

OUR VOICES!

¡Vuestra  
¡vooozz...

## **GROOVE WITH ME, INC.**

Is a youth development organization that offers free dance classes and performance opportunities as an outlet and a tool to instill in young women the leadership, pride, spirit of cooperation, creativity, joy and discipline needed to confront the adversity in their daily lives and throughout their future development. The program is located in a disenfranchised community and seeks to decrease risk factors while increasing protective factors. Currently Groove With Me, Inc. services youth from East Harlem and The Bronx.

## **ART A CATALYST FOR CHANGE**

By incorporating art and poetry, we have used the following pages to empower our students to express themselves in their own language and document their experiences with gun violence and violence in general that is prevalent in this country and within their community. ¡Nuestra Voozz!, serves as the students final testimony, a letter to their peers and adults in the community of Esperanza Preparatory Academy which is located in the East Harlem Section of Manhattan.

We gratefully acknowledge the leadership support of the Speaker of the New York City Council Corey Johnson, New York City Council Majority Leader Laurie A. Cumbo and New York City Council member Vanessa L Gibson who allocated funding for this initiative as well as the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs for partnering up with Groove With Me, Inc.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

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# OUR VOICES!

¡NUESTRA VOOOZZ!

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## CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Bianca Designs

## PUBLISHER

Beatriz Coronel

## SPECIAL THANKS

Assistant Principal Frances Saez

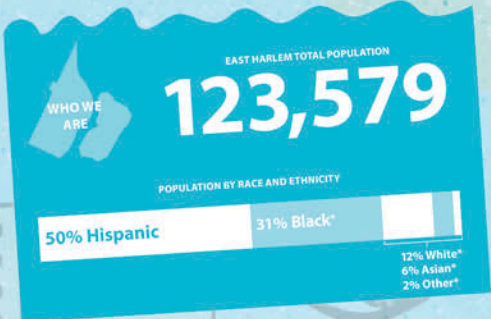
Jennifer Gomez

Rosanna Pichardo

Dean Arnulfo Velasquez

Vladimir Santana

# COMMUNITY PROFILE: EAST HARLEM

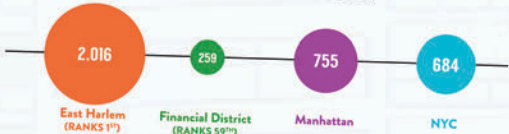


**31% OF RESIDENTS OF EAST HARLEM LIVE BELOW THE FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL; IT IS THE TWELFTH-POOREST NEIGHBORHOOD IN NYC.**

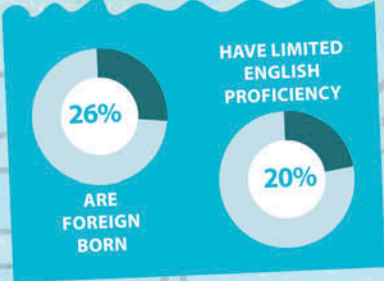
## MENTAL HEALTH

Variations in hospitalization rates may reflect differences in rates of illness, access to health care and other social and cultural factors. The rate of psychiatric hospitalizations among adults in **East Harlem** is the highest in the city.

PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALIZATIONS (PER 100,000 ADULTS)



New York State Department of Health, Statewide Planning and Research Cooperative System, 2012



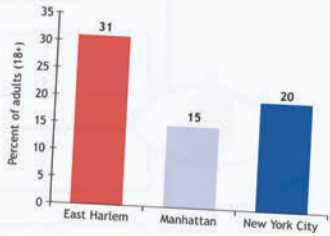
**ADULTS IN EAST HARLEM ARE THREE TIMES AS LIKELY TO CONSUME SUGARY BEVERAGES AS ADULTS IN STUYVESANT TOWN AND TURTLE BAY.**

## OBESITY

One in 3 adults in East Harlem is obese

Obesity is defined as a body-mass-index (BMI) of 30 or greater. Percents are age-adjusted

Data Source: NYC Community Health Survey 2002-03-04



East Harlem residents aged 25 and older have completed fewer years of education than those in Manhattan and NYC overall

	East Harlem	Manhattan	NYC
Up to 8th grade	21%	10%	12%
Some high school, no diploma	25%	11%	16%
High school diploma	23%	14%	25%
Some college, no degree	18%	16%	20%
College graduate	13%	49%	27%

King L, Hinterland K, Dragan KL, Driver CR, Harris TG, Gwynn RC, Linos N, Barbot O, Bassett MT. Community Health Profiles 2015, Manhattan Community District 11: East Harlem; 2015; 11 (59): 1-16.

Olson EC, Van Wye G, Kerker B, Thorpe L, Frieden TR. Take Care East Harlem. NYC Community Health Profiles, Second Edition; 2006; 21 (42): 1-16.



