



**THE UNSPOKEN WORD COLLECTION:
Disgusting Is My Middle Name**

Performance Project by Amanda Santiago

*Submitted to the Board of Theatre & Performance
Conservatory of Theatre Arts
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
for the Degree of Bachelor Arts*

*Purchase College
State University of New York
May 2021*

*First Reader: Lenora Champagne
Second Reader: Andrea Thome*

Table of Contents

Artistic Aims.....2

Technical Essay.....8

Removing the Veil: Healing after Assault.....17

National Sexual Assault Hotline.....26

Actor’s Portfolio.....28

Disgusting Is My Middle Name.....37

The Unspoken Word Collection: Disgusting Is My Middle Name

ARTISTIC AIMS

By: Amanda Santiago

Senior Project Advisor: Lenora Champagne

Senior Project: Artistic Aims

The Unspoken Word Collection: Disgusting Is My Middle Name

Disgusting Is My Middle Name is a one woman show/solo performance about the unraveling of a woman's healing process after she has been sexually assaulted. The catastrophic event takes place before the audience enters the room; they must piece the puzzle together throughout the show to decipher this "unspoken" tragedy of hers. It is an ode to women who must regain their sense of Identity through constant trial and error, in hopes that they find the courage to honor their evolving selves. *Disgusting* is a guidebook to develop compassion, bravery and metamorphosis after the extreme neglect and betrayal that has been committed to her body and brain. This remains a one-sided perspective of an infinite dice, and I encourage survivors to receive what they need from *Disgusting Is My Middle Name* to keep in their back pockets for as long as they need to. Regarding the potential of healing and the circumstances of trauma, my deepest intention is to provide a space that exposes the wound in the hope it will give closure to the uncomfortable.

The show dips into the form of Surrealism/Theatre of the Absurd, giving a "fever-dream" element to the character's process. The entire story reflects on Alina's struggle and willingness to fight internal monsters. To invoke the magical atmosphere of this subconscious production piece, colorful lighting, eerie music/sound, graphic designed montages of shadows/demons are used with a bizarrely obscure set design of a bedroom to create this world of simplistic lucidness. The loads of clothing throughout the show symbolize Alina's progress, since we undergo a healing process that is not exactly linear. The clothing is manifested in particular scenes to describe the chaos she feels inside, while in other scenes she remains more clear-headed. These subtleties

describe the waves of *Disgusting*, and keep a momentum occurring until we reach Alina's climatic epiphany.

Throughout the play, several artistic mediums attached to this solo performance are outlets to summon clarity, comfort and imagination for the viewer: spoken word poetry, movement/dance, burlesque, monologues, etc. Inside the mind of Alina, as well as the mind of the healing survivor, there is plenty of space for contradictory substances and themes that may coexist, such as juxtapositions of logic and emotion, chaos and order, freedom and imprisonment, peace and war. Themes include closure, forgiveness, self-love, shadow-healing, sexual-healing, sexual assault/harassment. The intent of these factors is to bring a sense of psychological progress, since there is never a specific moment in the play where things feel steady. Alina is shifting, moving, relearning, releasing, all for the simple matter of grasping her new sense of self back. My objective as an actor and playwright of this piece is to translate the emotions Alina feels, and transfer them into the audience, in the hope that this raises awareness of the turmoil that must be acknowledged. It all comes down to one question: Does your hope in healing outweigh the heaviness of your trauma?

What am I made up of?
 My liberation is just a synonym of all the chaos that occurs within & in —
 I am not whole,
 I am singing sins,
 Of a collective of abused women.

Naked - Disgusting Is My Middle Name

A goal that is connected to my artistry is to create a genre for all healing artists to rely on during times of creating struggling, transformative, metaphysical artwork. Powerartist™ is a term I've created in the hope of clustering these peculiar creatives. Throughout my own artistic journey, I've discovered that most of the proudest work I've developed since childhood has

initially come from broken and unhealed places in my soul. I was guided to pay attention to the parts of myself that were still hurting and lacked attention, allowing me to realize that most of my untapped power is buried under that disgust, shame and pain. Through these empowering revivals, I was able to connect with a higher development of my soul mission and purpose. Now, I am certain that the term Powerartist™ is a necessity for artists like me in the world.

POWERARTIST™: (noun)

- *A person who identifies as an artist and uses their talents and abilities to heal the collective.*
- *The Powerartist's work should focus on the lesson/healing process instead of the triggering event (can involve the trigger, but it is not solely focused on it.)*
- *Inspire the audience instead of intimidating or influencing negatively.*
- *Creates art that promotes self-growth.*

Through the great tribulations women all around the world face after overcoming sexual assault, they are forming and reshaping themselves to develop sturdier foundations; ones that nurture, empower, defend, protect, create and destroy systems, patterns and cycles. She is forced to create anew, and that itself is not easy. Sexual assault is a conversation that raises hairs on arms, and has been a discussion that is needed for the well-being of victims, simply for comfort, acknowledgement, safety and healing of their experiences. However, we live in a time where people refuse to speak about this because of the mass-oppression caused by men in power. Conversations are shut down, denied or rejected because they do not appease the abusers of these

committed crimes. Therefore, **art is not just a whim of craft and skill, but a valuable tool we must conquer to initiate change and revolution.**

My heart hurts when I hear stories relating to sexual assault.
 Physical pain I feel.
 Migraines that kill.
 Second-hand symptoms
 For the survivors, the post-victims.
 Working class women that are aiming for steady incomes.
 Globalized cries I can hear when I'm sleeping,
 Suffocating under, but the monsters keep breathing.
 They sneak up on you in the night,
 And they willingly take a bite...
 Now this?
 You take my body,
 What else do you want from me?

Relapse - Disgusting Is My Middle Name

Art feels most important to me when it is being developed for the greater good of humanity. As a result, this project means a great deal to me in terms of my post-Purchase goals and plans because of the interconnections between spirituality, activism, performance, research and collaboration. Through all of these themes combined, revelations can be achieved through ART in terms of psychological and spiritual phenomenon, since we are the metaphysical makers of the world. We are given permission to tap into any and all fields of the world as long as we dive head-first into our experiences. As a product of this privilege, artists today will find deeper ways of developing work that is crucial to humanity's history. The work we create today has the potential to outlive all of us, and become stepping stones for generations to come. We must "remove the veil" in order to see who each of us truly are underneath, and that begins when we start being honest with ourselves and our life story. I promise it will begin to illuminate through everything we do. Our voice, our bodies, and our minds are God-given, and I intend on

expanding my knowledge about the world and the people that live in it in order to grasp a better understanding of Life itself.

It is a great honor to be an artist in this day and age. We are the shapeshifters, the communicators, the innovators, the entrepreneurs, the historians, the futurists. We have the ability to bring long lasting issues from the past into the present and terminate them for good. We are *Universal Creators and Destroyers*. It is a pleasure to call ourselves artists, but with this privilege we must take responsibility. This means to become the voice for the voiceless, to look after the underdogs, and to execute projects that promote change for people all around the world. These projects must include mental health advocacy, sexual assault prevention, and immigration protection for women, children and families of color across the globe. At this time of the revolution, it is violent to remain silent. And so, we must ask ourselves over and over again: Why are we artists? The answer may change repetitively over time, and that is perfectly fine as long as we start today.

