

# FIVE

THE MAGAZINE OF THE 52ND STREET PROJECT ● #23 ● 2022





Smart Partners is the after-school mentoring program of The 52nd Street Project. *Fivey* is the program's annual magazine.

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# FROM THE EDITORS' DESKS

Welcome to the 23rd edition of **Fivey Magazine!** For years the young people of the Project and their adult mentors have gone on many adventures together, but over these last two years we have had to pause due to the pandemic.

This year, however, we are excited to bring Fivey back and get you up to speed on what we've been up to. In this year's issue, read about **Sarah** and **Lynne's** Pizza Bus adventure, learn about **Nicole** and **Joanna's** planting experience, and enjoy Free Writes and poems by **Xavier** and **Ronald**.

In addition, you'll find some fantastic song lyrics and monologues written by 52nd Street Project members. You'll also get to learn about the fascinating individuals our young people created in our first-ever character workshop and much more. We hope that you enjoy it! 📍

— Johanna Vidal



Johanna Vidal



George Babiak

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**On the cover: The newest members of The Project, all of whom joined during the Pandemic.**

**Top row, L to R:** Christina Keorajavongsay, Anthony Zappa, Caelnne Arango-Ramirez, Oliver Tanner, Lorelei de Campi, Ivy Moayed, Elisa Ramos, Giovanni and Hansel Benedicto, and Gloria Sanchez.

**Middle row:** Annabelle Yam, Payton Jones, Evelyn Meyers, Brooke Pendleton, Ramsis Ramirez, Valerie Lugo-Rodriguez, Katty Lopez, Logan Centeno, Alyssa Garcia.

**Bottom:** Rebeca Vanterpool, Isabella Taveras.

# FOOD BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER!

## THE STORY OF A PIZZA PILGRIMAGE

BY SARAH LOPEZ AND LYNNE ROSENBERG

*Where do chemistry, biology, history, linguistics, urban planning, genealogy, food science, art, and thermodynamics come together? The study of pizza. Lynne and Sarah spent a beautiful April Sunday afternoon traveling New York City in a big yellow school bus on a Scott's Pizza Tour. Here Lynne and Sarah interview one another about the experience.*



*Lynne:* So Sarah. We did something very special a couple of weeks ago. What did we do?

*Sarah:* We went on a pizza tour.

*L:* We went on a pizza tour with Scott's Pizza Tours.

*S:* Yes.

*L:* Scott is a very good friend of mine. I've known Scott for almost 20 years. We did figure out that he has been doing this longer than you have been alive, right? I want to say he started the year you were born, was it '07?

*S:* It was '07. But I think he started like a month before I was born, or after. I can't remember. It was extremely close.

*L:* Yeah, very, very close. He was deeply disturbed by the fact that that you were the same age as his company, basically. But so what did we do?

*S:* We traveled to a variety of different pizzerias and we tried different pizzas, using the

scientific method. We hypothesized. We found our conclusions.

*L:* Absolutely. It was very much right up our alley. And that actually leads me to one of my questions. Can you tell me what happened at the very beginning of the tour when we looked at each other and realized it was going to be not just an awesome day, but specifically perfect for our relationship?

*S:* The presentation that he did about the dough rising and the heat?

*L:* True. He did give a really cool presentation about how fast the dough rises. I was thinking at the very beginning he said, we are going to approach this both quantitative –

*S:* Yes!

*L:* --both quantitatively and qualitatively. And you and I looked at each other, like, Oh my god, it's about to be the best day ever.



**Scott Wiener**



**Kesté**



**Luzzo's**

S: Yes.

L: What did you think of his multi-academic approach, like multidisciplinary approach to pizza?

S: I was flabbergasted. That someone could manage to acquire so much knowledge on such a broad subject.

L: Yeah, I think I had never quite realized what a great subject pizza is if you're someone who is interested in making connections across different academic disciplines. Pizza's perfect for that because it's such a cultural thing, it's such a historic thing, it's such a food science thing. There were just so many different lenses through which he could tell stories about pizza.

S: I couldn't agree more. I think it was so interesting to see all these different relationships to world history. Especially me, as a student who's gradually learning so many different things, to be able to relate this subject that I tend to find extremely boring and relate to something so delicious - to relate an unattractive subject to, you know, pizza.

L: So we went to four pizzerias. We went to *Kesté* downtown, *Luzzo's* in the East Village, and then we took a-

S: We took a school bus, a yellow school bus!



**Mario's**



**Pugsley's**

L: We took a big yellow school bus all the way up to the Bronx, to Arthur Avenue.

S: Yeah, I will say I'd never been to that particular part of the Bronx. And it was really nice to see all of the different restaurants and all the different bakeries. And the mixture of culture and food right there.

L: It was also an incredibly beautiful day.

S: The trees, the birds. The sun.

L: It was peak New York City spring - flowering trees everywhere, blue skies. It was just a really incredible day in general, and so fun to experience those things from a big yellow school bus.



*The pizza at Luzzo's.*

S: Yes.

L: What did you say when we first got on the big yellow school bus?

S: Well, as a native New Yorker I was never really able to experience the big yellow school bus to and from school because I lived five blocks away from my elementary school. So it was really fun to live out my suburban dream.

L: That's right. You said something like, I'm living my-

S: ...best suburban life.

L: I loved that. Oh! Tell me about the evolution of our experience on the bus: where we started sitting and then where we sat by the end.

S: Well, we began sitting in the front, very close to Scott, watching him get off and on the seats.

L: Yeah, he did sort of frighteningly jump off and on the back of the seats to give his talks as the bus was moving. As his friend, I was very nervous.

S: I think you and I were ready to catch him if he fell at any moment.

L: But then after the first stop, after Luzzo's...

S: We went to the back of the bus, the very, very, very back of the bus.

L: The "wayback," as we used to call it in the suburbs.

S: And the bumps that you and I experienced; it was very fun.

L: You didn't believe me before we started driving that the back of the bus is much, much bumpier than the front of the bus. But it is -

S: It is!

L: - Extensively bumpier. We both definitely left the seat at one point.

S: That really left me in awe.

L: Something that happened that I really loved was that I was telling you what kids used to do when I was in school was that they would stand and jump when the big bumps came and you didn't believe me. And then Scott came over and said the same thing and I felt very validated.

S: Did you?

L: Yes. So in terms of pizza, did you have a favorite pie?

S: The one - Luzzo's. That one was my favorite because I really liked the amount of cheese that was on it. And the crust. In comparison to Kesté's, the bottom was much harder. And the way that I personally eat pizza is "The Fold." I heard a good snap, a good crunch when I folded it, which was delightful to hear.

L: I agree. It was still very, very thin Neapolitan style, but it had a nice sort of firm, formed base. I liked *Mario's*. I liked both of the ones up in the Bronx. The one at Mario's and the one at *Pugsley's*.

S: Pugsley's! That was an experience.

L: That one I liked for the experience, the slice was perfectly good, I think I just prefer the really thin Neapolitans.

S: Yeah, the slice is good, but I think it was the environment. It was really unique.

L: Very unique. One of those places I never would have even known to go into.

S: The barbed wire...

L: Yeah the barbed wire on the fence in the front... But part of what trying to figure out what my preferences are is affected by how hungry I was. Because when we got to Keste, I was starving.

S: We spoke about this on the bus, whether a certain slice would have tasted better if we had eaten it earlier in the day, I guess. If we had changed the sequence of the places we had eaten.



*Scott is a pro at slicing pizza.*



*An interior wall at Pugsley's.*

L: I do think Scott thinks very specifically about the order in terms of people not feeling sick - not sick, but just getting really full. Because you're having four slices of pizza over the course of 4 hours, if you started with a heavy slice, you wouldn't be able to keep going in that way.

S: With the long span of the tour, it doesn't feel like you're eating too much in one sitting because you're not.

L: Yeah, I was really worried in the morning like, will I just feel gross by the end of the day, but I felt fine... Oh! I think this is an interesting question. So, Scott has taken something he really loved -

S: This is one of my questions, too!

L: Is it really? Oh, awesome. ...And turned it into his entire career. Is there anything - and not that you need to know this at 14, almost 15 years old - but is there anything that you could imagine wanting to make a dream career of?