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FRONT & BACK  
COVER ARTWORK BY

JOSSY



## LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

I'm pleased to unveil this zine, produced in collaboration with the students of class 602 at Esperanza Preparatory Academy, located in East Harlem.

Over the last eight weeks, we embarked on a journey to connect with 25 Latinx 6th graders. Our goal was to help them articulate their personal experiences through visual arts and poetry. The students inspired me with their stories of strength. At a young age many of them have been exposed to obstacles I felt are beyond what any child should experience. During our sessions, we took our individual and shared experiences, our highs and lows, and turned them into one collective piece of art.

Throughout my years of working in the Mental Health field, I have seen individuals who have been in crisis reshape their thought patterns and transform into more aware and confident people. When I learned about the population of students I would be working with, and the challenges they were facing, I knew that Art A Catalyst For Change would be an ideal program for them. Although we wouldn't be able to change every single student's life overnight, we would at the very least foster critical thinking skills that would propel them to rewrite their narrative and tell their truth, from an empowering standpoint.

What an incredible experience this has been. I wanted to extend a special thank you to the following people that helped us realize Our Voices: Assistant Principal Frances Saez, Spanish Teacher Elvira Rossi, Special Education Teacher Jennifer Gomez, and paraprofessionals Vladimir Santana and Rosana Pichardo, for their efforts in helping us have a successful program. To all of the students of class 602, thank you for sharing your stories with me, your voice is your most powerful ammunition, use it wisely. And, I'd like to thank my colleague, author and filmmaker, Raquel Cepeda, for her invaluable contributions.

We thank the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs as well as New York City Council Majority Leader Laurie A. Cumbo and New York City Council Member Vanessa L. Gibson for allotting funding for this much needed initiative and partnering with us at Groove With Me, Inc. to implement this program.

Sincerely yours,

**Beatriz Coronel, MA**  
Program Director  
Groove With Me, Inc.





## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF

This year, we had the privilege of collaborating with a class of mostly E.S.L. students at the Esperanza Preparatory Academy in East Harlem. Our group of about 25, give or take, were a microcosm of the Latinx-America experience in one room. There was a Hurricane Maria survivor who, along with a number of my compatriotas from the Dominican Republic, demonstrated an understanding and profundity about the world that's inherent to hyphenated-Americans.

One morning, a pre-teen of Mexican parentage went out of her way to share with us that she "had her papers," while another expressed that while she was born in New York City she lived in constant fear that ICE agents would steal her family and friends away. Another newish arrival from Venezuela, a boy with the soul of an old man visible through a set of hardened eyes and demeanor to match, revealed over time that he longed for a stable homeland where he might be reunited with his father. To shoulder that kind of societal pressure with learning a new language in a country that has shown itself to be racist, misogynistic, and xenophobic, all while having to focus on reading, writing, and arithmetic, is daunting.

I'm proud of the finished product, a collection of artwork, poetry and musings by a group of youngsters processing their respective trauma through creative expression.

I'm grateful for the participation of our senior editor, Spanish teacher Ms. Elvira Rossi, who stayed committed to working with the class on the days we weren't in school. Special Education teacher Ms. Jennifer Gomez, and paraprofessionals, Mr. Vladimir Santana and Ms. Rosanna Pichardo, respectively, were invaluable to the process. Dean Arnulfo Velasquez was accommodating and engaged. Considering our negative experience last year with an apathetic administration in the Bronx who seemed to work against us, this year's cycle was a welcomed change.

Peace,

**Raquel Cepeda**  
Teaching Artist  
Art A Catalyst For Change

[www.djalirancher.com](http://www.djalirancher.com)





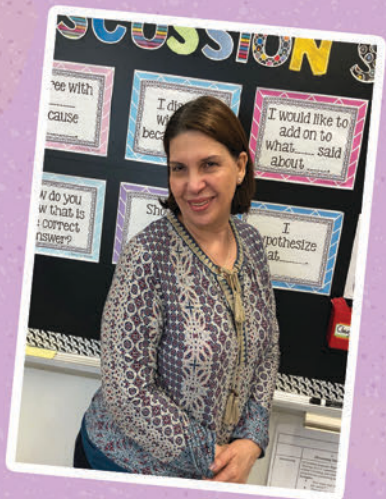
## LETTER FROM MS. ELVIRA ROSSI ESPERANZA PREPATORY ACADEMY

I have been working as a Spanish teacher for the last 22 years for NYC Department of Education. Throughout my career, I've had the opportunity to participate in many programs. This has given me the necessary experience to make a fair judgment about the quality and success of Art A Catalyst For Change. This program, I can honestly say, has been effective for the social and emotional development of my students. This program has motivated the students to express their feelings and about the world they live today, in a realistic manner. I would like to thank the program's facilitators and our school's administration for affording me the honor of working with such a fabulous team.