Personal Note from Amanda Santiago: *Disgusting Is My Middle Name* may not be a piece that is immediately understood. I have come to terms that I am an extremely complex human being and artist. As a result I ask *you*: the audience, the viewer, the critic, the student, the teacher: Please continue to study my work. Devour it, chew it up, spit it out, analyze it, dissect it, nurture it, learn from it, teach it. My art is not for the superficial. It will make you do the work. And so, if you find yourself at a roadblock, please keep going.



Disgusting Is My Middle Name

The Unspoken Word Collection

By: Amanda Santiago

Senior Project Advisor: Lenora Champagne

Senior Project: Technical Essay

Technical Essay

The Unspoken Word Collection: Disgusting Is My Middle Name

“An artist is someone who isn’t put off by how terrible his first tries are, who finds himself talking back and notices that he changes and grows when he makes art.”

-Mark Vonnegut, M.D.

What I have learned about my process as an artist is that creating art is the result of marvelous serendipity. Every scrap torn from a notebook, every utterance of a song I’ve randomly sung, and every idea from which has been sparked by my internalized lightbulb has all been for a reason—or rather, a series of reasons that lead to incredible breakthroughs. The written creation of *Disgusting Is My Middle Name* was a process that occurred over the course of two years. The first sight of its development was in the summer of 2019 at the Shantigar non-profit organization in Rowe, Massachusetts. At this nature retreat that lasted ten days with my fellow LaGuardia Community College peers, I was led to resurface all of these obscure, hidden emotions that I’d never acknowledged before, which left me feeling scared, shameful, and disempowered. Leaning towards art and expression was the only possible way I could articulate the depth of my spiritual encounter. I suppose it was an epiphany that sparked this journey, or an awakening, or a trigger or an abrupt cognizance. You may put it into the words you understand.

Out of this so-called initial spark came the spoken-word poem *Naked*. This particular work illuminates the intuitive connection I have with a Collective of women from around the world; women I have never met, but feel so intensely. It is almost like I have been forced to understand the haunting residue that has always lingered in my mental and emotional brain, by finally acknowledging that it isn’t only my own. To hear these women so clearly, along with their injustices, their dreams, their traumas, their laughs and their cries, has become imprinted in my

soul and through the art that I create. It is so deeply ingrained and easily accessed in my consciousness, I can no longer deny it. *Naked* was created through this immediate unlocking of my suppressed intuition, and I was left with this written work to take with me. Over the course of the rest of that year, I made the decision to perform *Naked* in several performative outings, such as the Bowery Poetry Club and the Nuyorican Poets Café, where I received feedback, criticism and recognition for this work. It was about time I began to branch out my writing through mediums such as the performing arts in search of something much larger than myself. This was the moment a potential, artistic seed was planted into my psyche.

Given the opportunity to develop a production from scratch is not a chance an artist is offered every day of their careers. Approaching my senior year before receiving my Bachelor's Degree, I was told to allow my artist's heart to reach for the stars, and pull down a dream I'd like to bring into fruition. With my knowledge from the previous summer before attending SUNY Purchase, I knew this dream required me to put all my abilities to the challenge. "I'd like to do a one-human show," I told my peers. As soon as that announcement was made, I could feel my Universe aligning the necessary tools and resources for me. I began to feel this metamorphosis growing within me, as it began to make me realize that I'd be playing more roles than just the actor. I'd be a playwright, a self-induced counselor, a motivator, a healer, a teacher, a conductor, a creator, and so many more overlapping embodiments. I intuitively knew I was going to have to die, and come back to life, for this to happen.

My agreement to collaborate with my co-creator Abel Santiago maintained its passionate and consistent flow as our project unfolded. We verbalized each of our visions as to what it is we wanted to create, we compared and contrasted our individual works, and answered the important questions, "Why is this piece essential to the artistic communities in educational institutions?"

What divides this piece from other works we've seen in the past? What can we develop that transcends our creative potentials?" We were led to come up with the title, *The Unspoken Word Collection*, which would consist of a series of spoken-word poems, monologues, music, and *personal* topics that are rarely ever discussed out loud in these college settings, let alone the



entire world. These intimate topics are ingrained into the lives of many individuals of colour in America, but are limited to the dialogues in order to protect those who implement these harms. These conversations include sexual assault, sexual harassment, police

brutality, gang violence, the public school system, and all of its complexities and psychological impacts, whether it be the internalized traumas they've endured, their survival complex, or their mental health and illnesses. Soon later, an addition to the Collective was introduced, Veronica Ryzio, who offered insight on immigration policies, the intricacies of the DACA recipient, and the discrimination that occurs for immigrants in America, providing a third illumination to what officially became *The Unspoken Word Collection*.

Before play comes hard work, and that is exactly how the making of this project officially took off. Faculty meetings, production meetings, scoutings for graphic designers and potential stage managers, scheduling, finding a filming company—the chaos was beginning to settle in as we scrambled for extra hands. I was lucky enough to stumble across a student who has worked as a stage manager for several productions in SUNY Purchase, Oliver Copeland, and immediately

sent him an email asking if he'd like to have a one-on-one chat about potentially managing our project. He responded very enthusiastically, and we communicated over the phone for an hour about the excitement that would take off in Spring 2021. Copeland gave me his word, and in return, he managed scheduling, rehearsals, meetings and overall communication between the three shows that were part of *TUWC*, as well as reaching out to faculty members such as Jack Tamburri, Peter Sprague, and any other members who were concerned about our project. It was an extreme pleasure to have Copeland on board with us, because of his nonstop dedication to carry us with his full support as we developed the vision for our project.

Initially, *TUSW* attempted to find a production team that was located on SUNY Purchase campus grounds. Being a transfer student, I did not have much knowledge of the students who were associated with the Film and Media major. Word-of-mouth did not feel it would get me very far since our deadline was approaching to get our project on its feet, and it is against my nature to leave it entirely up to someone else to search for a huge component that would contribute to *TUWC*. I began to take matters into my hands, and do a "witch-hunt" for a filming production team in my own, unique way. I looked outside of our campus, searching through friends of friends and acquaintances of acquaintances. Luckily, I came across alumni of my previous school, LaGuardia Community College, who have conducted their own production team on their own terms. *The Unheard Voices Production* is a Brooklyn-based film/theatre company run by former CUNY students. Their mission is to shed light on the voices that are unheard through multimedia content of all different genres, whilst simultaneously becoming the hub where these voices speak their mind. It seemed only right to have them on board with us. I reached out to the production team with each cast member's headshot and description of their individual shows, providing them with more than enough information to decide whether they'd

want to sign onto our project or not. Without hesitation, they said yes, and the journey began as *The Unspoken Word Collection* and *The Unheard Voices Production* started their collaboration.

From the start of this process, my most daring aspiration was to develop a piece of artwork that would articulate the internal struggle between healing and relapsing after the event of sexual assault has occurred. This is not a delicate issue, and I knew intuitively that my work will not be fully understood by every human that comes across it. I am aware that myself and my work are extremely complicated. With that being said, complex works are Milan Castro's preference. I deeply admired her tenacity and courage to uplift the veil, in search of the answers that my mind and self could not find while creating this piece of work. On the development of

Disgusting Is My Middle Name, Milan tended to my blindspots. She asked, answered, and made up every gap that I felt was missing. I realize now, in order for a great production to occur, the actor and the director must have an electric chemistry between them. The



creative process was intensifying, and led to many discussions about how the world works for women; all sorts of women, Brown and Black women, Trans women, Queer women, Immigrant women, women who were forced to grow up too quickly, women without fathers and mothers, women with abusive fathers and mothers, women who constantly changed identity, women who were bullied, women were home-schooled, women who never went to school. Even white women, and how the world responds to the privilege they've endured since their birth, while simultaneously experiencing degradation behind closed doors. These conversations escalated too

severely at times, and Milan provided the space and safety for me to express (or not express) these spiraling emotions. At times, rehearsals felt like pouring salt into my wound. We cried a lot, both her and I, though, I mostly was the one in tears. Giving any more detail about our process feels borderline invasive, since it was a sacred process we were involved in together.