S: You know, there isn't, but while on this tour it led to me thinking - to not only analyze your life and be able to dissect a certain aspect of it that you are willing to risk it all for and convert into a job, I think doing that is hard enough, but like actually being able to DO it was rare. It was really rare. I don't think you ever see that.



I will belong. It's just a really rare thing to see.

*L:* Thank you. I really appreciate that. I feel a great affinity to what Scott does I think because of that exactly. He's this brilliant little nerd who decided, you know, I want to make my own space. I think he carved his own space. And I think in my career, I spent a long time perhaps even lamenting that I hadn't found space for myself and then in my maybe early 30s finally said, no, I'm just going to make my own. I'm just going to decide that this system is broken and what is the way I can occupy it in order to change it. So I'm incredibly grateful for you having said that, that means a lot to me. Whoo! This interview is really going great places. All right. So what are your questions? I feel like I totally commandeered that. That's the problem with me being a professional interviewer.

*S:* Okay. I think pizza is a very New York thing. But do you think that his pizza tour would have been as successful as it is here if it had been anywhere else in the world?

*L:* That is a great question. I think that it would be completely different anywhere else in the world. I think in New York specifically, you get to look at the immigrant history of the United States from a very particular lens. You know, the fact that you're doing a pizza tour in the place where Ellis Island is -

*S:* Yeah.

*L:* - gives the tour a flavor, so to speak, that you could never have anywhere else in the United States. You could do a fascinating pizza tour in Seattle. You could do a fascinating pizza tour in L.A., but it's never going to have the connection to the United States history and immigrant history and global European history, that it has by being in New York City.

*S:* What does New York style mean to you? You've lived in New York for longer than I've been alive so throughout your years of visiting different pizzerias, trying different things, what does it mean to you?

*L:* Yeah, it takes incredible courage, I think, to do what Scott did; to just say, I love this. I want to make this my life. I'm going to take a leap and do it.

*S:* And I think this is very similar to what you're doing right now.

*L:* Thank you.

*S:* I think because you haven't managed to find something for you, you're making something for yourself, which I think I admire a lot, because I think it's very hard to say - to not fix yourself for these things, but rather fix the space in which you want to work and accommodate yourself there.

*L:* I'm not gonna cry.

*S:* But it's true! I think even when you're young, and doing very small day to day things, you're able to see how, hey, I don't feel like I belong here, but somehow you have managed to say,



L: I wonder if before Scott's tour, I would have had a clearer answer to that than I do now, because now I feel like it's an impossible question to answer. Right? Because now we know the different styles, the different families—

S: Yeah! We learned so much!

L: I think we learn so much that I can, with absolute clarity, say there's no answer to that question. But I will say, when I think about, I'm running late, I need a slice -

S: That's exactly...!

L: When I'm thinking about, I'm running late, I need a slice - and I'm gonna try and put this in terms of things I learned from Scott - it's a relatively thick, not thick-thick, but like, have more of a bite than a Neapolitan.

S: Yeah.

L: A drier cheese, a lower water content cheese. More coverage, right? Higher cheese ratio to sauce.

S: Yes.

L: Not a fresh mozzarella, which, again, is the lower water quantity and very foldable

S: Extremely.

L: Drippy, a little drippy, maybe a little oily and very foldable. That's what I think about as a classic New York slice.

S: Yeah.

L: Yeah. Is that what you would say as well?

S: That's exactly what I would say. And I think similar to you I had a much clearer definition to New York style prior to the tour. Because after learning all of the history – the immigrant history - I think it brought up the question is there anything unique to New York without having to incorporate the importance of immigrants and everything that they've done

for New York... Okay. Do you think this tour targets a specific group of people, because you and I - one of the most defining aspects of our relationship is that we know that we're very different from the rest of people and I think it's our differences that make up our similarities.

L: Ugh, beautifully put.

S: And I think that's why this was kind of perfect for us.

L: It really was. And I knew we were going to have fun, I did not know just how much this was going to be in our wheelhouse in terms of nerding out on loving knowledge and thought.

S: That's it exactly.

L: Yeah, I think what's really cool about Scott's whole

business plan is that you could come and do it as a total tourist and have a blast and have a really cool story to tell your friends from wherever you live because it's not the average, you know, going up the Statue of Liberty - it's not one of those things. I don't even know if you can do that anymore. But also, I think any native New Yorker or like me lived in New York for 20 years, would have just as much fun on this tour because you're going to wind up in pizza places you don't know necessarily or in neighborhoods you don't know necessarily. And he changes the places you go. So you could go this month and then go again next month and have a totally different experience. I think it's such a smart model in that regard.

S: Yeah, I completely forgot about that aspect that he changes his tours and the places that he chooses to visit, it's very spontaneous.

L: Yeah. And we talked about how technology has allowed him to be even more spontaneous because he can make a call or check online and watch the traffic and see the best places to go. Even just 10 years ago he wouldn't necessarily



*Scott takes charge.*

have had as ready facility to do that as he has now. I mean, I think you and I loved even talking about that. It's sort of meta tour – the tour about the tour – it's interesting to see how world technology changes even the experience we had that day and in two years, his tour may be completely different because of some technology that exists that we haven't even thought of yet. Like you get to teleport to one. Forget the school bus, we're gonna get beamed to the Bronx.

S: This is my final question. We met a lot of people, not just at the places and who we sat with but on the bus -

L: It was a really neat mix of people.

S: It really was.

L: And it wasn't New Yorkers, per se, but it was people who had - like there was a family from Long Island. There was a couple from Jersey, you know, so they're like not New Yorkers, but New York adjacent.

S: And the Australian couple.

L: Yeah, it was a really neat mix. The longest conversation we had was with the couple from Jersey.

S: Their dynamic was really interesting.

L: Yeah, she was a therapist and he was an ex-cop who is now a barber.

S: Wasn't she a marriage counselor?

L: Couple's therapist you're right!

S: Yeah that was a big thing that we talked about on how you could be married to a marriage counselor.

L: This is one of those things we talk a lot about living in the northeast and in particular in this climate in our country right now, where we're in a bastion of progressive thought and a bastion of progressive beliefs. Not everywhere is like that, and we often feel quite different. It was really interesting to me to meet someone



like this fellow who is maybe not from the same progressive background that we have. And he mentioned that his daughter, I think, had just come out, and I sort of watched him reckoning with his own language and the way he talked about things. And there was something sort of heartwarming about, you and I probably never would have met them –

S: Yeah.

L: - in our daily lives had we not been on this sort of interesting thing. You think about how food brings people together and how food can be a chisel to get people to talk and meet. I think there's a lot of stories of people with relatives who are very different than them, but they come together over meals, you know what I mean? It was interesting to be engaging with someone who I maybe don't agree with on a lot of stuff, but am having this fun, enjoyable afternoon with. That because you're in this very unique experience, you do wind up talking.

S: I think that should be the title of this piece: "Food Brings People Together." 🍕



Want to know more about Scott and his School Bus Pizza Tour?

Visit [www.scottspizzatours.com](http://www.scottspizzatours.com)

# FIRE WRITES AND POEMS

by Xavier Espinal and Ronald Peet

*Xavier and I would like to submit 2 free writes and 2 poems for FIVEY. The free writes were during our SmartPartner meetings and the poems were from a 52nd St poetry program.*

*Best, Ronald Peet*



**I** As the young man made his way down the line he handed people a flyer, they were holding a small orchestra meeting and they were requesting people to come. I stared at the piece of paper and tucked it into my pocket, I could not go to this event, unfortunately, because I had to work in the market. Throughout the hardships we faced, my family was still intact, through my mother being accused of being a witch, and my father losing his job with the king we still rised. But because of my family struggles I was forced to work. I loaded the docks and helped put the new fresh cargo in the marketplace, luckily we got the work done quickly today. I stared at the piece of paper that the man gave me and wondered if I should go, so I did. As I walked into the cellar 15 feet below the ground, I saw the walls filled with barrels and I then maneuvered my way through the group of people to the front.

