

Collaboraction

Interview with Migdalia Cruz, Playwright



This week, we are very fortunate to have words directly from Migdalia Cruz, playwright of *El Grito Del Bronx*. Here's what she had to say to Diana Pando:

Diana Pando: What were some of the highlights of writing "*El Grito del Bronx*"? Were there any challenges? If yes what were they and how did you overcome them?

Migdalia Cruz: *I wrote "El Grito" because for as long as I can remember I have been angry and often didn't know why. Why live with this rage? How do we get beyond the rage to a place where we feel entitled to happiness? How do we accept that though the rage may always be there, we can learn to make our lives grow beyond it? I wanted to write a play about racism, about poverty, about the negative forces that haunt us and make us murderous—and the positive forces that do daily battle for us—like love, friendship, family—which lead to some kind of hope. The play was originally commissioned by the Public Theater in New York. I wrote Papo's first monologue in the snowy wilds of Wyoming at the Sundance/UCross Writing Retreat. I found Lulu staring at me from a studio at New Dramatists. The angels, the mothers, the Gas Station Attendants—came alive at South Coast Rep's Hispanic Playwrights Program, NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, & Portland's Miracle Theater. And now I'm excited to see the work move, grow, find its stride at the Goodman with Collaboraction & Teatro Vista guiding it. I feel blessed that this journey has been so full of people and places who took a risk and committed their resources to the work because they believed in my voice. The challenge was striving to live up to expectations of all the actors, directors, producers, designers, who inspired me along the way.*

Diana: I read somewhere that you were originally a math major. How did you go from math major to playwright?

Migdalia: *I was also a History minor, and took a class about Beckett. I thought it was about the English historical figure "Thomas aBecket, but instead it was about Samuel Beckett. When I saw how beautifully and poetically Beckett rendered the most horrible of human conditions, I thought becoming a playwright could be an incredible gift. So I dropped the Calculus. When I get stuck on my plays, I sometimes add big numbers. I figure anything on paper is good. It also relaxes me. Strange, huh? Math stresses a lot of people, but not me. But once I faced the fact that writing was what would truly make me happy, I remembered that I had written my first play when I was six years old—a puppet play about Civil Rights. So I suppose I was really just acknowledging what I always knew in my heart. Math was fun, but writing was life.*

Diana: What advice do you give to emerging women playwrights?

Migdalia: *Respect your history, listen to your ancestors, tell the truth, and write your own story—or*

someone else will write it and get it all wrong.

Diana: What impact do you think Collaboraction and Teatro Vista coming together on this production will have on "El Grito del Bronx" and on audiences?

Migdalia: *I feel that this collaboration is dynamic and inclusive. It will combine a youthful, athleticism with authentic voices. This combo will, I hope, speak to a new hybrid audience that can open itself to the poetic darkness of "El Grito" and find its inner light.*

Diana: Can you give us a sneak peek at some of the other plays you might be working on?

Migdalia: *Hmmm...I'm not sure how much I should tell you— I have been working for a while on an adaptation of Petronius' Satyricon, which will include both reggaeton & the music of Nino Rota.*

And I have recently started thinking about a play about real Puerto Rican Pirates to whom I am related. Enough said.

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Stay tuned for more interviews with the cast and crew of El Grito Del Bronx by Migdalia Cruz!

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