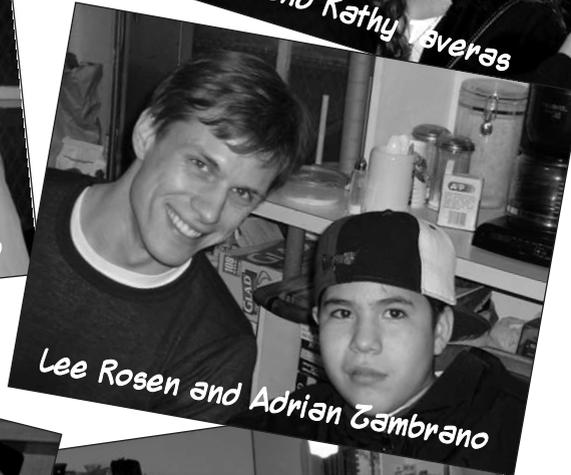
These photos were taken by John Sheehy at the Smart Partner Ping Pong Tournament back in February.



Frankie Ventura and Tim Luceno



Kari Riely and Kathy Sveras



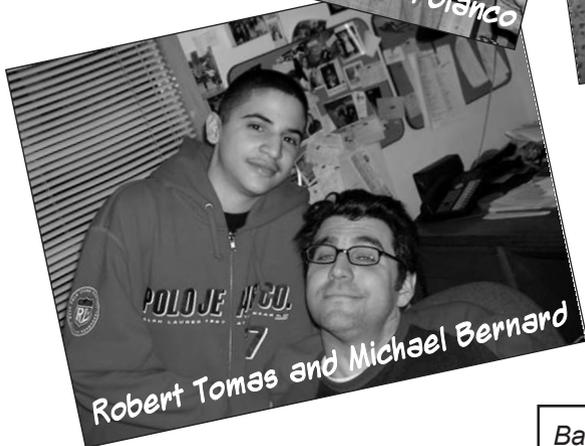
Lee Rosen and Adrian Zambrano



George Babiak and Noel Polanco



Sarah Winkler, Lorraine Calderon, and Emily Crow



Robert Tomas and Michael Bernard

**"Put those ping-pong paddles away!"** It just wouldn't be a party without old Grandma Ramirez there to keep us in line.



Back cover: Nicole Fargardo, Christopher Ramirez, Crystal Toro, Alex Kehr and Ani Kehr as a family of plains settlers, somewhere in the West in 1898.

# Fives

"Everything is Relative"  
The Family Issue



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