Our initial intentions for *The Unspoken Word Collection* were to have a common rhythm that corresponded between three shows. While each show had its own topic and format, the three playwrights searched for commonalities to incorporate into the editing portion of our process.



Title cards were essential for differentiating the levels of the characters and scenes. *Disgusting's* rhythm consisted of two climaxes; the sexual assault event itself that takes place prior to the start of the film, and the scene 'Relapse', where the resurface of the wound comes alive

again. The remainder of the scenes are steady heartbeats that are interwoven together, creating a dance of healing about the tragic episode that occurred in Alina's life. *Relapse* was the last scene we filmed, though, initially we wanted to wrap on *Dear Body* for a clean closing. *Relapse* required less than half of a bottle of fake blood and a limited film-take to conserve the energy of the actor and her voice. Prior to action, the production team, director, stage manager and myself sat in silence in the dark. I took deep breaths, since I knew the start of the scene required a loud scream of agony. Camera rolling, the director calls action, and we launch into it. I would say this was the most memorable part of the process, not only because of the brutal vulnerability I freed

into the room, but the heavy release I've had since the start of this journey. I am reminded that being an artist comes with the discomfort, pain, the grotesque, delusion. Creating art may be accessible for everyone, but it takes courage to develop works that are truthful. I notice that I am not superficial, I am not a fake, and I seek to be acknowledged for the heaviness of my work since I repetitively pour the entirety of myself into it. I cannot create unless it comes from my core, and the development of *Disgusting* has really allowed me to come to terms with this truth.

At the end of *Relapse*, once the cameras finished rolling, we all took a breather. My director checked up on my well-being, and I was left sobbing on the mattress in the center of the theatre. She threw her hands on top of me and cried with me. The production team left the room



and headed into the control room as a gesture of respect. We cried, and thanked each other, and cried some more, and expressed gratitude again. Milan and I knew that the wrapping of *Disgusting* meant that we accomplished something huge. It meant that this work transcended the

means of politics and social issues in art, and that is something to cry and celebrate for. Sexual assault is not the only conversation that is offered in this story. We currently live in a system that sympathizes with the lives of abusers over the well-being of the victims. Everyday women are tackled, scrutinized and degraded for the actions of men in power, who need to feel superior, whether in their tall buildings or small households. It is a discussion that goes beyond four walls, but much rather lives in the gaps of cracks on sidewalks. Sexual abuse is a repulsive

phenomenon that lifts the bounds of ego, destruction, degradation, dominance, and superiority in man. We must ask ourselves why this occurs, and what leads these individuals to commit these heinous crimes in the first place. This is an internalized issue that manifests unjustly, and we must take action in order to dissipate the repugnant pattern of abuse that is occurring in our world today.

Creating *Disgusting Is My Middle Name* is my personal way of taking one step forward to liberation. The production was released on Sexual Assault Prevention Month as a means to spread this awareness. The process required many genuine, kind, patient individual artists who aspired to ignite these unspoken topics. I express my deepest gratitude to my collaborators; Milan Castro, Oliver Copeland, Aldo Ortiz, Una Bharat, Abel Santiago and Veronica Ryzio for their nonstop love and support. I am grateful to have completed the technicalities of my senior project, and have tackled any obstacle of discouragement that landed in my way. I aspire to develop more beautiful, original artwork in the future, with the added experience of my self-written one human show in my back pocket to bring along with me.



Removing The Veil: Healing after Assault



The Unspoken Word Collection: Disgusting Is My Middle Name

By: Amanda Santiago

Senior Project Advisor: Lenora Champagne

Senior Project: Research Paper

The Unspoken Word Collection: Disgusting Is My Middle Name

Removing The Veil: Healing after Assault

When an injustice against a woman's sexuality, consent, and physical safety takes place, it is not the event itself that causes the most harm to a woman, but the internal damage that occurs afterwards. Recollecting the broken and lingering pieces that have been robbed from *Her* is the most difficult part. Through strong will-power and transformation, we can tap into the unknown of our souls and unlock the most valuable secret that has the potential to cure the infinite abuse and pain in our world: The Power of Healing. When we stand hand-in-hand with one another to acknowledge the wounds that have been committed against us, we create a space of acknowledgment, honor, respect, inspiration and hope for the survivors. However, healing after assault has become its own personal attack on the humanity of victims. Recovery has become synonymous with tragedy, and the wounded are left to wallow in their own desperation as they look for answers and explanations of their trauma. It is our job as enlightened individuals to remove the veil and remind those that the power they are looking for is in themselves.

It is said that caterpillars do not reflect on what they are doing at their birth. They remain in the present as they carry out their steps in each moment. Their only purpose is to continue eating until they've stored enough energy needed to transform into their adult shape. During this premature process, they might even change color or camouflage to deter their predators. After all, this is an intuitive process. There is no guidebook or proper illustration for these caterpillars. They just *know* what to do. One might say caterpillars are a lot like humans, since they undergo similar transitions. We begin as babies with blurry consciousness and the need to learn how to stand up on two feet, then wind up in beautiful transformations towards adulthood. However,

along the way to our grown figures, events might occur that delay this progress. These events might even take place as adults, and the metamorphosis process begins all over again. Sometimes, this process never sees its end. Some individuals just might remain in their cocoons forever as a result of fear of the outside world. It is a tragic resolution to never see the beautiful outcome of all of your suffering.



A young girl who is taught to “camouflage” her appearance through “less-revealing” and “less-provoking” items of clothing will eventually have to come face-to-face with this absurd realization; The realization that in order for her to prevent harassment, *she* must be the one to change. Assault should not have to be an inevitable part of human nature. It is, however, part of our human nature to reach our fullest potential. It should be valued for young girls to grow into women at their own timing and pace, not because the world insists that they do so.

The psychological damage that is endured after a sexual assault is committed has the potential of destroying an individual’s way of Life. The mind, body and soul immediately malfunction due to the neglect and betrayal of the non-consensual act, leaving it up to time, commitment, safety, therapy, and internal power to reverse the catastrophe. And yes, *this is a catastrophe*. A disastrous event such as sexual assault must be taken into full and serious contemplation. Abusers should not only be prosecuted for their crimes, but should attend a life-long curriculum that raises their consciousness about the inhumane and sadistic trials they’ve perpetrated. It should be taken into account that these crimes are irreversible, therefore, the consequences of their actions should be lifelong. Simultaneously, social services and care for the victims should

be mandatory. Free counseling, therapeutic services and mental health training should be necessities for the survivors of sexual assault. This way they can feel cared for, acknowledged, and can proceed into their healing process knowing that their community wants them to succeed.

According to *Women Who Run With The Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype* by Clarissa Pinkola Estés, it is mentioned that it is remarkable if a woman has reached age twenty-five without having such a dream as this one: “The Dark Man in Women’s Dreams” (page 67) is manifested through “sweats, struggles, hoarse breathing and heart pounding.” This dream is a result of numerous psychological battles that occur within the feminine psyche. “The antagonist(s) of this “dark man” dream are usually, in women’s own words, “terrorists, rapists, thugs, concentration camp Nazis, marauders, murderers, criminals, creeps, bad men, thieves. There are several levels to the interpretation of such a dream, depending on the life circumstances and interior dramas surrounding the dreamer.”