The lights went dark, but the lights centered on the stage didn't, the lights moved into a singular spot creating a circle, it was a spotlight. A tall man in a dark suit walked into the spotlight and bowed at us before turning around. The lights went toward the direction he was looking and a dozen people holding instruments were sitting in spots no one was earlier. The man in the suit picked up a stick and started to move his hand around, and just like that the group started to play. The sound had almost a light flow to it, like it was dancing around in the air, and just like that so was I. It was like the rhythm was visible and all around me, lathering me up with the sweet, sweet melody. But just as it started it ended, this was the day I discovered music.

**II** • Our car drives down the empty highway, we yell out of the windows as we go at 80 mph. We sing as we drive farther down the highway, using random things in the car as a microphone. We smile as we open the sunroof and stand up yelling as we hold our hands up, and feel the breeze. The warm air hits our bodies, we smile. As we slow down, and enter the city we sit down, still singing. We park at the motel and go inside, getting a room, and we jump on the bed. I grab the car keys, and drive to the casino, looking at the Las Vegas lights as I drive, the city being bright and rambunctious. I smile at the sound of electronic billboards and the sweet music playing from the other cars that are blasting it. I park in the parking area, and walk into the casino. Spinning, and praying for 5 red cherries, but never getting it. I look at my almost empty pockets and walk up to the bar. I get a drink as I gulp the whole thing down, getting back into my car. The lights feel brighter, my head spinning and I look down. A split-second, a millisecond, and my car collides into another one, I launch as I slowly close my eyes and fly away.

**III** • I am sand, itchy and even annoying, constantly going into places that I'm not supposed to. I am sand, sometimes I feel small but when I'm with others like me we can make a desert. I am sand created from the people before me, sometimes I fall under the waves and sometimes I stop them. I am sand, I am salty.

**IV** • I am a box, with infinite possibilities and infinite uses. I am a box, I hold thoughts and ideas inside of me, but sometimes I struggle with letting them out. I am told to think out of the box, but how am I supposed to think out of something meant to hold everything in. I am a box. ⑤

# "Ya gotta have Faith"

Four poems and a story by Ms. Villanueva



## Leo's Surgery

Poem by Faith Villanueva

He's crying, whimpering, hurt.  
In the corner trying to get comfortable.  
He's taken to the hospital, and I find out he has a very  
dangerous and serious hip condition,  
And that he needs surgery.  
I try to visit him but visiting hours are over.  
My performance is soon and all I think about is him,  
Wondering if he will pull through another night.  
The next day, I get into the Uber with my mother and he is  
there, with a cone and stitches.  
He is ok, and I cry and hold him in my hands.  
It was only two days, but for me two days are like two years.  
When he gets home he jumps around like a monkey.  
He's a champion I say. He's my baby. ⑤

# My Thoughts

Poem by Faith Villanueva

My thoughts, My thoughts, My thoughts  
Overwhelm me and I cannot escape.  
My thoughts are mostly sad.  
Thinking of a man who was a dad,  
Killed by racist police.  
He was not the only one. He was just one of the millions  
killed because of his skin color.  
Did he deserve to die? I question myself what  
Was the purpose of killing these innocent  
People.  
To rip apart families?  
For the satisfaction that you think  
You'll feel? For the lies you will create  
To avoid trouble?  
Well, I have a question for you.  
Do you feel the guilt weighing you down?  
Do you realize the damage you have created?  
'Cause we do. All thanks to you.  
These are my thoughts. I share them with you.  
My thoughts ripping you apart one by one.  
As the guilt settles in I want you to know  
What made you feel the guilt.  
My thoughts.  
Only My thoughts. ⑤

# I'm Going Insane

Poem by Faith Villanueva

I'm going insane, I'm going insane. I'm  
Wondering if I will ever be going  
Outside after these crazy  
Months are over. I realize I'm  
Now in a new chapter about living  
In the year of 2020.  
"It's like living in Hell" they'll say.  
And after we think some of the pain is gone a  
New turn of events about George Floyd. Crazy  
To think that this was supposed to be an awesome year  
When in reality I'm going insane.  
Of course this was not it. More pain  
Was yet to come. More sadness  
Was not yet shown. More tears  
Were going to be shed. And  
Of course, there was going to be more death.  
It'll be a fun year they said. They lied I  
Said. They lied to my face. Will  
This ever stop? Sometimes I think this will never  
End. Nothing will be  
Like how I thought it would.  
Nothing is the  
Same. I'm not the same. ⑤

# Crying in the Back Seat

Poem by Faith Villanueva

Twelve o'clock on a Saturday night  
Dark streets nothing much in sight  
A phone rings from my mother's pocket  
Telling her to hurry up and come home  
A fire began in the basement that night

The gas set fire with no one in sight  
Alarms went off and people woke up  
Fireman telling them to hurry up  
My grandmother scared, my brother asleep  
We drove home while I was crying in the back seat

My father taking red lights, my mother  
Shaking with fear, my grandmother yelling  
The sirens howling louder and louder  
My fear growing bigger and bigger  
All while I was crying in the back seat

We arrived in less than an hour  
Grandma too scared to take a shower  
A quiet moment with no movement  
All relieved that everything was all over  
There was no need for any more crying in the back seat. ⑤



# How it Really Happened

Story by Faith Villanueva



Just as we stood there in our vast land covered with trees and flowers with the deer and buffalo roaming, these figures started moving up from the horizon. They made a mockery of us riding on their horses wearing their fancy clothes, while we were here standing in our animal hides. I was frightened by them. I was frightened by their horses. The horses crushed every beautiful flower in their path. The men ruining our land as they enter it. Though I was afraid of their horses, I was mostly frightened by their guns. Those massive guns next to them. Ready to shoot anyone at any time.

“Poppa” I asked, “why are these men here?” I did not move my eyes from them, not even for a minute. He did not answer till I tapped him back to reality, he too was frightened by these strange men.

Poppa approached the man. “Who are you?” he asked. He stared at the man straight in his eyes when he said this. The other villagers started to look too. We were all scared.

“I am Sir William, I come here to take what is rightfully mine.” The man said, “Who are you? ”

Poppa replied, “ I am the Big Eagle, and this here is were us Natives live.”

The man looked confused as if Poppa was speaking another language. Maybe he thought this land was empty. After all, we are an unknown tribe to others. We call ourselves the Kiowa tribe. We are like the other tribes but we are much smaller. We love to eat buffalo and use their hides as coats and rugs.

Poppa and William talked for a while when finally Poppa decided to tell Willam where he was.

“You are not going to be able to take our land.” Poppa said “For we are the Kiowa tribe and this is our home.”

I almost laughed as William scrunched up his face in anger. "This is not your land, this is ours and we rightfully own it." William showed Poppa a piece of paper, but Poppa could not read it for he was too old and his eyes fooled him. One of the villagers stepped out of the crowd and read it for him. The paper was a treaty that said William and every other settler could come through this land and was allowed to take it. Poppa was angered by this news and ordered that his guards approached him. He explained that it was not their land to take that we needed to fight for it.

I tapped Poppa on the shoulder, but instead of a reply he answered with a grumble. "Poppa, please don't fight over the land just tell the man the true meaning of our culture." He turned around and glared at me along with the others surrounding him. I felt my face get hot but I ignored it and told Poppa, "Poppa, why does it have to be this way, why do we..." He pushed me away and told me to leave him alone. I snapped; I spun him around and stepped on his toes. He cried out in pain but I no longer cared. He tried to get me to calm down but I couldn't. I yelled at him so loud that people on the other side of the land could hear. "I'm sick and tired of you ignoring me, you pig." I was so ashamed but I couldn't stop. "You have been ignoring me all day!"

Then he slapped me...

My own father slapped me in front of the whole village. I was so embarrassed. I ran back to our teepee and wept. I wept out all my anger. I wept out all my sadness. I wept till I could weep no more. I wept till my eyes ran dry. Then I just layed there cocooned in my furry mat. I layed there till I fell asleep. I was woken by a gunshot. I ran out to see that my father had been shot in the head. My mother was cradling him in her arms. Her blouse was drenched in blood. The shaman came to my mother and placed a sheet over my father's cold dead body.

It was my fault. I got my father killed. I yelled at him. I caused him to fight with the man over the land. If I had never yelled poppa he would have never gotten killed.