He trabajado como profesora de español durante los últimos 22 años para NYC Department of Education. A lo largo de mi carrera, he tenido la oportunidad de participar en muchos programas. Esto me ha proporcionado la experiencia necesaria para hacer un juicio justo sobre la calidad y el éxito del programa Art A Catalyst For Change. Honestamente puedo decir que ha sido exitosamente efectivo para el desarrollo social y emocional de mis estudiantes. Este programa motivó a los estudiantes a expresar sus sentimientos y emociones sobre el mundo real en el que viven hoy en día. Me gustaría agradecer al programa y a la administración de nuestra escuela por permitirme el honor de trabajar con tan fabuloso equipo.

Sincerely y Saludos,

Ms. Elvira Rossi  
Spanish Teacher  
Esperanza Prepatory Academy





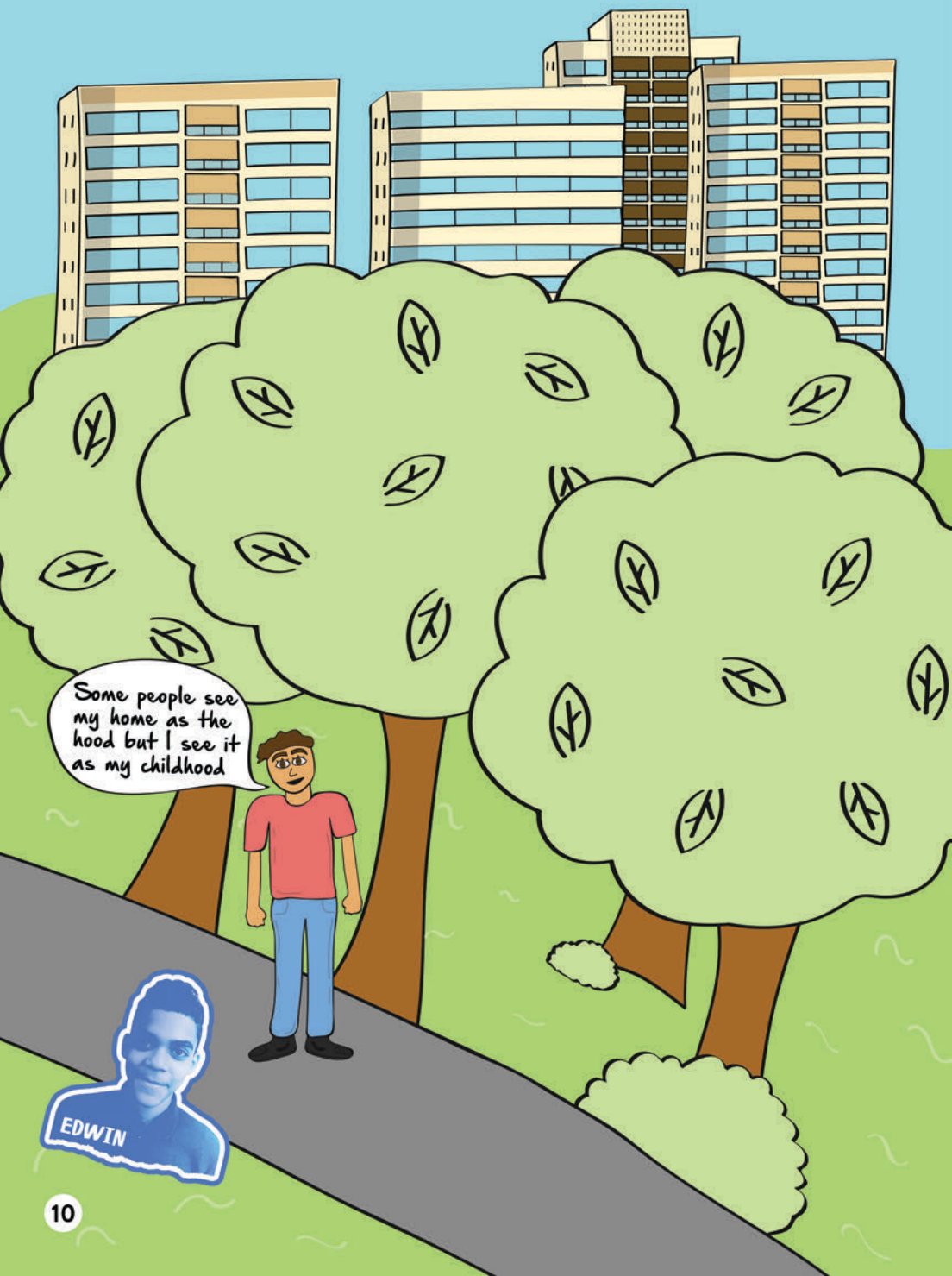
# Break The Silence!



¡Rompe el Silencio!  
¡Dile No a  
La Violencia!



# Taino Towers







# PROVIN' THEM WRONG

by Elijah Jordan Perna

These people think I'm bad  
but I'm not

I'm going to prove them wrong  
I'm headed to the top

I know I'm smart but I make dumb decisions  
I be in detention and I think about what I'm missing

My family knows I can succeed  
But sometimes I don't see what they see in me.