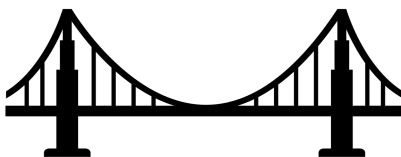


Our dream state is the intuitive connection between our conscious and subconscious worlds. It is the astral plane that promotes the potentialities of our physical realities. It allows us to grasp onto our dignities, whilst communicating to us about what needs to change. *Wolves* states, “Additionally, dark man dreams are also wake-up calls. They say: Pay attention! Something has gone radically amiss in the outer world, in personal life, or in the outer collective culture.” The bizarre manifestation of the dark figure in women’s consciousness foretells the instinctive nature to beware the masculine predator. This is all a chain-reaction of the mass-oppression that is occurring in our world. Assault and harassment have become ingrained into the female evolution, where women must fend for themselves in order to survive. The world owes it up to

the population of women by providing them the materials to recover, whilst also putting into strong consideration how to prevent these immoral acts from occurring. If this innate predator shows up beneath the surface of the woman's mind, that is more the reason to put a stop to the collective mistreatment. After all, the subconscious world is indeed the physical world in disguise.

Could it be that the cause of delay of the womanly metamorphosis is the result of the world's catastrophic state? Perhaps, the lack of attention that is given to the victims and survivors of sexual assault is merely a repercussion of Mother Nature's neglect. Humanity cannot bear to save the beloved Earthly home they live in, let alone their own mothers, sisters, grandmothers and daughters. It is a travesty to witness the evolution of the world dissipate simply because of the lack of healing and help that we could reciprocally offer one another. In *This Bridge Called My Back, Writings by Radical Women of Color* edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, the common struggle of women that occurs all over the world regardless of culture, race or age is discussed. "We do all this in concert with women across the globe pursuing the same goals: a shared and thriving existence in the world where our leaders have for the most part abandoned us and on a planet on the brink of utter abandonment." The world is in a state of desperate survival, and those in power are turning a blind eye to those in need. White, privileged, entitled, billionaire men should not determine the fate of Women of Color on this Earth. In order to dismantle the system that is set up for women to fail and rot in their own pain, we must begin translating our pain into power, whilst "men in power" must recognize the excruciating damage they are contributing to the world with abusive torment. *Bridge* mentions, (page xix) "It is not always a matter of the actual bodies in the room, but of a life dedicated to a growing awareness of who and what is *missing* in that room; and responding to that absence. *What ideas never surface*

because we imagine we already have all the answers? Patriarchy and white privilege can so seamlessly disguise ignorances that later become the Achilles heel of many progressive organizations, leading to their demise.” It is an understatement to state that the cause of the mass-assault of Women of Colour begins with white male leaders in higher positions. They are indeed responsible for the countless rapes, mental imprisonments, self-harms, murders and deaths of billions of women throughout history. The blood on their hands will never wash away.



Major contributors to the sexual assault cycle can be found within powerful occupations such as the police force. In *Invisible No More: Police Violence against Black Women and Women of Color*, written by police misconduct attorney Andrea J. Ritchie, she elaborates on the systemic issue. “Police sexual violence is the second most frequently reported form of police misconduct. A police officer is caught in an act of sexual misconduct every 5 days. Officers are rarely prosecuted, and the ones that are, are often acquitted. Once prosecuted/acquitted, the officers are just shuffled into different departments where they can continue their abusive pattern. Out of 38 of the largest police departments, only half had a policy saying that you can’t sexually assault a member of the public. Up until recently police departments didn’t have a policy explicitly instructing officers that they shouldn’t engage in certain forms of force against pregnant women.” The irrationality of abuse is often ingrained into the lives of men in power who are protected by their organizations, giving them a shield of preventative immunity from their actions. How can we expect women to heal responsibly and safely if the corporations that are meant to shelter them are corrupt? How can the cycle of abuse begin to be minimized if the

perpetrators do not have any consequential repercussions for their actions? This is the exact reason sexual assault survivors have a delayed reflection of their healing progress. In order to see who we are, we must look at our communities. If it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a village to destroy one.

In humans, as for the butterfly, a metamorphosis is part of the cycle of full development. The time that is spent within the cocoon calls for deep contemplation, meditation, preparation, transformation and finally, acceptance. The caterpillar experiences its first catharsis, as it is reborn into a magnificent, colorful, expansive winged creature. Wings were not there before, but are here now, for good. Also, similar to the leaves on trees as they change color throughout the seasons, it is their birthright to release and be reborn as they desire. Nature has become our guidelines for evolution, and we must take close and clear notes. A woman's sexuality must encompass a steady process. The individual must reach the age of puberty, continue to adapt into their newfound body and desires, and earn acceptance of oneself before anybody else's. If in any way the woman's sexuality is taken advantage of, it may lead down a tarnishing road involving mishandling or inappropriate use. Sexuality is a powerful force of manifestation, but what happens when sexuality is stolen? What does an individual do when the source of their sexual power is robbed from them? How do they reclaim that power? Where do they even begin?

Sexual abuse alters the survivor's perspective of intimacy whilst disconnecting them from their bodies. It becomes incredibly difficult to crave or enjoy physical touch because of the underlying traumatic response to it. PTSD, anxiety, depression and other diagnoses are very common for the sexual assault victim. It takes a lifelong journey of recovery and healing for this individual, where therapy and medication cannot be entirely relied on. Sexual assault is far from simple, it is a chain of events that may manifest in extremities depending on the circumstances

and character of the survivor. Our trauma is not our fault. The shame and guilt we feel is not our fault. Therefore, through translation of pain into power, we can reclaim our missing and broken pieces by acknowledging the changes that must occur inside our souls. Healing is not linear, therefore, we can begin our healing process as often as we desire.

In Sex After Sexual Assault: Survivors Share Their Stories by Zahra Barnes, there is hope of navigating the missing link of our sexualities after sexual violence has been committed to our bodies and brains. Holly Richmond, Ph.D., a certified sex therapist who has counseled survivors at the Santa Barbara Rape Crisis Center, explains more thoroughly: “The trauma happened in the past, and a new, healthy, sexual self is moving into future, but it’s all the same person—one body,



one mind.” To shed the skin we once had can reap the benefits of a renewed and powerful sexuality. As we begin to release the shame, guilt, and recollection of the trauma, we are able to move into a wider space of energetic positivity and strength.

“Many survivors realize they deserve pleasure, too, and that seeking it out is essential for healing,” Zahra writes. Liberation is around the corner, and through steady steps we can declare it. Grounding, meditation, exercise, therapy/counseling, creating art and performing hobbies that feed the soul are ways to get the motor running to our newfound selves. Survivors of assault are incredibly strong human beings, therefore, our rebirth will be legendary.