As the shaman took my father away. As my mother wept, drenched in his blood. As William and his men sat on their horses, I realized something.

I realized something big.

I realized... The war was beginning ⑤

# Germination, Growth, and Graduation

Nicole and Joanna's Seed Experiment  
Spring 2022

By Nicole Quiles and Joanna Parson



This spring, we wanted to grow plants from seeds and see how the different light, water, and temperature conditions affected their growths.

## THE ENVIRONMENTS

Nicole's environment was similar to that of a greenhouse. Her plants remained in her bedroom and her windows face the west, therefore her room receives plenty of sunlight and causes for a more humid and hot setting. Additionally, she watered her plants between once to twice a week.



Joanna kept her seeds on her north-facing windowsill and then moved the small plants to her balcony. The northern exposure provides steady but low levels of light, and because her apartment is on the 43rd floor, the balcony can be windy. She watered her plants more often than Nicole, at least every other day.

# STARTING OFF

We started off the experiment by purchasing the following seeds:

- Romaine Lettuce
- Cherry Tomatoes
- Cilantro
- Kale
- Carrots
- Parsley
- Sugar Snap Peas
- Broccoli
- Garlic Chives



We also needed small containers that we filled with fresh soil from our local hardware store. On March 14th, we officially set our seeds up to grow!

# GERMINATION

## Joanna

My plants took longer to germinate than Nicole's, because of my north-facing windowsill. The first growth was from the cilantro and tomato plants, and then the snap peas. The garlic chives, broccoli, and carrots did not seem to take at all. I also moved my plants to my balcony fairly early on after they'd germinated. I was worried that it might be too early, but it was after the last blasts of winter, and I wanted to take the chance because I felt they'd get more sun. I could see that on the windowsill, the stems were growing long as the plants tried to find the light.



## Nicole

During the germination process, all of my seedlings were able to sprout due to the high amounts of sun I received. I would intentionally avoid watering the sprouts because of the lack of drainage in the plastic cups we used to start them off. If I did not do that, all of the roots were more likely to develop root rot and get soggy with the water getting backed up. Unfortunately, I was not able to preserve all of my seedlings due to my initially limited amount of pots and soil so I found proper pots for the parsley, lettuce, cherry tomatoes, and peas. For my cilantro, I cut a large apple juice bottle in half and drilled drainage holes in the bottom and repotted it in there.

# PROGRESS IN GROWTH

## Joanna

I saw much slower growth than Nicole— again, that north-facing light! It was slow but steady growth for most plants. The lettuce seemed to create small leaves but not big bunches. I bought “cages” for the tomato plants, which will provide support as they grow, and I replanted them into larger containers. I also provided a stake for the snap pea plant to wind itself around. I had two snap pea stems growing and one flowered but then dried up.

## Nicole

My plants grew pretty fast, especially my pea plants and my cherry tomato plants. I would find myself purchasing new pots very frequently to accommodate the rapid growth I'd see. Personally, I had a good experience with the self-watering pots that Target produces (the black pots featured in the pictures). They made maintaining the amount of water I provided to my plants easier and provided a cohesive and aesthetically pleasing windowsill garden.

The only fruit that grew to harvest so far have been snap peas. I kept my garden indoors so pollinating my flowers required a bit of extra work. Pea flowers are pretty self-sustaining when it comes to the pollination process, however I noticed that they would be more successful in providing pea pods with me assisting them in ways such as: humming on the bases of the flowers to cause vibration, blowing on them, and even tickling them with my finger.

# HARVESTING

## Nicole

By the two and a half month mark, I was able to harvest several pea pods, plenty of cilantro leaves, and just began to consume my lettuce. The first thing I tried was my cilantro. It reminded me of the flavor in my abuelita's cooking which I absolutely adored and I cannot wait to use it in some recipes. Then making my mom my first test-tasting victim, she tried a lettuce leaf and detailed how although it was tasty, she noticed that it was significantly smaller and a bit more bitter than our store-bought lettuce of the same species. She implied that the reasoning behind this may be due to early harvest and the lack of GMOs. My guinea pigs on the other hand, devoured their lettuce and squeaked in (hopefully) excitement. Lastly, I gave peas to my picky little brother and got his stamp of approval.

## Joanna

At this point, I'm able to pinch off some cilantro, but I'm still looking forward to the plants growing more fully. My cherry tomato plants are robust, but I don't anticipate seeing tomatoes until later in the summer. I do have some kale and lettuce leaves coming up.





# TIPS

When you first plant a seed, keep it indoors until it matures over a couple of weeks to limit pests, extreme weather, and other unpredictable factors from harming it.

Underwatering is easier to fix than overwatering. Overwatering your plant can permanently damage, or even kill, your roots. Underwatering your plant can be quicker to reverse by watering it a bit more. Two signs that your plant is drying up are when the leaves start to get floppy and wilted and/or your soil will be noticeably dry to the touch when dipping your finger about half an inch deep.

Try a lot of different types of plants! Varying species will work in your environment so it is key to experiment with new varieties.

Don't get discouraged! Patience is important! Sometimes seeds will be unsuccessful or simply take long to germinate. Some plants will thrive more than others and that is completely normal!

# REFLECTION

Our gardens are still going very strong and Nicole is even planning on taking her plants with her to her college dorm in Pennsylvania this August! This was an extremely fun project that allowed us to get a better understanding of all of the plants around us and produce that we consume. This activity, being our last Smart Partner submission, was a really nice way to close out the year because we know our gardens, like our friendship, will last!! :) 🍷



2018



2022

# SONGMAKING SECTION

*In 2021, Program Director Garrett Kim and Musical Director Avi A. Amon once again spearheaded the annual Songmaking Workshop. Five members met weekly to learn advanced songwriting techniques and have their words set to music by a panoply of experienced adult musicians. Here are the 10 songs that were performed at our first live concert in two years.*

## **Para Mis Niños**

Lyrics by Cassandra Sinchi

Music by John Brautigam, Sung by Laura Riveros-Sefair

Para mis niños [for my children]  
I never told you about my life  
The life I never want you to live  
The impossible dreams

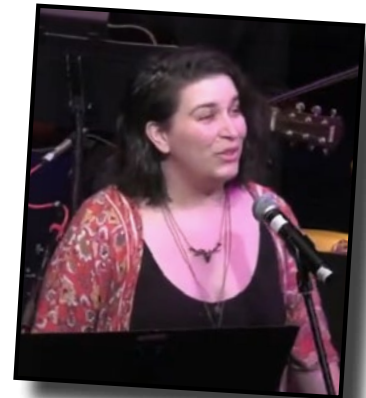
I wanted to be a dancer  
I watched the girls twirl  
And noticed how their dresses swirled  
But I knew I could never be a dancer

You see my children  
Money's not something that's easy to get  
My parents worked hours  
But hard as they worked, they could never pay the rent  
The impossible dreams

So I watched the dancers from afar  
I accepted that I could never show my skills  
Or touch the dancers silky skirts  
It was a dream I could never fulfill

And here I stand  
I'm handing you the things I could only dream about  
Hoping you would all do something great  
Only to see you throw this opportunity away  
Que Périda!

Mira mis niños [look my children]  
Please be grateful for every class you take  
And that you live a life that I've never seen  
Oh, the impossible dreams. 🎧



# What Do We Need? Hedgehogs!

Lyrics by Cassandra Sinchi

Music by John Brautigam

Sung by Natalie Walker

Attention everyone...  
It seems we are missing something from our lives  
We are missing  
Spiky  
Bouncy  
Yet cuddly guys

We are missing hedgehogsss  
Hedeghogsss  
We don't need food  
We only need  
Hedgehogss

Give our world more hedgehogs  
With their beady eyes  
Expressive face  
Spiky fur  
And stubby legs  
We need more hedgehogss

These creatures  
Are all so cuddly  
They are bound  
To make you smile  
Oh hedgehogsss

Look at their faces!  
Doesn't that make you smile?  
Our hedgehogs are really worth the while

So give us  
Hedgehogsss  
Hedgehogss  
They're what we truly need. ⑤



# The Big Stage

Lyrics by Morgan Smalls

Music by Joely Zuker

Sung by Kyle Cameron and Angel Desai

*Kid runs off stage sad to confide in the Dad because the kid gets scared.*

DAD

I knew you were going to embarrass yourself!

