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# “ World Wide Enough ” : Reshaping the American Mainstream through Broadway in Hamilton and In the Heights ?

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**“World Wide Enough”**: Reshaping  
the American Mainstream through  
Broadway in *Hamilton* and *In the  
Heights*?

**MILKOVICH**  
**Isabel**

UFR LANGUES ETRANGERES

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## Introduction: Overture

On a hot July day in 2019, four United States Congresswomen of color stood at a podium and assured the American people that, despite exclusionary comments from President Trump against American people of color, they would continue to uphold their electoral mandate to reshape the nation as one that includes people of all races and ethnicities. In relating words that her father spoke to her as a young girl, Congresswomen Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez told listeners at the press conference,

This belongs to all of us. This belongs to you, and it belongs to me.... I want to tell children across this country that, no matter what the President says, this country belongs to you, and it belongs to everyone. (C-SPAN)

She was alluding, of course, to the current cultural divide in the United States between the predominantly white mainstream and racial and ethnic minorities. African Americans and immigrants were both displaced to this country, either by force or choice. Given America's current state of social and cultural division, these groups must work to assert their right to belong in a country that theoretically "belongs to everyone." Not only must they navigate life in a country that celebrates a culture different from their own, but they must also affirm their own place in that culture. The Squad, through legislative power, attempts to move the nation toward such an inclusive sense of community. They do this not through encouraging marginalized people to forsake their cultures in order to join the prescribed mainstream culture, but by reshaping the "American mainstream" to accommodate the subcultures of all people to whom America belongs.

While the Squad openly works to achieve this through legal means, Broadway composer and lyricist Lin-Manuel Miranda uses popular entertainment to ostensibly change attitudes toward race at the cultural level. The Great White Way does not wield the same legal power as Congress does to make significant changes to race relations in the United States, but its ubiquity in mainstream culture places it in a position to recontextualize certain issues, including race, and spark new conversations that can effect considerable change. Miranda's most recent musical, *Hamilton*, uses a multiracial cast to tell the story of America's founding, which he purports to be revolutionary. Though no one likely has framed the story of Alexander Hamilton in quite this way, his overall treatment of color has not necessarily led to the socio-racial revolution some associate with his musical. Even claiming to be revolutionary does not necessarily make one a radical, since revolution itself is part of the country's mainstream

heritage. To what extent do Miranda's musicals challenge white America's notions of the spaces African Americans and Latinx<sup>1</sup> immigrants occupy in relation to mainstream culture?

In depicting Latinx immigrants and African Americans onstage in positive albeit unrealistic ways, Lin-Manuel Miranda's blockbuster musical *Hamilton: An American Musical* portrays an image of what post-racial America might look like. It uses Broadway as a platform on which to bring together diverse communities of people, notably Latinx immigrant, African American, and white populations, to have new conversations about progressing racial equality in the United States. Miranda's *In the Heights* portrays these same communities, yet demonstrates the tensions between them in different ways, thus allowing for alternative perspectives on *Hamilton's* proposed image of post-racial America. The text, performance, and context of the two musicals propose a redefinition of what it is to be mainstream in America by using the Great White Way to design a space for members of all these groups to coexist with their respective cultures intact. While the content and messages of *Hamilton* and *Heights* do little to reconcile systemic discrimination or move toward racial equality, their advocacy for a new, all-inclusive American mainstream designs a blueprint for a reshaped American mainstream culture that incorporates Latinx and African American subcultures.

### **Broadway as a Space for Cultural Inclusion**

Broadway serves the double purpose of reflecting and driving mainstream culture. Thus, audiences can use it to gauge current conversations on race and creators can use it to influence the nature and direction of future conversations. In his essay "The Politics of Region and Nation in American Musicals," Chase A. Bringardner writes, "The musical [is] a key element of America's cultural history [and has a] pivotal role as mediator of American identity, cultural history, and politics." As such, it dramatizes the tensions that prevent this sought-after cultural inclusion. However, the Broadway musical does more than just educate its audience on how American society at large perceives constructs such as race and ethnicity. It can also push for a restructuring of these perceptions. Bringardner continues, "The musical creates, exhibits, and maintains alternative identities in the service of re-inscribing, refining, and restricting American cultural identity." This seems an onerous task, but the Great White Way accomplishes it in three main ways. First, the musical provides middle-brow entertainment, thus democratically making itself available to all Americans. Second, through its literal use of bodies, the musical demonstrates to all groups what it is to be American (Knapp 2005, 103). Finally, Broadway is

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<sup>1</sup> Latinx is a gender-neutral term that denotes people from countries in Latin America.



considered “American as apple pie,” but typically excludes African American and Latinx immigrant subcultures, both onstage and in the house, thus continuing the notion that they do not belong because American society currently lacks space for them.

Broadway also provides an appropriate lens through which to develop an image of cultural inclusion because it forms an intersection of disparate characteristics. Miranda sees musical theater as “a mutt of an art form,” and for this reason it “appeals to many kinds of people, encompasses all cultures and arts disciplines” (quoted in Berson). As a gathering place of various artforms, styles, genres, and audiences, it can embody an as-yet hypothetical mainstream culture that encompasses rather than excludes marginalized subcultures. Additionally, the American musical engages literature differently from books, and theater differently from spoken-word productions. Warren Hoffman calls Broadway “a deceptively potent form” because it “sings, dances, and performs its politics in plain sight,” so the audience is “so mesmerized by the spectacle that a show’s social context and ideologies may become difficult to see” (2-3). The tangibility involved in live theater resonates with people more forcibly than written text does. Meanwhile, the camp<sup>2</sup> of Broadway establishes an environment that can foster a subconscious acceptance of diverse cultures because the audience, distracted by the “spectacle,” often does not overtly recognize messages of inclusion.

### ***Hamilton and Heights in Broadway’s Heritage***

Broadway’s own history centers around a few key composers and lyricists over the last century who pushed the American musical forward in terms of both content and form, and Miranda is the most recent artist to perpetuate this heritage. George Cohan, Oscar Hammerstein II, Leonard Bernstein, and Stephen Sondheim were all first- and second-generation immigrants noteworthy for the ways in which they normalized elements that were, prior to their respective times, seldom seen onstage. As Sondheim’s protégé and the son of parents born in Puerto Rico, Miranda carries on their tradition by updating the American musical for this generation’s younger audiences through the normalization of hip hop and Latinx music onstage. Miranda’s place in this lineage also reflects a key shift in mainstream attitudes toward different immigrant groups. His predecessors have Euro-American roots, and each in their formative years faced discrimination against their respective ancestries. However, as their careers progressed, so too did conceptions about the spaces people of their heritage occupied in mainstream culture. Miranda’s emergence on the Broadway stage has come at a time when people of his own Latinx

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<sup>2</sup> Camp describes an aesthetic style characterized by ironic exaggeration and artificiality. Susan Sontag describes it as “art that proposes itself seriously, but cannot be taken altogether seriously because it is ‘too much.’”

background are fighting to assert their belonging in the United States, and his musicals underscore this in their focus on the Latinx immigrant narrative.

After several months Off-Broadway at the Public Theatre, *Hamilton* moved to Broadway on July 13, 2015. It has performed to sold-out audiences at the Richard Rodgers Theatre since that time. It follows in fairly accurate detail the life of United States founding father Alexander Hamilton. The story begins in 1776 as the orphaned titular character arrives in New York City as a young man from his homeland in the Caribbean. He meets several revolutionaries, including Aaron Burr and the French Marquis de Lafayette. Then, in the army, Hamilton works as George Washington's aide and marries Eliza Schuyler. The colonists win the War for Independence, and Hamilton returns to New York City to help establish a new government and to become the nation's first Secretary of the Treasury. The second act introduces Thomas Jefferson, who has recently been named the first Secretary of State and who proves to be a staunch opponent of the main character. Hamilton begins an affair with a married woman and, amidst pressure from his political nemeses, publicly reveals the details of their trysts. Eventually, he reconciles with Eliza and then Jefferson, but Burr, seeking reparations from Hamilton for having destroyed his political career, kills the titular character in a duel.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to immigrant and underdog success, a main theme of *Hamilton* is narration and how different approaches to storytelling may alter the messaging of a particular sequence of events. This plays well into the performance of this musical, as it incorporates hip hop music, dance, and coding to tell a traditionally mainstream story and propel Alexander Hamilton, a proponent of big business, into a favorable position in the eyes of today's progressives. Additionally, the main characters are all portrayed by actors of color, even though their historical namesakes were white. These particular storytelling devices promote messages of inclusion and multiracial ownership over America's founding myth.

*Heights*, an original story first staged by Miranda while studying at Wesleyan University, played on Broadway at the Richard Rodgers Theatre from February 14, 2008, to January 9, 2011. It presents a contemporary, "slice-of-life" depiction of several people in the primarily Latinx neighborhood of Washington Heights in uptown Manhattan over the course of their Fourth of July weekend. Usnavi, a bodega owner, dreams of moving to his parents' former home in the Dominican Republic. His friend Nina, recently returned from her first year at Stanford University, faces the disappointment of her family and friends after having dropped out of school due to financial troubles. Everyone living in the Heights experiences economic

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<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed plot description and list of characters, see Appendix A.

challenges in an increasingly gentrified neighborhood and dreams of winning the lottery, thereby paying off their debts and improving their lives. Abuela Claudia, the community's grandmother-figure, purchases the winning ticket, worth \$96,000, but dies shortly after collecting her winnings, leaving the money to Usnavi. He realizes that Washington Heights is his home and, rather than use the money to move to the Dominican Republic, he fixes up his store and focuses his energy on helping his neighbors combat gentrification.<sup>4</sup>

The themes of *Heights* center around home and community. Characters born in Latin America reminisce about their homelands, while those born in New York City regret not being able to fully experience their parents' culture. They all, however, embrace their neighborhood as home, too. The feeling of Latinx community is underscored by the intermingling of traditionally-styled showtunes and Latinx music styles. Through these themes, as well as performance elements such as casting, costume design, and set, the musical displays its characters simultaneously as members of the immigrant community and as embodying mainstream cultural values and components, thereby closing the gap between American mainstream and immigrant cultures.

While both musicals garnered approval from critics, theater scholars, and traditional musical theater audiences, *Hamilton* seems unique in the attention it has received from people outside the Broadway community. It won a remarkable number of accolades, including 11 Tony Awards (out of a total 16 nominations), a Pulitzer Prize for Drama, an NAACP Image Award, and Kennedy Center Honors. The cast album won a Grammy Award and ranked at number two on *Billboard's 25 Best Albums of 2015*. Moreover, advance ticket sales reached into the thousands before the show even opened on Broadway, and high demand for seats led to performances being sold-out months in advance. Written appreciation of *Hamilton* also demonstrated its popularity. Revolution-era historian Joanne B. Freeman said of the musical,

*Hamilton* is an *unexpected* and *rule-breaking* piece of theater that *captures* the *contingency* and *experimentation* of America's founding. The music's *bravado*, *urgency*, and seeming improvisation *powerfully* reflect the charged dynamics of the time. [My emphases.]

Her positive language provides only a small example of what people outside the Broadway community say about *Hamilton*.

And yet, the musical is not as rule-breaking as some may think. Theater historian Elizabeth L. Wollman challenges the claim that *Hamilton* is "revolutionary," as many critics have called it. In her essay "From *The Black Crook* to *Hamilton*: A Brief History of Hot Tickets

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<sup>4</sup> For a more detailed plot description and list of characters, see Appendix A.

on Broadway,” she writes of the show, “Genuinely unprecedented, unlike anything before it, and poised to change everything that comes after it? No. Broadway just doesn’t work that way” (188). In fact, *Hamilton* follows in the footsteps of its predecessors beyond its apparent “shout-outs” to canonical musicals such as *South Pacific* and *West Side Story*. Musically, the score’s frequent implementation of the descending base line to communicate sadness stems from a musical conceit that has been used by composers as early as the Renaissance. Nor is *Hamilton* revolutionary in a cultural sense. Many have praised it as such, both in its use of hip hop as a form and in the questions it has raised surrounding racial tensions in America. Yet, neither hip hop nor conversations about race and ethnicity are new to the Great White Way. Nevertheless, Miranda uses *Hamilton* and *Heights* to open up the conversation to a more diverse audience, thereby engaging both the mainstream and Latinx and African American communities.

This blend of Broadway tradition and reaching out to marginalized groups serves to smooth over tensions that exist between white and minority communities. Ethnomusicologist Loren Kajikawa attributes “*Hamilton*’s far-reaching appeal” to the production’s avoidance of certain “elements of mainstream hip hop ... that some find objectionable.” He posits that minority audience members can connect to the story through the hip hop music, while mainstream audience members can connect to the hip hop music through the familiarity of the founding myth. Through these musical medleys, *Hamilton* dramatizes a space that brings disparate people together to celebrate the possibility of a single mainstream culture that encompasses Latinx and African American cultures.

### ***Hamilton* and *Heights* as Case Studies in Broadway’s Ability to Effect Social Change**

Although *Hamilton* and *Heights* both engage the immigrant narrative, they present it in seemingly contrasting ways. The two musicals take place more than two centuries apart, and the former adapts history while the latter tells a feel-good story of community. Yet, unlike in his other Broadway works, Miranda expressly uses these musicals for the purpose of presenting African Americans and Latinx immigrants in ways that are appealing to mainstream audiences. In both musicals, elements of hip hop create a strong link between these minority cultures as an artistic expression of their shared desire to occupy uncontested space in America. Miranda takes advantage of hip hop’s popularity among white audiences and the feelings of safety Broadway provides for them to engage more members of the mainstream in conversations about race and cultural inclusion. In this way, *Hamilton* and *Heights* can serve as a case study for entertainment and, more specifically, the Broadway musical. These shows might indicate the extent to which the Great White Way can effect social change.

While *Hamilton* occupies the central space of this thesis, analysis of *Heights* plays an integral role in illuminating certain arguments about the text, performance, and reception of *Hamilton*. Miranda claims that both musicals aim to do away with white America's presuppositions about African Americans and Latinx immigrants, yet *Hamilton* appears to be a more groundbreaking musical than *Heights*. It has certainly sparked more conversations about America's racial politics, and its hype alone gives the impression to first-time viewers that it will open doors to racial equality in ways that *Heights* never could. Nevertheless, *Hamilton*'s close ties to Broadway traditions and norms render it just as unthreatening to mainstream audiences as its 2008 counterpart.

## **Methodology**

In conducting my research, I will look at Latinx immigrant and African American subcultures and their relationships to and with mainstream culture, specifically as they are performed in *Hamilton*. *Heights*, as a popular musical that depicts these groups but is not recognized as having significant cultural import, will serve as a counterexample with which to compare how *Hamilton* might change the way these minorities fit into the mainstream. Act I analyzes the ways in which the musicals recontextualize familiar stories by asking what these new texts actually say and how they might alter perspectives on bootstraps and immigrant narratives. Close readings shed light on the role of framing in altering interpretations of common notions. Act II questions how *Hamilton* and *Heights* articulate relationships between Latinx immigrants, African Americans, and Broadway audiences. The part addresses Broadway's representations (or lack thereof) of these subcultures, with a special focus on how *Hamilton* and *Heights* use the Great White Way as a vehicle through which to start new conversations about race in the United States. In Act III, I question whether the two musicals can reshape America's mainstream culture to include Latinx and African American cultures so that these groups might move into a *new* mainstream America, that is, one that includes people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds. These particular shows and Broadway more generally raise questions about what it means to be mainstream in America and how this concept can be reshaped to include minorities, to which I attempt to provide possible—though far from definitive—answers.

What kind of methodology should be used to look at musicals? They exist in many layers and on many levels. Broadway musicals are neither literature, film, music, nor dance; and yet, they layer all these artforms together. They exist not only on a textual level, but also on a performance level and at the level of public reception. One must consider *Hamilton* and *Heights*

from all these angles in order to give a faithful account of what the question of race means to the shows and, indeed, of what the shows mean to the question of race in America. Therefore, each Act of this thesis examines a different level of these musicals. In dissecting the ways in which Miranda recontextualizes these stories, I rely on textual analysis and close readings of each musical's lyrics. While addressing the musicals' articulation of relationships between the performed minorities and Broadway audiences, I shift my focus to performance of the texts, relying on reviews and academic papers that describe the stage productions. In assessing the musicals' ability to reshape mainstream culture, I turn to their critical and academic reception to question how these musicals have entered cultural dialogues on race. In this way, a unique, multidisciplinary argument emerges that integrates literary, performance, and reception studies. Given the relatively small scope of a Master's thesis, this work cannot look deeply into all these aspects of stage musicals. Although this is a somewhat risky approach, looking at the ways in which *Hamilton* and *Heights* function in all these spaces can give a more comprehensive and therefore more faithful picture of the musicals', Broadway's, and entertainment's abilities to effect culture change.

### **Existing Literature**

As a blockbuster musical, *Hamilton* has garnered considerable attention from the academic sphere. Most critical publications center on the contribution of the musical's text to revolutionary- and early republic-era historiography. For these types of criticisms, *Historians on Hamilton: How a Blockbuster Musical is Restaging America's Past*, a compilation book edited and curated by Renee C. Romano and Claire Bond Patter, is invaluable. In it, historians reflect on a range of historical aspects of the play, from its attitude toward slavery, to its place in the "founders' chic" movement, to its use as a tool to teach history. In addition to historical critiques, musicologists have largely commented on *Hamilton's* use of hip hop as a form through which to convey the story of the nation's founding. The journal *American Music* published a special forum on *Hamilton* in its Winter 2018 edition that features articles on hip hop authenticity, *The Hamilton Mixtape*, and the implementation of hip hop-inspired choreography.

However, a dearth of scholars consider the performance of *Hamilton* and its role in reshaping the American mainstream, with the exception of Elizabeth Titrington Craft and Warren Hoffman. Both musical theater scholars, they consider the portrayals of race and ethnicity in the musical and their effects on the audience. Craft has published pieces on both *Hamilton* and *Heights*, including a chapter of her doctoral dissertation addressing the ways in

which *Heights* promotes the Americanness of the Latinx community in the United States. Her focus on the concept of cultural citizenship facilitates this argument about *Heights*, but her work on *Hamilton* is limited to political interpretations of the text. Hoffman, meanwhile, focuses his attention specifically on whether *Hamilton* can push the Broadway musical toward racial equality and inclusion, but does little to dissect the show's role in pushing American culture toward such a space.

*Hamilton*, as a work of art and entertainment, exists as a moment that, in the wake of Donald Trump's presidency, is both obsolete and in the making. The Obama era is over, and it has become clear that the "post-racial America" we thought the nation had reached was merely a specter of what might one day come to pass. In light of this, the Squad and Miranda, each in their own ways, still work toward this yet-to-be-experienced social sense of community. Bruce Kirle insists that musicals' popularity springs "from their affirmation that the system could be fixed" (127). Is Broadway merely a curio of a feelgood past, or can it help us ask important questions about the current state of America and the relationships between its Latinx, African American, and mainstream cultures?

**Act I**

**Shaping Consensual Stories Through New Combinations  
of Traditional Narratives**

*“Who tells your story?”*

Company, *Hamilton*



Broadway's representations of Black and Brown bodies onstage provide for its predominantly white audiences a way in which to view the subcultures of these ethnic minorities. This lens can lead to varying interpretations of these groups. Depending on both a story's framing and the experiences of the individual audience members, existing tensions between these subcultures and the mainstream culture may be exaggerated or smoothed over.

In *Hamilton*, Miranda places emphasis on the musical's narrative conceit. A repeating lyric asks, "Who tells your story?" suggesting that the musical as a whole presents merely one way of framing the life of Alexander Hamilton. Meanwhile, the staging presents the question of narration visually. The musical is bookended by songs in which all except Hamilton narrate his story. Rather than the characters enacting his early life in the opening number, they use a variation of the "park and bark," a musical theater technique in which one character sings while standing still as the others dance behind him or her.<sup>1</sup> Here, however, everyone onstage stands relatively still. The ensemble mimes and moves around the stage at certain points, but for the most part they mimic the stationary stances of the main characters. The closing number replicates this, with perhaps even less movement, thus projecting an image of the ensemble framing the lead characters as they tell rather than show the legacy that the titular character leaves behind. This emphasis on narration over action raises questions around the ways in which Miranda chose to tell the story of this founding father. Neither opening nor closing number explicitly states that this is an African American and Latinx retelling of the founding myth. Yet, the Black and Brown bodies suggest that the true intent of the lyric is to tell the audience that the musical will empower people of color to tell their own stories.

In *Hamilton* and *Heights*, Miranda has taken familiar stories—that of Alexander Hamilton and that of Latinx immigrant communities—and portrays alternative tellings of them. By reframing these stories, he presents mainstream audiences with a way to view minority cultures that does not fall in line with expected Broadway representations of them.

## Chapter 1: Sources Versus Narrative Frames

When we hear the word "Hamilton," a mix of Alexander Hamilton the historical figure and *Hamilton* the musical comes to mind. With the latter, of course, come images of people of color rapping in period costume. Neither the overarching plot of *Hamilton* nor the life experiences and achievements of Hamilton, however, are about race or minority culture. Rather,

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<sup>1</sup> The park and bark is used to draw attention to the main speaker by setting a single character in relief against a dancing ensemble in the background.

they revolve around the myth of America's founding. Nor is the musical's text really about Hamilton the man. It instead focuses on the immigrant experience framed, in this case, by details of the founding father's life. *Heights* similarly foregrounds the immigrant experience, but frames it entirely within the context of a barrio in present-day New York City. The main characters' respective drives to succeed in spite of obstacles reinforce the inherent connection between the bootstraps narrative and that of the immigrant hero. Both of these mythical American narratives, as portrayed in *Hamilton* and *Heights*, reveal tensions between mainstream and minority cultures in the United States.

### ***Familiar Sources***

Miranda drew his inspiration for *Hamilton* from Ron Chernow's popular biography *Alexander Hamilton*, published in 2004. In an origin story now well-known by fans of *Hamilton*, the Tony-winning composer and lyricist picked up a copy of Chernow's nearly 800-page biography on his way to a beach vacation. Only a few pages into the first chapter, he had a revelation: Alexander Hamilton, America's first Treasury Secretary and the face on the ten-dollar bill, embodied hip hop culture. How could an old white man, so visibly entrenched in the white, mainstream founding myth of the United States, with a name that instantly brings to mind dusty old history teachers droning on to bored students, also bring to life the vibrancy, youth, and cool of a 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century subculture? By diving deeper into the personal life of the man rather than focusing on his political achievements, Chernow's biography and Miranda's musical reveal another side to him. Abandoned by his father and orphaned after the death of his mother, Hamilton emigrated from the Caribbean to New York City as a young man and used his intelligence and prolific writing ability to work his way into the upper echelons of society and become a Founding Father. This biographical story arc reminded Miranda of DJ Kool Herc, "the first ... founding father of hip hop," as well as his own father and other immigrants he knows (Miranda and McCarter, 15). With the encouragement of *Heights* director Tommy Kail, then-theater critic Jeremy McCarter, and others, Miranda worked over the next six years to develop this epiphanic correlation into a record-breaking, blockbuster musical.

Throughout the writing process, Miranda wanted to stay close to Chernow's biography, hiring him as an historical consultant so that "historians [would] take this seriously," (quoted in Miranda and McCarter, 32). However, whereas *Hamilton* the musical remains largely faithful to *Alexander Hamilton* the biography, historians have raised objections about Chernow's faithfulness to history. It is true that some historians laud the book's historical virtues, praising its "valuable portraits" of Hamilton and its ability to "delight scholars" (Presser, 192).

Conversely, many other historians critique Chernow's work as being motivated more by entertainment than education. William Hogeland claims that, as "popular biography," that is, written for the general public rather than for students and professional academics, it could not have succeeded without "making Alexander Hamilton the protagonist, ... the 'hero' of the piece" (23). Less diplomatic but more to the point in expressing the same critique, Andrew Trees accuses Chernow of "seeing history too much through his protagonist's eyes" (13). Either way, this strays markedly from the goal of impartiality realized in successful academic biographies.<sup>2</sup>

Chernow's lionized version of Hamilton revolves around the glorification of three main characteristics of the historical figure's life, all of which Miranda brings to the forefront and Hogeland refutes. First, Chernow and Miranda frame Hamilton as an immigrant living and working amongst "heritage" Americans. While today's geopolitical boundaries would label Hamilton an immigrant, there were different attitudes toward borders and concepts of immigration during the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Following Chernow's and Miranda's logic, the term "immigration" would have also included Benjamin Franklin's move from Massachusetts to Pennsylvania, as well as the relocations of countless others who moved from any British colony to another. Thus, in reality, Hamilton's status as an immigrant was not remarkable for his time and place. Hogeland also rebuts Chernow's contention that the "something from nothing" motif set Hamilton apart from his contemporaries. He cites several founders, including financier Robert Morris, Franklin, Thomas Paine, General Henry Knox, and George Washington himself, as others who had to work hard to make their way in life. Finally, Hogeland takes aim at the biographer's emphasis on Hamilton's abolitionist leanings. He freely accepts and even reinforces Chernow's assertion that Hamilton opposed slavery, but criticizes him for downplaying the founder's own role in the institution. Hamilton not only participated in slave auctions for his childhood employer and managed his father-in-law's slaves, but he also promoted the Three-Fifths Compromise, which constitutionally legalized slavery, "without any recorded misgivings" (Hogeland, 28). This demonstrates that his support was not contingent on a desire to compromise with slaveowners to ratify the Constitution. Clearly, Chernow's framing of Hamilton's life aims to entertain rather than inform—thus attracting mass readership—by developing his central figure as likeable, relatable, and worthy of our sympathy.