The devastating abuse of power that is sexual violence must be ended to in order to save millions of lives. To raise awareness about this entrenched issue will need all the voices in the

world, and it is our responsibility to start today. April marks Sexual Assault Prevention Month, which leads a campaign to educate those on how to prevent the cycle of abuse. Protecting ourselves begins with protecting each other, and every day must be a call to action. Healing is especially significant due to the repugnant number of abusers in our world, let alone the wounded individuals that implement pain without realization. Healing brings

Revolution

light to not only the survivors, but to the initiators of the abuse. Our world is filled with perpetrators of violence and assault, therefore, we must initiate normalcy by talking about the hardships of Life. We must stop denying how heavy our vulnerability is and embrace our divine nature that is connectivity. Using our voices and platforms to share and secure our experiences is the first step to recovery, but we must conduct safe spaces to do so. Teaching sexual assault prevention courses in public schooling may be the first step to establishing safer environments. Sexual education is another creative and informative way to feed knowledge to individuals on the importance of developing and respecting boundaries during sexual activity. Giving extreme consequential actions to people in power for their inhumane, abusive behavior will set punishable examples to the public on the atrocities of rape. Providing therapy, medication, and crucial study on the importance of healing after assault may reach medical and psychological miracles and breakthroughs for victims of violence. Sexual assault is a deadly, genocidal phenomenon that is targeted mostly towards women, children and the vulnerable. It is our job to initiate and enforce this change, so we do not continue this infinite cycle of tragedy. Revolution has begun; we must continue to strive towards freedom.

RAINN: The Nation's Largest Anti-Sexual Violence Organization

National Sexual Assault Hotline. Free. Confidential. 24/7.

Call 800.656.HOPE

Works Cited

- Barnes, Zahra. "Sex After Sexual Assault: Survivors Share Their Stories." *SELF*, 3 Aug. 2018, www.self.com/story/sex-after-sexual-assault.
- Corley, Cheryl. "NPR Cookie Consent and Choices." "*Invisible No More*" Examines Police Violence Against Minority Women, 5 Nov. 2017, choice.npr.org/index.html?origin=https://www.npr.org/2017/11/05/561931899/invisible-no-more-examines-police-violence-against-minority-women.
- Estés, Clarissa Pinkola. *Women Who Run with the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype*. Reissue, Ballantine Books, 1996.
- Moraga, Cherríe, and Gloria Anzaldúa. *This Bridge Called My Back, Fourth Edition: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. 4th ed., State University of New York Press, 2015.
- Ritchie, Andrea, and Bahni Turpin. *Invisible No More: Police Violence Against Black Women and Women of Color*. Unabridged, Dreamscape Media, 2018.

Actor's Portfolio



@Unheardvoicesproductions

Disgusting Is my Middle Name

written by Amanda Santiago

directed by Milan Castro

Produced by The Unheard Voices Productions
@Unheardvoicesproductions



Disgusting is my
Middle Name by Amanda Santiago

Alienated by Veronica Ryzio

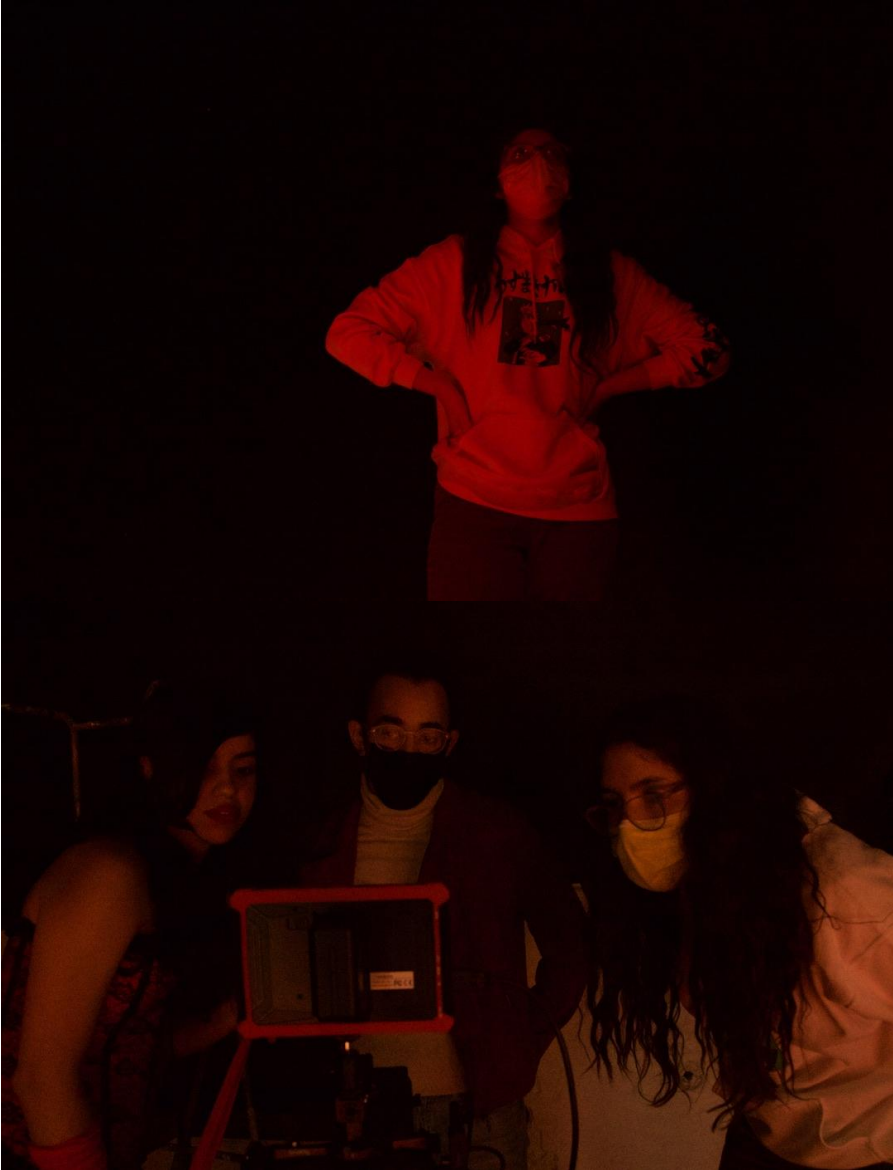
2 Pimp a Caterpillar
by Abel Santiago

Graphic Design Posters by Sergio Georghiou

*Alina lays on her bed in **The Shadow Monster***



Disgusting Is My Middle Name
Photo by Una Bharat



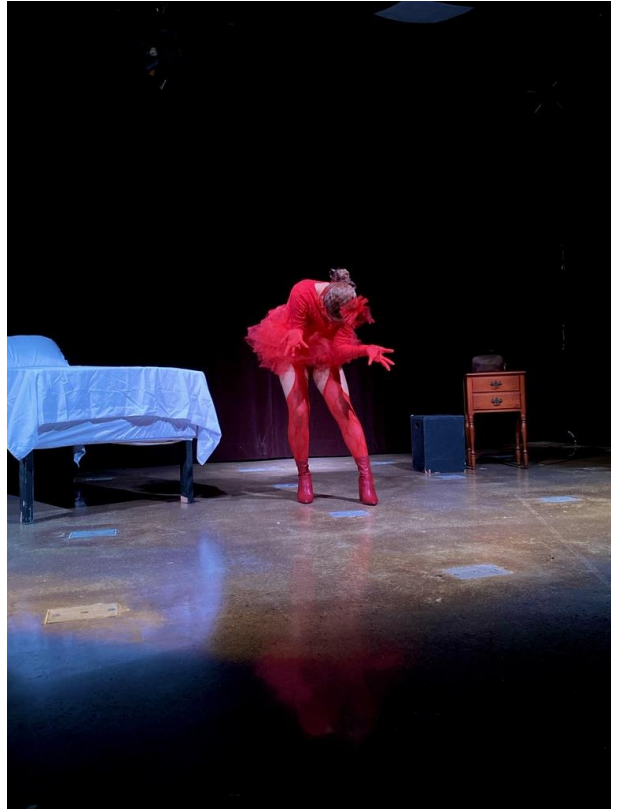
(Top) Milan in director mode.