*Kid runs away.  
Verse 1:*

CAT

I hope he's ok  
I hope that he sees another stage

DAD

I hope that he learned his lesson  
Cause singing's not for him

*Pre-chorus 1:*

DAD

I hate seeing my son like that  
Singing is for girls

CAT

Who told you that? Things have changed  
It's not the same world

*Chorus 1:*

CAT

He needs support so don't put him down  
He tried, he got scared, but he made it on the stage

DAD

You're right but I still don't support his singing  
Though I hope he's okay, I hope he doesn't see another stage



DAD

I don't want my son to think I'm cruel  
I don't want him to give up on his dream,  
but he needs to stay in school

*Pre-chorus 2:*

CAT

I know you hate seeing your son like that  
But singing is for him

DAD

Do you think I approached it wrong?  
Should I make it up to my kid?

*Chorus 2:*

CAT

He needs support so don't put him down  
He tried, he got scared, but he made it on the stage

DAD

You're right, I should support what makes him happy  
I learned my lesson that singing is for him. ⑤



# Change

Lyrics by Morgan Smalls  
Music by Joely Zuker  
Sung by Adrienne C. Moore

## *Verse 1*

We need more people who love not hate  
The color of my skin is what makes me great  
We all should stand, hand to hand,  
So people can start to understand

## *Pre-chorus 1*

The years will change again and again  
But the real problem is what we did back then

## *Chorus 1*

It doesn't matter if you're black or white  
We're all humans, so alike  
It doesn't matter if you're black or white  
We're all humans, we're so alike.

## *Pre-chorus 2*

The years will change again and again  
But the real problem is what we did back then

## *Chorus 2*

It doesn't matter if you're black or white  
We're all humans, so alike  
It doesn't matter if you're black or white  
We're all humans, we're so alike. ⑤



## Safety Blanket

Lyrics by Kylee Chester  
Music by Raiah Rofsky  
Sung by Vanessa Porras

I feel your hand slip away  
And you disappear into the sea  
Of laughter and music and  
Eyes staring at me

But I have to keep calm  
Before they see just how  
Much I need you with me

But how dare you leave and  
Let me become small when  
There's people around me that  
loom so tall

*(chorus)*

Because you're my safety blanket  
The only familiar face in a space  
Where I have no place

I'm suffocating in the corner,  
With my world spinning fast,  
But the only thing people see is the mask hiding the truth

My eyes dart around the room, searching for something to save me  
I feel my heartbeat in my ears as my thoughts run screaming

I'm falling apart and I can't see you  
I'm on the verge of tears and I need you

*(chorus)*

Because you're my safety blanket  
The only familiar face in a space  
Where I have no place. ⑤



## Light

Lyrics by Kylee Chester

Music by Raiah Rofsky

Sung by Allie Babich



I watch you wake up in the morning  
With a grin on your loving face  
Ripping me out of my darkened place

I watch you make breakfast with a smile,  
Serving it to me along with your joy  
I could've slept a year longer but I haven't eaten in a while

You wrap me in a hug of earth and security  
And the bright glow inside me restores  
and I no longer feel broken any more

I'm walking on air and light on my feet  
Gleaming with a feeling that simply can't be beat  
I feel my heart growing with the warmth of your smile  
It fills me with an unknown energy and I could walk a mile

I think of you and my whole mood changes  
I didn't know how contagious you would be  
The whole world falls away living just enough space for you and me

For so long I've been alone, drowning in my thoughts  
Unable to come up for air as my mind began to rot

I just can't explain why  
I'm walking on air and light on my feet  
Gleaming with a feeling that simply can't be beat

My head is spinning with the thrill of it all  
The last time I wasn't happy, I can't quite recall  
You are my everything and my everything is you  
Our love story will never end because it's just us two. ⑤



# Kevin Hart

Lyrics by Alex Torres  
Music by Utsav Bhargava  
Sung by Marchánt Davis

Hello my name is Frank  
And I gotta say that I have some  
interesting tastes  
I like music and I work everyday  
It's a pretty normal life and I'm here to  
stay.  
I'm a studio producer  
Working 9 to 5  
Nothing is ever gonna break-a-my  
stride

Then one day a man came bursting  
through the door  
Looking pretty sweaty from his head to  
the floor.  
Then I wondered then I pondered what  
could the problem be  
He screamed, He shouted saying all this  
nonsense

Kevin Hart is at the front door  
He wants to make a song but why did it  
take him this gosh darn long  
He wants to sing about his height and  
how it doesn't matter  
He finally came out into the light but we  
all know he still needs a ladder

Bring him in I shouted  
Looking at him he looked so delighted  
With that big grin on his face  
He told me the plans  
Checking them, marking them  
Figuring out what to do

Kevin Hart is crazy  
Kevin Hart is funny  
Deep in me wants to believe in him  
But I just can't believe



This opportunity  
Kevin Hart is pretty cool  
Kevin Hart is a chill dude  
When we got the call  
I'll make sure this song won't fall

I get started and get to planning  
Wondering how I could make this great  
Then it hits me  
This will take the cake  
Now I know what to do  
**BRING ME**  
Blue light wear jackets  
Ginger ale  
Small dish of fried chicken  
And finally 1 rare pair of the Air Yeezy 2  
Red Octobers.

Kevin hart is crazy  
Kevin hart is funny  
I made the best song for him  
And all that he likes  
There is no strifes  
Finally here

Kevin Hart! ⑤





# Jack and Tammery: The Mightiest Hammer

Lyrics by Alex Torres  
Music by Utsav Bhargava  
Sung by Jon-Michael Reese

There once was a lad his name was Jack  
He is hardworking and that's a fact  
He's a construction Worker just like his  
father and his Mother

He was working on the job until  
one day a warlock came flying  
Through the great Big Sky.  
The Warlock dropped magic on Jack's  
Hammer letting it come to life.

With the power of this mighty  
Hammer he now became a brand new  
Fighter. Now with this Hammer  
now named Tammery Jack became  
super  
Crazy filled with excitement now  
He can change his voice with this power

Oooo I just want to go out and sing and  
fill the world with so much glee.  
Prove to others that anything is  
possible.

Going up on stage will empower those  
who just need a little push.  
I'll be the one to raise my fist in the air  
No more hiding  
We'll keep on fighting and keep moving  
forward  
Till we can't sing any more.

Now it's time to gooooo  
Get up on my feet  
It's time to go and finally sing  
This won't be a challenge now with this  
talent  
On Americas got talent  
Standing on the stage sweating and  
afraid



I sing my soul out trying to make  
change  
So people will finally know my name  
With Tammery's power I'll show them  
what I can do  
Style and talent is my only proof

The crowd silence as a mouse  
Thinking I was through  
Thought I bring down the whole dang  
house  
Slowly and quietly I start to hear  
applause  
What's this, what's that  
Am I being mocked?  
I turn, I see the crowd is filled with glee.  
I can't believe my eyes they love me  
They cheered my name  
Then took a bow  
I was finally not that lame  
With the judges final votes I was in!

There once was a lad his name was Jack  
He is hardworking and that's a fact  
He got to the top with his own talent  
better than all the others  
He now sings with a beautiful voice  
with Tammery by his side  
He made his dreams come true and has  
come out to light. ⑤



## A Guide to Create Fun

Lyrics by Jai-Lyzz Rodriguez  
Music by Julio Vaquero Ramos  
Sung by Jen Anaya



We have so many ordinary objects.  
There are so boring, bland, plain.  
We need more unique and new things.  
Most of the things are lame.  
We need...

Aliens, yeah I mean aliens  
Not the good nor bad ones  
We all could be friends

And instead having people at work as  
your friends.  
We could have aliens to be our new  
friends.  
We could meet new people

The aliens could take us on a trip to  
their planet  
This could be a fun trip for us

Then we need frogs, not just ordinary  
frogs  
Frogs that can dance, can sing, and can  
talk  
This could be a fun nap for us  
These frogs could pop in your dreams  
And pop up in real life.

The frogs could bring comfort to  
Everyone who is stressing about  
School or work.