This entertainment value, while lacking in historical accuracy, does lend itself well to adaptation into other forms of entertainment, which Miranda quickly seized upon. With

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<sup>2</sup> Success here, for both popular and academic biographies, is measured by their reception among their respective target audiences.

musicals and rapping as his two main creative outlets, the artist nurtured his desire to adapt this story first as a hip hop concept album<sup>3</sup> and then as a Broadway musical. One must remember, as Joanne B. Freeman insists, that “*Hamilton* is a musical, not a work of history” (43), which she later reiterates: “Above all else, *Hamilton* is a work of historical fiction” (44). While many of the facts conveyed through the show are accurate, the way in which Miranda contextualizes these facts for the sake of drama leads uninformed audiences to inaccurately conceptualize the events portrayed. However faithful the links between “drama, biography, and history,” the musical *Hamilton* takes place in a fictional world that Miranda has created for the purpose of entertainment (Hogeland, 23). As with *Man of La Mancha*’s lasting success,<sup>4</sup> *Hamilton* has had a “cultural impact” because it *does not* heavily engage in the historiographical dialogue surrounding the founding father (Knapp 2018, 217). Rather, the hit musical “focuses on human drama above all else” (Freeman, 43), mythologizing the titular character as “a hero and a scholar” (“Alexander Hamilton”). In the world of *Hamilton*, drama and entertainment trump historical accuracy.

Beyond the common critique of *Hamilton*’s historical inaccuracies, academics such as Lyra D. Monteiro condemn Miranda for his *choice* of hero. Even though Black and Brown bodies fill the stage, the narrative itself follows the story of a white man whose existence is already well-known by the general public. Rather than “trumpeting the deeds of wealthy white men,” Monteiro posits, a musical based on the life of an African American would open people’s eyes to the existence of Black heroes and their achievements (66). This, she argues, might better elevate the social status of this group, thus closing the gap between it and the mainstream. In recognizing the discrepancies between what *Hamilton* does teach and what she believes it ought to teach, Freeman proposes that the musical serves merely as a starting point that history teachers can use to get students interested in the Revolutionary War; then, they can recontextualize the story, correcting the inaccuracies and filling in the information that Miranda elides.

*Heights* also depicts a familiar story, that of a poor, Latinx neighborhood in a large city, which Miranda reframes to appear more positive. In creating the musical, he drew inspiration from the neighborhoods surrounding his childhood home in New York City. One such neighborhood, Washington Heights, provides both the musical’s setting and its title. As an original production, *Heights* does not draw from a well-known narrative, thus pre-empting the

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<sup>3</sup> The initial idea of a concept album later evolved into *The Hamilton Mixtape*.

<sup>4</sup> Knapp attributes this to “the way it manages performance on every level,” as opposed to *Candide*, which “is more about being a text than a show.”

critiques of historiographical accuracy that plague *Hamilton* in academic circles. Nor does it read as autobiographical, though it does present a simulacrum of Miranda's own Latinx experiences. Rather, it portrays a "slice-of-life" of a fictional group of immigrants living in Washington Heights (Miranda, quoted in Craft 2014, 277). Many fictional stories about barrio residents foreground "drugs and gangs" as a way of life for Latinx communities, but Miranda avoids pandering to "expectations" (Craft 2014, 281) of this by focusing on the things his characters have in common with his white, middle-class audiences. Miranda did face criticism for not "exploring darker themes and subject matter" (Craft 2014, 281), yet his decision to keep the plot light-hearted allows *Heights* to underscore the discrepancy between these stereotypes and reality, a sentiment he shared in a YouTube post during *Heights*' Broadway run (Miranda, "7 Years"). Despite its refusal of negative stereotypes held by white America, the musical still "feels familiar to Broadway theatergoers" in its focus on common themes such as home, family, and change, while at the same time bringing the "underrepresented" Latinx community to the Broadway stage (Craft 2014, 282).

In recontextualizing these stories for the Great White Way, Miranda raised eyebrows from those expecting to watch an historically accurate biography of Hamilton or a Latinx story about "drugs and gangs." The entertainment value that these reframings provide, however, has led to a wide and diverse fanbase, sparking interest among people from all walks of life. A large reason for this consensualness lies in the prevalence of the musicals' implementations of the bootstraps narrative, which appeals to audiences as a largely American myth.

### ***The Bootstrap Narrative***

The bootstrap narratives that frame the plots of *Hamilton* and *Heights* receive little attention from academics. Most refer to them glancingly or as ways to support arguments related to other aspects of the musicals,<sup>5</sup> but few adequately address them for their own sake. The texts of the two musicals place focus on the characters' abilities to achieve upward social mobility through hard work. The following textual and linguistic analyses question how this narrative contributes to the developments of each musical's plotline and characters.

While the Usnavi plotline of *Heights* focuses on the \$96,000 lottery ticket, other characters quietly continue to work hard to improve their lives, from people running their own businesses to Nina earning university scholarships. Even as everyone shares the fantasy of winning the lottery, no one plans a "spendin' spree;" most harbor intentions of "pay[ing] off

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<sup>5</sup> Searcy's "Bringing Dance Back to the Center in *Hamilton*" is an excellent example of this.

the debts [they] owe” or somehow investing the money to improve their livelihoods, not just their lives (“96,000”). As the two main characters, Usnavi and Nina react differently to Abuela Claudia’s offer to share her winnings, which establishes them as foils to one another. They both work hard to advance themselves, pragmatically “creat[ing] a set of goals” (“96,000”) and “sav[ing] every dollar” (“Breathe”). However, when Abuela Claudia offers “a third for” Usnavi, he greedily replies, “Uh huh, uh huh! Uh huh, uh huh!” (“Hundreds of Stories”); conversely, Nina insists she “can’t take her money” (Act II, Scene 8). And yet, this moment of refusal does not reveal or even imply that Usnavi does not “work so much harder / and [is not] so much smarter,”<sup>6</sup> as Nina is (“Inútil”). The two offers are separated by the trauma of Abuela Claudia’s death, thus shielding Usnavi from harsh judgement in light of Nina’s determination not to take the money. This suggests that the two main characters’ separate means of advancement are equally viable routes to success.

As frequently reiterated in *Hamilton*, the titular character’s upward mobility comes in large part as a direct result of his writing. As such, it seems appropriate to conduct a linguistic analysis of the song “Hurricane,”<sup>7</sup> in which Hamilton expounds on the efficacy of his published works in achieving his goals. In this way, we can see that the song not only tells the audience this, but also demonstrates it. Two resultative constructions<sup>8</sup> in the song reveal the extent to which Hamilton’s hard work, via his extensive writing, propels him toward the political sway he holds at the end of the play.

In the first, an “X’s way” construction,<sup>9</sup> Hamilton states he “wrote [his] way to revolution.” Because the construction lacks a semantic object, the line fails to specify whether his writing *got himself* into the revolution or *urged the colonies* to revolution. The former is unlikely, since many foot soldiers joined the revolution without writing extensively on the subject; thus, writing would not be a necessary means for Hamilton himself to enter the war. Thus, we might accept the latter case to be true. This construction therefore implies the main character’s personal realization of the revolution, drawing attention to his own ability to work hard, rise up, and change the world. Later, Hamilton reminds the audience that he “wrote financial systems into existence.” Where the previous X’s way construction renders the phrase ambiguous, the true object here, “financial systems,” leaves no room to doubt what exactly

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<sup>6</sup> This rhyme is recycled in *Hamilton* to demonstrate his ability to “pull himself up by his bootstraps.”

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix C for a transcript of the song.

<sup>8</sup> In linguistics, a resultative construction is a phrase in which the predicative complement indicates the result of a change undergone by the subject.

<sup>9</sup> An “X’s way” construction is a resultative construction in which the syntactic object is phrased as “[person]’s way”.

comes into existence as a result of his writing. Again, his hard work gives rise to a significant socio-economic shift upward, earning him the position of Secretary of the Treasury. Moreover, the building music of this verse suggests the obstacles become more and more difficult and, as they do, Hamilton works harder to overcome them.<sup>10</sup> Thus, these resultative constructions in “Hurricane” elicit a feeling of grit and determination to do whatever it takes, despite and to spite the obstacles in the main character’s way.

Clearly, the contextualization of *Hamilton* and *Heights* within the frame of a bootstrap narrative promotes the notion that an individual can overcome any obstacle if they work hard enough toward their goals. Placing the experiences of immigrant characters at the center of these stories calls attention to an important variant of this something-from-nothing narrative: that of the mythical figure of the immigrant hero.

### ***The Immigrant Narrative***

References to Hamilton’s immigrant identity litter the text, from the show’s opening lines in “Alexander Hamilton” to the character’s final words in “The World Was Wide Enough,” punctuated in the middle by the show-stopping line, “Immigrants, we get the job done!” in “Yorktown”. Additionally, the show’s now-mythical origin story begins with Miranda’s recognition of the hip hop immigrant in Hamilton. Placing the historical figure’s story within the context of the immigrant narrative sheds a tremendous amount of light on the dynamic nature of the characters’ views on immigrants and the resulting relationships Hamilton, as the immigrant protagonist, has with them. Furthermore, looking at direct references to immigrants and immigration in the two musicals side-by-side reveals interesting insights into the nature of immigration in modern-day America.

Instances of the word “immigrant” in both musicals often appear within the context of demonstrating the distance and other challenges of the immigrant’s journey. This can function as a reminder to the audience that immigrants necessarily have further to go since they must come “up from the bottom” (“Alexander Hamilton”). By amplifying the bootstraps aspect of the immigrant narrative, the story shifts political focus away from ethnic specificity, presenting instead an uplifting albeit empty trope. This is evidenced by the fact that *Hamilton*’s first act and the entirety of *Heights* give positive connotations to the term “immigrant,” as seen most clearly in Eliza’s repeated praise of her husband: “Look at where you are / Look at where you started” (“That Would Be Enough” and “Non-Stop”). The musical also takes this a step further

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<sup>10</sup> Audio track 1. The phrase climaxes with Hamilton proclaiming that he did for himself what God would not do.

by establishing its fictitious world as one in which the general population “know and love” immigrants as “America’s favorite[s]” (“Guns and Ships”). By calling Hamilton “*another* immigrant comin’ up from the bottom” (my emphasis), the musical communicates from the very outset that it does not set out to *prove* that immigrants come “up from the bottom.” Rather, it shows that characters in its fictitious world take this for granted and that Hamilton is merely “another” such immigrant.

Many stories with immigrant characters either depict them as heroic individuals who work hard for what they earn or emphasize that they share the same difficulties as many just like them. Conversely, Miranda’s framing of the immigrant narrative simultaneously glorifies and downplays how hard immigrants must work to get ahead. His recontextualization is underscored in the way the character Lafayette commands the stage in “Guns and Ships.” While rapping at an incredibly fast pace, he athletically jumps off a table, giving the appearance of a man who leads without hesitation in the face of the enemy. His words, however, remind the audience that he is far from singular. He relies on his homeland “France for more funds, ... guns, and ships” and insists that he needs fellow immigrant Hamilton by his side if he is to successfully lead his men.

In *Heights*, Kevin’s personal story of immigration frames in more detail his struggles and successes in working his way up. From his childhood desire to go “farther” and to “change the world someday,” and through his willingness to “do what it takes,” Kevin realizes success vicariously through his daughter, for whom he gives “all [his] work, all [his] life” so that she can “fly away” and “change the world someday.” Although he struggles and ultimately fails to keep his business open in the face of gentrification, his daughter Nina goes back to Stanford to finish her degree, so that “everything [he’s] sacrificed” will not “have been useless.” Thus, Kevin’s immigration story, shown through his first-hand account of the difficulties he has faced, provides the audience with a microcosmic example of the journeys that immigrants take toward overcoming systemic challenges. (“Inútil”)

*Hamilton* and *Heights* also elicit a certain sense of nostalgia that the immigrant characters feel for the places they call home. Curiously, the home for which Hamilton feels nostalgia is not his birthplace in the Caribbean, but “America.” Generally speaking, one would not consider *Hamilton* a nostalgic musical in its focus on building the future but, in the protagonist’s final moments, his thoughts return to the country he helped build, “A place where even orphan immigrants / Can leave their fingerprints.” His appreciation of and nostalgia for the United States when he knows he will die reveals the thoroughness of his assimilation: Through all the



discrimination and hardship he faced, America was still his home. (“The World Was Wide Enough”)

On the other hand, *Heights*, with its central theme of home, portrays nostalgia through many of its immigrant characters. Abuela Claudia remembers her Cuban roots in “Paciencia Y Fe,” and the whole neighborhood sings of their home countries and wave their respective flags in “Carnaval del Barrio.” The most revealing instance of nostalgia, however, comes in the opening lines, as Usnavi introduces himself. He self-identifies as an immigrant, citing his “highly complicated” “syntax” as a result of this. He provides an immediate example when he says he “immigrated from ... Dominican Republic.” The correct word here is emigrated, and two probable reasons for this error present themselves. First, Usnavi may not realize the difference between the two words. This is possible, since Spanish has one word, *emigrar*, which means both; but it is also unlikely, since he emigrated as a newborn and would have grown up speaking English. Or, Usnavi understands the lexical difference and deliberately chooses “immigrated” because he identifies more with the United States than with the Dominican Republic. Thus, he says, “I immigrated [to the United States] from ... Dominican Republic,” but elides the destination. It is unnecessary, given the setting of the musical, to specify the U.S., but he mentions the Dominican Republic out of nostalgia. This gives depth to the character in a way that mere “complicated” “syntax” does not because it reveals Usnavi’s simultaneous sentimentality toward his ethnic heritage and feeling of belonging in the United States. (“In the Heights”)

*Hamilton* and *Heights* also demonstrate a darker aspect of the immigrant narrative: ethnic discrimination and immigrant-based conflict. While the main tensions of *Hamilton*’s second act do not center around the protagonist’s immigrant identity, his aggressors frequently apply the word “immigrant” derogatorily when speaking about him. They reinforce exclusionary anti-immigrant rhetoric (“Washington On Your Side”), associate immigrants with criminality (“We Know”), and use the word as a general insult (“Your Obedient Servant”). The immigrant-friendly world of Act I disappears almost entirely with America’s newfound independence. This reflects Benedict Anderson’s claim that severance from the British Empire triggered, at least in part, the country’s shift toward nationalism and isolationism:

Notice the transformations that independence brought the Americans: first-generation immigrants [such as Hamilton] now became ‘lowest’ rather than ‘highest’, i.e. the ones most contaminated by a fatal place of birth. (58)

Thus, during the 15-minute intermission, Hamilton goes from venerated immigrant with strong British connections via his “Scotsman” (“Alexander Hamilton”) father to inferior immigrant due to his status as a “Creole bastard” (“The Adams Administration”).

Burr underlines this shift in sentiment when, in the opening lines of “Your Obedient Servant,” he paraphrases his own opening lines in “Alexander Hamilton.” This time, however, he disparages rather than celebrates Hamilton’s immigrant identity, as heard in the bitterness of his tone of voice and the more ominous, less staccato tones of the piano.<sup>11</sup> This reveals his own resentment of “[his] best friend, [his] enemy” for rising from no money or family to having enough political clout to choose the next President. The musical paraphrasing of these lines<sup>12</sup> brings this transformation full-circle, reminding the audience of Burr’s positive sentiments toward the titular character at the outset of the story. This in turn allows Hamilton, in his final moments, to reassert the notion that America is the land of opportunity for immigrants, that it is “a place where even orphan immigrants / can leave their fingerprints,” thus countering Act II’s anti-immigrant rhetoric. (“The World Was Wide Enough”)

The more realistic setting of *Heights* renders it an interesting contrast to *Hamilton* in its portrayal of anti-immigrant discrimination. In Abuela Claudia’s solo song, the audience witnesses the abuse she suffers at the hands of her employers, yet she makes clear her refusal to be victimized, as she continues “polishing [their homes] with pride” (“Paciencia Y Fe”). Sonny, meanwhile, seeks a political avenue through which to combat the discrimination his community faces. As he witnesses gentrification, poor education, and racism in his predominantly immigrant neighborhood, he promises to “finally fix housin’ / Give the barrio computers with wireless web browsin’,” provide children with “a good edjumentation / [and] teach 'em about gentrification” (“96,000”). By displaying anti-immigrant discrimination overtly, *Heights* opens up the possibility for a more candid conversation about the ethnic prejudices immigrants experience.

The ways in which Miranda contextualizes the immigrant and bootstrap narratives in *Hamilton* and *Heights* consensually attract audiences from all walks of life through the appeal of the narratives’ universality. Political interpretations of the texts, however, add a layer of tension to what seems to be consensual entertainment. Disagreements have developed amongst politicians surrounding the question of which narrative is more prevalent and which carries deeper meaning in the American political landscape.

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<sup>11</sup> Audio tracks 2 and 3

<sup>12</sup> The same musical phrase accompanies both sets of lines, but with differences in instrumentation and key.

## Chapter 2: Political Interpretations

*Hamilton* is, on the surface, another history of the Founding Fathers. Given this, historian Joanne B. Freeman critiques the play for not incorporating more historical detail on “Hamilton’s most important and influential role: politician” (42). Indeed, the main focus of the plot of *Hamilton* is not politics, but rather the challenges the titular character faces in his interpersonal relationships. The musical uses Hamilton’s political life merely as a backdrop against which to contextualize the growing tensions between himself and Jefferson and Burr, his primary political opponents. Similarly, *Heights* places textual emphasis on the characters’ personal lives, while the politics of gentrification and systemic discrimination provide a context for their difficulties. In today’s charged, partisan atmosphere, this framing of the narratives provides relevant examples from which to build political interpretations and arguments surrounding the concept of the American Dream and minority groups’ relationship to it. In this way, the musicals engage political arguments beyond those explicitly found in the plotline, allowing politicians to use them as tools to push their respective political agendas.

### *Political Tensions*

*Hamilton*’s second act is framed by politics and the creation of the United States government, and it dramatizes interparty rivalries through the complex and dynamic relationships between the eponymous character and his rivals Burr, Jefferson, and Madison. Hamilton’s friendship with Burr gradually turns to enmity over the course of the entire play, a linear trajectory foreshadowed in their first meeting and Burr’s insistence that Hamilton “talk less, smile more,” a mantra the titular character scoffs at (“Aaron Burr, Sir”). Hamilton’s relationships with Jefferson and Madison, on the other hand, change course. In the closing number of Act I, in which we see Hamilton and Madison together onstage for the first time, the two men work together toward the mutual goal of writing *The Federalist Papers*. Then, with the introduction of Jefferson into the story, Madison unites with his fellow southerner, and their alliance leads to the feud between these two and Hamilton that drives the plot of the second act. However, as the musical draws to a close, Hamilton sides with his “diametrically opposed foes,” thus signaling the end of his friendship with Burr (“The Room Where It Happens”).

These shifts in loyalties and political support reflect the realities of today’s political climate through the characters’ representations of larger political factions. Freeman sees the character of Jefferson as representative of “the nation’s slaveholding past” (42), but he also

represents modern-day originalists<sup>1</sup> in his desire to maintain “the ideals of [the] nation” and, more specifically, to uphold original intent theory<sup>2</sup> by honoring the “treaty” with France as a nation rather than with the French “king whose head is now in a basket” (“Cabinet Battle #2”). Furthermore, Hamilton himself provides more than just a stand-in for immigrants and self-made men. He also mirrors modern-day progressives through his desire for the federal government to “assume states’ debts,” similar to current left-wing politicians pushing for student loan forgiveness (“Cabinet Battle #1”).

And yet, for all the divisiveness *Hamilton* portrays onstage, it causes little inter-party controversy amongst its diverse audiences. Elizabeth Wollman claims that “most [21<sup>st</sup>-century] musicals shy away from sentiment that might be perceived as too far to the political left or right” (2017, 180). *Hamilton* follows this trend by making no explicit references to modern-day issues. Rather, the issues discussed, including the ratification of the Constitution, the development of the nation’s financial system, the extent of the country’s involvement in the French Revolution, and the election of 1800, remain wholly within the realm of late 18<sup>th</sup>-century politics. By making no overt connections to contentious topics of the 21<sup>st</sup> century,<sup>3</sup> the show attracts a wide audience of people with varying political ideologies.

Perhaps less in line with Wollman’s statement, however, is the way in which *Hamilton*’s characters support and even promote diverse political goals and interpretations that “speak...to what each side of the ideological aisle wants to see.” Thus, the bootstraps interpretation that conservatives connect with may not appeal to a member of an ethnic minority who faces systemic discrimination, while the pro-immigrant interpretation appreciated by progressives will likely not appeal to an anti-immigration voter. Still, this does not divide the audience into conservative and progressive factions, perhaps because the musical “avoids serious engagement with interpretations that might prove offensive to either.” Rather, by dramatizing heated disputes that do not directly engage with current topics, audiences of today’s politically-charged atmosphere relate to the *situation* of the characters’ polarized politics, if not to the specific topics of their disagreements. Audience members across the political spectrum experience extreme partisanship and can thus find a point of commonality with each other through witnessing a reflection of it displayed onstage . (Schocket, 168)

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<sup>1</sup> Originalists push for the United States judicial branch to interpret the Constitution as it was originally written, thus precluding interpretations that treat it as a living document.

<sup>2</sup> Original intent theory advocates interpretation of the spirit of a document; conversely, original meaning theory promotes the interpretation of legal documents following its explicitly written content.

<sup>3</sup> While a modern-day audience may see the colorful casting and immigrant narrative as inherently political, these do not engage with the musical’s narrative of politics surrounding the creation of the United States.

Renee C. Romano views this shared experience as a result of the “hopeful and inclusive origin story for the nation” put forth by *Hamilton*. She observes that the musical “resonates with many people on both the left and the right,” while simultaneously countering “claims put forth by Trump and his white nationalist supporters” (Romano, 299). This highlights the ways in which *Hamilton*’s contextualization of America’s founding, though potentially divisive, serves more to smooth over the tensions between those of contrasting ideologies. On the one hand, it denounces the exclusionary rhetoric that most Democrats find offensive, or at the very least distasteful. On the other hand, it also provides a space where Republicans can maintain their conservative beliefs while distancing themselves from white nationalist groups that fall under the umbrella of the Republican Party.

Another “hopeful and inclusive” facet of the musical is the narrative of the American Dream. In theory, it is a concept that reaches everyone living in the United States, regardless of race or ethnicity. In reality, African Americans are often excluded from it due to systemic discrimination, and immigrants, while not altogether excluded, do not have the same access to it as “heritage” Americans. *Hamilton* and *Heights*, however, recontextualize the Dream to propose some ways in which it might be opened up to include them.

### ***The Politics of the American Dream***

The pursuit of the American Dream plays a large role in Broadway theater, and it does indeed function as a theme in both *Hamilton* and *Heights*. Chase A. Bringardner focuses on musical theater’s “continued fascination with projecting, championing, and challenging the American Dream” (Bringardner, 62) While neither *Hamilton* nor *Heights* overtly “project[s]” or “champion[s]” the American Dream, the more oblique ways in which it manifests itself in the texts speak more loudly than open engagement with the theme could. On the surface, their treatment of the Dream reflects long-established Broadway representations of it, but a closer look at the musicals in tandem suggests otherwise.<sup>4</sup>

While they do not specifically focus on the concept of the American Dream, *Hamilton* and *Heights* do promote opening it up to include Latinx immigrants.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the entire narrative of *Hamilton* revolves around the eponymous immigrant character “ris[ing] up” (“My Shot”) from “squalor ... to be a hero and a scholar” (“Alexander Hamilton”). Additionally, *Heights* sees Piragüero participate in capitalism by increasing his prices during a time of low supply and

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<sup>4</sup> For more on traditional Broadway representations of the American Dream, see Hoffman; Kenrick; Knapp, 2004; and Wollman.

<sup>5</sup> For more on the complex relationship between African Americans and the American Dream, see Chapter 7.

high demand, thus happily getting the last word over his corporate competitor Mister Softee (“Piragua (Reprise)”).

Through their incorporation of the American Dream, *Hamilton* and *Heights*, like most successful Broadway musicals, focus on the success of the individual over social progress for the communities displayed. Simply looking at the abundance of instances when characters in *Hamilton* speak in the first person singular (114 times in “My Shot” alone) reveals a self-centeredness rarely seen in musicals. Furthermore, while Act I follows the main characters as they seek social freedoms from King George III, Hamilton believes that “a revolution in this century” will come about only when he “ENTER[s]” the scene (“My Shot”). The notion continues in Act II when Hamilton insists that he must be the one to “get [his] plan through Congress” (“Take A Break”), thereby giving the new nation the “boost” (“Cabinet Battle #1”) it needs to survive. *Heights* follows a similar narrative of individual success, as seen through Vanessa and Benny. Both work hard at their jobs and, after getting laid off, eventually find success, the latter by moving “out of the barrio” (“96,000”) and the former by “planning his own business” (Act II, Scene 12). Neither attempts to end the gentrification that led their respective employers to go out of business. Elizabeth Craft points to several other academics’ criticisms of this emphasis on individual success over social progress, concisely underscoring their view that it “upholds the falsehood that hard work alone wins one success in America without attention to structural inequalities” (2018, 434). At least on Broadway, it seems the American Dream makes itself available to all Americans and precludes the existence of glass ceilings.