*(Bottom) Aldo, Milan and
Amanda reviewing footage.*

Photos by Una Bharat

Alina's bed





**Shadow in *Shadow Sequence 4*
Photos by Una Bharat**



Alina in *Naked*



*Amanda/Alina getting into character for Burlesque Sequence
Photos by Una Bharat*





Alina in Relapse
Photos by Una Bharat



(From left to right) Aldo, Milan, Amanda, Una, Emily (bottom) Oliver

All posing with red roses for the wrapping of Disgusting Is My Middle Name



DISGUSTING IS MY MIDDLE NAME

Written by Amanda Santiago

EULOGY FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT

My greatest works have come from the darkest nights of the soul. These surreal moments of recognizing, extracting, forgiving and accepting have been the core root of my artistry. My ability to “go there” has pushed me forward in both my healing process and career in the arts. I’ve come to realize that



the works I’ve resonated most deeply with are the pieces that have made me highly uncomfortable and disturbed, leading me to acknowledge hidden potential spiraling inside of me. Writing and performance has been the cure to understanding the inner-being that longs to thrive inside of me. She patiently waits until her turn to unleash her beast, and when the time comes, all chaos shall turn into order while I stand and watch her from the sidelines. I vow to create work that commits this healthy phenomena for the human who suppresses until the right time appears.

***Disgusting Is My Middle Name** is an ode to all of the women who have undergone the terrible event that is sexual assault, and could not articulate, comprehend and/or understand the affect this has on the emotional brain. I hope you find yourself in my work, and when you do, to point and yell with pure excitement: YES. We form sturdier foundations by acknowledging our demons that prance within us, instead of digging deeper holes in our hearts for them. To differentiate ourselves from the event, the abuser, and the self is to draw healthy boundaries toward caring for thyself instead of building cold, cement walls that do not let any sun radiate within. As survivors, we need the warmth to remind us of what eternal life truly is. I ask you, when you are ready, to consider removing the bandage and allow the wound to breathe. Illuminating our monsters only turns on the light in the dark room that is our subconscious. With the help of our Gods, Angels, Higher Forces, Inner-Child, Inner-Elder and Ancestors, we empower our psyche to prosper by living out their cries and greatest desires — To be free with no strings attached, to transform pain into power, and to outlive what it means to be human.*

I believe it is my responsibility as an artist to contribute to the Collective in ways that offer acknowledgment and healing. Finding ourselves in life’s greatest offers, such as art and love, gives us the momentum to grow and improve. It is our birthright to surpass our hardships with gratitude, instead of living in absolute suffering. Life will offer you many deaths, and when you learn to ignite them, there is a promise your rebirth will be legendary.

— Amanda Santiago

“I hope you will go out and let stories, that is life, happen to you, and that you will work with these stories... water them with your blood and tears and your laughter till they bloom, till you yourself burst into bloom.”

— Clarissa Pinkola Estés, Women Who Run With the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype

Characters

ALINA - Woman. Innocence. Purity. Curious. Triggered. Dissociative. Manic. Alive. Piecing the puzzle together.

SHADOW - Comes to haunt/help Alina. Hovers over her like a cloud or an imaginary friend. Usually reveals itself throughout the most ironic and synchronous moments in the play. Wears a mask that covers the entire face. *Note: Actor that plays ALINA can also play SHADOW.*

SIN - The embodiment of disadvantage. The crossing of physical and emotional boundaries. It is the event of trauma. The immoral act against God's wishes.

Time

Between reality and daydreams, between healing and relapse, of any point in life.

Place

A bedroom. A trance. A bar. A brain.

.....

“When an injustice against a woman’s sexuality, consent, and physical safety takes place, it is not the event itself that causes the most harm to a woman, but the internal damage that occurs afterwards. Recollecting the broken and lingering pieces that have been robbed from Her is the most difficult part.”

PROLOGUE | THE NIGHTMARE: *Audience enters the theatre. Eerie music is playing. Projections of shadows are on the walls of the stage. We are in a dream, or perhaps, a nightmare. The set consists of a low brass bed with a pile of blankets, pillows, and clothing on it. Some of it is also on the floor. A very messy bedroom. There is a night-light in the corner. ALINA is under the blankets, you can see subtle movements as if she is trying to wake up, but can't. Once the audience is seated and the show begins, a beam of red light takes over the stage. Eerie music intensifies. Shadows begin to pick up pace. Suddenly, the red light disappears and music stops. Spotlight on ALINA, she wakes up gasping for air.*

THE SHADOW MONSTER

ALINA is finally awake. It is the middle of the night. She recollects her nightmare, feeling and grasping onto reality. She is shaking, still paralyzed from this recurring dream.

ALINA: You ever had a nightmare that feels so real, so obscene, you feel your arms and legs dissipating between?

I have this dream, it happens at least once a week,

And I think it's trying to tell me something.

In this dream, there's this creature, and he calls on me in the night.

He tells me we have some unfinished business to recite.

I tell him NO, and I run the other way,

But then he grabs me by my ankles by the time I wake.

Alina begins to stand up on her bed.

He is,

Twice my size

I stare into its eyes

I growl, it growls back

I attempt to attack

It grabs my arm

It startles my harm --

I ain't afraid! No, I ain't afraid!

I love myself so I'm the one to blame --

For what had happened,

Its arms on me

Its teeth on me

Its knees pinning me down

Its weight keeping my breathing slow and steady till I suffocate

And scream into tears till I die.

Not I! Not I! Not I! Not I!

The women have always warned me

They say it sneaks up into the night.
 It climbs onto your breasts
 And eats your heart out.
 It eats your heart out.
 It eats your heart out!
 Till you're dead!
 Dead I said!
 Yes, dead I said!
 Till you're dead!
 But forget what I said.
 The shadow monster is my bestest friend.

ALINA dramatically falls back onto her bed and falls into a deep slumber. Lights go up, it is morning. She is finally awake and begins to fold the blankets on her bed neatly and onto a pile. As she prepares for the day, she recollects her rough night.

ALINA: My life is a constant dream of nostalgia.
 Seriously,
 My favorite button to press is rewind.
 I'm almost always living things twice,
 Or feeling things twice,
 Or making the same mistake two or three times.
 At this point, it should be a crime
 To live a life of reminisce.
 These grey areas consume my life like waste
 And then I wonder why I'm left in a puddle of my own feelings.
 Seriously, can someone tell me why do the people who deserve the most pain
 Smile harder than those who have trouble breathing?
 I relive a life of painful repetitive replays,
 It's a system I can't seem to figure out.
 At this point, what past-life karma am I reliving?
 And can someone explain why I can't seem to get out?

ALINA walks center-stage. There is a slight change in atmosphere, in preparation for the next scene.

ALINA: There's this... person... and he did something... very, very bad. And he's just... living his life! And I'm just... not living my life. I just can't seem to figure it out, and I feel very unsure about it. Because, why is he okay, and I'm not? Is it because I didn't put up a fight? Do you think maybe you could help me relive the night?

Lights change into a silent, fluorescent setting as she walks. An obscure point between space and time. Cold, quiet, it is winter. She is on the phone at the start of the scene.

EIGHTEEN.