When I'm grown up  
I'm gonna be at the top

And I'll be looking down at the people  
that always said, "STOP!"

I know I can prove them wrong.





Overcom  
challeng

But she knows  
one thing

This picture is  
about a girl  
who is lost in  
her own world.





ne  
ges

She doesn't understand  
anything

But she will find a  
way to overcome her  
challenges. She  
is brave. Her  
name is Angel.





¡Que mis  
palabras rompan  
la pared de miedo!









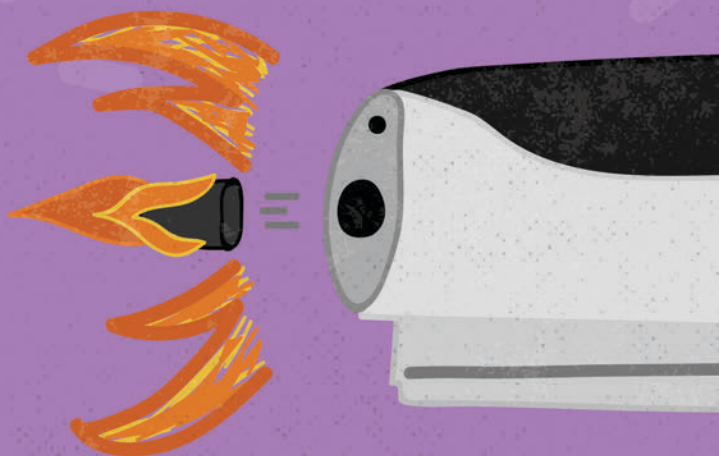
# LIFE'S UPS AND DOWNS

by Luz DeJesus

My name is Luz and I'm 11 years old. Sometimes my life may be sad and at other times happy. I feel sad when I hear Donald Trump saying that ICE people are going to deport immigrants to different countries or put them in jail. I'm afraid that it might happen to one of my family members. I don't want that to happen because I'll be left so lonely. Can you imagine being me and have your parents get taken away?



"A bullet does no






...t have eyes....”



A cartoon illustration depicting the impact of Hurricane Maria on Puerto Rico. A red-roofed house is shown with significant structural damage, including a missing section of the roof and a large hole in the wall. Two people are visible: one person is standing in the doorway, looking distressed with their arms raised, and another person is standing in front of the house, also looking sad with tears on their face. The background features green hills and a grey sky with white clouds and falling rain. A large, light blue puddle of water is visible on the right side of the house. The text 'hurricane MARIA P.R.' is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font in the upper right quadrant of the image.

# hurricane MARIA P.R.





Puerto Rico ha sufrido por muchos huracanes, uno de los huracanes más poderosos ha sido el huracán Maria en el cual tuve que irme de mi Isla del Encanto porque en mi casa se le rompió el techo de zinc y me tuve que mudar a Nueva York. Mi titi y tío nos ayudaron mucho, nos dejaron que viviéramos aquí mientras las cosas mejoran y nos apuntaron a mi y a mi hermano en una escuela. Cuando llegue a la escuela estaba un poco tímida pero luego fui mejorando la timidez. Aunque tuve amigas, por otro lado no estaba con mi mama y mi papa. Luego mi mama consiguio un trabajo en un hospital en el Bronx porque ella trabajaba en un hospital como enfermera. Mi mama vino para acá y me siento bien pero triste porque mi papa me hace falta, pero para el verano puede ser que me vaya a Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico has suffered from many hurricanes, one of the most powerful hurricanes has been hurricane Maria in which I had to leave my Isla del Encanto because the zinc roof in my house was destroyed and therefore I had to move to New York. My titi and uncle helped us a lot, they let us live with them while things get better and they also enrolled my brother and I in a school. When I arrived at this school I was a little shy but have been improving on my shyness. Although I had friends on one hand, on the other hand I was not with my mom and my dad. Then my mom got a job at a hospital in the Bronx because she has worked in a hospital as a nurse. My mom moved here, and I feel good but sad because I miss my dad but during the Summer I might go to Puerto Rico.



# OUR VOICE

## NUESTRA VOZ

By **Chary Canelo Duarte, Yerelyn Martinez  
& Amaris Mercado**

Hay un espacio  
Hay un lugar donde yo puedo hablar.

Puedo hablar para expresar lo que adentro de mi esta.

Puedo llorar  
Puedo gritar  
todo lo que siento sin parar .  
No importa la oscuridad que tenga que atravesar  
porque se que en este túnel la luz a mi llegara .

Esto es lo que llevo dentro  
y se que al fin una voz poderosa  
no la comparo con otra cosa .

Una persona no puede dejar de gritar  
porque él corazón explota si tu no lo dejas hablar.