In reality, however, many systemic obstacles stand in the way of people of color achieving individual success, a problem most successful musicals tend to overlook. Warren Hoffman points to *A Chorus Line*<sup>6</sup> as a prime example of a musical plot in which “race is inconsequential; instead, anyone with talent who works hard, regardless of his or her race [or] ... ethnicity ... has the potential to get a job” (27). The play makes no mention of the realities of race-based casting, which falls under the “*bona fide* occupational qualification” exemption that allows production teams to discriminate based on race when casting musicals.<sup>7</sup> Rather, actors of various racial and ethnic backgrounds play the character-actors, resulting in a multiracial chorus line in the show-within-a-show, a *mélange* that was utopic during the 1970s and remains so

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<sup>6</sup> A blockbuster musical from 1975, *A Chorus Line* follows 17 people of diverse backgrounds and identities as they audition for eight positions in the chorus line of a Broadway show, at the end of which the characters then homogenize themselves in order to form a line of identical performers.

<sup>7</sup> 42 USC. Sec 2000e-2. 1991 <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title42/chapter21&edition=prelim>. Accessed March 21, 2020.

today. This dimension of the musical promotes what Hoffman refers to as “a fanciful white ideology that is quite detached from the workings of the real world” (27). In the theater industry, as in most industries in the United States, white people can rely on “talent” and “work[ing] hard” to realize success, while minorities continue to struggle to find (well-paying) jobs, anti-discrimination laws notwithstanding.

How, then, does social progress fit into the narratives at play in *Hamilton*? During the actual founding of the nation, “the narrative of the American Dream ... was not even accessible to” “many people of African ancestry”<sup>8</sup> (Hoffman, 222). Historically, New York City in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century did not have space for more than a few people of color to access the American Dream. However, in rewriting the Founding myth as historical fiction, Miranda not so much reconciles this as sidesteps it. *Hamilton*’s African American actors portray characters participating in this narrative, but their ancestors were likely among those who did not have access to it. At the same time, the musical neglects any mention of systemic changes necessary for such a world to exist in reality. Hoffman considers this absence of reconciliation “a missed opportunity” (224). However, it allows for the performance of one proposed conception of what Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary America *should* have been, that is, a place where the American Dream was not “a myth, mainly available to white people and then sometimes not even to them” (Hoffman, 222). By removing the myth of America’s founding from the context of severe racial inequalities and recontextualizing it as a narrative of individual success “regardless of ... race [or] ... ethnicity,” *Hamilton*, in a way, *creates* an opportunity that was not previously available, if only within the walls of a theater.<sup>9</sup>

*Heights* also promotes social change at a deeper level. Its dramatization of immigrant culture serves as a vehicle with which to demonstrate the “unspoken side to the American Dream narrative ... that if you haven’t ‘made it,’ it’s because you haven’t worked hard enough, not that the system is rigged against people of color” (Hoffman, 222). *Heights* calls this out directly, even if not obviously, through the continued gentrification of Washington Heights, notably through the character Kevin. He started as the son of a poor farmer in Puerto Rico whose family had not experienced upward mobility in generations and had no expectations of future generations doing so. However, he and his wife worked hard and moved to New York City, where he started as a mechanic and eventually worked his way up to purchasing a

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<sup>8</sup> While some African Americans at the time were free and ran successful businesses, the vast majority were enslaved and therefore precluded from climbing the socio-economic ladder regardless of how hard they worked.

<sup>9</sup> Miranda and others attempt to dramatize this alternative take on American History outside the walls of the theater through their contextualizations of the show, as I demonstrate in Chapter 9.

business. In the end, he sells his business to a corporate investment firm to pay for Nina's school. As he takes down his store sign in the final scene, the audience sees an older sign underneath that reads "O'Hanrahan Car Service," reminding them of the previous immigrant business owner's inability to succeed. While one might make an argument that Kevin sells out because he simply "ha[s]n't worked hard enough," the O'Hanrahan sign establishes this failure as a structural pattern of immigrants' inability to thrive in the face of the white American system (Act II, Scene 14). Furthermore, Kevin's inability to break the pattern, given that he successfully broke his own family's pattern of economic stagnation, underscores the role of the system in his decision to sell out. He overcomes the hardships of peasant life in Puerto Rico but cannot overcome "the system [that] is rigged against" him.

The complexities of the relationship between minorities and the American Dream allow space for several interpretations of it. This seems to establish a binary between the bootstraps and immigrant narratives, in that the former ostensibly applies to everyone, while the latter exists *because* the former does not apply to minorities. Because these three facets of American culture are so prevalent in *Hamilton* and *Heights*, their point of intersection allows for diverse interpretations of the musicals themselves.

### ***Diverse Interpretations***

*Hamilton* has found fans across the political spectrum, thereby bringing together people with diverse perspectives on today's cultural environment, notably around the subject of race and immigration. In her article "Headfirst into an Abyss," Elizabeth Craft provides many examples of politicians finding common ground in their admiration for the musical. Additionally, Justin A. Williams points specifically to *The Hamilton Mixtape* to demonstrate the "air of inclusivity" lent by the show in that Broadway and rap fans alike sing along to the same music (492).

While these seemingly opposing groups of people all find pleasure in and connection with *Hamilton*, their interpretations of the show are not so homogeneous. Craft's conclusions about the bootstraps and immigrant narratives demonstrate this. Additionally, the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, in partnership with The Rockefeller Foundation, offers a "Hamilton Education Program" to high schools across the United States, yet academics such as William Hogeland, David Waldstreicher, and Jeffrey L. Pasley critique the show for the historical inaccuracies found throughout the text. Former First Lady Michelle Obama once called it "the best piece of art in any form" (The Obama White House); meanwhile, many of President Trump's supporters attempted to start a boycott against the musical.



In promoting their respective interpretations of *Hamilton*, politicians take performance of partisanship beyond the theater, in that they perform when using the show to further their agendas. Some use simple quotations to dramatize their messages, as John Bolton did through the title of his recent Trump Administration tell-all memoir.<sup>10</sup> Others perform much more explicitly, as was the case when several politicians in Utah created their own rendition of James Corden's *Carpool Karaoke* using songs from *Hamilton*.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, political deal-making can be seen as a sort of performance between politicians in the way they manipulate the framing of their arguments in order to strike deals. Finally, politicians present a certain character and persona to the world.<sup>12</sup> This allows them to build an image that, like *Hamilton*, appeals to diverse populations by eschewing statements "that might prove offensive" (Schocket, 168).

Diverse interpretations of *Hamilton* permeate all tiers of society, not just the social elite. Debates over the musical's hip hop authenticity abound, with most diehard rap fans deeming it completely inauthentic and more mainstream-music consumers calling it a hip hop musical. The question of authenticity is not new to the Broadway stage. In his book *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity*, Raymond Knapp demonstrate this by drawing attention to the novel *Porgy*, the source text for the musical *Porgy and Bess*.<sup>13</sup> Although the book was "widely accepted by whites as an authentic account of life in an urban black community," those living in Charleston at the time saw it as an "unrealistic" representation of "life for urban blacks in the South" (195). *Porgy and Bess* is not *Hamilton*; the two musicals come from two different eras with two different attitudes toward race. Yet, making this comparison does raise interesting questions about the latter and raises the stakes of the question of hip hop authenticity in *Hamilton*. Is this musical, which sells thousands of tickets on the Great White Way to mainly middle-class, white consumers, an accurate representation of hip hop culture, or does it decontextualize the culture's artforms for the sake of entertainment? Does it perpetuate or curb negative stereotypes surrounding racial and ethnic minorities? While the debate of authenticity itself lies well beyond the scope of this thesis, its very existence reveals the underlying tensions beneath *Hamilton*'s universal popularity.

Diverse interpretations of stage musicals can serve as an exercise in democratic freedoms, but interpretations that lead to misunderstandings between cultural groups in the United States

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<sup>10</sup> Bolton, John. *The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir*. New York, Simon & Schuster, 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Utah Reps. "Utah Politicos Hamilton Carpool Karaoke." YouTube video, June 29, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-87PH8uCq1c>. Accessed Mar. 5, 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Broadway and hip-hop celebrities also do this, as I discuss in Chapter 7.

<sup>13</sup> *Porgy and Bess* (1935) was inspired by the true story of a murder that took place in a Black community in Charleston, South Carolina during the 1920s. It tells a fictional story of members of that community after the murderer flees to New York City.

might cause more harm than good. Warren Hoffman claims that “cast recordings ... reinforce and construct racialized stereotypes of entire groups of people in ... seemingly innocuous ways” (20) because the songs leave behind the (racial) context of the story when they become popular hits. This suggests that *Hamilton*’s diverse audience members will maintain their own interpretations of the musical rather than broaden their views and perspectives on America’s racial politics. Thus, people in the mainstream, whether politically conservative or progressive, will continue to see racial and ethnic minorities in ways aligned with their own communities rather than looking at them through the lens of another’s experience. The following chapter explores one negative consequence of this: the conflation of the immigrant and African American narratives.

### **Chapter 3: Juxtaposing the African American and Latinx Immigrant Narratives**

Oftentimes, the Otherness that marginalized communities represent to the mainstream, and the distance between them, allow for the blurring of lines that distinguish minorities from one another in the eyes of white America. A result of this is that whites can come to perceive African Americans and immigrants as living the same experience, in spite of the significant cultural and geopolitical contexts in which they navigate life in the United States. Many minority groups use hip hop as an artistic expression of the difficulties they face due to systemic inequalities. The message of inclusivity that hip hop music promotes therefore allows African Americans and Latinx immigrants, amongst others, to exist together while maintaining their distinct identities.

#### ***Two Separate Narratives***

Two key aspects of the historical context in which African Americans and immigrants first arrive(d) in the United States distinguish their experiences as disparate. First, according to Todd Decker, “immigrant groups ... came on their own terms,” ostensibly to improve their lives; the ancestors of today’s African Americans, on the other hand, were brought to the US “through force” (19). The harsh realities of slavery also affected the second key aspect: Whereas “immigrant groups ... typically arrived ... with their ethnic cultures intact, African Americans faced the challenge of constructing a new group identity or African American ethnicity” (Collins, 79). Thus, the displacement experienced by Africans centuries ago cannot be reversed by modern African Americans simply “going back to Africa” because their current culture and language differ starkly from those of their ancestors. Meanwhile, because immigrants are able to keep “their ethnic cultures intact,” they maintain a connection to their homeland. The overall result of these realities is that members of immigrant communities have a home that exists outside the systemic and social racism of the United States, even though they may never return there; African Americans, however, can consider “home” only this land, culture, and even language that discriminates against them.

White America does not necessarily recognize these profound differences between the African American and immigrant experiences, or between diverse home cultures of different immigrant groups. The resulting conflation occupies a curious space in American attitudes toward racism. On the one hand, whites who exhibit racist behaviors tend to categorize all people of color as being one group that receives racist treatment, a conflation that itself is racist

in its denial of identity and individuality. A strong definition of whom to discriminate against—in this case, anyone not white—in turn fuels racist attitudes. On the other hand, whites who fight racist behaviors and ideas typically do so in order to help or elevate the status of those discriminated against, thus in their own way grouping racial and ethnic minorities together as “non-white.” Again, this strong definition of whom to help allows “woke”<sup>1</sup> attitudes to thrive. Essentially, these disparate groups’ exclusion from the mainstream contributes to their conflation, which in turn furthers their exclusion.

*Hamilton* and *Heights* each frequently display members of the African American and Latinx immigrant communities together. Yet, the different ways in which they contextualize this sheds new light on white America’s tendency to see these two distinct groups of people as a single, conflated Other.

*Hamilton* largely portrays these two narratives interchangeably. The camaraderie between African American and immigrant-American bodies onstage suggests a strong bond between them. The original Broadway casting underscores this, with an African American actor (Daveed Diggs) playing the immigrant character Marquis de Lafayette, and second-generation Chinese-American Phillipa Soo and African American Renée Elise Goldsberry playing sisters Eliza and Angelica. This effectively foregrounds the two main points the narratives have in common: both face the challenge of “comin’ up from the bottom;” and they must overcome systemic discrimination to do so. (“Alexander Hamilton”)

*Heights* does not operate in quite the same way. First, it addresses Latinx immigrants specifically rather than grouping them with immigrants more generally. Also, it treats the African American and Latinx immigrant experiences as distinct, coexisting but with some tension between them. The relationship between Latino Kevin and Black Benny perhaps best highlights the distance between these groups. Ostensibly, Kevin’s dislike for Benny as his daughter Nina’s suitor stems not from his Blackness but from his lack of Latinx experience and culture. Benny acknowledges that he does not speak their native language, which he attempts to alleviate by learning Spanish (“Sunrise”); he even admits an intellectual difference when he concedes he is “[no]where near [Nina’s] level.” Yet, these acknowledgements do not change Kevin’s mind, and he continues to object to the relationship because Benny “know[s] nothing about [their] culture” (Act II, Scene 4). This seemingly irreconcilable difference marks a clear distinction in *Heights* between these two oft-conflated narratives.

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<sup>1</sup> Woke is a relatively new term in American popular culture, believed to be of African American origin, that denotes awareness of social justice issues, particularly those regarding race.

As with *Hamilton*, the casting of *Heights* provides interesting insight into the question of conflation versus juxtaposition. Unlike *Hamilton*, however, *Heights* characters are textually either Latinx or African American—or, at least, not Latinx. Thus, any casting inconsistent with the text may force this conversation. The first concerns over this issue came when African American actor Corbin Bleu replaced Miranda as Usnavi, sparking a “heated debate over whether a non-Latino should play the part” (Craft 2011, 62).<sup>2</sup> I posit that, by casting a non-Latinx actor to play a Latinx character, this decontextualization of ethnicity reaffirmed the peaceful coexistence of the two groups, easing the tension slightly while still acknowledging the separate identities. Suddenly, it was not Benny as the one African American other in a community of Latinx immigrants, but a *mélange* of immigrant and African American actors and characters, all struggling to make ends meet in the same increasingly-gentrified neighborhood. At the same time, Bleu’s Blackness visually distances him from mainstream audiences’ expectations of the Hispanic language and culture of his character, clearly demarcating the two narratives his body represents onstage. The overall effect is one of difference and similarity together in one character, thus promoting a peaceful and nondetrimental joining (rather than conflation) of the African American and immigrant communities.

### ***Music as a Unifier***

Let us return to look more closely at the second aspect that delineates African American and immigrant culture in the United States. Patricia Collins insists that African Americans had to “construct” their “ethnicity” after their displacement from their native lands and culture (79). This is not to say that a “constructed” African American culture is any less real than American mainstream culture. In fact, I might suggest that it is *more* real because it was created through a conscientious effort to generate such a culture, rather than through the latent effects of events and situations. The contrived nature of African American culture has allowed it to adapt more quickly to changing times, thus rendering it more resilient to the discrimination it constantly faces. This by no means should be read as a justification for such discrimination. Rather, I speculate that mainstream culture in its current state would not survive if it were on the receiving end of systemic and cultural racism.

One need look no further than the music that has come out of African American culture to demonstrate its adaptability. One by one, jazz, swing, soul, rhythm and blues, and rock’n’roll

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<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 7 for more on this casting choice and nontraditional casting more generally.

have all been first appropriated and then swallowed up by white culture. For swing and rock'n'roll, the styles have been recontextualized through adaptation by whites so much so that images of white artists and fans come to mind far more readily than those of minorities. With each appropriation, however, the subculture responds with another, new style to call their own. Hip hop, the prevailing African American style, appears to be following the same path of misappropriation, but hip hop analyst and activist Bakari Kitwana argues that the situation is more nuanced than that. His research has demonstrated that, while many signs point to white youth *consuming* more hip hop music than minorities, only a handful of white artists have found success *producing* in the genre (Chapter 3).

Moreover, themes in hip hop music continue to center around disenfranchisement and marginalization. In his 2019 *Billboard* chart-topper “Middle Child,” rapper J. Cole opens by asking, “What good is the bread if my niggas is broke? / What good is first class if my niggas can't sit?” By framing these lines within the context of his own success amongst white audiences, he underscores the hypocrisy of tokenizing one wealthy African American and ignoring the many who struggle in the face of systemic discrimination. Later in the song, Cole reflects on the cyclical nature of disenfranchisement and its roots in slavery when he raps, “Too many niggas in cycle of jail ... / We coming from a long bloodline of trauma.” He ends his final verse with the assertion that African Americans are “set up to fail” in American society due to its systemic inequalities. Perhaps the most jarring message of marginalization of this song comes through the music video, which shows, in the final seconds, a Black woman’s face in grocery-store meat packaging, which a white woman selects and places in her shopping cart. The imagery reinforces Kitwana’s findings regarding white consumption of hip hop and critiques this reality with its vivid display of the Black body as an object to be consumed. Clearly, the prevalence of African American issues in popular rap music shows that hip hop has resisted complete appropriation and has remained largely a facet of African American culture rather than that of the mainstream for over four decades.

The debate over whether immigrants can rightfully claim hip hop as part of their experience has been a contentious one since the early days of street parties in the Bronx. But it is at these very origins that one finds the intersection of the two groups. Widely recognized as the founder of hip hop, DJ Kool Herc, born Clive Campbell, is both a descendent of slaves and an immigrant.<sup>3</sup> Thus, he has experienced from a young age both the African American “constructed” culture and the act of arriving in the United States “with [his Jamaican] ethnic

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<sup>3</sup> Campbell immigrated to the United States from Jamaica with his parents when he was 12 years old.

culture intact.” Moreover, he began DJing at large street parties primarily as a way to ease violent tensions between gangs of Blacks and immigrants alike. He used hip hop as a way to bring these groups together within the space of a single musical style rather than to further divide them. (Chang, Chapter 4)

The adaptability of African American culture and, by extension, hip hop culture drives the existence of this common space. Justin A. Williams claims that “hip hop lends cultural citizenship to those who feel outside other definitions of citizenship.” This applies to all marginalized peoples, irrespective of race or ethnicity. Williams goes on to say that hip hop “provide[s] counternarratives that resist more visible and hegemonic structures” established and maintained by “more mainstream political and cultural narratives.” In essence, hip hop allows for a different cultural citizenship. It is the current (and lasting) music of the culture that African Americans have “constructed” for themselves. Yet, since hip hop developed within the milieu of a malleable African American culture, it has also morphed to allow immigrants to join in and participate in this subculture. (502)

*Hamilton*, in its use of hip hop coding, as well as Brown and Black bodies onstage, “illuminates the shared struggle of black and brown people” (Kajikawa, 480). While the text does not specifically allude to any character’s skin color, the display of Black and Brown bodies alike participating in rap battles and speaking to the necessity of “comin’ up from the bottom” (“Alexander Hamilton”) promote the notion that these visibly disparate groups can work together to overcome their “shared struggle.”

*Heights* also utilizes music to demonstrate unification between immigrants and African Americans. Although Benny clashes with Kevin over their different cultures in a spoken-word exchange, his close friendship with Usnavi and budding romantic relationship with Nina play out through song. He even participates in the “Carnaval del Barrio,” rolling his r’s as Spanish speakers do and receiving the Latinx characters’ punctuated “Hey!” in response to his lyrics. This signifies a welcoming incorporation into their community. Moreover, Corbin Bleu’s portrayal of Usnavi gave further depth to this unification. Although Broadway audiences expected the main character to be played as visibly Brown, a Black actor rapping about his homeland in the Caribbean and singing about his family’s Latinx roots operated as a reminder of Latin America’s own history of slavery and African diaspora.

While Kajikawa does concede that “mainstream hip hop continues to be coded as a black genre,” as opposed to a racial minority genre, his emphasis on the “shared struggle” between African Americans and immigrants, namely, the experience of racism and systemic inequalities, reminds his readers that the two have more in common than some might argue (480). In both

musicals, Miranda narrows the focus of this commonality by framing it in the “up from the bottom” narrative. Systemic racism in the United States directly causes these groups to occupy space at the lower rungs of society, regardless of whether in the country by force or by choice. By using hip hop as a medium through which to display members of both communities engaging in this narrative, *Hamilton* and *Heights* thus promote the joining of the two through music, as did DJ Kool Herc four decades earlier.

This sense of unification between the African American and immigrant communities goes beyond the stage to reach the audience, as well. Speaking specifically of the song “Immigrants” from *The Hamilton Mixtape*, Williams compares “the American musical and the ideologically attached idealism of the ‘American Dream’” and “the ‘something from nothing’ of both left-leaning immigration and hip hop authenticity discourses” (501). The connection between these also shows through in the musical *Hamilton*, as well as *Heights*. Every non-white body onstage necessarily portrays the “something from nothing” narrative as an embodiment of either the immigrant or African American experience, particularly since the actors worked hard enough to find success on the Great White Way. Furthermore, by using the traditionally white, middle-brow form of Broadway to dramatize these marginalized groups, any tensions that exist in reality between the diverse communities can be smoothed over in a space that is safe and familiar to the mainstream, that is, within the walls of a Broadway theatre. Thus, the audience members feel, while inside the theatre, a sense of unification between themselves and the communities they see represented onstage.

*Hamilton’s* and *Heights’* displays of unity, while bound in space by the Broadway stage, can still produce positive results in reality. Miranda’s decontextualizations and recontextualizations of the stories of both America’s founding and stereotyped immigrants give some space to marginalized peoples, if only onstage. Though he doesn’t appear to criticize conventional narratives, he has opened up a new space for discussions about the relationship between African American, Latinx immigrant, and mainstream cultures in the United States.



**Act II**

**Using Performance to Articulate Tensions Between  
Audiences and Onstage Communities**

Hamilton ... *has undeniably sparked a cultural conversation.*

Lyra D. Monteiro, "Race-Conscious Casting and the  
Erasure of the Black Past in *Hamilton*"

To move toward racial equality in the United States, it is not enough to merely portray marginalized communities in a positive light. The tensions performed onstage in *Hamilton* and *Heights* are largely smoothed over by established theatrical tropes that guarantee audiences a satisfying ending. While these make for successful entertainment, the real world does not work this way. Thus, different solutions must be found for easing tensions between these communities in reality. This raises the question of how much change the Great White Way can really effect, particularly given the demographics of Broadway audiences.

*Hamilton* stands out amongst other musicals of its generation as one that seems to have forged connections between diverse communities. It makes itself accessible to non-theatergoers in large part through its “Ham4Ham” hashtag. This started when cast members put on impromptu performances for people waiting in line to get day-of show tickets via the lottery system.<sup>1</sup> They would sing a song just outside the stage door, where anyone passing by could watch, and viewers were encouraged to film the mini-shows and post them to social media with the hashtag “Ham4Ham.” Fan-based engagement, public outreach, and free marketing all rolled into one, these recorded snippets of the musical underscore the friction in the show’s respective relationships with marginalized and mainstream communities. While the purpose of both #Ham4Ham and the lottery itself is ostensibly to spread *Hamilton* out to those who cannot afford a full-priced ticket, a quick look at any given video shows that almost all the people waiting in line appear to be white and middle-class, exactly the demographic that is already the most commonly seen in Broadway audiences.

During these mini-performances, *Hamilton*’s cast and creative team openly interacted with their fans. Neither costumes nor an orchestra pit set them apart, and audience participation was always encouraged. Since their audiences were almost exclusively white, however, how well could the #Ham4Ham shows articulate relationships between this demographic and the Latinxs and African Americans who are conspicuously absent? Can *Hamilton* reconcile the disparities between the audiences it purportedly seeks and those it actually attracts?

## **Chapter 4: Raising Questions Through Underlying Tensions Between Performed Cultural Communities**

The smoothing over of racial tensions in *Hamilton* and *Heights* continues a pattern perpetuated by most musicals in Broadway’s long history. Shows on the Great White Way

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<sup>1</sup> When the lottery transitioned to be exclusively online, Miranda began staging and recording the mini-performances inside the theater and posting them online himself.

largely depict how whites conceptualize America, and this usually does not include portrayals of systemic inequalities. White theatergoers, after all, typically feel uncomfortable when confronted with their own implications in the country's history of racism. Yet, these musicals, particularly *Hamilton*, articulate a relationship between marginalized and mainstream communities onstage that challenges current racial inequalities. The utilization of hip hop as a form makes this acceptable to mainstream audiences due to the place it occupies in popular culture. Even so, the musical's representation of the subculture challenges many white Americans' expectations of what hip hop is, while simultaneously neglecting to account for existing inequalities between African American and immigrant cultures within the Broadway community.

### ***Tensions Between Immigrants and the American Mainstream***

*Hamilton* and *Heights* develop certain dichotomies between immigrants and the American mainstream. Warren Hoffman writes,

As the twentieth century progresses, the appearance of race in the Broadway musical becomes less about explicit conflict or overt racism and more about the unspoken racial structures that order U.S. society. (25)

Miranda's two blockbuster musicals continue this trajectory into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In their portrayals of "the unspoken racial structures" of our time, they add a new voice to the mix: that of the discriminated, existing in and even sometimes thriving despite these "structures."

In looking at depictions of race onstage, Hoffman invokes Matthew Frye Jacobson's claim that "completely intertwined were the prospects of becoming American and becoming Caucasian"<sup>2</sup> (23). Hoffman takes Jacobson's cultural theory regarding *immigrants* and applies it to *race in general* on the Broadway stage, naming it as the "one predominant theme in the Broadway musical concerning race" (23). By converging the two notions to apply to immigrants on the Broadway stage, one sees that *Hamilton* and *Heights* show interesting ways in which they do and do not comply with this "intertwin[ing]."