ALINA: I was eighteen.

Calling you in the freezing cold,

Hoping you'd pick up just to take me home.

I remember thinking,

This is what love is...

Waiting,

Waiting for someone to pick up my call.

Instead of my place, we went to yours. You never had the place to yourself, but this time, it was different. On the counter, sleepy pills. Ambien. Temazepam. Or was it your quick and easy deli-run NyQuil? You always go to sleep at the crack of dawn, so my question is, why'd you decide to take a pill tonight? Are you feeling okay? I recognize that look on your face, you're upset. You're upset with me. You're always upset with me. Your eyes get so dark sometimes. You feel so heavy when you're not even touching me. You feel so heavy, like, like I can't say no.

Echoes on the word no fill the stage for a long moment. Eerie, haunting music comes on. Alina changes into SHADOW/SHADOW appears from the darkness.

NO.

NO.

NO.

SHADOW appears. It is crawling, moving, dancing. It takes up the space of the stage. Perhaps it is trying to serenade you or warn you. It crawls off the stage when music ends.

Sitting down on a chair center-stage. We are at a bar. SIN is at the countertop at his local bar. He has a drink in his right hand and a cigarette in his left. He has been here for a while. Is this his fourth drink, maybe fifth? Who knows.

YOU KNOW SHE LIKES IT...

SIN: What is she feeling? Is she feeling... insecure? Possibly she's never had a boyfriend before. Oh, you know how the ladies are-- they like that sort of thing. To be felt up after a few shots of tequila under the shimmering lights of the Heineken sign at the local bar's hallway. You know she likes it. When she's pushing you away to tease ya, makin' it harder for you to please ha, it's all part of their silly little game. Now, she ain't stupid and neither are you, and together the world has brought us here to be a union-- in the local bar's hallway, of course. She was actin' all flirty back there, wasn't she? I mean, c'mon, the girl's got fishnets on. FISHNETS. No girl just wears

fishnets on a Saturday night. That was a precise and delicate decision she made before walkin' in here tonight. Now that ain't a coincidence. I mean, c'mon, it was super intentional, right? You know she wants it, right?

SIN gets up from his seat. He approaches you, so you get a deeper understanding of where he is coming from. He trips as he walks closer.

SIN: And the way she rolls her eyes... yeah, she's a tease, ain't she? She gets me so hard when she hates me. And I try to talk to her for a little while, like maybe she's some kind of a mystery, and you know me, I've been up for the challenge lately, but then she says, "you're disgusting", so I say, that's my middle name, baby! (*beat*) But, I don't take her seriously when she acts like that. She knows I don't like that. You know I don't like it when you push me away. You do something to me that I can't explain. And if you don't want to see me switch, I suggest you play the game. You better quit playin' before you drive me insane!

Hey, where are you going?
No, you can't get away!

Suddenly, SIN begins to choke on its words. It is manifested through actual choking. It cannot breathe and its face is turning bright red. The very last second before it passes out, SIN gasps and falls to its knees.

ALINA, writing, on an invisible board in front of her. She is journaling, or possibly writing an open letter. Movements of the hands can be placed more theatrically as she continues her note.

THINGS JUST HAPPEN.

ALINA: Sometimes things occur to us,
They happen.
They affect.
They inject.
They just do.
And we can't do anything about it.
We can't stop it from happening.
We couldn't have prevented it from happening
Because it is in our moral code
Or written in our spiritual contract before we are born.
Before our bodies are attached to souls,
We read the fine print,
We choose the flesh we want to live in,
And God sends us off.

Now what is the most unjust part of this
Is that during our stay on Earth
Things happen.
Things. Happen.
They happen.
In dark alleys,
In night clubs,
In taxi cabs and Ubers and Lyfts,
In the bedroom,
From an ex boyfriend or a family member or a stranger,
They happen.
And no matter how much we scream
Or shout
Or say no
Or say nothing at all,
It still happens.
And what is unjust about this is-
We are forced to carry it in our back pocket
So every time we sit
We feel it pinching our spines.
And every time we try to make love
We are reminded of that one time.
(beat) Now what is unjust is God decided this was my burden to bear
And I can go through the necessary guidelines to make sure it doesn't happen again
But what is unfair
What is annoying
What is cruel
And disgusting
Is that the act of giving someone your power
Is sometimes involuntary
So no matter how long we try to manage it
And say we have self-control
That we wouldn't allow a dark force to over take us
To consume us
To trick us
To manipulate us
If God
And Mother Nature
And the Angels
And the Ancestors

And the Universe are all on the same page
 They will make the decision for you
 To have your power taken away for a moment
 To have your control slipped for a microsecond
 So you can live in constant wonder
 On why you let yourself do that.

An immediate blackout that lasts quite a while. Silence.

RELAPSE

Stage is pitch black. ALINA screaming excruciatingly, then crying. A heavenly, purgatorial light slowly fades onto ALINA from above. She is on the floor, holding herself, rocking back and forth like a baby who needs to be cuddled. There is blood on her hands, though she doesn't know where it came from. She is talking to the Gods above, or herself. The sound of a beating heart monitor can be played faintly in the background.

ALINA: It's gone! It's gone! It was stolen. My soul. It was taken from me. No, I didn't misplace it. They took it from me! They took it from *ME!* (*beat*) There's blood on my hands. Why is there blood on my hands? (*ALINA points upwards*) This is your doing, not me! Then why is there blood on my hands? Have I died? Is this what heaven is like? (*beat*) Am I in hell? Tell me, have I died and gone to hell? (*beat*) I'm alive? I'm alive more than ever? Why do I feel so much pain? (*touching her chest*) Here, I feel so much pain here. It feels like someone has stabbed me in the chest and now they're twisting the knife. (*touching her pelvis*) It feels like the second day of my period. (*holding her entire torso*) It feels like volcanic acid erupting through my ventricles. It feels like I've been taken advantage of. This feels like, no... I won't say it. The women say to never say that word.

ALINA feels sharp pain in her chest. She gasps. Her hands cover her heart. A nudging force pushes her own up to her feelings. She inhales, then exhales.

ALINA:

My heart hurts when I hear stories relating to sexual assault.
 Physical pain I feel.
 Migraines that kill.
 Second-hand symptoms
 For the survivors, the post-victims.
 Working class women that are aiming for steady incomes.
 Globalized cries I can hear when I'm sleeping,
 Suffocating under, but the monsters keep breathing.
 They sneak up on you in the night,

And they willingly take a bite...

Now this?

You take my body,

What else do you want from me?

(to the Gods) I said, what else do you want from me? Hello? Can you hear me? I said can you freakin' hear me! Anyone?!

Blackout.

*Shadow appears. Creeping, stretching, and feeling it's limbs. It is alone. It is looking above, left, and right. It is searching for something, similar to a dog sniffing for a bone. What is it looking for? Is it searching for *Her?** It looks at its own body and feels onto its skin, muscles, breasts, and pelvic bone. It is humorous as it checks itself out. Suddenly, it understands. A moment of a reclaiming of sexuality. It yawns and stretches towards the sky in a moment of finale. It spots a hot-pink fabric, grabs it with its mouth, and runs off into the dark distance.

This is a fever dream sequence. A burlesque-performance piece. ALINA enters the scene with noisey heels, and a long hot pink burqa-like fabric across her face and body. She wears a headpiece, a two-piece burlesque suit, with pointed eyebrows, blush and lipstick. She walks, and walks, and walks, taking up the stage. She stops to occasionally pose or throw a kiss. She walks, and walks, until she stops center-stage.