2006



# LA VIDA NO ES SENCILLA

## LIFE IS NOT SIMPLE

by Santiago Hernandez Perez

Soy Santiago y tengo 12 anos  
y soy venezolano de corazon  
por problemas economicos  
y en la seguridad  
un paso en mi vida tuve quedar  
primero inmigrar  
despues acostumbrarme al llegar  
buscar una casa  
colegio, amigos, y mas  
ahora puedo caminar  
sin miedo pasar  
a que me roben, maten o algo mas,  
en estados unidos tambien hay problemas  
como armas, el racismo inmigratorio  
que por la casa blanca es un problema  
de locos, y eso me afecta a mi  
por que yo no vengo de aqui  
y me gustaria  
que la inmigracion no fuera haci,  
pero igual es mucho mejor tengo comida y amor  
puedo cumplir mi cumpleanos  
sin tener terror.







The world is surrounded by people who can change our lives in good and bad ways. All of our collective voices can yield many changes in our lives. Our lives cannot be lived with one single voice, but rather with a thousand voices to confront situations in our lives.

- Mariela Pareja



The Other Side Of Life

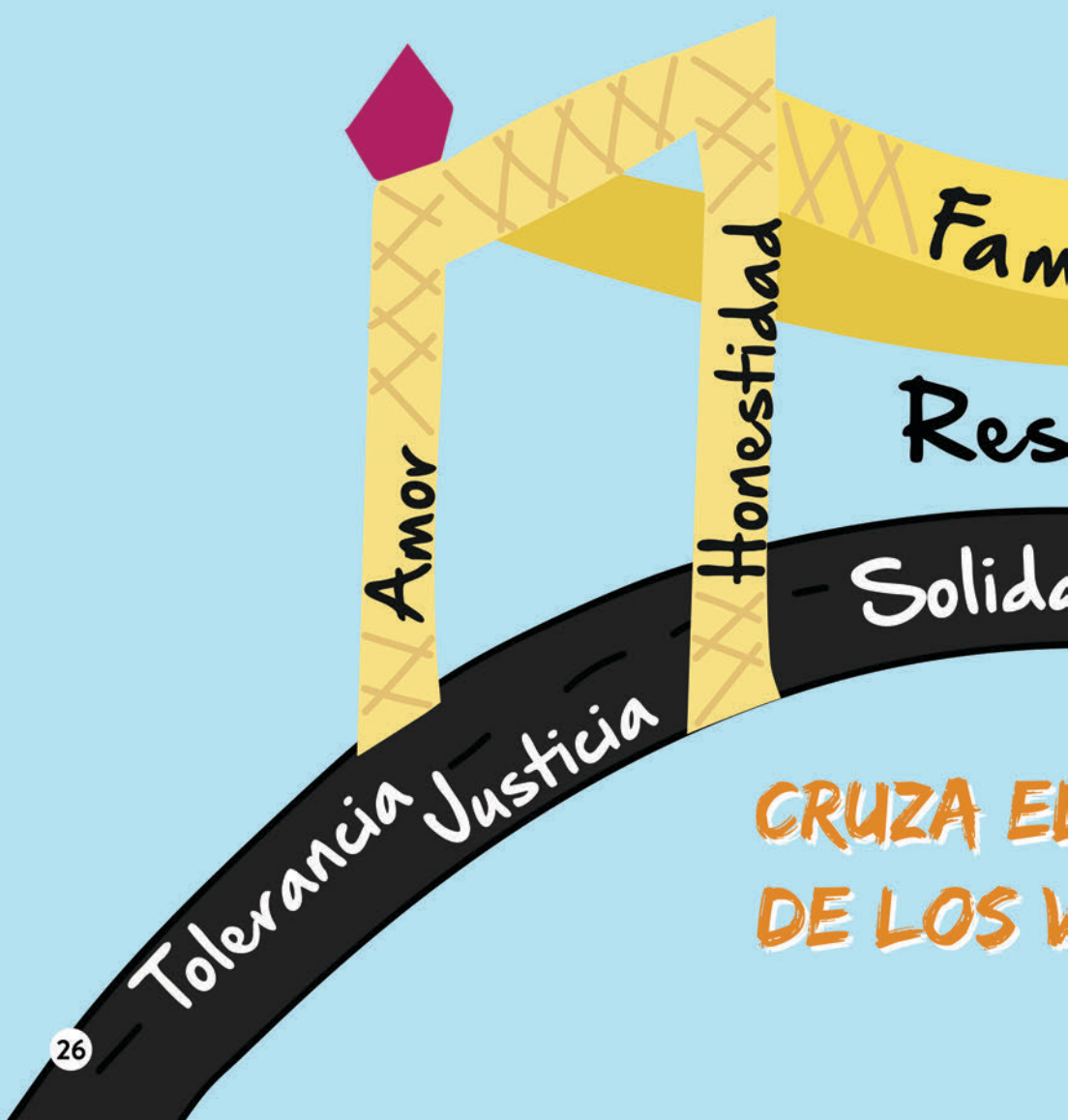
The symbol behind this image is that nobody knows what's going on internally.