We need rocket ships! Not like the really  
big ones just rocket ships  
that can fit in a parking garage.  
We could ride them for everyone,  
These rocket ships could be a getaway  
from adults' work  
The adults get to have fun,  
maybe even the first fun they have had  
in a while.

So the reason we need these things is to  
have fun  
Be ourself  
Have no more stress  
Have fun, or even more than before  
there is many things  
There is many things  
Many things we need and could have  
Instead of the things we have right now  
We don't have many of these things  
but if you just think we could imagine  
anything with your imagination  
If we put our mind to it. ⑤



# You Don't Have to Be Scared

Lyrics by Jai-Lyzz Rodriguez  
Music by Julio Vaquero Ramos  
Sung by Ronald Peet



A

It's ok brother  
It doesn't matter if we're small or big  
They might be bigger  
But we are wiser and we're gonna stay  
We're special in our own way  
You don't have to be scared

A

Think about it brother  
We saw the world change with our  
own eyes  
We saw the things in the world  
We saw people grow up and live their  
lives.  
We have cool things like a magical  
garden  
Leaves on us, no other building has  
that  
There are a lot of buildings out there.  
You don't have to be scared

B

When I was little I wanted to be just  
like everyone else.  
I was amazed of how shiny their  
windows were.  
I wanted to be big and tall, the  
building looked so mighty, up so  
high.  
But then I noticed something, I was  
special inside,  
I didn't want to be like the others, like  
no one.  
I just wanted to be my own self  
I have wisdom, I have beauty

A

You don't have to be scared  
You don't have to be scared  
You don't have to be scared  
You don't have to be scared  
You don't have to be scared  
You don't have to be scared  
Just love yourself. ⑤



# URBAN POETRY

In the Fall of 2021, we did an in-person Artmaking week for the first time in a couple of years. One of the exercises was to draw a view of the city and write a short poem to go with the drawing. We thought they were worthy of inclusion here!



In New York  
City life is bigger  
then it seems  
In New York  
City the concrete  
is pretty with the  
trees



Melanie Correa

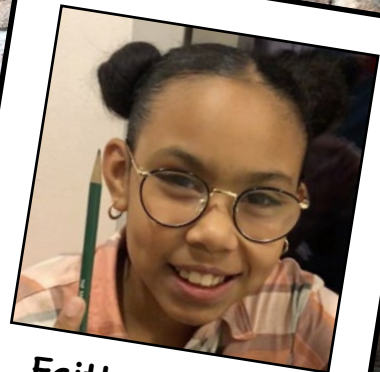


Adolfo Sinchi

In a Brilliant sunset  
A Wonderful Park  
I Enter into the  
Brightness  
I play till Night  
As I Go home  
To Rest



Oh today was an wonderful day with tree's  
swinging around as  
The wind breezes  
On me.



Faith Mitchell



Sophia La Cotera

At school,  
not so cruel,  
never Boring,  
always something  
new





Bread with thy Butter  
Oh How I Love For Breakfast  
But Cerial Not





Evelyn Meyers



### EVELYN'S DIPTYCH

Evelyn was in Artmaking, but she had to miss the day we worked on the poems. Instead, we present her "diptych." The assignment was to render a subject in two different media or styles. Evelyn chose a potted plant.

# FLYING SOLO

## THE MONOLOGUES



*Flying Solo*, a collection of original spoken-word pieces performed on February 11, 2022, marked the return of young performers to the Five Angels stage. Here are the transcripts of their monologues. If you'd like to see the video of the event and follow along with the text, just click the photo above or [HERE!](#)

### KIARA'S POTENTIAL

Written and performed by Melanie Correa

Directed by Michael Propster

Sometimes I wish people understood me. I put up this mask to pretend everything is fine but it's not. Sometimes I wonder if it ever will be. I fake this bubbly, always happy, never down person but I know it's all fake. Like yesterday as I was in Study Hall no one looked like they wanted to be there. The room was dead. I think even Ms. Smith didn't want to be there. Ms. Smith was the ELA teacher but loved to work overtime. When we went in the classroom, Ms. Smith said "Hello everyone, how are we, how are we doing?"

I simply said "Great everything's fine everything's perfect whooo excited!"

Truth is, the night before I got no sleep.

Last night as I shuffled through my Broadway musicals playlist, I couldn't stop thinking about how that's who I wanted to be. Take on a lead role. Singing, acting, Dancing, doing something you love, that's what I wanted. As I take off my headphones I realize I'm still in my bed, not on a stage, and my mom is screaming "Kiara, come throw out the trash, stop listening to that silly music."

I roll my eyes a bit and my older sister complains "When I was your age I never had a attitude like that."

My mom says "You need to stop being lazy."

When I'm at home my family thinks I'm rude and a brat. When I'm at school, almost all the

students and teachers think I'm the bubbly theater kid. That's what's scary...once I was done throwing the trash my mom says,

"What's the attitude for?"

I replied with "Just leave me alone." Then my mom turns red.

"Kiara, that attitude of yours better take you to Stuyvesant."

"Kiara you're not going to one of those arts schools."

"Kiara you're setting yourself up for failure."

My mom doesn't believe in my talent. She thinks it's a hobby...like cleaning. When she finishes screaming, I tell her I have pure talent, potential. I can be a star. She just laughs in my face. (Laugh)

"Go clean your room, Kiara, I'm tired of this nonsense."

Today after school I ask my theater teacher for a recommendation letter for a high school. Really it was for my mom so she can see, other people think I'm a star. When Ms. Gomez hands me the pink letter I read it immediately. 3 pages worth full of just talking about MY talent...when I get home from school I hand the paper to my mom. I see her eyes skimming down the papers word for word. My palms are sweaty and my heart is beating out of my chest. When she's done I say

"Mom, you see? My teacher says I'm a star. Mom look, "Kiara is a star. Waiting to be discovered with the voice of an angel, her talent shakes rooms."

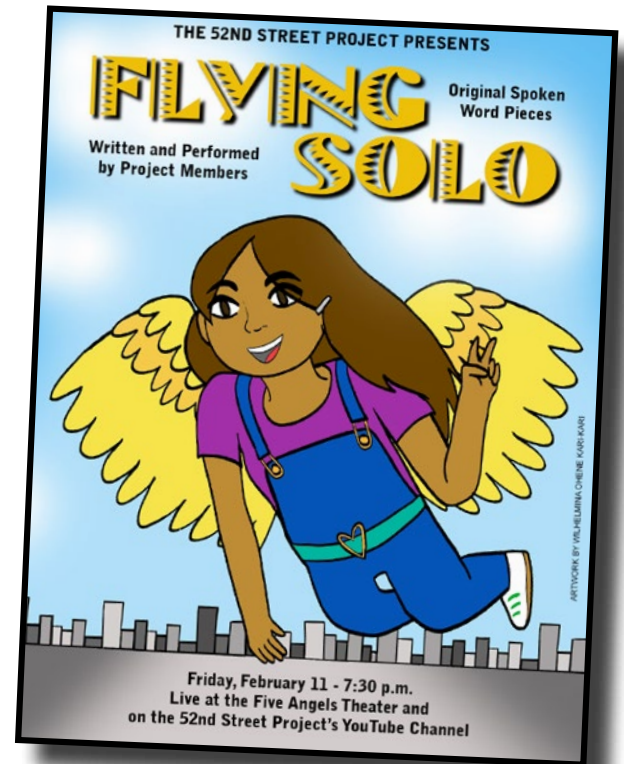
This makes ME happy, mom."

She just sits there for two straight minutes dead silent. She looks at me up and down and says,

"You want to be a star? You sure? It's not easy. Honey, I'm hard on you for a reason. You don't think I want you to be a star but with that comes responsibilities. You think tomorrow you will be famous? Some actors act for years and still

aren't famous. Don't you want a stable job...?"

All I could say back was "Okay. Okay...Okay..." I let her have that round of convincing. But then something came out of me. I did not get all this way to let her win. I'm not kidding, she



was grinding my gears. So I say:

"Mom, I'm sick and tired of you. You don't believe in me. All I ask is to apply to arts high schools, I'm not asking for a million dollars. You just want me to have a perfect life because you screwed up yours. You had two kids by 18 with two jobs and the fathers weren't around. I did not come on this earth to be controlled."