ALINA: I recall my first protest fighting for the rights of my own body. My first riot committed battle scars for my own safety. When there is a lack of nurture, your fight becomes second-nature, and your bloody fists turn into sharp claws that pinch your palms.

I have only ever known the storm, and never the calm.

The first brick, the first kiss, the first of it all - was because of you.

I've ballroom danced with what could've been, but it has only turned the dance floor into a horror of a moshpit, and God knows I hate the fucking waltz.

Music begins to play. ALINA has reclaimed her missing sexuality in this scene. She is dancing, prancing, twirling, teasing, seducing, exaggerating and mimicking movements to a chosen burlesque song. She embodies La Lupe's infamous removal of accessories during her performance. ALINA represents freedom of self in this scene. Music ends.

ALINA, back to her normal self, sits on a high stool.

NAKED

I come from a time when women were both servants and queens. Where the kitchen is where the cult meets, to discuss tactics for revenge. I come from women of different shades who relate to the same idea or taste, where sometimes we must draw our swords, or pour our poisons into cups, in order to get what we want. I come from fierce women who were not taught to be nice. From ancient lands to railroad

apartments that should suffice. I come from bloody knuckles, wild, wild hair, c-section tussles and secret lesbian affairs. I come from Luquillo, Salinas, Baitoa, Bushwick, Queens. Of Taino and Afro-Latina descent pouring into the seams. I come from women who were not taught how to fight, but were left at every corner with grips of hair hand-holding tight. I come from sacrifice. I come from despair. I come from 16 & pregnant to high school dropout to welfare. I come from the hospital room, staring up at my mother's bright eyes. I come from big, brown eyes. Big. Beautiful. Eyes.

(beat)

Veils are for prudes

I like my ceremonies to be raw

Mascara smudged from our conversation last night, we both cried

About all the things that are wrong.

I know I've got really terrible walls up

I'm working on tearing them down

But the plaster is too thick

To get in between

Not even a punch can keep you from the sound—

Of all the voices

And the whispers

And the singing

And the sobs.

I'm moving on.

It's not that easy to admit that on some days my flesh resembles every little thing the universe is made up of,

Cosmic dust & the same shit the stars are made up of.

What am I made up of?

My liberation is just a synonym of all the chaos that occurs within & in —

I am not whole,

I am singing sins,

Of a collective of abused women.

I look to my father and I ask him for a drink of water,

He says "serve yourself" out of humor but I know he isn't kidding.

He proceeds while sucking his teeth & I am sitting uncomfortably thirsty,

And I am about to apologize when suddenly I stop myself in the process and ask "why?"

Men have always taught me how to lie.

I put on a smile & a show & I reassure you being a strong woman is anything but easy,

But hey, at least I'm smiling, right?

I meet a man who I think is my lifetime lover & he stabs me with the most beautiful words I have ever heard.

Much, much more than "we're meant for each other" but things like "I have never experienced a love as deep before I saw your eyes."

And boy, do I know my eyes are dreamy.

So I sit & contemplate,

Or meditate,

Anything to ease the pain,

To keep me sane,
 I pray and pray
 And fall away
 Into an abyss of answerable questions that make me say...
 I am not one to sit and wait
 For the approval of men who love to claim,
 I am not a woman whose body is a toy to play
 I am endless
 I am power
 I am countless waves of emotion and fire.
 Don't you dare tell me what to desire...
 These artists don't need structure,
 We need therapy.
 we need to yell at god on an open field and cry out the pain that seeps into our veins.
 Bloodline traumas that effect my day to day
 I create & create & create
 No art can ever equate
 To the way my mother looks at me...
 She sees the fire in my eyes.
 And she knows it's there because it's in hers too.
 I ask her why the world is like this and she says "baby It just is"
 How could she accept it?
 I turn to my sister and we both cry out our anger together over Oreos and red wine.
 It's about time I start using the voice Spirit has given me because lord knows it's been hidden for too long.
 Like a snake, I shed my skin and rebirth into a new human
 Doing all the things my ancestors shoulda did
 I've heard their cries of all the battles they didn't win
 My head spins and spins and spins
 So I strip.
 Naked.
 I surrender to the game.
 I reveal my cuts and burns and scars
 Like a veil that is forced off me
 My moment of vulnerability
 Is all that you can see
 A historic moment that's written in the stars.

Scene of SHADOW. It retrieves from beside the bed. It lurks through the room. It touches items of clothing. It begins to appear as an inconvenience in the space, as if it has no purpose of being there any longer. It walks up to the bedroom mirror. It scratches its head, and observes every corner of itself. Suddenly, it understands its purpose has been fulfilled. It crawls away into the darkness, looks back once more, and leaves for good.

DEAR BODY,

ALINA uses the audience as her mirror. A very clean bedroom is behind her, though it is noticed throughout the play the room progressively becomes more suitable to live in. She appears to be looking lovely, confident, and almost unfamiliar to herself. ALINA touches her face slowly, then proceeds to touch her body. She is getting to know herself. She paces back and forth, looking up and down at herself.

ALINA: Dear body,
 You are not a shame.
 Disregard all the times I've grabbed you and said you were the one to blame.
 Those days I held my anger for all my failed partnerships,
 It was you I failed, for not paying too close attention to —
 I'm sorry I treated you this way.

Dear body,
 You've always warned me.
 Holding tension from my uterus
 To my spine
 To my heart.
 I felt that there, that pain right there,
 You waited for me to acknowledge it
 Instead I told you to just drop it
 Then you said "no wait just listen"
 Then I said "will you just quit it?"
 I'm sorry.
 You were just trying to warn me
 Of what I couldn't see.

Dear body,
 It is okay to say you are not ready.
 The world is just selfish, but you
 You are almighty.
 The way your legs cross & your tongue ties,
 Any body would be lucky to have you,
 To hold you
 To touch you —
 But don't let just anyone touch you
 Because sooner or later the vibrations in their veins will begin to seep into your brains and you
 will wonder why you can't think at day
 Or sleep at night.
 I ask you to think twice on who you let into your space.

It might set the tone for every lover after.

So I say, Dear Body,
 His intention might be to persuade
 But I know you are fluent in reading in between the lines.
 Now is he able to convey what he wants
 Without slipping his hands and fingers onto your thighs?
 Has his madness taken over the blackness in his eyes?
 Can you read his truth through the sweetness of his lies?
 Are you blind?
 No! You're just not aligned.
 Get with the times — this world won't wait for you to recognize the crimes,
 They will bury you if you can't find the surface on your own
 You're not on your own
 You're just six feet under the universe's sign.

Say it isn't your fault.
 I need you to hear it,
 Now what he does and what you do are completely different.
 Your body is your own — don't let them tell you any difference.
 I ask you to tap in to your God and prove your innocence.
 I'm sorry —
 You were just trying to warn me,
 Of what I couldn't see.
 I know in times of intensity
 My mind drifts into a far away land
 I leave you to deal with the mess that has been made
 While my brain prances and dances without command.
 I disassociate.
 I float away.
 I'm aware that is something that I do.
 So I say,
 Dear body,
 Keep me company while I drift...
 And I'll thank you.
 Thank you.

*A bouquet of red roses are thrown to her feet, and the sound of the audience clapping plays. Red curtains close the stage. Visuals of the theatre appear: lights, wires, crew members, bleachers, etc. An entire Brecht-like compilation. Blackout. **END OF PLAY.***