In *Heights*, characters reflect this "intertwin[ing]" through their assimilation into U.S. culture and neglect of their Hispanic roots. Carla's addition to the "Carnaval" song succinctly demonstrates this: "My mom is Dominican-Cuban / My dad is from Chile and P.R. which means: / I'm Chile-Domini-Curican... / But I always say I'm from Queens!" By only telling acquaintances about her immediate origins in the borough of Queens, she effectively erases to

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<sup>2</sup> Jacobson, Matthew Frye. *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1998.

the outside world her non-Caucasian family origins in Latin America, thus ostensibly “intertwin[ing] ... becoming American and becoming Caucasian.” Yet, as the Latinx characters assimilate, they retain their cultural roots by speaking Spanish to one another and waving the flags of the countries from which they and/or their families came (“Carnaval del Barrio”). This paradox is perhaps best demonstrated through the characters’ *mélange* of the English and Spanish languages. Interestingly, their performance of this hybridization shows the ironic nature of the immigrant/mainstream dichotomy through their self-contradicting pronunciations. The most striking example of this comes from Kevin, the character who maintains perhaps the most acutely his Hispanic language and culture. In the cast recording of his solo number “Inútil,” actor Carlos Gómez pronounces the “t” in the titular word as an *aspirated* plosive. While the English language has both aspirated and non-aspirated plosives, only the latter exists in Spanish. This and other examples of aspirated plosives throughout the recording signify Broadway’s upper hand in *Heights*’ cultural dichotomy between immigrant and mainstream. According to Bruce Kirle, the inherent camp of Broadway requires more emotional force behind the words sung, which the aspiration of plosives can provide (159). Thus, although the musical incorporates a considerable Spanish vocabulary, itself seldom seen on the Broadway stage, vocal norms of American musical theater dictate an anglicized pronunciation of these words. In the end, even the effusion of Hispanic culture<sup>3</sup> is controlled by the ubiquity of mainstream American culture on the Great White Way.

*Hamilton*, on the other hand, does not portray *simultaneous* compliance and noncompliance with Jacobson’s and Hoffman’s “intertwin[ing].” Rather, it shows them chronologically side-by-side, with the former in Act I and the latter in Act II. By looking closely at the ways in which Marquis de Lafayette serves as a foil to Hamilton in the first act, we also see how he might be a foil to the immigrant in reality. This second comparison highlights the dichotomous relationship between immigrants and the mainstream, thereby reinforcing Hoffman’s claim that race in recent Broadway shows centers around “the unspoken racial structures that order U.S. society.”

Lafayette takes centerstage in the song “Guns and Ships,” in which he raps to the audience the many ways in which he contributes to the colonial army’s success. We see here many commonalities between him and the main character, including their shared desire to “mak[e] / redcoats redder with bloodstains,” their “fluen[cy] in French,” and their “resilience” and “practical tactical brilliance.” The one key difference between the two immigrant characters is

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<sup>3</sup> The Spanish words used are either easily recognizable to anyone with only a basic understanding of the language or are given in context that explicitly reveals their meaning.

that, while Hamilton continually challenges other characters, including Samuel Seabury, Charles Lee, and even Washington, Lafayette seems to have neither enemies nor unpalatable qualities. In fact, we discover later that Lafayette is even liked by Jefferson, the leader of the second act's anti-immigrant faction, so much so that the former diplomat is willing to bring his new nation to war in order to help his French friend in his "hour of need" ("Cabinet Battle #2"). Because Hamilton's clashes lead to his downfall in Act II, his likeable counterpart represents what he could have been were he not "divisive [rather] than indecisive" (Farmer Refuted).

Stepping outside the text, Lafayette's broad appeal serves as a foil to reality itself. His dearth of negative qualities, unheard-of outside fiction, means that, if this character were a real person in modern-day America, his immigrant status would be his one "unlikeable" quality, and only those who dislike immigrants generally might dislike him for this. In reality, his accent and difficulty speaking English might suffer the common taunt: "This is America, we speak English!" His status as an immigrant military leader brings to mind some Americans' concerns that immigrants take away good jobs from U.S. citizens. His key role in the musical's Battle of Yorktown serves as a reminder that the United States would not exist without him and other immigrants. One might even surmise that Jefferson remains loyal to Lafayette only because the two meet after the latter returns to France, that is, after he literally "goes back to where he came from" and is therefore no longer an immigrant. Thus, his character draws the audience's attention to this stark contrast between the "hated and feared" immigrant of nationalist rhetoric and the immigrant we "know and love" in *Hamilton* ("Guns and Ships").

Hoffman posits that "musicals tell the story of ... racial shifts" in that "racial categories and concepts change over time, emphasiz[ing] that race itself is a socially and historically contingent category" (23). Amidst the technology boom and the rise of social media in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, these "racial shifts" now happen at a faster pace. Integration of the DACA program<sup>4</sup> and repeated debates over the DREAM Act<sup>5</sup> have brought about a "shift" from passive to more active fights for immigrants' inclusion in American society. We see this "shift" reflected in the seven years between *Heights*' Broadway opening and that of *Hamilton*. The former musical passively suggests that immigrants experience internal conflict between their cultural heritage and their desire to "becom[e] American." Less than a decade later, the latter actively reminds

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<sup>4</sup> Established in 2012 by President Obama, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals is an immigration policy that allows eligible minor immigrants to stay in the United States and potentially acquire work permits.

<sup>5</sup> A bipartisan bill debated in Congress many times since 2001 but never passed into law, the proposed Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act generally seeks to extend social benefits to foreign-born minors and, unlike DACA, would potentially allow a path to citizenship.

the audience that the reality of America is still in line with Jacobson's claim that one cannot "becom[e] American" without "becoming Caucasian."

The consensual ways in which *Hamilton* and *Heights* present the act of "becoming American" to mainstream audiences relies heavily on white America's relationship to hip hop, a genre that connotes both immigrants and African Americans. Miranda's musicals articulate realism and theatricality in a way that allows Broadway audiences to find the genre palatable on a Broadway stage. The seemingly tension-free space that results sets the stage for a new approach to racial hierarchies in the United States.

### ***Tensions Between the Hip Hop Subculture and the American Mainstream***

*Hamilton* and *Heights* each portray the hip hop subculture in ways that conflict with the American mainstream's traditional view of it. Raymond Knapp posits that American musicals "function ... as more-or-less reliable sources of cultural information" for "immigrants and early-generation Americans" and "mainstream, heritage Americans" alike in that they portray how "the realities of Americans and American history ... are generally understood, of what they are taken to be by Americans." Thus, he argues, "American musicals become ... an enacted demonstration of Americanism, ... tak[ing] on a formative, defining role in the construction of a collective sense of 'America'" (2004, 103). Two significant problems arise from this claim. First, it ignores the African American population, a group that can be classified as neither "mainstream American" nor "immigrant" and who, as established in Chapter 3, developed hip hop music in response to their inability to participate in American mainstream culture. Second, as Warren Hoffman points out, "the musical, with few exceptions, is written *by* white people, *for* white people, and is *about* white people" (4), seldom including narratives of non-white U.S. citizens. I suggest, therefore, an addendum to Knapp's assertion: The Great White Way displays "the realities of Americans and American history" as they are "generally understood" by *white, mainstream* "Americans."<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, Broadway's representations of *immigrants and Blacks*—the primary groups that typify hip hop culture—depict the way their "realities" are "generally understood" by white, mainstream Americans.

Following this logic, Miranda's musicals therefore portray *his and his creative team's* understanding of the hip hop subculture. Given Miranda's own Latinx heritage, one might expect his interpretation to deviate from more typical Broadway representations of Latinx immigrants. In fact, *Heights* does fulfill this expectation through Miranda's focus on

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<sup>6</sup> In line with Hoffman's claim about "racial shifts," this previously excluded white European immigrants but no longer does.

“characters that happen to be Latino [and Black]” acting in “relatable” ways that specifically contrast their “being demonized on the news ... as [they] so often [are]” (quoted in Craft 2014, 318). The implementation of hip hop subculture, however, does not necessarily challenge many white Americans’ conceptions of hip hop codes.

*Hamilton* and *Heights* both use hip hop as a form by featuring characters that embody hip hop subculture through their respective representations of rapping, dancing, and idioms. In the 2008 musical, this is seen through call-and-response (“96,000”), Benny “rapping with [his] buddies” (“When You’re Home”), and Graffiti Pete painting murals and tagging (“Finale”). In *Hamilton*, the characters beatbox, participate in rap battles (“Cabinet Battle #1” and “Cabinet Battle #2”), and frequently begin sentences with the word “yo.” Each of these is performed in ways commensurate with what the average Broadway theatergoer would expect of hip hop and follows Miranda’s declared intention to “orient the audience and set them at ease” (quoted in Craft 2014, 300).

The two musicals diverge, however, in their incorporations of hip hop content. The key difference here lies in the realism, or lack thereof, in the two productions. According to Elissa Harbert,

In realist productions the characters do not seem to know they are in a musical, ... [while more theatrical shows] do away with the goal of linearity or psychological realism in order to bring the past jarringly into the present with alienation effects, creative distortions of the distance between past and present, and extensive use of self-aware anachronism.<sup>7</sup> (421)

Generally speaking, *Heights* exemplifies the realistic musical: The characters sing and dance as if this behavior were the norm for American society. Meanwhile, *Hamilton* positions itself closer to theatricality, with its plethora of metatheatrical references (“We are waiting in the wings for you” in the opening number), its use of prolepsis (“Burn”), and its self-referentialism (“He says in parentheses” in the song “My Shot”). Even the fact that the show is sung and rapped through eliminates the contrast between sung and spoken word performed in most musicals. *Hamilton* thereby calls attention to the tendency of realist shows to accept this characteristic of musical theater as normal.

If we narrow Harbert’s binary configuration of realism and theatricality to consider just the use of hip hop elements in each production, we find that the two are in fact reversed. *Heights* tells a story of characters who were “never alive when [hip hop] didn't exist” and, according to Miranda, for them, “hip hop ... is breathing” (quoted in Craft 2014, 282). The bodies populating

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<sup>7</sup> This differs from the realist art movement that first gained popularity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In musicals, the focus is on whether the camp of Broadway seems realistic to the characters who enact it rather than to the viewer.

the stage manifest hip hop subculture and *they know* it. *Hamilton*, on the other hand, tells a story of war and policy-making that is set almost 250 years ago. These colorful founding fathers are not aware that their cabinet meetings are rap battles, nor that Jefferson's jibe, "If you don't know, now you know," directly quotes The Notorious B.I.G.'s song "Juicy," even if the audience does understand the references.

As a result of *Hamilton*'s more realistic performance of hip hop subculture, the cultural hierarchy that exists onstage deviates from those of most other Broadway musicals. The hip hop-embodied characters occupy clear positions of superiority over the white bodies that project 1960's pop (King George III) and baroque (Samuel Seabury) styles, both of which are part of the American mainstream's European roots. Because the characters are unaware of their enactments of hip hop, the musical presents this inversion of hip hop subculture and the American mainstream as realistic. The reversed racial hierarchy that results shows not necessarily how Miranda sees "the realities of Americans," but what this "realit[y]" might look like if immigrants and Blacks were not relegated to marginal spaces in the culture.

Thus, *Hamilton* and *Heights* foreground the need to end structural inequalities between whites and people of color by boldly reversing them. They do not, however, acknowledge the inherent differences between immigrants and African Americans and their unequal representations on the Great White Way.

### ***Tensions Between Immigrant and African American Communities***

*Hamilton* and *Heights* portray African American and immigrant groups as unified through hip hop, but at the expense of their unique identities and histories. In "Guns and Ships," Burr introduces Marquis de Lafayette as "an immigrant you know and love," an introduction emceed use, thereby connecting him to performance, specifically that of rapping. It is not a coincidence that this introduction is followed by the quickest rapping in the entire show: This is the only explicit connection the musical makes between immigrants and hip hop. Otherwise, the only link between the two is the hip hop form used to relate the immigrant experience. In general, immigrant communities seem to have a smaller cultural footprint on Broadway than Blacks do. Todd Decker attributes this to the fact that immigrants' "occasional inclusion has not had a lasting impact on the music or dance content of the genre." Meanwhile, "identifiably African American musical styles have had, and continue to have, a formative impact on the sound of the musical" (27). This evokes a chicken-and-egg-style paradox: Do artistic genres from immigrant cultures appear less frequently because they do not make "a lasting impact" on the Great White Way, or is the genre less impacted by them because they do not appear as often on



the stage? While the answer to this may never be known, we can look at the effects of this reality as portrayed in *West Side Story*<sup>8</sup> and then apply them to *Hamilton* and *Heights*.

During the writing process of *West Side Story*, the creators considered portraying several different pairs of opposing groups. According to Raymond Knapp,

At no point did the creators seriously consider placing the show within a white-black context, which would have had a ... profile ... of being both too familiar and too distinctive. In using as their basis the conflict between Puerto Rican immigrants and longer-established constituencies ... [the creative team] were paradoxically *not* particularly interested in the life circumstances (or music) of actual Puerto Rican immigrants, but only in their current relevance and comparative facelessness, as the ‘other’ to the mainstream Jets, who ... occupy the dramatically central position in the story. (205)

It seems that, during the 1950s and now, immigrant characters and cultures serve primarily as a theatrical tool on the Great White Way to act as a foil to more mainstream identities. African Americans, on the other hand, are so “familiar” to the mainstream that they can serve their own intrinsic purposes.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the familiarity of Blacks has allowed their music to function time and again as form on the Broadway stage,<sup>10</sup> while immigrants’ “facelessness” precludes them, for the time being, from leaving any “lasting impact” on the genre.

Similarly, immigrants are often denied the same recognition African Americans receive for their part in developing hip hop culture, despite the vital role they have played in the origination, production, and consumption of it. *Hamilton*’s juxtaposition of immigrant narrative and hip hop form highlights this irony by bringing Latinx characters to the forefront of the culture. The melding of Black bodies and pro-immigrant narrative then has the effect of familiarizing the Latinx immigrant vicariously through the already-familiar African American, presumably in an attempt to alleviate the former’s lack of recognition.

Where tensions exist in reality between all these groups, *Hamilton* and *Heights* seem to smooth them over for the sake of entertainment. This sense of unification does not necessarily reach outside the Broadway bubble to effect political change. Generally speaking, Broadway musicals “handle [race] in a way that simplifies matters and makes its predominantly white audiences feel good about themselves for thinking either that they are not racist or that they have defeated racism” (Hoffman, 14). The onstage success of Latinx immigrants and African

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<sup>8</sup> *West Side Story* (1957), based on *Romeo and Juliet*, depicts a gang of third- and fourth-generation European (and therefore white and assimilated) immigrant youths in a feud against a gang of first-generation Puerto Rican immigrants.

<sup>9</sup> This all overlooks, of course, the highly problematic reality that both groups are seen onstage only in terms of their relationships with the mainstream and not as their own, inherently valuable entities.

<sup>10</sup> Examples include jazz in *An American in Paris*; swing in *Swing!*; rock’n’roll in *Hair*; and hip hop in *Holler if Ya Hear Me*

Americans in *Hamilton* and *Heights*, as told through displays of hip hop elements, makes their mainstream audiences feel good about themselves for embracing aspects of these other cultures, thereby empathizing with the people who embody them. Outside the theater, however, minority communities still work hard to fight for their inclusion as first-rate citizens in American society. But is the actual political sway that *Hamilton* and *Heights* hold enough to effect real change, as some claim it is?

## Chapter 5: The Solubility of Politics in Entertainment

The question of Broadway's ability to bring about political change is one that has been debated by academics for decades. Whether or not this is true, few lay audience members look to the Great White Way as a motor toward progress. The respective popularities of *Hamilton* and *Heights* might, then, suggest that they have less potential to alter relations between white, African American, and Latinx communities. However, as with a few musicals before them, they can engage racial politics on the Great White Way through a multiracial casting approach.

### *Broadway Entertainment as "Serious" Art*

Politics and culture in the United States share a nuanced relationship. Like politics, American culture exists in several spectrums. One such spectrum is that between entertainment and art. At the former end, we find easy-to-digest movies and popular music, typically considered lowbrow, which do little to challenge social norms or ways of thinking. "Serious" art, which lies opposite entertainment, generally implies an important political message or cultural relevancy, such as is often found in the more highbrow spoken theatre.

This dichotomy of "serious" art and entertainment precludes the possibility for art with entertainment value to be taken seriously. Theater and social theory scholar David Savran points to "the older elite us[ing] the division between highbrow and lowbrow as a tool to organize ... the social and economic realms ... to fashion a hierarchy." He purports that this hierarchy "is far more important than the specific content of categories like highbrow and lowbrow" (84). That is, the *distance* between entertainment and "serious" art does more to maintain social and racial divides than the actual texts, contexts, and messages found in the simple plots of many Hollywood movies or the more complex plots of most spoken-theater productions.

The Broadway musical occupies a contested space on this spectrum. Elissa Harbert insists that "Broadway musicals ... must entertain the public if they are to succeed" (413). In other words, musical theatre audiences expect entertainment more so than art and want simple messages, if any. Warren Hoffman's take on the debate is a bit more nuanced. He concedes that "the American musical is repeatedly *written off* as inconsequential because it ... is too occupied with entertaining its middlebrow masses to articulate any sort of politics, racial or otherwise" (5, my emphasis). Yet, while consumers of popular culture understand these shows to have little or no political import, Hoffman's critical approach suggests the opposite. He argues that, in fact, "The Broadway musical ... is one of America's most powerful, influential, and even at times polemical arts *precisely* because it often seems to be about nothing at all" (2, emphasis

original). The fact that audiences go to the theater expecting to *not* consume (racial) political statements is the very thing that renders them more susceptible to such messages.

Savran classifies Broadway theater as “neither high nor low—or rather, *both high and low at the same time*” (87). Thus, this middle-brow entertainment navigates the space between these two ends of the spectrum. A given musical’s location on the spectrum depends on the varying degrees of “high and low” found in the text and performance. Moreover, according to Savran, the genre “evinces[ ] ... the willful mixture of entertainment and art, the profane and the sacred, frivolous and profound” (87). In “mix[ing]” these binary characteristics, each show expresses a compromise between entertainment and “serious” art. Because they are “both high and low at the same time,” musicals effectively average the two extremes, carefully smoothing over the tensions between them by exhibiting parts of each together.

*Hamilton*’s and *Heights*’ respective political messages place them toward the “serious” art end of this spectrum. Beyond their representations of the American Dream, these musicals also demonstrate the harsh realities of political inequalities faced by the minority groups depicted onstage. John Laurens, one of Hamilton’s revolutionary friends, vows to “pop chick-a pop these cops” (“Aaron Burr, Sir”). An incendiary comment seldom discussed by academics or critics, this line invokes the violence pervasive to relations between minorities and law enforcement in urban areas of the United States. In *Heights*, the double meaning of Sonny’s plea that he and his neighbors “are powerless” establishes a sense of helplessness amidst the chaos of the blackout—both to return electricity to the neighborhood, thereby ending the blackout, and to gain political power, which would eventually end the systemic discrimination the minority characters face (“Blackout”). Through depicting the political realities of minorities, *Hamilton* and *Heights* have themselves become acts of political recognition of the cultures they depict onstage.

Since these musicals also provide significant entertainment value, one might arrive at the conclusion that they occupy a space near, if not exactly at, the center of the entertainment/“serious” art spectrum. According to Savran, “The middlebrow consumer was considered to be traditional at heart yet striving to be au courant” (86). This, in essence, is also the common goal of Miranda’s two blockbuster musicals. Striving for socio-political relevance, they pass through the medium of Broadway, a facet of American popular culture that has become less artistic and more commercial with the recent advent of corporate and jukebox musicals. Yet, Miranda combines these two seemingly disparate functions of theater to create musicals that celebrate both as separate entities rather than average them to find a middle

ground. It is in this way that countless *Hamilton* fan-fiction videos have appeared on YouTube and Utah state legislators passed a resolution honoring Miranda and his musical.

With “serious” art and entertainment so closely linked in *Hamilton* and *Heights*, these musicals not only fill the space between highbrow and lowbrow, but effectively work to close the gap between them. Their political aspects propound the argument that they should both be considered as “serious” art. Perhaps their most important political messaging, then, comes through the form of their multiracial casting schemes.

### ***Casting and Political Messaging***

*Hamilton*’s use of actors of color to portray the founding fathers onstage has sparked considerable debate amongst critics, academics, and some lay audience members. For some, this multiracial casting strategy allows marginalized groups to take ownership of the founding myth. Others think it problematic to use actors of color to celebrate the lives of slave-owners. Others still see *Hamilton* as a way for predominantly white audience members to rationalize any racist behaviors they might exhibit because, as fans of a hip hop musical, they can consider themselves as being “woke.” While I delve into the cultural effects of such a casting choice in Chapter 7, I would like here to consider the political effects of this decision.

There has been much discussion in recent years about nontraditional casting, or the casting of an actor whose race does not match that of the character they play onstage.<sup>1</sup> Theater scholar Brian Eugenio Herrera clarifies casting overall as:

an umbrella term used to describe not only the process through which performers are assessed for and assigned to roles, but also the meanings, effects, and implications that are activated when the selected performers enact those roles.... Every act of casting is then simultaneously a creative act of interpretation and also an administrative allocation of resources. (230)

Thus, when making casting decisions for a musical, creative teams must consider the acting experience and skill levels of the actors auditioning for parts and any racial messaging—positive or negative—they may want to convey through the bodies seen onstage. When considering these two facets of casting, I argue that, overall, *Hamilton*’s multiracial casting does less harm than good.

Concerning the first of these two functions, Herrera sees casting as “a necessary administrative task” that gives “great power” to “those deciding who gets a part and who does not” (230). The creative teams of *Hamilton* and *Heights* chose to write and produce their shows in a way that provides a significant number of roles to minority actors and actresses. In this

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<sup>1</sup> See the Glossary for a more in-depth explanation of nontraditional casting and its many subcategories of casting.

way, the multiracial casting functions as an individual act toward equality, in that only a handful of creators made this decision. Conversely, little has been done at a systemic level to achieve this. Actors' Equity Association, the union representing the United States' live-theater industry, developed a standard definition for "nontraditional casting" several decades ago<sup>2</sup> but has not updated it in the wake of the 21<sup>st</sup> century's changing views on race and ethnicity. Meanwhile, policy-makers have done even less to ensure proportional representation of marginalized groups on the Broadway stage, given the "*bona fide* occupational qualification" loophole in anti-discriminatory hiring laws.

Some research has been done to ascertain the effects of nontraditional casting in this regard. In his article "Power and Problems of Performance across Ethnic Lines: An Alternative Approach to Nontraditional Casting," William H. Sun lists three perspectives from which he examines "[a]cting across (or adhering to) ethnic lines:... an anthropological perspective as it relates to education; aesthetics in relation to professional theatre; and a political perspective in relation to unemployment" (88). He discusses the first two at length, but leaves the third mostly untouched. In essence, he argues that multiracial casting provides opportunities for many minority actors who would otherwise have difficulty finding employment on the Great White Way. However, I might question the overall impact *Hamilton* and *Heights* have had in providing significant numbers of jobs for non-white actors on Broadway. They do provide many roles for actors of color.<sup>3</sup> And yet, this makes up a relatively small percentage of jobs compared to all other career paths. According to The Broadway League, during the 2018-2019 season, Broadway theater accounted for 96,900 jobs across all positions for both spoken and musical plays. This includes actors, creative teams, and theater management companies, but also marketing companies, backstage crew, concessions vendors, ticket offices, theater janitorial staff, and more. As is apparent, only a fraction of these are acting jobs, and less than half of those go to minorities. Thus, only a few would be affected by truly equal casting opportunities.

This is not to say that multiracial casting cannot function as a *collective* act toward equality. Herrera argues that casting Black and Brown actors "might build a stage reality in which racial meaning might imbue, inform, and amplify the scripted drama in particular ways" (232). Thus, this second facet of casting—that of artistic interpretation—can play an even larger

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<sup>2</sup> AEA's definition of nontraditional casting systemically endorses an industry norm of white actors playing white characters. See the Glossary of Casting Terms for their full definition.

<sup>3</sup> This number reaches into the several hundreds when taking into account *Hamilton*'s numerous touring and permanent productions outside New York City

role in efforts toward racial equality, both inside and outside the theater. We see this in *Hamilton* and *Heights* in three primary ways.

First, Black and Brown bodies onstage attract a more diverse demographic into the house. *Hamilton* in particular has achieved this through several modes of outreach, including its partnership with the Gilder-Lehrman Institute and Wednesday matinees for students of inner-city high schools. While the Broadway League does not report on statistics for individual shows, it has seen a steady increase in “non-Caucasian theatergoers” over the last decade, which can be contributed at least in part to more diverse audiences for *Hamilton* and *Heights*.

Second, as Herrera writes, “*Hamilton*’s reach will almost certainly accelerate the incorporation ... of nontraditional casting practices” (233). Given the current trend to produce Broadway musicals that replicate previous successes, whether through revivals, jukebox musicals, or adaptations of Hollywood films, *Hamilton*’s popularity and record ticket sales will ostensibly encourage other producers to replicate this in order to ensure profits in an increasingly-expensive industry. The multiracial casting therefore operates as an invitation to other playwrights and theaters to do the same.