As I was screaming I felt my legs getting heavy. I had never spoke to my mom like that...my mom just stares at me because she's in shock I did this horrible thing...and by horrible I mean state my opinion. All she says is, "Honey I just don't want you to make the same mistakes I made. You can apply to as many as you feel. If that makes you happy then apply. When I was your age I was unhappy nothing ever satisfied

me. I know now you just want to be happy.”  
My mom looked defeated. I tell her. “Mom I’m sorry. My happiness is important.”  
She responds with “I understand.”  
The words I’ve been waiting to hear from her for months! So, yes, maybe I hurt my mom’s feelings by explaining how I felt but hey... most of the schools I applied to were of the ARTS!

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### **WHY ARE WE FRIENDS?**

**Written and performed by Kailey Caton**  
**Directed by Kendall Cafaro**

I chose to spend my summer with my sci-fi obsessed bff, and I regretted it. Faith had her eyes on this creepy house for a while. Sadly, I was the only friend to budge. Me and hers friendship was made out of begging each other to do things. Its just how we work, although it turned out no good./ It was around 10:30, so it was dark. We had a flashlight but it flickered often; due to low battery. We had our phone but mine was on twenty whilst hers was on 13. I made her promise me ice cream, thankfully she did. As we walked on sand I cried and complained about my feet aching. Finally we got there being followed by footsteps we believed to be deer. We didn’t bat an eye. 2 clearly tipsy men that must’ve lived nearby asked what we were doing & we ran. Clearly not in the correct direction because Faith started to look around. “Faith where are we”

“I know where we are trust me, trust me.” - Faith (inner thought - I’m stressed enough and the spiders on trees don’t help)

“Do you? You seem kind of lost” (inner thought - She doesn’t know, she never knows, this always happens)

“Of course I do, I’ve been here 3 years straight... you need to trust me”

At this point I was pointing with a dead flash light. I didn’t see anything familiar, nor did I hear the music we heard before. Not only that

but the signs were oh so confusing. Thankfully after about 15 minutes of walking up & down the boardwalk, we made it home, amen! Using a horror story to show our friendship was weird but its the only way I got her to come be here in this audience right now!

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### **AL AND THE LIBRARY**

**Written and performed by Amari DuBose**  
**Directed by José Gamo**

My name is Al, I’m a librarian and I’m Invisible, like actually Invisible. You-don’t-see-me-but-I-see-you-misplace-books-in-the-wrong-genre-aisle-after-I-perfectly-sorted-by-letter-type Invisible. I could probably walk through you if I wanted to. And day by day, page by page, I lose more of myself. Endless pages of knowledge and one can’t set me free of this... When you’re invisible, you’re not seen. It’s not like I was ever seen anyways.

The books have given me a piece of mind, especially the fairytale section. Princes slay dragons and cause havoc to protect their blue eyed princesses. Courage, dignity and being grounded...I have none of those qualities, I wanna slay dragons and use dainty swords but I have nothing to stand for, no princess, no dragons no...

Anyways, there's this one book In the stand up section that's me. It's me I know it. It's my story, my shine.

My family has a gathering every Easter at my grandparents. Beautiful place by the way. Anyways, I get there late picking up my sister Kathy from the airport and all of the rooms are taken and I have to sleep on the couch. You know it's late, It's fine. I put a sheet on the couch, fluffed up the pillow, you know making it real homy and it worked surprisingly! I was out like a light and It surprised me cause it felt like Sabre Steel made It themselves. The couch was so hard It...but I fell asleep.

Now I'm a dreamer, and when I tell you I

would've given the world to stay asleep 'cause when I opened my eyes my uncle...was in his briefs drinking juice straight out the carton. Now keep in mind, my uncle is a big guy, very big guy. Now imagine The Rock if he's wearing pink bedazzled slides with Hello Kitty stickers on them, only undies, drinking straight from a carton. This is the same guy who put *me* in time-out? Oh no, I had to get a picture, so I grabbed my phone and snapped one.

Comedians get to say whatever they want as long as it's funny. Anything from their kids, private life or someone else's. They stand in front of hundreds of people and talk to them like they just met them. I sit up in front of people who I've known since high school and can't spit out a single word.

Why? Why can't I express my moments of discomfort? Why can't I tell my friends about my day? Why do I have to be a shadow in a library? Why? Why can't I speak! Why do I relate to "Stand Up, Tony, Stand Up?" The same answers for all these questions, I don't know.

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## CHARLIE'S NEW WORLD

Written and performed by Hannah Leon

Directed by Adaire Kamen

### Journal entry #1, Sept 12th, 2016

Hi. My name's Charlie Jimenez, and I don't know why I'm doing this. Not too long ago my friend, Maddie, suggested I see a therapist and although I hated even the thought of it, I went. My therapist, Mr. Clark, or whatever his name was, gave me this stupid journal to write in. He said it could be like a vent book or something. This is stupid, I don't vent, this is NOT venting!

### Journal entry #2, Sept 21st

It's been a week since I started seeing that crappy therapist. He asked if I've been writing and I said no. He suggested I should write more and it would make me feel better, I suggested

he should get another job.

### Journal entry #3, Sept 25th

This is entirely stupid. I had to go AGAIN this week all because I had a little breakdown at school. Psh... He said it was a panic attack, and diagnosed me with "social anxiety." I'll let you know I'm perfectly capable of talking to people. I just don't!

### Journal entry #4, Sept 26th

Friday, it happened again, cafeteria. Everyone was staring and I couldn't move... I felt like my body was sinking in lava, and my lungs crushed by a boulder, God. I hate it here. I wanna go home.

### Journal entry #5, Oct 5th

How long has it been since I came to NY? A full year by now. I started seeing a therapist, Mr. Clark or as I call him Mr. C, three weeks ago. He's...ok I guess. He's helped me deal with sudden attacks and stuff, but they still haven't gone down. Nothing like this ever happened in Puerto Rico. I miss my family, my parents, my home.

### Journal entry #6, Oct 6th

I'm only here because we couldn't afford a good school at home and Maddie's parents suggested to take care of me. I'm only here for my parents. "Get a good education, you'll go places we could never. Buy a big house, have a beautiful family." I'm only doing this for them...

### Journal entry #12, December 5th

Another day, hit replay. 6:45, get up. 7:34, board the bus. 8:10, history, science, health, lunch. No one sees me, good. I wave to the same people on the way to math, hi and bye as it always goes. English, cold-calling, ignore me, good. I'm too lazy to do the math for a full year but I'm pretty sure you get the point.) Anyways, repeat. 6:45, get up. 7:34, board the bus. 11:28, math class, hi friend, bye friend. 12:16, English class. 4 kids, 1 table. Huddled away, don't call on me, don't talk to me. I won't answer.

"Now can someone tell me why the author decided to use imagery here?" I shrink down, and hide away behind my computer. Expecting the exact opposite, she calls my name and everything stops. Heads turn, scattered students, everyone focusing on me. No. No no. Ignore me like every other day. She calls me a second time and I can't help but forget everything. Their eyes feel like knives piercing through my skin. A third time and I've barely let out a peep. A simple "I know the answer Miss!" and everyone averts their eyes from me. It's only been 2 minutes and it feels like I've ran a 10 mile marathon. Everyday it's always the same but I can't help breaking down into a slushie when they call me. Maybe I should quit school.

**Journal entry #28, Sept 15th, 2021**

Hi, it's me again. I haven't written in this since freshman year, god I was so emo back then. I guess I should re-introduce myself then; my name is Charlie Jimenez and I am 19 years old in my first year of college. You must be wondering, "why am I writing in this after 4 years?" and to that I say...I had no choice. The world has succumbed to chaos and in result birthed monsters fighting each other for a meaningless throne. You're probably thinking: "but Charlie, isn't that just our regular ol' American government?" and well, you aren't wrong, but this time it's different. On the day of September 10, a meteorite came hurtling down to crash right in the center of New York, secreting a gas that affected almost the entire city...including me. Since I was closest to the crash, I was immediately sent into a 3 day coma in which I awoke from (obviously) 2 days ago. Since then I've been studying what happened to the outside world...and it's not pretty.