- Gabriela Nuñez

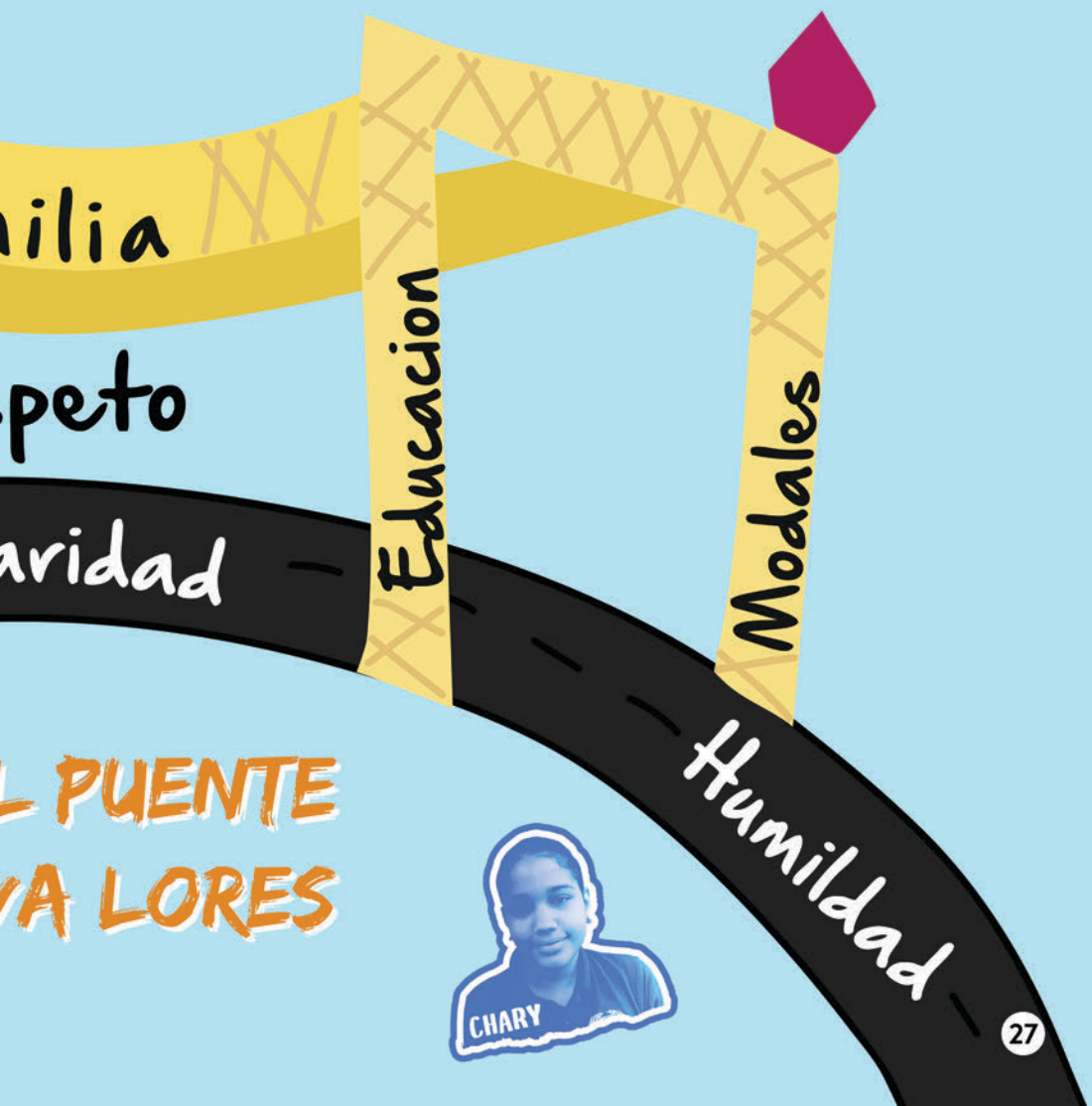




# CONTRA LA



# VIOLENCIA



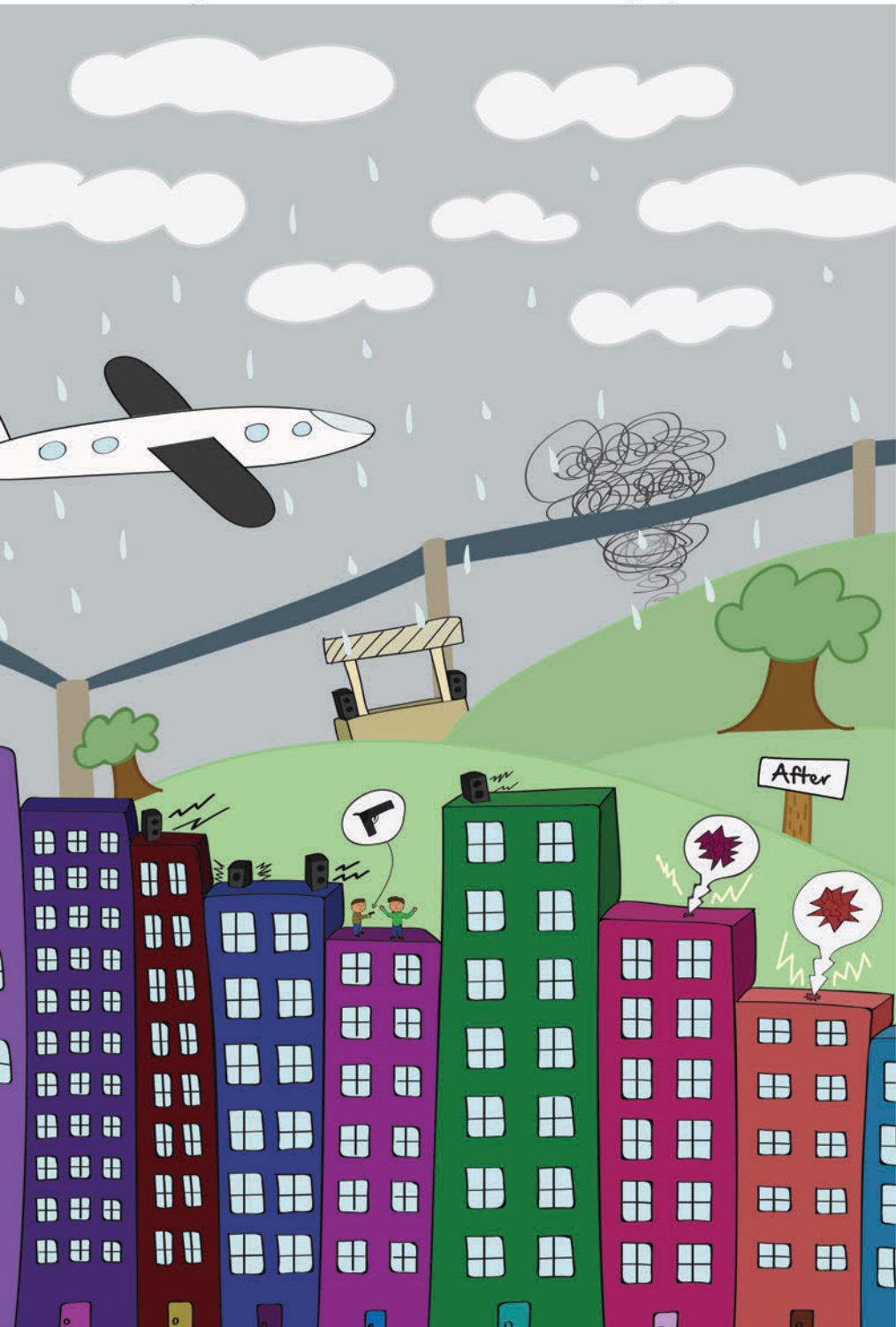
and more attention was paid to us and to the teacher.

Before, this class was great because there were less students





Suddenly, more students arrived and things got chaotic.



The new kids acted out to get attention and I escaped into myself.



"La vida tiene dos lados: Un lado de tristeza y un lado de Feleicidad."

Life has two sides: A side of sadness and a side of happiness.





Everyday I think of how the world  
would be if there were no guns..

Cada día pienso como sería el mundo  
si no hubiese armas.