Finally, the multiracial casting in *Hamilton* can have an effect on the viewpoints of audience members. In speaking about the musical *The Scottsboro Boys*<sup>4</sup>, Warren Hoffman contends, “[T]he creators are asking [the primarily white] viewers not to merely reconsider the connection between racism and entertainment but to contemplate their own complicity in this project” (233). Hoffman refers specifically to minstrelsy here, but the same holds true for Miranda’s musical in certain ways. The 21<sup>st</sup> century has seen a turn away from idolizing Thomas Jefferson because he owned slaves. In *Hamilton*, however, an African American plays his doppelganger, wearing an afro while singing to a jazz-inspired bassline and twirling a fashionable walking cane. This medley of the Black body and sophistication reminds the audience that, during the time of America’s founding, the former was subjugated while the latter almost always meant “white.” Miranda’s portrayal of Hamilton, on the other hand, prompts a conversation about white America’s relationship with immigrants. Since he is a Latinx actor with no apparent African heritage, his performance serves merely to underscore that the titular character must work harder than the other founders, but that his obstacles are not constitutionally insurmountable.

Presenting these minority cultural communities onstage serves to open the minds of traditional Broadway audience members to consider new ways of perceiving them onstage.

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<sup>4</sup> *The Scottsboro Boys* (2011) tells the true story of nine young African American men who were falsely accused and convicted of raping two white women in 1931. I discuss this musical further in Chapter 9.

Elissa Harbert posits that *Hamilton* “makes a statement about the dynamics of race relations ... in the early twenty-first century” (414).<sup>5</sup> It certainly does reflect a recent turn toward positive portrayals of African American and Latinx communities in mainstream entertainment. I suggest, however, that the musical does more than merely comment on the current racial politics in the United States. The attention that its nuanced portrayals of race has garnered in the Broadway community in fact actively encourages higher visibility for these groups onstage, which might eventually lead to a new norm of equal casting opportunities.

Let us return for a moment to Raymond Knapp’s assertion of visibility on Broadway stages. As I said in Chapter 4, the *Great White Way* depicts the realities of American culture, whether mainstream or marginalized, as seen through the eyes of white America. This holds true as long as these depictions sell tickets because Broadway, after all, largely exists to make money for investors. If depictions of race that are unexpected by mainstream audiences can lead to successful musicals such as *Hamilton* and *Heights*, these are the images audiences will continue to see onstage. If mainstream audiences *see* more Black and Brown bodies onstage, “the history of the American musical” may in the future become less and less “the history of white identity in the United States,” as Hoffman indicates it currently is (3). It might become, instead, a way for minorities to facilitate better relationships between African American culture, Latinx and other immigrant cultures, and mainstream culture.

It remains to be seen whether the successes of *Hamilton* and *Heights* will lead to a new generation of Broadway musicals that promote more positive visibility of minority cultures in the eyes of the mainstream. We do know, however, that these were not the first productions to use multiracial casting to attempt to change race politics. In 1969, Richard Piro embarked on what he thought would be a small endeavor to improve race relations in New York City’s Junior High School 275. The show that resulted has engaged musical theater historians ever since.

### ***“Black Fiddler;” or, an Historical Case Study in the Political Effects of Multiracial Casting***

In the 1960s, Broadway met with serious decline. It faced national social upheaval and a youth counterculture, along with the diaspora of Manhattan’s middle-class families into suburbs, leading to a decline in tax income and a rise in crime and poverty among its minority communities. Amidst this, there was significant doubt as to whether Broadway theater would

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<sup>5</sup> The “statement” to which Harbert alludes seems so apparent that she makes no effort to support this claim.



survive (Kenrick, 249). Few musicals found success, and *Fiddler on the Roof*<sup>6</sup> stands out as one that not only broke records, but did so for a notably unconventional reason: Many anticipated the musical to be too narrowly focused on Jewish traditions to appeal to mainstream audiences. Despite this concern, mainstream audiences flocked to it because they, like the parents in *Fiddler*, faced “outspoken youth” and lived in a time when “social mores were shifting” and “the links between tradition and change seemed stretched to the limit” (Wollman, 147). After all, at this point in time, while orthodoxy of any religion lay outside the norm, the white mainstream no longer thought of American Jews as “immigrants.”

In the wake of the show’s success and ostensible ability to cross the boundary between Jewish and “American,” Richard Piro, a high school drama teacher in Brownsville, Brooklyn, restaged *Fiddler* in an attempt to foster better cultural understanding between the largely Latinx and African American student body and the predominantly Jewish staff. In an event Piro dubbed “Black *Fiddler*,” he and the school principal faced criticism from several angles. On the one hand, the severely anti-Semitic students disliked the idea of staging a show about Jewish characters and traditions. The faculty, on the other hand, urged them to cancel the show due to worries about increased anti-Semitism and using non-Jewish students to play Jewish roles. When they did cancel the show, they received backlash from Black parents who saw hypocrisy at their children not being allowed to respectfully portray and learn about Euro-American culture onstage. The school eventually decided to continue with the production. In the end, the students of color came to closely identify with the persecution of Jews. Most teachers eventually saw the benefits of their students learning about their culture.<sup>7</sup> Finally, the community as a whole benefitted, if only briefly, from better cross-cultural understanding and a reprieve from violent tensions between Jews, Latinxs, and African Americans. (Piro, 55)

In 1971, two years after the final performance of “Black *Fiddler*,” Piro wrote an open letter to the students of his production in an attempt to explain, from his own point of view, what exactly had happened. At the outset, he wrote, he chose *Fiddler* as that year’s musical because it “presented a perfect vehicle for changing student-community attitudes” (52). He referred to their process of staging and performance as “an experience that both ennobled and shamed everyone involved” (50). In the end, he wrote,

[O]ne of the most exciting things to me and a few other teachers is the fact that our community (school and home) now shares our views—no, not on Jews and blacks,

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<sup>6</sup> First appearing on the Great White Way in 1964, it tells the story of a Jewish dairyman living in a ghetto in czarist Russia with his headstrong daughters, and it depicts in specific detail the traditions, values, and concerns of orthodox Jews.

<sup>7</sup> A few teachers did boycott performances of the show.

but our deep belief that the students of our school are first class citizens of the world and are capable of delivering first-class contributions to society. (50)

At least in Piro's mind, the production yielded positive results for the individuals and families involved. The students found a deep connection with a people they once hated through a process that allowed them to escape the "drugs, sex, and hate" that plagued their lives outside school (51). Meanwhile, the parents had tangible proof that their children could be the change their community so desperately needed.

And yet, as Bruce Kirle writes, "[I]t was beyond the parameters of theatre to solve the racial tensions in Brownsville in the 1960s" (150). As the decade came to an end, tensions rose not only in Brownsville but across the country. An arsonist destroyed the school's auditorium, and with it all the drama program's costumes, props, and scenery. This led Piro to write in his letter, "The situation in the cities had deteriorated to a point at which excellence of any kind became the prime target for the destroyers" (55). So, while the students experienced, at least for a time, a positive racial-political outcome of "Black *Fiddler*," little was done beyond their individual lives to ease tensions in their surroundings. Kirle grants Piro and his production that "[a]ttempting radical social change through musical theatre is an admirable goal and one to be encouraged" (150). This was ostensibly also the goal of the Broadway production's creative team who, according to Piro, donated resources to his school production.<sup>8</sup> Kirle nuances his own praise of Piro, however, with his claim that Broadway musicals' "more conservative solutions to social problems ... satisfy commercial audiences hungry for peaceful change but averse to revolution" (150). While the casting of African American and Latinx children to play Jewish roles engendered a positive relationship onstage between these minority cultures, tensions offstage ran too deep to be greatly affected by the production.

One thing to keep in mind through all this is that tackling race through performance, and casting specifically, is not the same as tackling race through the text itself. In his book *The Great White Way: Race and the Broadway Musical*, Warren Hoffman builds his main argument around the relationship between the actors and the characters, questioning what this relationship says about American culture. In his introduction, he writes,

The performances and the ways the bodies of the actors are utilized divulge a great deal [about race], revealing that racial meaning is sometimes located in the space *between* the text and the performers. (26)

For his production, Piro strove to create an exact replica of the Broadway show except, of course, the casting. This means that the textual message was the same for both: Tradition is

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<sup>8</sup> The creative team also reportedly convinced their producers to drop a lawsuit they filed against the school for staging the musical before its copywrite allowed it.

important to elder generations, but changes must be made if one is to survive in a changing world. However, in terms of performance, “*Black Fiddler*’s” casting scheme, particularly in relation to its staging in Brownsville, sent a different message: “Poverty and oppression know no ethnic singularities” (Piro, 55). This shift in political messaging happened solely “in the space between” the original text about Russian Jews and Piro’s casting of African American and Latinx children who face similar difficulties.

Similar to “*Black Fiddler*,” the multiracial casting in *Hamilton* reveals racial-political messaging that strives to articulate positive relationships between these minorities and Broadway audiences. Like *Fiddler*, it is removed historiographically from the present yet still contains some culturally relevant political messaging. While no lines or lyrics refer explicitly to a particular character’s race or ethnicity, *Hamilton* and the Marquis de Lafayette congratulate each other on their immigrant status when they proclaim, “Immigrants, we get the job done” (“Yorktown”). This show-stopping line, which has become a cultural item in and of itself, functions as a political message by reminding the audience that immigrants are always in the background, working to keep the country running. Beyond the line itself, the characters who say the line are played by Latinx and African American actors. This foregrounds the United States’ dependence on the former in the present day to work physically demanding agricultural jobs for little pay, and on the latter for the same type of work they did as enslaved people.

In the next chapter, I dive deeper into how the respective popularities of *Hamilton* and *Heights* contribute to the musicals’ message of positive relationships between Broadway audiences and the minority communities they see portrayed onstage. Unlike *Heights*, however, *Hamilton*’s fame has reached outside the Broadway bubble and therefore has the potential to bring other mainstream Americans into the conversation.

## Chapter 6: Using Commercialism to Declare Accessibility

*Hamilton* and *Heights* establish a common ground for members of diverse communities. Broadway fans and hip hop fans, historians and pop-culture gurus, elite celebrities and inner-city high schoolers, first-generation immigrants and white, Anglo-Saxon protestants can all consider themselves fans of these musicals. Memorabilia facilitate this broad appeal by rendering the shows more accessible to those who do not comprise the traditional Broadway audience. Yet, the undeniable commercial value of these items leaves room to question the intentions behind them. Either way, they allow the musicals to exist simultaneously in and outside the walls of the theater. This in turn provides a way to analyze the overall effectiveness of *Hamilton* and *Heights* to articulate positive relationships between Broadway audiences, Latinx immigrants, and African Americans.

### *Paratheatricality*

In her book *A Critical Companion to the American Stage Musical*, Elizabeth Wollman reminds her readers that Broadway is “a mass entertainment often created with one eye on art and the other on commerce” (180). *Hamilton* and *Heights* are no exception to this. Their qualification of “serious” art has not prevented their commercial success. During the week ending March 8, 2020<sup>1</sup>, *Hamilton* grossed nearly \$2.7 million, with a total gross of almost \$650 million; *Heights* grossed over \$1 million in its final week on Broadway, and grossed over \$100 million throughout its three-season run (BroadwayWorld.com). The financial successes of the two shows exist in tandem with their non-performance iterations, or what Brian Eugenio Herrera calls “paratheatrical versions” of shows. Do these components merely contribute to the shows’ commercial goals, or do they actually render the musicals more accessible to Americans at large?

By creating various easy-to-obtain iterations of *Hamilton* to code to both marginalized and mainstream communities, Miranda exposes his oeuvre to a broad and diverse audience. Warren Hoffman compares the musical’s popularity with those of *Hair* and *Rent*, claiming that *Hamilton* “is much more wildly popular due to the world of social media that has allowed the show to take on a life of its own” (215). Wollman notes that “these tools have all been incorporated by the commercial theater industry for use in advertising and promotion” (185). These typically free outlets broaden the show’s media footprint, thereby providing exposure to

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<sup>1</sup> Broadway theaters closed beginning March 9, 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and are projected to reopen in September, 2020.

the public in addition to, or rather as a part of, the production team's prescribed marketing strategy.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, the cast album makes a significant contribution to encouraging ticket sales when one considers that it serves as "an often profitable artifact" (129), as Michelle Dvoskin does. Among all the forms of show memorabilia, whether tangible, audible, or virtual, the cast album provides the most potent experience of performance outside "the act of viewing the musical itself" (128). "Through this," Dvoskin affirms, "it becomes possible to understand oneself as a fan of a show without having seen it" (129). The emotional connection one builds through the transition from casual listener to self-proclaimed fan allows for the development of a sentimental bond between the person and the musical, thus encouraging the listener to purchase more show memorabilia and, perhaps, a ticket to the show.

*Hamilton* is no exception to this phenomenon, and its various integrants provide a window into the performance of the show that doesn't require the purchase of a Broadway ticket—or a trip to New York City, for that matter. For this reason, "many of the show's aficionados have never actually seen the show live," as Hoffman points out (224). This accessibility allows for an audience that is not limited to merely those (typically) middle-class, white New Yorkers and tourists who can spend hundreds of dollars on one night's entertainment. Through the cast album, *The Hamilton Mixtape*, *Hamilton: The Revolution*, and Miranda's large social media footprint, *Hamilton* can reach anyone with access to the Internet.

*Heights* incorporates many of the same types of products, as do most modern musicals. Since the release of the Original Broadway Cast album of *Oklahoma!* in 1943, the very songs of musicals have become artifacts of inherent importance. Prior to this show, individual songs from musicals were recorded, if at all, as covers by contemporary singers. With the inception of the cast album, one could record—and therefore cement in history—the show itself, and facsimile it for mass consumption. With the advent of the megamusical in the 1980s, other types of memorabilia, such as key-chains and coffee cups, became commonplace for all musicals big enough to make it to Broadway. Even *Hamilton*'s high visibility through social media grew out of Miranda's numerous YouTube posts around the time of *Heights*' Broadway run, and the lottery system it utilizes to sell day-of tickets for only \$10 began in 1995 with *Rent*.

Yet, the memorabilia and paratheatrical iterations of *Heights* and other shows ostensibly lack the supposed purpose of accessibility that the *Hamilton* products carry. Or, perhaps more precisely, the musicals' accessibility through these items serves the more commercial purpose

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<sup>2</sup> Social media also facilitates larger conversations between Miranda and his fans. He often encourages his Twitter followers to post lyrics from *Hamilton* that reflect on topical issues.

of generating a broader interest in them. If people from all corners of the United States can become “aficionados” of a show merely by listening to cast albums and buying refrigerator magnets, then these same people will more likely make the trip to the Big Apple to see their favorite show live, presumably sparking their friends’ interest in the process. *Hamilton* also benefits commercially from the sale of its memorabilia. Performances in Chicago, San Francisco, and London opened to sold-out theaters full of fans and “aficionados” who knew the musical *only* from commemorative artifacts, and this trend continues with each new city that hosts one of the musical’s two North American touring companies.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the incorporation of *Hamilton* into high school history classes outwardly focuses on opening up the show to students in under-served areas; but it also establishes the show as one that supports good causes, thereby increasing its attractiveness to white, middle-class musical theater patrons who tend to advocate for community giving.

While it may seem a fine line between accessibility for accessibility’s sake and accessibility for commercial purposes, these two aspects differ significantly from one another. John Kenrick points to *Cats*<sup>4</sup> as the first musical to employ paratheatrical products as marketing tools:

The most revolutionary thing about *Cats* was its marketing. Before this, musicals limited their souvenirs to photo programs, songbooks, and T-shirts. *Cats* splashed its distinctive logo [...] on a vast array of coffee mugs, music boxes, figurines, books, greeting cards, baseball caps, satin jackets, Christmas ornaments, storage tins, stuffed toys, matchboxes, umbrellas, key chains, pins, and much more.

The key to these artifacts’ success in marketing relies on the objects’ consensual vision of both the content and context of the musical. They do not make political or social statements, nor do they pass exclusionary judgement on those who have not seen the show live. Rather, through fostering the “aficionado’s” pride in his or her knowledge of the show, these codes of fandom have become “splashed” not only on the items themselves, but throughout homes, schools, shopping malls, and any other number of places that the products may be carried by their owners. The various iterations of both *Hamilton* and *Heights* also maintain this. They do not openly advocate either a bootstraps or immigrant reading of either musical; endorse one ethnic community over another; or, notably in the case of *Hamilton*, engage with political backlash

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<sup>3</sup> I myself first discovered the show not by reading theater reviews and keeping an eye out for new shows to see, but through a combination of friends who were fans (without having seen the show, of course) and hearing some of its songs on the radio.

<sup>4</sup> Considered the first of the megamusicals, *Cats* (1982) appeared on Broadway after its first of many successful seasons in London. Its simple plotline and emotive music appeal primarily to families and international tourists of all levels of English comprehension.

from government officials. The items simply advertise the logo of the show in any setting in which fans choose to display them, thus attracting members of all communities.

The accessibility and commercialism that show memorabilia generate typically function together unidirectionally. The items render a show more accessible to those who would not otherwise be interested in seeing a Broadway musical, thus providing marketing en masse. However, this “open-access” marketing does not guarantee the masses a seat in the theatre. As production costs skyrocket, ticket prices increase (Kenrick, 281). Ticket lotteries can help with this, but systemic limitations place constraints on the number of people who can take advantage of this. A mere handful of musicals employ this system, so most remain fully accessible only to those who can pay full price for tickets. A fraction of people who enter win tickets, leaving others to either pay full price or not see the show. Moreover, since the lottery system became entirely digitized, it now requires a credit card and easy and reliable access to the internet, which many working-class immigrants and African Americans do not have. Finally, and perhaps most definitively, ticket lotteries only benefit those who can afford a trip to midtown Manhattan, which many all around the country cannot easily do.

Where the lottery falls short, however, *Hamilton*'s popularity pulls through. First, it led to a renewed interest in *Heights*, resulting in the production of a film version currently set to release in 2021<sup>5</sup>. This will allow people across the country to gain access to this musical without purchasing a Broadway ticket, airline and/or hotel reservations, or expensive meals in the Big Apple. Similarly, *Hamilton* itself will become available in homes, not through a cinematic adaptation but through the release of a recording of the original stage production. In an interview for *Variety Magazine*, Miranda focuses attention on the fact that such a release will “steal that brag [of seeing the Original Broadway Cast production] from” those who were able to afford such a ticket. This will indeed render *Hamilton* accessible to more individuals than any number of touring and permanent companies could possibly do. Miranda's perspective on this “brag,” however, reveals the level of neglect of marginalized peoples that the show's and his popularity allow. The lyricist/composer states that “everyone” has “that friend who brags” about seeing *Hamilton* “with the original cast.” This claim can only factually be directed at the friends of the 500,000 people who saw the original production. This excludes most ethnic minorities not connected to the white, middle-class community of typical Broadway audience members. His insistence that “everyone” has such a friend denies that these minority groups are

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<sup>5</sup> The release date, originally in June of 2020, may be delayed again, pending the reopening of movie theaters in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

a part of America's "everyone," thus countering the work the musical has done to promote positive relationships between members of Latinx, African American, and white communities.

Nevertheless, the plethora of paratheatrical iterations of *Hamilton*, as well as the forthcoming film, allow it to exist in various dimensions. Just as *Hamilton*'s accessibility and commercialism are closely linked and even overlap, the musical's own relationship to Broadway, in the contexts of both the performances and paratheatrical versions, operates on several layers.

### ***Broadway as the Container and the Contained***

The theater industry's definition of "Broadway" focuses on a codified set of concrete criteria, namely its geographical location and a theater's size. To be considered a Broadway show, a musical must be performed in a theater that seats at least 500 people and that is located in the theater district in midtown Manhattan. The theater must also primarily house plays and musicals, rather than music concerts or dance performances. The Broadway League, the national trade association for the Broadway industry, currently recognizes 41 theaters as being "on-Broadway".

The Richard Rodgers Theatre, which housed *Heights* and now plays home to *Hamilton*, is one such Broadway theater. Thus, the musical is bound in space by these specifications. It inherently cannot reach outward to the minority communities in Brooklyn, the Bronx, or even uptown Manhattan's Washington Heights neighborhood, let alone those living in other parts of the country. Brian Eugenio Herrera notes constraints not just in keeping *Hamilton* stationary, but also in preventing members of these communities from going to it. He writes,

The stubborn limits of the live theatrical event—of time, of capacity, of geography, of cost—have proven an obstacle to many who want to experience *Hamilton* live in performance. (223)

Minorities often do not have the resources to overcome these obstacles. They cannot afford the expensive theater tickets, nor, in the case of non-New Yorkers, the cost of transportation to get to the theater. For many, seeing an evening show means taking time off work, which they often cannot do, and, at least in the beginning, the high demand of the show and the relatively small number of seats meant that no tickets were even available.

However, the various paratheatrical components of *Hamilton* allow it to also exist outside the strictly-defined Broadway space. Herrera insists that these groups can still experience the musical, obstacles notwithstanding. He posits,



[I]n spite of (or perhaps because of) *Hamilton*'s obdurate theatrical limits, a broad constellation of ways to encounter the show even without being in the room where it actually happens have quickly emerged. (223)

Thus, the vast accessibility of the musical's offshoots serves to bring the experience of *Hamilton*, if not the experience of the live show itself, to those who cannot come to it. Broadway, then, is merely a single part of *Hamilton* in addition to something that encompasses it. Because the *Hamilton* franchise exists beyond the limitations, both physical and economic, of the Great White Way, it can function as a platform on which to articulate relationships between those who can see the musical on Broadway and those who cannot.

*Heights* creates an interesting counterexample here, because it does not share the same amount of popularity outside the Broadway bubble. It does, however, occupy a significant space within Broadway culture, as evidenced by its abundance of merchandise and numerous Tony awards and nominations. Furthermore, its popularity has grown as a direct result of *Hamilton*'s popularity. Miranda's name now garners attention itself, and fans eager for all things "*Hamilton*" have now been drawn to his other works.

Most if not all communities agree that *Hamilton* is a blockbuster. Indeed, it hit the trifecta of Broadway success: It received rave reviews from critics, collected a record number of both Tony awards and nominations, and still performs to sold-out audiences. Not all people, however, see it in the same way. *Hamilton* exists at different points on each of the political, social, cultural, and historical spectrums. The musical's significance in each of these aspects depends more on the communities to which the viewer belongs than on any inherent qualities of the text. Thus, politicians believe the show is of immense political importance, while most historians either see it as historically insignificant or deem it significant only because of its inaccuracies. Each of these communities has strictly defined boundaries, excluding those that do not code as such. And yet, unlike the straight lines of narrative, each of these groups meld and reshape to adjust to changing times and culture. For this reason, none of the communities that fit under the umbrella of the American mainstream inherently preclude the addition of immigrants or African Americans as first-class citizens of the United States.

The ability to reach the entire nation in spite of Broadway's limitations has led Herrera to question, "How significant are *Hamilton*'s theatrical origins, especially when the musical has become a multisite and multimedia phenomenon of interest to millions?" He goes on to assess the production "from inside the Broadway bubble" (224), looking at the space it occupies in Broadway culture and how the two affect one another. However, one must consider the show from *outside* this bubble in order to recognize how it can help extend Americanness to those

who have been marginalized from it. If the contained truly does mirror the container, perhaps we can measure the effects of *Hamilton* on minority cultures by looking not only at how it articulates relationships between Latinx, African American, and mainstream cultures, but also at how it might foster the reshaping of the mainstream to include these minorities.

## **Act III**

### **Can Broadway Reshape Mainstream Culture to Include Latinx and African American cultures?**

*We fought ... for the notion of a nation we now get to build.*

Alexander Hamilton, *Hamilton*

*Hamilton* was popular during its time off-Broadway. Shortly after it moved to the Great White Way, it had become a cultural phenomenon. Almost everyone was talking about it; lines from the musical were quoted in casual conversations; and for the first time, Broadway stars without previous film credits made regular appearances on television. More than a year after its Broadway debut, *Hamilton* was still the hottest ticket on the Great White Way. When then-President-elect Donald Trump tweeted that the musical was “overrated,” *The Late Show* host Stephen Colbert responded the following evening on his show by jokingly addressing Trump:

You’ve gone too far. You can pull out of NATO, you can round up immigrants, but *Hamilton*, overrated? No! ... You can’t say it’s overrated! It’s had a huge cultural impact. It has finally given old white people a way to enjoy rap.

Certainly, the beginning of this joke did not age well given many of President Trump’s policies. As a whole, though, it reveals the prominent place *Hamilton* did and continues to occupy in American mainstream culture. The laughs the joke garnered from its primarily white, middle-class, progressive audience indicate that, at least on the surface, white America seemed to feel more protective of Miranda’s show than of Latinx migrants seeking refuge on United States soil. This suggests that *Hamilton* has not moved the nation forward on issues of race. Indeed, the punchline seems to undermine the preceding claim that the musical has “had a huge cultural impact.”

What cultural impact as *Hamilton* actually had? It surely has facilitated “old white people[‘s]” interest in hip hop culture, and its unquestioned popularity ensures easily recognizable context for popular humor. But has it engaged white America enough in conversations about race that they might work toward reshaping mainstream culture to include African American and Latinx people, not just that aspect of their culture that is displayed so appealingly onstage?

## **Chapter 7: Raising Questions of Imagery and Impact Through Multiracial Casting<sup>1</sup>**

From talk show hosts to critics to fans, people seem eager to label *Hamilton* as “revolutionary.” Perhaps one of the more prominent reasons for this is the way it utilizes multiracial casting to adapt a story traditionally only thought of as white. In fact, America’s founding myth is so entrenched in the population’s psyche as being “white” that most academics treat the characters in *Hamilton* as such, despite the Black and Brown bodies that populate the

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<sup>1</sup> See the Glossary of Casting Terms.

stage in this fictionalized adaptation. If we view Miranda's story as one that presents America's founders as people of color, a new interpretation of the musical and, indeed, of mainstream culture presents itself.