**Journal entry #29, Sept 16th, 2021**

I realize I kinda left you on a cliffhanger there yesterday so let me tell you everything I've discovered. Almost everyone who was a part of the human species completely morphed

into something else entirely; monsters? These things are hunting each other for the hell of it, destroying our already fricked up monarchy and building up an entirely new one. When you look outside all you see is hell. Bodies sprawled across the streets, buildings on fire and these "monsters" walking around as if it's nothing?!

I hate to admit it but I'm one of these horrid creatures. I can do these inhumane things and I hunger for something...living. I'm running out of supplies like food and water and I know sooner or later I have to leave but...I'm afraid to go outside. What if I succumb to these desires, what if I start thirsting for violence?

**Journal entry #30, Sept 24th, 2021**

Everyday feels like a living hell, and everyday I find myself losing what little humanity I have left. Just today I woke up to these blood-curdling screams outside my window and the water officially shutting off. I feel like I'm fighting two wars at once. The monstrous desire to leave and the humane one that wants to let it take over. I can't...No...I don't know what I'm supposed to do anymore. I'm all alone and I feel like this black goo is taking over my body the longer I stay put. If I go outside I let that monster win, but if I stay it'll win either way. What am I supposed to do?

**Side entry #31, later that day**

I can't stand it here anymore. I feel like these thoughts are screaming at me constantly, I almost want to rip my ears out. But. I won't let it win. If I have to leave I will, but I won't. I WON'T be succumbed to these horrendous desires even if it means fighting for the rest of my life. I won't be anything like them. I am not a monster.

**I AM...**

**Written and performed by Xavier Espinal**

**Directed by Ronald Peet**

I am Myself,

A body comprised of blood and bone,  
comprised of many systems I call my own.

A body also has cells that clone themselves,  
Just like when I look into a mirror I see a clone  
but I may want it to be someone else.

The Image in the mirror can make me feel  
doubtful emotions, the whole collection. But i  
tell myself "That isn't me, that's a reflection."

I *am* a reflection.

Found in water, either fresh or amongst the  
waves. My mood changes between both on the  
days I choose not to behave.

A reflection is also found in glass.

If you tap me too hard I might fracture and  
collapse.

I really want to be strong, not a broken piece.  
But in reality I know I'm very fragile.

I am fragile.

A glass outline of a human body,

In the sun I glisten, remaining perfectly calm.

But in the storm one poke and I may be forever  
gone

Caught in a cyclone that continues to tear my  
pieces apart, but the cyclone is just words that  
go straight to my heart.

The emotion I feel is simply fragility but placed  
upon that is immense anxiety.

I am anxiety.

A emotion I attempt to suppress.

But I am caught in a reality that amplifies  
dysmorphia simply from the social media that  
is handed to me.

I always fluster my words up because my  
mind's always thinking, thinking of the worst  
possibilities.

My mind's made up of puzzle pieces, none of  
them are clicking.

I'm grasping on eternity, my hands are always  
slipping.

I may be winning outside but inside I'm  
screaming, kicking.

Trying to search for an ailment for my mind, a  
cure.

But everything turns into a blur, and I'm simply  
left with failure.

I am failure.

Am I actually saying this or is this just failure?

Am I really believing myself or am I just failure?

Why does it feel like my ears are ringing, my  
heart is stinging.

is it cause I'm admitting?...I am failure.

but is that failure?

I'm not failing to realize my mistakes.

Or making excuses that break.

All the choices I made, and continue to make.

At least I'm taking a step in the right direction  
or believe I am .

That's not me being a failure.

That's me learning to truly understand.

Don't shame me, all I need is for you to  
acknowledge me and hold out a hand.

Because all I'm doing is realizing...

Myself,

I am Myself. ⑤



# The 52nd Street Project BUILDS CHARACTER(S)!

*In March and April of 2022, Garrett Kim led a workshop on the creation of characters. Our members create character profiles during Playmaking classes, but this workshop took things a few steps beyond the normal process. The course culminated in the students costuming themselves or an adult volunteer as their finished characters and taking photo portraits. Here are the finished portraits with their profiles.*



## GLORIA SANCHEZ'S CHARACTER

**Name:** Victoria (Played by Gloria).

**Age:** 13.

**Family:** Father and five sisters.

**Habitat:** New Jersey. Busy, very small two-bedroom apartment, one for Dad, one for the others. Smells like mail and poop.

**Wish:** Wants to have her own bathroom, and wants to get away from her little sister.

**Fear:** Her little sister who does crazy things like eating turtle.

**Quirk:** Does dances in the air like seals.

**Most Important Being:** Her mother.

## JESSICA ELIE-PIERRE'S CHARACTER

**Name:** Kyka, who is Japanese (Played by Jessica).

**Age:** 96 years alive - 100 years dead (1896-1996).

**Family:** No family.

**Habitat:** Abandoned hospital where she was experimented on. Blood stains on walls, smells dead, flickering lights.

**Occupation:** Killing people.

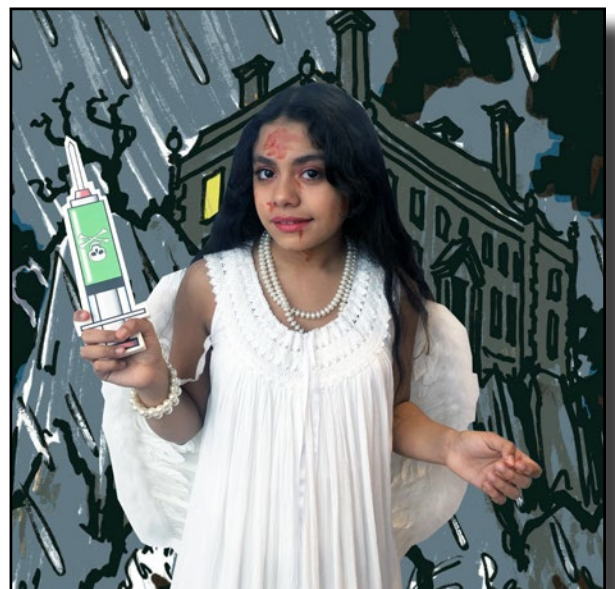
**Wish:** Revenge on people that experimented on her.

**Fear:** Abandonment (looks for people to be in her life)

**Quirk:** Mental health (She has ADHD)

**Most Important Being:** Mother (who committed suicide)

**What she looks like:** Really pale skin, sharp teeth (crusted) white dress, long sharp black nails.







### SOPHIA LA COTERA'S CHARACTER

**Name:** Abigail Marks (Played by Mikayla Mahony)

**Age:** 22.

**Family:** Two hairless cats: Jewels and Diamond

**Habitat:** Mansion in California.

**Occupation:** Doesn't need a job because of inheritance, but if needed, model.

**Wish:** For people to see who she really is, she thinks she's a good person but finds herself to be a villain like her mother, who used to be a criminal.

**Fear:** Being liked only for her looks. Scared of dogs.

**Quirk:** Is a bad driver but is book-smart and street-smart.

**Most Important Being:** Her dad, because of the money, but he was also a good dad.

### ETHAN CRUZ'S CHARACTER

**Name:** A.J. (Played by Alex Sasso).

**Age:** 17.

**Family:** Dog, brother, parents, best friend.

**Habitat:** In a spiderweb house.

**Occupation:** School junior, writer, wrestler.

**Wish:** To find the love of her life.

**Fear:** Breakups.

**Quirk:** Crazy, breakdowns, unhinged, resourceful.

**Most Important Beings:** Her powers and her relationships.



### XAVIER VALENTIN'S CHARACTER

**Name:** Melono Doggo (Played by Xavier).

**Age:** 5 (35 in dog years).

**Family:** Melono Mommo, Melono Daddo.

**Habitat:** Melon Farm. Looks like a farm, smells like dirt, sounds like flowing water, feels like dirt or sand, tastes like bugs.

**Occupation:** Professional melon eater.

**Hobby:** Melon farmer.

**Wish:** Taste a pumpkin, contrast it to melon.

**Fear:** Never wants to lose his melon hat, his first watermelon he ate.

**Quirk:** Always wears a melon hat.

**Most Important Being:** Melono Mommo.





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