# CONTRIBUTORS



**Yerico, 12**

**Hobby:** Soccer

**Sign:** Scorpio

**Hidden Talent:** Singing



**Luz, 11**

**Hobby:** Soccer

**Sign:** Sagittarius

**Hidden Talent:** Singing



**Maurilio, 13**

**Hobby:** Gaming

**Sign:** Pisces

**Hidden Talent:** Illustrating



**Belinda, 14**

**Hobby:** Art & Music

**Sign:** Aries

**Hidden Talent:** Singing & Dancing

**Amaris, 11**

**Hobby:** Volleyball, Karate, Basketball

**Sign:** Sagittarius

**Hidden Talent:** Drawing



**Elijah, 13**

**Hobby:** Basketball

**Sign:** Aquarius

**Hidden Talent:** Rapping



**Jossy**

**Hobby:** Art

**Sign:** Taurus

**Hidden Talent:** Dancing & Cooking



**Edwin, 12**

**Hobby:** Playing Video Games

**Sign:** Virgo

**Hidden Talent:** Singing







**Chary, 11**

**Hobby:** Listening to music

**Sign:** Libra

**Hidden Talent:** Dancing



**Santiago, 11**

**Hobby:** Video games and soccer

**Sign:** Gemini

**Hidden Talent:** Cinematography



**Alexa, 12**

**Hobby:** Photography

**Sign:** Taurus

**Hidden Talent:** Drawing



**Yerelyn, 12**

**Hobby:** Baseball, Basketball, and Soccer

**Sign:** Capricorn

**Hidden Talent:** Science enthusiast



**Gabriela, 11**

**Hobby:** Jewelry Making

**Sign:** Virgo

**Hidden Talent:** Singing



**Mariela, 11**

**Hobby:** Listening to music, Jewelry making

**Sign:** Scorpio

**Hidden Talent:** Clothing design



**Lia, 11**

**Hobby:** Dancing

**Sign:** Taurus

**Hidden Talent:** Volleyball



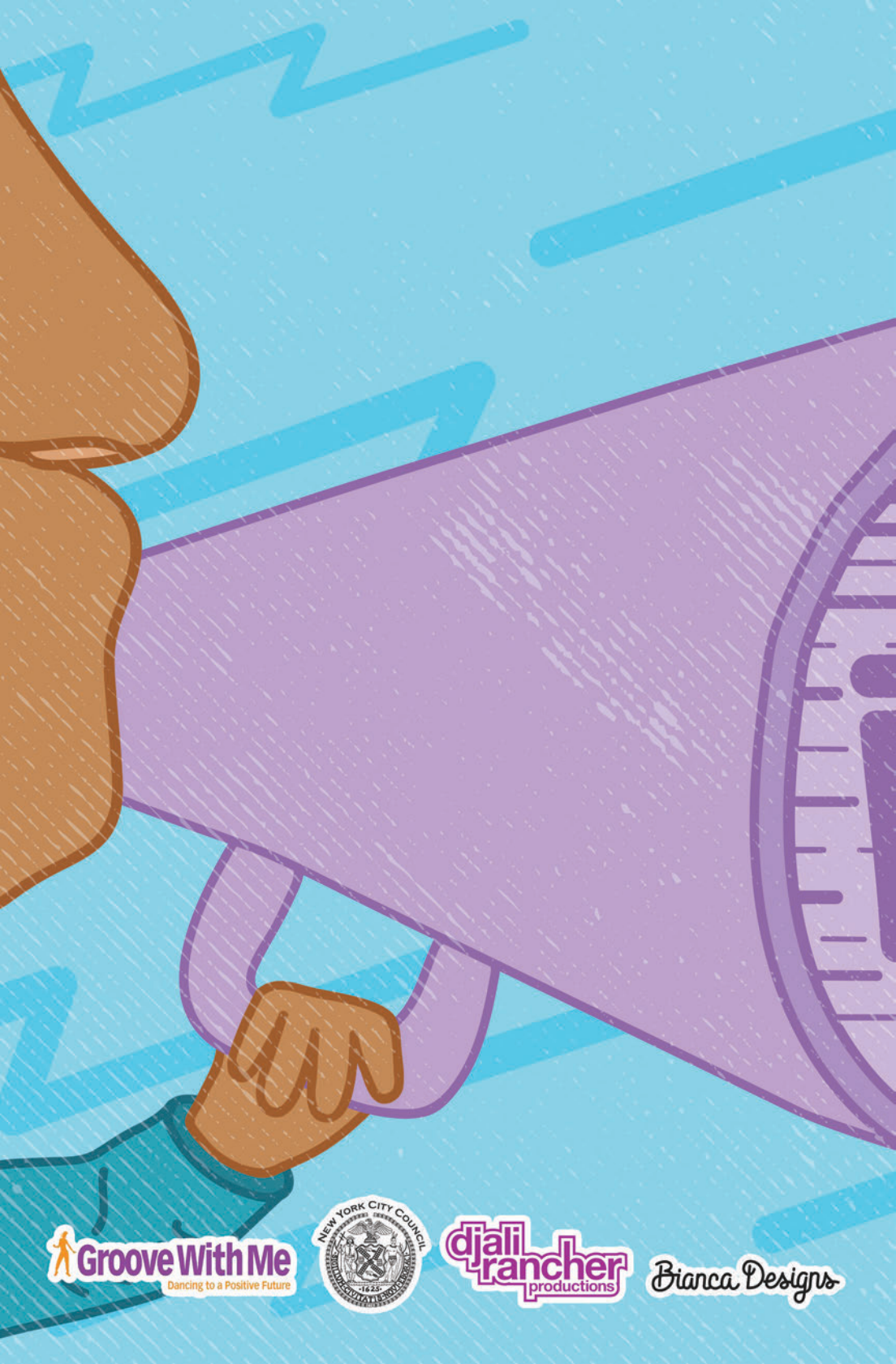
**Arely, 12**

**Hobby:** Listening to Music

**Sign:** Taurus

**Hidden Talent:** Playing piano and guitar





Bianca Designs