### ***Black and Brown Bodies, White Characters?***

When discussing *Hamilton*'s casting, academics and critics often disagree on whether it is nontraditional, race-conscious, or colorblind. Many critics, and even some academics, well-versed in theater but not specifically in performance studies, use the three terms almost interchangeably. Theater scholars Brian Eugenio Herrera and Warren Hoffman strive for greater precision, identifying for their readers the differences between these terms and the reasons why they are important. For example, Hoffman takes issue with "many critics call[ing] [*Hamilton*] ... color-blind casting, in which just anyone could play these roles." Instead, he advocates that academics and critics alike refer to the strategy as "race-conscious casting or ... 'compositional casting'" (216).<sup>2</sup> In considering the effects of the musical's casting, Hoffman asks rhetorically, "What makes something a 'white musical,' a 'black musical,' or a 'Latino musical'?" Despite its colorful casting, he suggests that *Hamilton* is "a white tale through and through" give its historically-based source text (217). However, he ignores another possible approach to the show's casting.

In categorizing the casting scheme of any show, one must not only consider the actors that are cast for each role, but also the characters themselves. I posit that, in Miranda's fictitious world, *Black and Brown characters* populate the streets of New York. The hairstyles, dance, language, coding, and even casting that are integral to the performance of *Hamilton* display characters who engage in hip hop subculture. As the protagonist and his friends fight their final battle of the war, they frequently pound a fist to their chest, a gesture in hip hop culture that signifies respect. In the background, the ensemble mixes traditional Broadway dance with break-dancing moves, including popping and locking, knee spins, and rock steps. These movements are hardly reminiscent of elderly, white slaveowners.

Few academics, however, seem to consider this when discussing the musical's casting. In his essay "Looking at *Hamilton* from Inside the Broadway Bubble," Herrera subtly questions this, constantly referring to the characters as "presumptively white," but he never openly argues that they differ in race and ethnicity from their historical namesakes. If Black and Brown characters do indeed sing and rap their way through revolution and early governance, *Hamilton*,

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<sup>2</sup> See the Glossary of Casting Terms.

then, does in fact utilize traditional casting through its employment of non-white actors to play non-white roles. In light of this, I might make an addition to Hoffman's claim that "the inherent whiteness that the founding fathers represent is left untouched and essentially unexamined" in *Hamilton* (218). The founding fathers of the source text are white, but their "inherent whiteness" is "left untouched and essentially unexamined" here precisely *because* the actors do not perform Chernow's founding fathers, but rather they perform Miranda's non-white characters who were merely *inspired by* Chernow's biography. *Hamilton*, I argue, is no more a "white tale through and through" than *Heights*, because it uses Black and Brown bodies to portray Black and Brown characters.<sup>3</sup>

In this way, Black and Brown bodies onstage are not merely cosmetic, but significantly affect the ways in which race is portrayed onstage, in terms of both character representations and what Miranda calls "cultural baggage" (quoted in Paulson). Hoffman states that "the musical is often silent, literally, about race" (7). Using Brown and Black bodies counters this. When *Hamilton's* revolutionary friends first enter the story, they introduce themselves in the same way that rappers frequently do on mixtapes ("Aaron Burr, Sir"). Where white bodies here might draw criticism for misappropriation, Black and Brown bodies can open a conversation about links between these characters' desire to make names for themselves and the importance of reputation in hip hop culture. Opening the musical with this display of street credibility allows audiences to accept from the beginning that rap and other forms of hip hop coding are the norm for the fictionalized *Hamilton* and his fellow revolutionaries. More importantly, this representation portrays people of color holding positions of leadership and power, and they rather than whites build a new nation from the ground up, thereby shaping the values and customs that, centuries later, would come to be known as American mainstream culture.

Hoffman is not alone in his critique that "at no point in the show is an enslaved person or any other nonwhite character given the chance to sing or tell the story from his or her point of view" (218). This is, in fact, a common observation of academics who consider the characters to be white. It is true that there are no voiced enslaved characters. However, the implications of nonwhite characters must be taken into consideration. While *Hamilton* does not tell the stories of nonwhite people of that time period, neither does it tell the actual stories of the founding fathers. Look no further than historical critiques of Chernow's biography as evidence of this. It tells the stories of fictional characters in a fictional world, where people of color achieve great

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<sup>3</sup> Though it might be argued that the medium of Broadway makes any story inherently white, one of Miranda's reasons for channeling his art through the Great White Way is to change perceptions of what Broadway is and can be.

things. Moreover, this is not an accurate reflection of race in reality, but neither is *West Side Story*, nor *Porgy & Bess*.

As noted earlier, many historians argue against Miranda's insistence on telling the story of Alexander Hamilton, a white man, through the lens of a colorful cast. In forming their arguments, they often conflate the source text—Chernow's biography—with the text—Miranda's musical representation of historical fiction. Their focus on historiography leads their articles to comment on the implications of Black and Brown actors portraying white men rather than portraying Black and Brown men. Still, their arguments, when addressed through the lens of historical *fiction*, shed light on the way in which *Hamilton* utilizes Broadway to promote the redefinition of "American mainstream" to include the immigrant and African American subcultures.

Lyra D. Monteiro, among other historians, provide valuable critiques of the ways in which Miranda juxtaposes Black and Brown actors with "wealthy white men" (66). She posits that the musical does more to glorify the image of the founding father than to empower that of racial and ethnic minorities. Looking at arguments against telling this story through the lens of Brown and Black characters provides a more nuanced approach to *Hamilton*'s multiracial casting scheme and helps us to understand how it affects the narrative.

### ***Nuancing Arguments Against Multiracial Casting***

Many historians do not differentiate the text and the source text of *Hamilton*, except when acknowledging minor discrepancies for theatrical effect. For this reason, most of these interpretations assume the characters to be "wealthy white men" rather than "young, scrappy, and hungry" ("My Shot") people of color. Their backgrounds in United States history and culture can provide great depth of knowledge in how the American mainstream views the nation's founding. In considering the ways in which many white historians and students conceive of this period in U.S. history, historians often draw attention to the all-too-common neglect of non-whites' roles in the War for Independence and subsequent establishment of government. Specifically, Monteiro suggests that Miranda might have focused on Crispus Attucks<sup>4</sup> or Cato<sup>5</sup>, two men of African ancestry with important contributions to the rebels' cause. She also raises the question of interpretation of Hamilton's own life by considering what the musical might have looked like if Miranda relied on an historian of color rather than

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<sup>4</sup> Crispus Attucks, a man of African and Native American ancestry, died during the Boston Massacre in 1772. This event is considered by historians to be the first casualty-causing event of the Revolutionary War. (Monteiro, 64)

<sup>5</sup> Cato was the slave of Hercules Mulligan and played an indispensable role in spying on the British with his master. (Monteiro, 64)

Chernow, which would have significantly altered the slavery and antislavery narratives in the musical.

While *Hamilton* does carry a political message, its position on Broadway suggests that the multiracial casting strategy used to tell this story will lend itself well to socio-cultural debates rather than historiographical ones. A deeper understanding of how the casting *affects* the narrative, i.e., by establishing a fictitious world in which Black and Brown people play significant roles in shaping mainstream culture, may lead to a deeper understanding of how *Hamilton* itself might be able to affect this change in reality.

As Monteiro points out, no historical person of color plays any significant<sup>6</sup> part in Miranda's *Hamilton*. This is arguably a notable error by itself when considering, as Monteiro does, the text as a story of "wealthy white men." However, her essay sheds light on an even deeper cultural misstep, as it looks at this in the context of Miranda's oft-quoted claim that his musical "is the story of America then," but the "cast looks like America looks now" (Paulson):

The idea that this musical "looks like America looks now" in contrast to "then," however, is misleading and actively erases the presence and role of black and brown people in Revolutionary America, as well as before and since. America "then" *did* look like the people in this play, if you looked outside of the halls of government. This has never been a white nation. The idea that the actors who are performing on stage represent newcomers to this country in any way is insulting.  
(62)

It is true that "black and brown people" are not "newcomers to this nation."<sup>7</sup> However, Monteiro's mention of "the halls of government" belies an important point that contradicts her argument. "America then" *excluded* "black and brown people" from "the halls of government" in any policy- or decision-making capacity. Conversely, "America ... now" sees "black and brown people" in government and, on a more basic level, simply free to do as they choose. This certainly was not the case 250 years ago, but Miranda's musical can give audiences an idea of what that might have been like. When Hamilton meets with Jefferson and Madison to negotiate his debt plan, these politicians of color exclude white America from "the room where it happens" ("The Room Where It Happens"). The predominantly white audience feels for a moment, through Burr's remonstrations, the resentment of not being able to participate in important decision-making.

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<sup>6</sup> During the space of a few lines, one ensemble member mimes the role of Sally Hemings, one of Thomas Jefferson's slaves with whom he had an ongoing sexual relationship.

<sup>7</sup> The implication here seems to "actively erase" the hard work and contributions of immigrants who have arrived in the United States *since* "then" and are therefore indeed "newcomers."



Another key critique that Monteiro makes of *Hamilton* is that the cast members' ancestors of that time did not have access to the American Dream. She writes,

The play is set in a world in which, no matter how much harder they worked, the direct ancestors of the black and brown actors who populate the stage ... would never have been able to get as far as a white man like Alexander Hamilton could.  
(66)

This was certainly true in 18<sup>th</sup>-century America, and it is, to a certain extent, still true today. While some people of African and Latinx ancestry have gained prominent positions in the United States government, including Senators Kamala Harris and Cory Booker of the Congressional Black Caucus, the vast majority of these minorities have been marginalized to low-paying jobs and crime-ridden neighborhoods. In view of the fact that the *performance* of *Hamilton* sets the story in a fictitious Revolutionary New York City, however, we might consider that the word "time" would be more appropriate than "world," given the point Monteiro makes. Since *Hamilton* presents itself as a piece of fiction, the "world" we see is one in which people of color can and do "get as far as" the main character does. The *time* during which the musical takes place, however, reflects a period in history when "the ancestors of these same actors were excluded from the freedoms" the characters enjoy onstage (62). Over the course of the second act, the audience sees not one but three Black Presidents. Although in reality it took almost 250 years for America to elect its first Black President, the fictional world onstage embraces minorities' ability and right to rise to the highest office in the nation.

Finally, Monteiro focuses a considerable amount of her essay on the "silencing ... of people of color" in *Hamilton* (67). In doing so, she compares Miranda's musical to an "historical version of the Clarks' Doll Test<sup>8</sup> ... encouraging<sup>9</sup> people of color to see the important past as limited to the deeds of white men" (67). Chernow's source text, as a contribution to the Founder's Chic movement, certainly "encourag[es]" this of its readers. Miranda's text, when isolated from the context of performance, also does this to an extent. The lyrics by themselves have little to say on the subject of race in America, whether in the 18<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, the crux of *Hamilton* lies in its interracial casting, which portrays African Americans, Latinx Americans, Asian Americans, and even Euro-Americans working together to create an inclusive nation. So, while the musical may not depict the lives of historical people of color, it

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<sup>8</sup> Conducted in the 1940s by Drs. Kenneth and Mamie Clark, the "Doll Test" was a series of psychological experiments that utilized dolls, all identical except for color, to reveal that prejudice, discrimination, and segregation had severe effects on African American children's self-esteem. (*Legal Defense*)

<sup>9</sup> An integral detail of the test in question must be made clear here. The psychological experiment measured the *extent* to which "people of color ... see the important past as limited to the deeds ... of white men," but did not actually "encourag[e]" this phenomenon.

can encourage its diverse audiences to learn more about America's "important past." In so doing, they might discover the stories of people of color that *Hamilton* alludes to, such as the Black battalion led by John Laurens ("My Shot").

Monteiro's concluding paragraph challenges her reader to question the appropriateness of *Hamilton* as "the history that we most want black and brown youth to connect with" (68). While she concedes that the show might "make [youth] excited about theater, music, and live performance" (68), her article critiques those who consider it "accessible," claiming that this word "is coded language suggesting that young people and people of color cannot understand history unless it is made 'accessible' to them" (67). Current high school history curricula typically focus on the stories of "wealthy white men" rather than people of color. As Monteiro contends, African American historians do concern themselves with inserting the African American narrative into the history books in order to empower African American youth and encourage them to take part in writing their own descendants' history. Through *Hamilton*, Miranda seeks to reach the same goal via a different strategy—one of engaging these youth in a story they will learn about regardless, but also encouraging them to take ownership over the founding.

*Hamilton* is not out to change history or historiography; it is out to change the present, so future generations can look back on this history and see African Americans taking a larger role in shaping it. By using a multiracial cast to do this, the musical not only gives us alternative ways to look at the narrative of the founding myth, but it can also function as a tool with which to challenge the conflation of "white" and "universal" so frequently embodied on the Great White Way.

### ***Challenging Universality***

As noted in the Introduction, the Broadway musical is considered by many as a universal representation of America. Warren Hoffman attributes this viewpoint to the fact that musicals are "often ... presented as raceless or 'universal' in content" (5). He quotes Richard Dyer from his book *White*,

As long as race is something only applied to non-white people ... as long as white people are not racially seen and named, they/we function as a human norm. Other people are raced, we are just people. (5)

Brian Eugenio Herrera also finds that "the intransigent persistence of whiteness [is] ... the presumptively 'neutral' or 'universal' narrative default" in most Broadway shows (233). If "white people" are "universal" and "a human norm," then non-white people could therefore be

considered “abnormal,” perpetually excluded from American mainstream culture simply because they are not white. According to Herrera, because Broadway is seen as “universal,” it does “little to change the underlying presumptions that persist in privileging whiteness within, and outside, the theater,” despite the implementation of nontraditional casting (233).

A detrimental effect of interpreting “white” as “normal” can be seen in the homogenization of non-white characters onstage. Raymond Knapp challenges the pan-Latinx characteristics of *West Side Story*’s textually Puerto Rican characters. He writes,

The show generalizes the politics of immigration so as to apply in blanket fashion to Spanish-speaking populations in the New World... [P]erpetuating this kind of preconception and prejudice would seem to be a decidedly odd way to promote ethnic tolerance. (2004, 206)

*Heights* portrays an ethnic mix similar to the one alluded to in *West Side Story*. The characters come from all over Latin America, yet they all seem to refer to the same “home.” While this could be taken as a metaphorical or symbolic “home,” Usnavi and Abuela Claudia make definitive plans to go “home” together. Where is this “home”? Usnavi dreams of living near a beach “a stone’s throw / from ... [his] folks’ home” in the Dominican Republic. Meanwhile, Abuela Claudia reminds him of the “hundreds of stories / about home” that she has told him over the years (“Hundreds of Stories”). And yet, we know from her song “Paciencia y Fe” that Abuela Claudia has only lived in Cuba and New York City. How could she possibly tell Usnavi “stories about [his] home” when she has never been there? Similar to the conflation of African American and immigrant narratives discussed in Chapter 3, this inappropriately juxtaposes different immigrant stories in a potentially harmful way. Rather than educate the Broadway audience on the variety of traditions and “stories” that arise out of Latin America, *Heights* here seems to “perpetuat[e]” *West Side Story*’s erasure of diversity between “Spanish-speaking populations in the New World.”

On the other hand, one might acknowledge that the typical Broadway musical serves as a *white* representation of *white* America, rather than a “universal” or “normal” representation. This, then, confronts us with another harsh reality: “Community [as a show’s theme] really means *white* community, while people of color are often absent from the utopia that many musicals present” (6). In driving his point home, Hoffman brings his readers’ attention to American Renaissance, a white nationalist organization “invested in a reactionary, nostalgic view of American society in which the formation of a homogeneous white community is the

norm.” He “provocative[ly]” asks, “Is this not what *The Music Man*<sup>10</sup>, a musical that celebrates small-town white America at the turn of the twentieth century, is all about?” (9). By challenging, as Hoffman does, the notion that white is “universal,” Broadway might be able to develop new theater norms that display non-white experiences as depictions of reality. Mainstream culture might then be able to move toward a space that acknowledges that people of different races and ethnicities have different experiences, and there is no such thing as “universal.”

*Heights* in particular foregrounds themes and problems common to both Latinx and mainstream cultures, thus linking it to notions of universality. Money, family, relationships, home, ambition, and societal expectations are only a few examples of themes that pervade the most well-known, “universal” shows centering around white, mainstream American characters. They also happen to be the main motivations that drive both the characters and the plot of *Heights*. Unlike the *Music Man*, however, this musical explicitly includes its Latinx and African Americans characters in the show’s “utopia.” Thus, by shifting the meaning of “universal” from focusing on race and ethnicity to focusing on commonalities between people living in the United States, we might discover that this homogenization of Latinx peoples presents a strong argument for the inclusion of immigrant populations in American mainstream culture.

Still, Broadway has far to go before audiences might see the positive effects of linking actors of color with universality, as demonstrated in a controversy over *Heights* casting when Miranda first left the show. Corbin Bleu, an African American actor, was slated to take on the role of Usnavi in January 2010, and this “sparked heated debate over whether a non-Latino should play the part,” writes Elizabeth Craft (2011, 62). Miranda posted his response on a message board on the social media site BroadwayWorld.com. The conversation has since been taken down by the website, but Craft included the post in her 2011 article on *Heights*’ marketing campaign:

Now THIS is sensitive, and I’m hesitant to begin again  
But I’m a Puerto Rican-Mexican; I PLAYED Dominican.  
And everyone’s from everywhere, we are reppin’ so many things  
Andrea’s Venezuelan and Jewish, Karen’s like twenty things<sup>11</sup>  
So yes, I see your point, but ethnicity’s just a factor  
They’ve gotta play the part: in the end, dude is an ACTOR (62)

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<sup>10</sup> *The Music Man* (1957) tells the story of a con-man who arrives in a small, all-white midwestern town. He eventually sees the “value” of living in “small-town white America” and gives up his “profession” in order to assimilate into the community.

<sup>11</sup> Andréa Burns and Karen Olivo were in the original Broadway cast of *Heights*.

Perhaps fans were worried that a Latinx role was being taken away from a potential Latinx actor. Maybe they thought the storyline would be less realistic with Bleu fully participating in Hispanic culture onstage while African American character Benny is so forcefully excluded from it by Kevin. Indeed, once Bleu took over the role of Usnavi, the character was suddenly distanced visually from his cousin Sonny, who was still played by Brown actor Robin de Jesús. But the lay fan does not likely understand the nuances of nontraditional casting that would allow them to articulate the deeper meaning of this casting decision. Actually, only a few of the actors in the original cast truly match their characters' scripted heritages (PBS, 2009); this caused no notable problems because they all *appeared* to do so. Once Bleu was casted, the audience had to confront the possibility that *none* of the actors were representing their own heritages. The debates that followed on BroadwayWorld.com and other sites demonstrate the ability of race-based casting to start conversations that challenge widely-held views on race in America.

Herein lies the layered genius of *Hamilton*'s colorful cast. The audience, including critics and academics, becomes distracted by the idea of Black and Brown actors playing characters that were until this point cemented as white. As with *Heights*, they must confront within themselves their level of acceptance of such a casting choice, particularly given the deep cultural reverence that the mainstream feels for the founding fathers. Herrera lauds "Miranda's tactical use of ... nontraditional casting techniques" as they "emphatically resist the presumptions and privileges of whiteness that have shaped American theater history" (232). I argue that, by viewing *Hamilton* as *traditionally* cast with actors of color playing characters of color, this casting not only challenges "American theater history," but also the Broadway audience's expectations of theater in two key ways. First, it reinforces the possibility that actors need not look like characters. Second, it questions the cemented idea that the founding fathers *must be* white characters onstage. This latter challenge fights against a notion rooted so deeply in the cultural psyche that few realize that *Hamilton* even poses a threat to this belief.<sup>12</sup>

*Hamilton* and *Heights*, in their representations of non-white characters in apparently universal stories, call attention to the conflation of "white" and "universal" and in so doing provide a striking example of what the "Great White Way" might look like without these more common representations of "universal." Although it certainly seems revolutionary to cast Black and Brown actors to play the founding fathers, Miranda does little to thoroughly defend *Hamilton*'s multiracial casting.

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<sup>12</sup> Conversely, few take issue with nontraditional adaptations of America's classic musicals, as in Daniel Fish's 2019 restaging of *Oklahoma!*. The production includes several African American characters both in lead roles and the ensemble, as well as a secondary character played by an actress in a wheelchair.

## Chapter 8: Using Broadway's Limitations to Create a Nonthreatening Space

In his book *Hamilton: The Revolution*, Miranda draws a connection between the “I want” song of a musical<sup>1</sup> and the ambition inherent in rap music. He writes, “Without a song like this, you wouldn’t get very far in a musical. A character needs to want something pretty badly to sing about it for two and a half hours. And you wouldn’t get anywhere at all in hip hop” (33). Beyond this analogy, he only loosely links Hamilton’s something-from-nothing life story with the mythical immigrant narrative and suggests only in passing that Black and Latino actors would be “best able to perform the songs” (33). These vague defenses, however, seem to carry enough power to convince the general public. This comes from the strength of Miranda’s persona and its deep link with his role as Hamilton. The line between the two often becomes blurred to the point that his persona functions as another paratheatrical extension of the musical. Unlike the others discussed in Chapter 6, this iteration of *Hamilton* has the ability to make controversial statements about race in America, though Miranda seems uninterested in doing so. Rather, he uses it to embody another gathering place similar to Broadway, and his cross-coding encourages his audiences to see him at once as a rapper, Broadway composer, Latino, and a mainstream figure. This alter ego Miranda presents to the public is a representation of the “ideal” immigrant: hard-working, unthreatening, and uncomplaining. This facilitates a feeling of comfort among white audiences, who can then watch his musicals about the immigrant’s hardships in a way that does not threaten them personally. *Hamilton* and *Heights* smooth over tensions onstage to facilitate this, but this in turn raises new concerns about their abilities to redefine what it means to be “mainstream” in America.

### *The Functions of Miranda’s Persona*

Public personas are an integral part of both hip hop and Broadway. Rappers such as Christopher Wallace and Christopher Rios often take on pseudonyms that project their street credibility, in their cases Notorious B.I.G. and Big Pun(isher), respectively. Meanwhile, Broadway stars like Idina Menzel take on roles that perpetuate particular images, in her case a headstrong woman placed in difficult circumstances that test her fortitude. Miranda’s own persona, carefully curated through interviews, talk show appearances, social media, and political activism in addition to the musicals he creates, presents him as being well-versed in

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<sup>1</sup> Usually the first or second song in a musical, the “I want” song features the main character singing about the things he or she wants to accomplish. These are the goals that the character will seek to accomplish throughout the story.

mainstream and Latinx cultures. This allows him to code to both Broadway and hip hop communities.

The sheer number of media outlets utilized by Miranda shows that he is a perpetual entertainer. He has written books, music for the Disney movie *Moana*, and musical numbers for Tony Award shows. He hosted *Saturday Night Live*, helped raise funds for hurricane relief in Puerto Rico, and contributes annotations of his songs on the lyrics database Genius.com. He has also maintained a large social media footprint through Twitter, Facebook, *BroadwaysWorld.com*, and other sites. The public persona he has created through these endeavors reflects Holley Replogle-Wong's tenet that "[s]tars are accessible, but also extraordinary" (148). Miranda remains accessible to his fans through his many TV appearances and interviews wherein he purportedly talks about his real life. On the other hand, he also appears extraordinary due to the monumental volume of work he has created since *Heights* came to the professional theater fifteen years ago.

However, because the general public sees only his controlled projections of this persona, which is distinct from his personal life, we do not have access to Miranda as a private individual. Replogle-Wong looks to Richard Dyer's research regarding film stars to question the authenticity of Broadway stars' personas. She contends that "[b]ehind-the-scene biographies and interviews *practice* acts of 'authentic spontaneity'" (151, my emphasis), but in reality, these glimpses into the "real lives" of Broadway stars are neither "authentic" nor "spontane[ous]." Replogle-Wong asks rhetorically, "To what degree do stars author their images?" (151). For Miranda, a simple look at the number of times he repeats himself in interviews can give us an answer. He has quoted *Hamilton*'s marketing slogan, "America then, told by America now," in interviews with television hosts such as Stephen Colbert, Seth Meyers, and Ellen DeGeneres, and with journalists for *The New York Times*, *Rolling Stone Magazine*, and *The Atlantic*. Although Miranda is very vocal in these settings, he says relatively little. Rather, he repeats a few ideas during all his recorded interactions with people. In doing this, however, he creates a space for others to discuss what he alludes to, and his repetitions serve to keep these conversations going.

Replogle-Wong also asks "to what degree ... the roles [Broadway stars] play [are] reflective of their selfhood" (151). Indeed, Miranda's own ethnic origins shape the characters he played in both *Hamilton* and *Heights*. By the time *Hamilton* debuted on Broadway, Miranda was well known in celebrity circles from the success of *Heights* and guest appearances at the White House, Lincoln Center, and Tony Awards shows. Perhaps people purchased tickets for this musical to see him as much as to see his work. Certainly, his choice to play the titular

character rather than Aaron Burr, the pseudo-narrator, did a great deal to give the show its aura of centrality around the immigrant hero, thereby solidifying as a cultural trope the line “Immigrants, we get the job done” (“Yorktown”). But his role as Hamilton also gave his persona a higher degree of celebrity. After all, what import would the persona of the composer/lyricist carry if he had never performed in the show? Lines were never blurred in the public’s mind between lyricist Stephen Sondheim and the character Tony in *West Side Story*, or between Oscar Hammerstein II and Curly in *Oklahoma!*, though these creators are famous for their musicals. And yet, they did not garner inquiries from fans into their personal lives quite as much as Miranda does. There is a certain amount of fluidity in Miranda between his role of Hamilton onstage and his persona offstage. Thus, just as his persona creates a space for discussion, so does his musical.

Just as Miranda’s persona and the roles he played in *Hamilton* and *Heights* build off one another, they also rely on each other to grow in popularity. Replogle-Wong posits that “[s]tar-making is a reciprocal project that is mediated between the star figure ... the mass audience, and the individual fan” (149). Indeed, the success of *Heights* launched Miranda’s career within the Broadway bubble, and his growing popularity among fans and audiences led to opportunities that became the “origin story” of *Hamilton* I discussed in Chapter 1. Warren Hoffman suggests that

the immigrant mythology is so prevalent in *Hamilton* because Miranda himself is the exception who far breaks the rule. Known to be extremely hard-working, naturally gifted, and constantly balancing multiple projects at a time, Miranda, the son of immigrants, seems to want to say, ‘Look at me, I did it, and so can you!’ (222)

The success Miranda has realized as a member of New York City’s immigrant community projects itself onto and into his musicals. By conceiving characters who similarly achieve success—that is, through hard work in the face of systemic inequalities—he earns the approval of fans of color who experience the same narrative.

Since *Hamilton* moved to Broadway, there has been a significant revival of interest in *Heights*. This has resulted in the production of a film version, which likely would not have received the budget and marketing it did without this symbiotic relationship. This can be attributed to the fact that “[f]ans are much more than ‘spectators.’... [T]hey are part of the image-making process, and ... they can choose what they wish to engage with” (Replogle-Wong, 158). Fans therefore contribute to the relationship between Miranda’s persona and his musicals by communicating to investors the existence of a strong enough fan base to render a film version of *Heights* financially feasible. More importantly, they comprise the context of this



relationship, in that their interest in and emotional connection to Miranda's "authentic" self allow the two to build off one another.

Miranda's fanbase is not limited to the typical Broadway fan, however. Rather, he has become what Justin A. Williams calls an "ambassador of the subaltern" (490). As the son of Puerto Rican immigrants, Miranda self-identifies with the Latinx community. His profusive writing has catapulted him to a high position in American society, so much so that he carries some political weight, as seen in his performance at a Hillary Clinton fundraiser held shortly before the 2016 presidential election.<sup>2</sup> Loren Kajikawa compares Miranda to "Jay-Z and Obama," in that his "hip hop authenticity ... is defined not by essential ties to particular neighborhoods ... or revolutionary politics but instead by the ability to exercise power across diverse platforms" (477). His high level of education and exposure to both hip hop and the performing arts from a young age have allowed him to excel at both, despite the systemic difficulties that most in the immigrant community face. Thus, as Brian Eugenio Herrera argues, he successfully "delivered [in *Heights*] a sound and sensibility resonating as simultaneously Latin *and* Broadway, not merely Latin *on* Broadway," and he "forged a similarly hybrid musical apparatus" in *Hamilton* (235-6). By "straddle[ing] both" hip hop and Broadway, Miranda found a way to open up a conversation about the space between mainstream and marginalized America.

Although the nonthreatening environment that Miranda's persona creates welcomes white audiences to engage in conversations about race, the smoothed tensions in *Hamilton* and *Heights* might undermine the musicals' ability to bring about the cultural change needed to end racial inequality.

### ***Smoothed Tensions Preventing Change***

Given Broadway's unique position in the space between art and entertainment, its mainstream audiences have, since its beginning, attended shows on the Great White Way to "be taken out of their troubles, not immersed in them" (Hoffman, 13). This may at first seem counterintuitive given the financial successes of tragic musicals such as *West Side Story*, *Les Misérables*, and *Rent*. However, audiences can distance themselves from the characters' "troubles" in a way that they cannot distance themselves from their own. This space is achieved primarily through the efforts of a musical's creative team to develop what Warren Hoffman calls "theatrical vehicles that white audiences will consider 'safe' and nonthreatening," thereby

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<sup>2</sup> CBS News. "Lin-Manuel Miranda Changes *Hamilton* Lyrics for Hillary Clinton." YouTube video, Oct. 18, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o10xcWo2k04>, 2016c. Accessed Oct. 10, 2019.

reassuring the audience that the difficulties portrayed are exclusively those of the characters onstage (229). If they are representations of real-world troubles, such as are depicted in all three of the examples above, they are presented in a way such that the audience is not confronted with the fact that they are real—that is, as fictional pieces.

This ability to experience real-world problems while simultaneously escaping the reality of them is not limited to those who see shows live; cast albums also provide this, and to an even greater extent. Hoffman writes,

The significance of severing songs from their shows is profound. The political ideologies contained in such songs ... temporarily disappear, and the show tunes are free to circulate in popular culture as “harmless” and “inconsequential” music that people can hum without having to process the accompanying context. (16)

Thus, one can sing along to “It’s Quiet Uptown” from *Hamilton* purely for the pleasure of crooning a soft, emotional song, without contemplating the personal devastation of the loss of a child or watching it play out onstage.

Marketing plays a large role in attracting people to shows that they might otherwise assume to be confrontational. By ensuring a consensual marketing campaign, production teams can reassure potential ticket buyers that they will not be confronted with the *reality* of the difficult lives the characters lead. According to Elizabeth Craft, *Heights*’ production team “reach[ed] out to Latinos and younger demographic groups” through its marketing campaign, yet initially experienced low ticket sales because it was known as a hip hop musical (2011, 53). In advertising for *Hamilton*, producer Jeffrey Seller “had to tame the representation of hip hop and race in the publicity and marketing materials” by not “making any references to hip hop culture,” in order to “make the conventional Broadway theatergoer comfortable” (P. Herrera, 267).

*The Hamilton Mixtape*, however, establishes a space for both marketing strategies. Traditional Broadway audiences can appreciate the album as simply another paratheatrical iteration of the show. Meanwhile, traditional hip hop audiences might relate to Snow Tha Product rapping, “You claim I’m stealing jobs though / Peter Piper claimed he picked them, he just underpaid Pablo” (“Immigrants”) or Black Thought rapping, “Role models tell us we’re born to be felons / We’re never gettin’ into Harvard or Carnegie Mellon / And we gon’ end up either robbin’ somebody or killin’” (“My Shot”). In this way, they can experience a connection to Miranda’s understanding of the hip hop narrative without being forcefully reminded of the exclusionary reality of the Great White Way.

Despite the consensual nature of many Broadway marketing campaigns, the offset between the challenges presented in the show and the safety of the theater establishes a veiled yet important conflict between the Broadway audience and the communities depicted onstage. The former can watch with satisfaction while the latter struggle to overcome whatever obstacles the creators have put in their way. Bruce Kirle stresses this point with a quotation from St. Augustine:

Why is it that men enjoy feeling sad at the sight of tragedy and suffering on the stage, although they would be most unhappy if they had to endure the same fate themselves? Yet they watch the plays because they hope to be made to feel sad, and the feeling of sorrow is what they enjoy. (157)

In Miranda's musicals, one obstacle after another presents itself to the Latinx and African American characters. This allows white audience members to feel sad about the hardships Latinx immigrants and African Americans in the country face. Rather than carry this emotion with them when they leave the theater, they find satisfaction in feeling the sadness they expected to experience when they purchased their tickets. This satisfaction then remains with them and gives them a sense of moving toward social justice, although they may never do anything to actually help marginalized groups.

*Hamilton* and *Heights* further this tension between audience and characters by smoothing over onstage similar conflicts in four key ways. First, characters are not pitted against one another based on race. This is achieved in *Heights* by featuring, as the main antagonist, the American economic system that makes it difficult for minorities to achieve upward mobility. While this system is easily recognizable as belonging to and controlled by white America, it nevertheless remains unnamed and unseen onstage. *Hamilton* takes a different route to accomplish this: African Americans and Latinos are challenged by characters played by white and minority actors alike. Thus, the diverse casting means the conflicts are not race-based, providing an image of what conflicts that are both interracial and non-race-based might look like. Second, the characters in *Hamilton* do not exude the negative qualities their namesakes did. In music, dress, speech, appearance, and even slave-owning habits, these onstage personages defy the common portrayals of the founding fathers and therefore allow audiences to applaud the performers guilt-free, because the characters are not the racist, elitist people the historical figures were. Third, the use of hip hop, in the context of the Great White Way, allows mainstream audiences to enjoy the music without understanding rap's history or the nuances of its connection with minorities' struggles against systemic racism. Just as songs on a cast album allow listeners to ignore the political ideologies communicated through performance, white

audience members can see *Hamilton* as true hip hop. This gives them a (false) sense of connection to “authentic” hip hop subculture without living the experiences of systemic racism and violence that minorities experience. Finally, those not accustomed to hip hop can feel safe because of Miranda’s numerous references to mainstream culture. As he frequently says about both *Hamilton* and *Heights*, the goal is to tell these stories without “cultural baggage.” By including “shoutouts” to mainstream songwriters such as Cole Porter and canonical Broadway musicals such as *South Pacific*, these musicals help white audience members adjust to hearing hip hop music within the confines of the Great White Way.

While Miranda’s shows may in some ways complicitly further the smoothing over of tensions between the American mainstream and minority communities, *Hamilton* and *Heights* also challenge this in certain ways. In his book *The American Musical*, Raymond Knapp identifies the musical *Hair*<sup>3</sup> as a “propositional redefinition of America, aspiring to establish an alternative mythology to displace those celebrated and elaborated on the American musical stage” (2004, 154). In much the same way, *Hamilton* deviates from the traditional way of telling the story of the founding fathers through its colorful casting. While it promotes a youth *subculture* rather than counterculture, it nevertheless attempts to “displace” the notion frequently displayed “on the American musical stage” that the white mainstream is the norm. Rather, it proposes a “redefinition” of American culture to include not just the mainstream, but also African American and immigrant marginalized cultures.

This “displace[ment]” alters presumptions of normativity both onstage and off. Brian Herrera contends that it “broadens the audience’s understanding and appreciation of both” Broadway show tunes and hip-hop music through Miranda’s “ability to ‘code switch’” (236). As Knapp argues, “American musicals become ... an enacted demonstration of Americanism, and often take on a formative, defining role in the construction of a collective sense of ‘America’” (2004, 103). In this vein, *Hamilton* and *Heights* show one iteration of what America is. While this is not necessarily an accurate reflection of reality, it does project a potential future reality in which people of all races and ethnicities live together and experience a unified albeit diverse mainstream culture together.

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<sup>3</sup> *Hair* (1968) portrays the youth counterculture of the 1960s, focusing on political and sexual liberation and featuring rock & roll music.

## Chapter 9: Differing Resonances on Broadway and in Reality

In order for America's mainstream culture to reshape itself and include minority cultures, a space must be created that allows people of all colors to coexist peacefully. Broadway's medley of artforms, as well as hip hop's message of inclusion, ostensibly signify the existence of such a space, but the Great White Way's frequent misappropriation of marginalized subcultures continues to stand in the way of truly achieving this. With *Hamilton*, however, the hip hop portrayal of America's white founding myth seems to articulate a response to this. As actors of color take control over the lives of white historical figures, they suggest a new way to address Broadway's historical entanglement with minstrelsy. The intense emotions conveyed through the camp of Broadway might indicate that *Hamilton* is indeed a forceful vehicle through which people in African American and Latinx communities can assert their positions in mainstream culture. However, the changing racial politics of 21<sup>st</sup>-century America mean that, five years after its Broadway debut, *Hamilton* may already not be enough to effect true change.

### *Authenticity and the Question of Cultural Appropriation*

The origin story of America's founding fathers, as well as the institution of Broadway, is traditionally presented as being of, by, and for the mainstream. Few founding stories center around people of color; though, as Lyra Monteiro notes, this is changing. Though historians have been researching the contributions of slaves and free Blacks during the Revolutionary era for over 50 years, historiography has seen, over the last decade, a significant increase in this line of work. Broadway's own history lacks such diversity since, according to Warren Hoffman, "The history of the American musical is the history of white identity in the United States" (3). He reinforces this later when he writes, "the musical, with few exceptions, is written *by* white people, *for* white people, and is *about* white people" (4, emphasis original). However, as with American historiography, Broadway has grown more diversified with the current generation of musicals. *The Scottsboro Boys*<sup>1</sup>, *The Book of Mormon*<sup>2</sup>, and other productions of the 2010s take on race and racism head-on, each in their own way.<sup>3</sup> *Heights* and *Hamilton* make their own

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<sup>1</sup> *The Scottsboro Boys* (2011) tells the true story of nine young African American men who were falsely accused and convicted of raping two white women in 1931. The musical notably is structured as a minstrel show and even has the African American actors appear onstage in blackface in the finale.

<sup>2</sup> *The Book of Mormon* (2011) centers around a fictitious Mormon missionary sent to Uganda to convert the "heathen" locals to the LDS church. The musical satirizes the Mormon church's history of discriminatory beliefs against people of color.

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed argumentation on rac(ism) in these musicals, see Warren Hoffman's *The Great White Way*.

contributions to this trend. In fact, John Kenrick posits that *Heights* was the first show in a burgeoning movement to bring diversity to Broadway (304).

These musicals have been able to achieve this, if only to a limited degree. This is partly due to the authenticity of their stories. *Mormon*'s creative team includes the creators of *South Park*, a satiric television show about small-town, mainstream America, and the composer/lyricist of *Avenue Q*,<sup>4</sup> a 2004 musical that pokes fun at privileged 20-somethings living in New York City. Ironically, both shows' intended audiences *and creators* are exactly those being satirized on screen and stage, respectively. With their proverbial feet in both camps—one camp the mainstream and the other a parody of the mainstream's prejudices—*Mormon*'s creative team lends authenticity to the show's point of view of a white, middle-class man who openly claims to be inherently superior to the people of color around him.

*Scottsboro* finds its authenticity not so much in its creative team as in its source text and the controversial framing of the story. The show combines a horrific true story in the United States' past with an entertainment medium popular at the time to remind its audiences that America is still far from being post-racial. The minstrel conceit, which I delve deeper into later in this section, gives authenticity not necessarily to the story itself, but to this retelling of the story. The shock of seeing Black men act as minstrels takes the audience back to a time when this was a norm in live entertainment, literally setting the stage for a more realistic experience of what people of color were subjected to by white America less than a century ago.

*Hamilton* and *Heights* find their authenticity through a combination of these two techniques. Like the creators of *Mormon*, Miranda identifies with the characters he created. His immigrant background and immersion in hip hop culture make him an appropriate candidate to tell the story of Usnavi's Washington Heights neighbors. Meanwhile, his role as a representative for the mythical immigrant hero gives him a certain authority to create a hip hop version of Alexander Hamilton as the exceptional immigrant founding father. *Heights* also mimics *Scottsboro*'s use of metatheatricity to claim authenticity. The opening number introduces all the characters, at the end of which Usnavi sings to the backstage crew to “turn up the stage lights” so that he can take the audience on “a flight / To a couple of days / in the life of what it's like [in] Washington Heights” (“In the Heights”). By beginning the story in such a way, the audience understands that what they see in the next two-and-a-half hours is between fiction and reality. The details of the diegesis may not be factual, but the story as a whole is

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<sup>4</sup> *Hamilton* and *Heights* producer Jeffrey Seller also produced *Avenue Q*.

representative of real experiences in Latinx neighborhoods and can therefore be trusted as authentic.

Amidst the hype of *Hamilton*'s "revolutionary" onstage display of "authentic" hip hop, the show's use Black and Brown bodies to tell the story of Alexander Hamilton limits its authenticity. The overall effect, however, is one of racial and ethnic minorities taking ownership of the story of the founding fathers, a legend that had long been considered as belonging solely to white America as its own creation myth. It may seem, then, that *Hamilton* acts as an appropriation of the founding myth, by Miranda, and for the marginalized American people. Yet, this is not appropriation because the musical does not take away this story from anyone else. Rather, it claims the story as one that already belongs to African American and Latinx populations. People of color did indeed make sacrifices for the war and helped build the new nation, albeit in less visible ways than whites did. While the ancestors of Latinx immigrants may not have participated directly in the founding, the ideas that this period in time represents—those of freedom, upward mobility, and democracy—apply to both them and African Americans.

Additionally, these communities can also take ownership of Broadway, another facet of American culture considered as uniquely white. Whereas the American musical is "by ... for ... and about white people" (Hoffman, 4), *Hamilton* and *Hamilton*, amongst other musicals of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, attempt to claim the Broadway musical and, to an extent, American history, as their own. In fact, in spite of many claims that *Hamilton* has reinvented Broadway, many theater scholars, among them Elizabeth Wollman, Andrew M. Schocket, and Elissa Harbert, argue that the musical follows many theater norms but challenges only a few. It implements the revolving stage made popular during the 1980s and follows the two-act structure, with opening and closing numbers in each act presenting the entire company onstage. Isolated spotlights indicate that characters onstage at the same time are scripted as being far away from each other. *Hamilton* even refrains from mentioning the Scottish play by name when analogizing his ambitions to those of Macbeth.

The very act of using the Great White Way to claim the founding myth and Broadway as their own promotes the Americanness of African Americans and Latinx immigrants. Raymond Knapp argues that such claims are part of the American psyche. In assessing immigrant composer/lyricist/actor George Cohan's presentation of Americanness in his 1904 musical *Little Johnny Jones*, Knapp writes,

[T]he sheer aggressiveness in Cohan's presentation ... carries great conviction, arguing, implicitly, that such posturing is basic to what it means to be American,

which is something one may be born to ... but more importantly what one aspires to become, in part through patriotic posing. (2006, 106)

*Hamilton* mimics this in the way that it “aggressive[ly]” exhibits hip hop music, dance, and other coding onstage. The cast album’s cover<sup>5</sup> includes the “explicit content” label, which it seems to wear in an effort to prove that it belongs alongside rap albums. Meanwhile, the primary marketing photo<sup>6</sup> shows Hamilton as the top point of a star thrusting his finger in the air in a way that alludes to codes of performance. Below and center, Washington mimics the gesture by pointing his sword in the air, suggesting that the gesture is also one of revolution. All this is shown in profile, suggesting that people of any color can perform Americanness.

While *Heights* uncontestedly uses Brown bodies to portray Brown characters, *Hamilton*, on the other hand, has been referred to as a sort of reverse minstrelsy in its use of Brown and Black bodies to portray the founding fathers. Hoffman posits that, in such shows, “racial meaning is sometimes located in the space between the text and the performers” (26). While the text of a show may not address issues of race, nontraditional casting might force conversations about it. In considering *Hamilton* as set in a fictional world where non-white men founded the nation, we see that the racial and ethnic switch happens, rather, in “the space between” Chernow’s biography and Miranda’s text. Thus, we must look at the musical-writing process to assess minstrelsy’s relationship with the performance of *Hamilton*.

In his essay “Performance, Authenticity, and the Reflexive Idealism of the American Musical,” Knapp posits that “[a]uthors who base a musical on a literary text are also in this sense performers, bringing to life the literary basis they are setting” (209). Miranda did, then, “perform” before *Hamilton* ever saw the stage. In comparing this type of performance to minstrelsy, Knapp calls attention to “the appearance of black dialect in written prose.” When “the primary way that blacks are allowed to express themselves is through words written by whites,” he argues, what we see onstage is merely a representation of “one more way in which blacks are ‘kept in their place’” (2004, 190). That is, people of color still cannot represent themselves in their own ways if white people dictate what they say. At times, the Black characters in *Hamilton* directly quote from the primary source documents of their namesakes. The actual founding fathers certainly did not write these words with the intention of African Americans speaking them. Yet, Miranda assigns these words to the characters just the same. While the lyricist is not white, nor is he Black. His Latinx heritage therefore places him somewhat outside Broadway’s history of minstrelsy. We see this pseudo-minstrelsy onstage

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<sup>5</sup> See Illustration 1.

<sup>6</sup> See Illustration 2.



when Washington asks Hamilton to write his farewell speech. In writing the scene, Miranda lifted words directly from the first President's actual speech and pushed them through the lips of African American actor Christopher Jackson. This plays out onstage, too, with Hamilton speaking the words as Washington sings them, replicating for the audience Miranda's own process of writing the musical.

*Scottsboro* provides a more direct implementation of reverse minstrelsy, and this sheds greater light on *Hamilton*'s relationship with it. Hoffman asserts that this musical's "minstrel conceit," which includes the appearance of Black actors playing Black characters in blackface, propounds that "to be black in America is, to a great extent, to be forced to perform in a never-ending minstrel show for whites" (231). The actors in *Hamilton* may "perform in a never-ending minstrel show" in their real lives. Conversely, onstage they portray white historical figures rewritten by a non-white creator as non-white characters. This allows them to "push back against the minstrel form," as Hoffman claims the titular characters eventually do in *Scottsboro* (232).

Broadway is indeed guilty of cultural misappropriation, from its historic roots in minstrelsy to its present-day stereotyping of ethnic minorities. Yet, it does provide a place to promote these cultures, too. By placing America's founding in the context of hip hop, a culture deeply rooted in the United States, Miranda reasserts, through *Hamilton*, the Americanness of the founding itself. Thus, it dramatizes an as yet fictional but potentially real space in which both the mainstream and the marginalized can coexist without sacrificing their distinct identities.

### ***Extending Change from Broadway to Culture?***

Broadway's function as a gathering place for diverse artforms has extended over the last two decades by incorporating the music and dance styles of more marginalized groups. The most apparent examples of this are found in the subgenre known as jukebox musicals, with certain shows featuring music by minority pop artists such as Tina Turner, Emilio and Gloria Estefan, and Tupac Shakur. Through this diversification of source material, Broadway has also become a gathering place for the minority cultures these celebrities represent. Through *Heights*, John Kenrick posits, "America's growing Latino community finally had a voice on Broadway" (304). In fact, both of Miranda's blockbuster musicals, with their "cross-cultural and cross-political appeal," have contributed to the Great White Way's broadening demographics by providing a gathering place for African American and Latinx communities to work with white American toward cultural change (Schocket, 181).

Such a gathering place can only succeed in reshaping mainstream culture if it promotes each group severally. In the Broadway community, Miranda's success means that the outreach programs, various Hamilton merchandise, and the charisma of his persona itself all promote Broadway by making it attractive to otherwise uninterested groups of people. Minority groups can also see advancement through Broadway. Raymond Knapp assures us,

As with other disadvantaged groups at various points in American history, ... show business provided the Irish with an avenue toward wider acceptance, most visibly as performers, but also as writers and composers. (2004, 105)

In *Hamilton* and *Heights*, Miranda continues this tradition by using middlebrow theater to promote the "acceptance" of African Americans and Latinx immigrants. Through his musicals' positive portrayals of these marginalized groups, and through his own success as a popular culture icon, Miranda advocates for the immigrant and African American communities by making the notion of their cultural inclusion attractive to mainstream America.

This has turned the Great White Way in the direction of equal representation of African Americans and Latinx immigrants. Elizabeth Wollman writes,

Minority groups remain under-represented on Broadway ... but the twenty-first century has seen the emergence of productions more reflective of the country's [racial and ethnic] diversity.... Broadway ... is, at the very least, less segregated and more self-aware than it once was. (2017, 183)

A common method of doing this is to employ actors of color when restaging classic musicals with traditionally white casts. Wollman argues that this strategy is "hardly a giant leap forward for civil rights," but that it does "break... down barriers" in terms of the audience's expectations for the role race and ethnicity play in musicals (2017, 157). While *Hamilton* is not a revival, it operates in a similar manner because it uses Brown and Black bodies to reshape a well-known story about white people that has traditionally been told with white bodies.

This casting scheme has helped diversify Broadway in several key ways. First, *Hamilton* is a blockbuster with two national tours and multiple permanent locations, including several international cities. This opens up roles across the country almost exclusively to minority actors, giving individuals jobs and more visibility for future parts.<sup>7</sup> Second, since the opening of the musical, Broadway has seen a diversification in *types* of shows, notably ones that showcase minorities and hip hop culture. For example, *Freestyle Love Supreme*, an improv rap show, started off-Broadway in 2003; after years of sporadic touring and one-off performances, sometimes including Miranda and others who would later join the cast of *Hamilton*, it finally

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<sup>7</sup> Original cast members Anthony Ramos and Daveed Diggs have both launched film careers since leaving *Hamilton*, and their credits include the films *In the Heights* and *Blindspotting*.

made it to the Great White Way in the wake of *Hamilton*'s success. Additionally, both of Miranda's blockbuster musicals give traditional Broadway audiences and hip hop audiences a common experience. Warren Hoffman writes that those who see these shows or even just listen to the cast albums "form a unified community across time and space" (18). Thus, people from diverse backgrounds and cultural groups can share the enjoyment of a performance with which they connect through music and dance styles with which they identify. In this way, these musicals can foster a sense of community between these two seemingly disparate groups, even if the individuals never meet. Finally, and most importantly, *Hamilton* cultivates interest in America's history and civics among minority youth, particularly through The Gilder-Lehrman Institute's Hamilton Education Program and weekly matinee shows reserved for inner-city high school students. This increase in engagement will make minority youth more likely to participate in shaping America's future history.

There are limits to *Hamilton*'s and *Heights*' promotion of immigrant and hip hop communities. Specifically, these characters merely depict Miranda's own perception of them; thus, the actors onstage are less representations of culture than they are of color. That is, they portray Miranda's vision for the future rather than present reality. Furthermore, the level of his popularity on Broadway, combined with questions of hip hop authenticity in his shows, have established Miranda as an embodiment of Broadway rather than an of immigrant or hip hop cultures. Nevertheless, he is able to navigate between these communities with a certain amount of success.

The resulting wide reach of *Hamilton* and *Heights* serves as a forceful reminder to traditional Broadway audiences that marginalized communities are part of American society. Knapp argues that "the real point of breaking down the barriers between audience and stage" is to allow the audience to "join [the] community" (2004, 156). While he speaks specifically of *onstage* communities, Miranda's musicals also function in the capacity of encouraging their audiences to "join [the] communit[ies]" of real-life marginalized groups, not merely their onstage representations. Broadway fans find it easy to connect with a musical by simply "learn[ing] the songs and join[ing] in" (156), as Knapp suggests, because these shows are rarely confrontational toward any group. By including catchy tunes that both minorities and whites enjoy, Miranda has created a common space where these people can be fans of the same cultural moment, even if .

Breaking down barriers between mainstream and marginalized groups requires much more than catchy show tunes. *Hamilton*'s and *Heights*' multiracial casts and positive portrayals of Latinx and African American communities go a long way toward showing that the musicals

break from Broadway's racially complicated past. Because Miranda's musicals create conversations about race, they do not wholly participate in the Great White Way's history of silencing minorities. However, America's racial politics have begun demanding that simply being non-racist is not enough to effect desired changes. One must also be explicitly anti-racist. Given that Miranda does not follow through on the conversations he generates, either in his musicals or in his persona, *Hamilton* and *Heights* do not, then, create actual change. Thus, they perpetuate Broadway's subjugation of African Americans and Latinx immigrants by not actively stopping it.

It is not enough, however, to simply have a place where people of all races and ethnicities live or perform side-by-side as equals. This could be achieved, after all, by people of color denying their heritages and cultures in order to fit into the mainstream as it currently exists. Rather, the goal of getting Black and Brown youths interested in laying claim over the United States' founding is to empower them to reshape the mainstream into a culture that incorporates their own beliefs, values, and customs.

### ***“Not. Yet.”***<sup>8</sup>

In the wake of *Hamilton*, a stronger sense of belonging has emerged amongst America's racial and ethnic minorities. By telling the story of America's founding using Black and Brown bodies, African Americans and Latinx immigrants have been able to see themselves at the center of American history rather than at its margins. This, according to producer Oskar Eustis, “makes the country the possession of everyone” and, therefore, a place where everyone belongs (quoted in Romano, 313).

An essential part of belonging is the notion of “cultural citizenship.” Elizabeth Craft defines this term as one that

capture[s], first, that sense of belonging beyond formal political, economic, or social rights and, second, citizenship as a process of both ‘self-making and being-made,’ including the agency and sociocultural activities by which minority groups claim membership. (2018, 431)

By displaying positive representations of the immigrant and African American subcultures through hip hop, *Hamilton* and *Heights* provide examples of what “self-making and being-made” might look like for these groups. Though manifestly fictionalized, these characters of color serve as an allegory for diverse people participating in the American Dream through “self-

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<sup>8</sup> *Hamilton*: “Yorktown (The World Turned Upside Down)”

making.” This, then, promotes “agency” for these same people because they “make” themselves while actively maintaining hip hop as their artistic outlet.

In particular, *Hamilton* not only depicts this onstage but also promotes it in reality. Loren Kajikawa notes,

To many people, the musical sounds like an intervention in the present moment not to preserve the status quo but to support some of the most marginalized members of US society.... [B]ringing Alexander Hamilton, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson back to life with hip hop and R&B is a gesture that speaks powerfully to the humanity so long denied to black and brown people. (471)

The characters that populate the streets of Miranda’s New York City envision and build a world in which “humanity” is not “denied to black and brown people.” Rather, this fictional world looks up to people of color as founders, as leaders, and as the ones who will disrupt the “status quo” in order to “support ... the most marginalized members of US society.” Admirers of this musical, then, look up to these characters to uphold the inalienability of the equality of all people. Because these audiences exist in the real world, they themselves can start to nurture and develop this same equality in reality.

*Hamilton* and *Heights* do more than just display cultural citizenship and “belonging” in fictionalized situations onstage. They also bring real-life experiences of the marginalized into the view of the mainstream. Kajikawa points to the influence of rap artist Notorious B.I.G.’s song “Ten Crack Commandments” in writing the song “Ten Duel Commandments” in *Hamilton*. He writes,

Miranda’s prominent use of Notorious B.I.G.’s famous song about the unofficial rules of street-level drug dealing smuggles some of the most marginalized members of contemporary US society into the heart of the Founders’ mythology. (474)

Miranda’s “Ten Duel Commandments” does not only “smuggle” marginalized people into “the Founders’ mythology.” It also “smuggles” them into the minds of the thousands of white, middle-class theater-goers who see the show. The song does not accomplish this by displaying drug deals or other negative minority stereotypes. Rather, the song itself serves as a fairly conspicuous “shoutout” to this cornerstone of the rap music world. Thus, “mainstream” audience members can witness this facet of hip hop subculture.

Furthermore, the overarching plot of *Hamilton* underscores the fact that marginalized people already contribute to and experience “mainstream” culture through living their own subcultures. Kajikawa argues that the musical’s

overriding message ... for hip hop listeners [is that] rappers and the personas they create are nothing less than a reflection of fundamental American ideals. The hip

hop gangsta ... is an embodiment of American enterprise. Like Alexander Hamilton and the Marquis de Lafayette, they find a way to get the job done. (474)

The “get rich or die trying” narrative serves two key purposes here. First, it lends a more identifiable hip hop authenticity to *Hamilton* than music style alone can do. This, in turn, attracts not only the typical mainstream Broadway audience to the Great White Way, but also African Americans and Latinx immigrants. Second, it facilitates the incorporation of the hip hop subculture into “mainstream” culture, thus reshaping the latter to include rather than marginalize the former. This leads to minorities experiencing a feeling of belonging to this “quintessential” American pastime.

Much has changed in the time since *Hamilton*’s Broadway debut. Lyra Monteiro observes that, during the first year *Hamilton* was on the Great White Way, many “described the cast as representing ‘Obama’s America’ [read ‘post-racial America’]” (61). After President Obama left office, the racial makeup of the country did not change, but rhetoric surrounding it surely did. Strict immigration policies now make it more difficult for people from Latin America to migrate to the United States, the number of racially motivated mass shootings has increased, and neo-Nazi groups are now more outspoken than ever. All this shows that the United States has not yet reached “post-racial” status.

Writing history is about writing the story of your community. Rewriting history, then, demonstrates how a story can alter when narrated by someone with a different experience. Miranda says as much in *Hamilton* when George Washington insists, “You have no control ... who tells your story.” He does not, however, make any explicit connection between this and the importance of people of color telling their own versions of history. Though he uses *Hamilton* and *Heights* to create conversations about race, Miranda does not participate in the discussion himself, either through his musicals or through his persona. *Hamilton* is not an embodiment of post-racial America, but rather a depiction of what that might look like. In its unfaithfulness to history and the present moment, it asks that the future be faithful to this musical.

In the dedication to their coffee table book *Hamilton: The Revolution*, Miranda and producer Jeremy McCarter declare that their children “will come of age with our young nation” (quoted from the *Hamilton* song “Dear Theodosia”). This, perhaps, most concisely reveals the distance America has yet to go to reach equality. The nation is “young” and has yet to “come of age,” just as the fictitious nation portrayed onstage. In reality, however, the United States is over two centuries old. And yet, a “post-racial America” has yet to “come of age.” Through *Hamilton*, Miranda seeks to enable this by creating spaces for conversations about race that will

eventually lead to redefining “mainstream” to include people of all races and ethnicities and that will encourage a future with minorities taking leading roles in history textbooks.

## Conclusion: Exit Music

The transfer of power from Barack Obama to Donald Trump in 2017 revealed to mainstream progressives what many people of color already knew: America is still far from being post-racial. Although the United States elected its first Black President, Obama was politically much more conventional than revolutionary. He passed immigration reforms that facilitated the entry of Latinx and other people seeking long-term stays in the country, but many policies that negatively and disproportionately affect African Americans have remained in place. Rather than confronting these issues head-on, he sought to bring people together through mostly consensual policies such as universal healthcare, environmental protection, and increased funding for education. While white progressives were able, during his tenure, to believe that the United States had moved past racial inequality simply because the President was Black, the subsequent election of Trump has empowered hate groups to more overtly practice acts of racism. It seems Obama's presidency foregrounded the question of race without truly addressing it in a constructive way.

Yet, progress has not halted in the wake of the current administration. The Squad and other politicians use the legislature, another type of gathering place, to change the laws that facilitate systemic inequalities. In this way, they initiate conversations that can lead to answering the question of race in America. While some have labeled these four women as "revolutionary," though, they perpetuate a heritage in much the same way that Miranda does. They do not advocate a violent overthrow of the government, nor do they even propose mild changes to existing structures. Rather, they follow the same normalized procedures and customs their predecessors did as they strive to solve the problems of their day, just as Congresspeople have done for centuries.

Given Obama's and the Squad's separate approaches to the issue of race in America, it seems fitting that *Hamilton* is so closely tied with the Obama Administration. The musical foregrounds the question of race, but Miranda's stated objective to bring diverse people together prescribes a show that smooths tensions rather than takes a revolutionary stand against the status quo. The Broadway star's Latinx heritage may lead some to believe that the Great White Way is no longer only white but, like Obama, the race of an individual is not a sufficient stand-in for racial progress. Indeed, as a person of color, Miranda likely would have met with criticism had he challenged ideas of race in a way that made white America feel uncomfortable. Some white



Broadway creators have, however, taken a more confrontational approach to questions of race in American.

Lynn Ahrens' and Stephen Flaherty's 1996 musical *Ragtime*, based on the 1975 novel by E.L. Doctorow, perhaps provides a more realistic representation of interracial conflicts in the United States. Set in 1906, it tells the story of the interactions between Coalhouse Walker, Jr., an educated and self-made African American, and his fiancée, Sarah; a middle-class white family who take Sarah in until her wedding; and Tateh, a poor Eastern-European immigrant who, through hard work and ingenuity, eventually becomes a mogul of the early cinema industry. When his car is destroyed for sport by local firemen led by Fire Chief Conklin, himself a descendant of Irish immigrants, Coalhouse seeks justice through the legal system but finds only clerks, policemen, and judges unwilling to help him. While trying to help her fiancé seek justice, Sarah is murdered by policemen who mistakenly believe her to be armed and violent. Coalhouse, distraught with grief, begins burning down firehouses until Conklin restores his car. In the end, he agrees to surrender in exchange for a fair trial, but is then immediately shot and killed by police.

*Ragtime*'s many characters and subplots allow it to engage several distinct narratives. We see Tateh assimilate through his embrace of capitalism, much as Piragüero does in *Heights*, and live the mythical narrative of the immigrant hero. Meanwhile, Coalhouse, successful as he is, cannot overcome discrimination to find happiness. While the story takes place more than 50 years before the Civil Rights Movement, it reflects the current African American narrative that sees Blacks unable to rely on the justice system to protect them from institutionalized racism. Sarah's murder speaks poignantly to police violence that has been going on since slave patrols hunted down and punished runaway slaves. More so than this, the staging of Coalhouse's execution mirrors case after case of innocent African Americans being shot by police officers who are then acquitted in their own trials, if they face charges at all. After he sings a moving song that urges his followers to peacefully spread messages of equality, the audience hears a gunshot in the silence and sees Coalhouse drop to the ground in a heap. The shot comes not from a character we see onstage, but from an anonymous officer who can then resume their duties without repercussion. The lights go dark, and the audience is left with nothing but a final narration by the company, promising racial equality and justice in the future but unable to guarantee it in the present.

*Ragtime* touches on many different aspects of racism, including discrimination against the Irish and Jews, the poor living conditions of the marginalized and disenfranchised, and even racism by lighter-skinned Blacks toward those with darker skin. None of these, however, are

explored too deeply due to the limitations in time and space of the theater. Nevertheless, the emotive power of the music allows the audience to feel deeply about each aspect that it does depict. This does not necessarily mean, however, that the audience converts these feelings into action toward racial and ethnic equality. The temporal distance between the events in *Ragtime* and those of today allows the musical to more directly engage African American and immigrant narratives without alienating white audiences. They can watch the musical or listen to the cast album and treat these violently racist acts as things of the past because they are set in the past, current racial tensions notwithstanding.

Like *Hamilton*, *Ragtime* incorporates a distinct narration conceit that foregrounds the story's events as forces of change, as the beginning of a completely new chapter in American history. Yet, why has *Hamilton* sparked so many conversations about race when *Ragtime*, itself an award-winning show, did not? *Ragtime* came shortly after the Rodney King riots and O.J. Simpson's murder trial, a time when America was clearly *not* post-racial. Conversely, Miranda began, developed, and opened *Hamilton* over the course of Obama's presidency,<sup>1</sup> and the conversations it sparked amongst white audiences about race in America were couched safely in the past tense. The increasing number of civil rights protests following incidents of police brutality, though, belied the notion that America was officially past its "race problem."

Just as *Ragtime* and other musicals engaged questions of race on the Broadway stage before *Hamilton*, shows that have opened since then have continued to do the same. In his 2019 revival of *Oklahoma!*, Daniel Fish changes little from the original production in terms of the lyrics and book, but he stages it with modern-day set, props, and costumes, complete with slow-cookers full of chili that the audience eats during intermission. The recent expiration of Rodgers and Hammerstein's strict copyright terms now allows creative teams to stage modern adaptations of the classic, and Fish's experimental reframing seems to have much more to say on racial tensions in America than Miranda's pseudo-adaptation of the founding myth.

In a relatively simple story about farmgirl Laurey choosing whether to go to the dance with Curley or Jud, Fish makes no attempts to hide the violence that plagues the African American heroine at the hands of her white suitors. The bright stage lights keep the entire house visible, thus making it nearly impossible to ignore the many rifles hanging on the walls behind and beside audience members. Video technology even projects Jud's face onto the backdrop as he attempts to rape Laurey, having a larger-than-life effect on the audience while simultaneously reminding them of the increased video surveillance that has become reality.

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<sup>1</sup> *Heights* opened on Broadway a year into Obama's first campaign.

This takes Hoffman's notion of Blacks performing in a minstrel show for whites to a much more violent level. Here, Laurey is not just performing. She belongs to the white men to be controlled. The blood splatters on her wedding dress after Curley shoots Jud underscore the innocence of many people of color who fall victim, whether physically, psychologically, or financially, to racism in America.

One message in *Hamilton* is that the founding belongs not only to white but also to people of color. Another deeper message is that America itself also belongs to people of color. But these messages remain a mere image. While they engage members of the mainstream in conversations about race, it does so in a way that allows them to remain in their comfort zones, essentially untouched by the issue. Broadway musicals are primarily designed to entertain audiences rather than to up-end the status quo, but this does not inherently diminish Miranda's desire to impact race relations in America. *Hamilton* asks people to "take a stand with pride" ("Non-Stop"), but how much change can this really affect? The nation as a whole must commit to change if we are to end systemic inequalities. But it seems, for the time being, that *Hamilton* and *Heights* reflect rather than facilitate the Squad's mission to grant cultural citizenship to racial and ethnic minorities.

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## Appendix A Characters and Detailed Plotlines

### *HAMILTON*

#### Characters

Alexander Hamilton .....	Soldier, first Treasury Secretary
Eliza Hamilton.....	Hamilton’s wife
Aaron Burr.....	Hamilton’s friend and rival, pseudo-narrator
Angelica Schuyler .....	Eliza’s sister
George Washington.....	Military general, first President
Marquis de Lafayette.....	Hamilton’s friend, soldier (appears in Act I only)
Hercules Mulligan.....	Hamilton’s friend, soldier (appears in Act I only)
John Laurens .....	Hamilton’s friend, soldier (appears in Act I only)
Peggy Schuyler.....	Eliza’s sister (appears in Act I only)
Thomas Jefferson .....	Hamilton’s political rival (appears in Act II only)
James Madison .....	Hamilton’s political rival and Jefferson’s friend (appears in Act II only)
Philip Hamilton .....	Hamilton’s eldest son (appears in Act II only)
Maria Reynolds .....	Hamilton’s mistress (appears in Act II only)
King George .....	King of England
Samuel Seabury.....	a Tory
Ensemble .....	5 women, 6 men

#### Act I

*Hamilton* opens with a synopsis of his young life. Born in the Caribbean and orphaned as a child, Hamilton worked as a clerk for a slave trader. His community realized his potential as a prolific writer and raised money to send him to New York City to attend university (**Alexander Hamilton**). Hamilton arrives in New York in 1776 and meets Burr, the heir of his dead parents’ fortune. Burr counsels Hamilton to “talk less, smile more” in order to appease everyone and therefore get ahead in life. Burr introduces Hamilton to Laurens, Lafayette, and Mulligan in a pub (**Aaron Burr, Sir**). Hamilton tells his new friends of his humble beginnings, his desire to start a revolution, and his ambition to structure a new government. Lafayette speaks out against the French monarchy, Mulligan talks about his role as a spy, and Laurens expresses his abolitionist leanings. The men urge others to join their rebellion (**My Shot**). All but Burr toast their freedom and the coming revolution (**The Story of Tonight**). Angelica, Eliza, and Peggy go downtown to mingle with young revolutionaries (**The Schuyler Sisters**). Seabury makes a speech against the revolutionaries. Hamilton rebuts him (**Farmer Refuted**). The colonies have declared independence, and King George warns them that they will regret their decision to leave the British Empire (**You’ll Be Back**). Hamilton, wishing to die a martyr, becomes a soldier. Washington, concerned about his army’s chances of beating the British Empire, hires Hamilton as his aide-de-camp (**Right Hand Man**). At a ball, Hamilton meets the Schuyler sisters (**A Winter’s Ball**). Eliza recounts her courtship with Hamilton (**Helpless**). At their wedding, Angelica tells her own version of the night they met (**Satisfied**). Hamilton’s friends toast him at the reception (**The Story of Tonight (Reprise)**). Burr confides to the audience his resentment that Hamilton does as he pleases, while Burr must live up to the legacy his parents left for him (**Wait For It**). After the wedding, Hamilton returns to the war. Eliza worries for Hamilton’s safety as he and his friends make various contributions to the war effort, but it seems unlikely they will win. A general insults Washington, and Laurens challenges him to a duel (**Stay Alive**).

The rules of dueling are explained to the audience, and Laurens wins the duel (**Ten Duel Commandments**). Hamilton demands to serve on the front lines, and Washington angrily sends him home (**Meet Me Inside**). Once home, Hamilton discovers that Eliza is pregnant. She pleads with him to live a simple, quiet life with her (**That Would Be Enough**). Back on the front, Lafayette proves an invaluable asset to the revolutionaries through his skills as a military strategist and his connections in France, who supply the army with money and weapons. He convinces Washington to call Hamilton back to the front as an officer (**Guns and Ships**). Before his son is born, Hamilton returns to battle to lead his own battalion. Washington advises him that history will remember him for his actions in battle (**History Has Its Eyes On You**). Hamilton and Lafayette reunite at the Battle of Yorktown. Hamilton, eager to return to meet his son, leads his men bravely but carefully. The revolutionaries win, and British soldiers return to England (**Yorktown (The World Turned Upside Down)**). King George warns the colonists of the difficulties of governing and questions how they will form their new government (**What Comes Next**). Burr and Hamilton each return home and meet their newborn babies (**Dear Theodosia**). Both men become lawyers and attend the Constitutional Convention, where Hamilton, a young upstart amongst wealthy, well-established gentlemen, brazenly proposes a new form of government. He asks Burr for help defending it, but his friend refuses to take a side. Angelica marries and moves to England. Meanwhile, people marvel at Hamilton's profusive writing. Washington, elected the first President, names Hamilton the first Secretary of the Treasury (**Non-Stop**).

## Act II

In 1789, Thomas Jefferson returns from his ambassadorship in France to become the first Secretary of State. He meets Hamilton for the first time (**What'd I Miss?**). Hamilton and Jefferson debate, in the style of a rap battle, whether the new federal government should assume the states' war debts (**Cabinet Battle #1**). Tensions between Hamilton and Jefferson rise. Angelica comes for the summer, and she, Eliza, and Philip vacation upstate while Hamilton stays in the city to work (**Take A Break**). Hamilton begins an affair with Maria Reynolds, and her husband demands money from him to keep quiet. Hamilton agrees to pay him regularly and continue the affair (**Say No To This**). Hamilton meets privately with Jefferson and Madison to negotiate a compromise regarding his debt plan. Burr confides to the audience that he feels jealous for having been excluded from the meeting (**The Room Where It Happens**). In order to one-up Hamilton, Burr runs against and defeats Eliza's father in a Senate race (**Schuyler Defeated**). In their second debate, Hamilton and Jefferson argue over whether to send aid to French revolutionaries. Hamilton wins when Washington sides with him (**Cabinet Battle #2**). Burr, Jefferson, and Madison air their resentment that the low-born Hamilton wields so much power. They discover his payments to Reynolds and vow to use this information against him (**Washington On Your Side**). Washington decides to step down from the Presidency after his second term (**One Last Time**). King George learns that John Adams will be the next President. He shows surprise that someone would willingly yield their power, and doubts the long-term stability of a government that frequently changes leaders (**I Know Him**). The newly elected Adams fires Hamilton, and Jefferson, Madison, and Burr decide to confront him (**The Adams Administration**). The three men accuse Hamilton of speculation, but Hamilton refutes the claim by telling them of his affair with the payee's wife. Jefferson and Madison agree to let the issue go, but Burr refuses to make the same promise (**We Know**). Worried that Burr will publicly reveal the details of his affair, Hamilton decides to save himself, once again, through his writing (**Hurricane**). He pre-emptively writes and publishes a pamphlet that discloses the affair (**The Reynolds Pamphlet**). Eliza, hurt by the scandal, burns the letters she wrote to Hamilton during the time of the affair (**Burn**). Philip tries to defend his father's honor by challenging someone to a duel (**Blow Us All Away**). He is shot and dies in his parents' arms

**(Stay Alive (Reprise))**. Hamilton and Eliza move uptown, and Hamilton removes himself from politics. They begin to repair their battered relationship **(It's Quiet Uptown)**. Burr and Jefferson run against each other for President. In a surprising change of heart, Hamilton endorses Jefferson, who then wins **(The Election of 1800)**. Burr, furious at his friend's betrayal, challenges Hamilton to a duel **(Your Obedient Servant)**. Hamilton writes a farewell letter to Eliza before he goes to meet Burr **(Best of Wives and Best of Women)**. During the duel, Hamilton yields, but Burr accidentally fires and shoots him. Hamilton speaks his final words and dies. Burr regrets that they could not learn to live peacefully together **(The World Was Wide Enough)**. All the characters but Hamilton address the audience, asking how much Hamilton might have accomplished had he not died so young **(Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story)**.

## ***IN THE HEIGHTS***

### **Characters**

Usnavi..... Bodega owner  
 Nina Rosario..... Usnavi's friend, a freshman at Stanford University  
 Kevin Rosario..... Nina's father, owner of Rosario Car Service  
 Camila Rosario..... Nina's mother, co-owner of Rosario's  
 Benny ..... Usnavi's friend, employee of Rosario's  
 Vanessa..... Usnavi's love interest, works at the salon  
 Sonny..... Usnavi's cousin, works at the bodega  
 Abuela Claudia..... raised Usnavi, though not his blood grandmother  
 Daniela ..... owner of Daniela's Salon  
 Carla ..... works at the salon  
 Graffiti Pete..... an artist  
 Piragüero ..... scrapes piraguas from his block of ice  
 Ensemble ..... 5 women, 6 men

### **Act I**

On the morning of July 3<sup>rd</sup>, Usnavi opens his bodega and greets his neighbors. They all go about their business, many purchasing lottery tickets from Usnavi. Camila invites Usnavi to dinner that evening to celebrate Nina's return from school **(Scene 1, In the Heights)**. Everyone goes to work and Nina searches for her parents. She wonders how to tell her parents that she is dropping out of college **(Scene 2, Breathe)**. Kevin and Camila discuss selling their business, and Benny volunteers to work dispatch. Kevin is hesitant because Benny speak Spanish, the first language of his drivers, but Camila convinces him to allow it. While working the dispatch, Nina enters the booth looking for her parents **(Scene 3, Benny's Dispatch)**. Usnavi remonstrates with Abuela Claudia for not taking her heart medicine. Vanessa cannot pay her electricity bill because her mother spends all her money on alcohol, and she dreams of moving into her own apartment downtown. She agrees to go on a date that night with Usnavi **(Scene 4, It Won't Be Long)**. In the dispatch booth, Kevin struggles communicating with the drivers in Spanish and Nina helps him. Her parents come in, and she tells them that she dropped out because she didn't have time to study while working multiple jobs. They are hurt that she didn't tell them sooner. Kevin, left alone, remembers his childhood and reaffirms his vow to give Nina everything she needs to be successful **(Scene 5, Inútil)**. In the salon, Daniela, Carla, and Vanessa pack things in preparation to move the business to the Bronx. The women gossip as Daniela gives Nina a makeover. They tease Vanessa and Nina about Usnavi Benny,

respectively, and congratulate Nina on her education, until she tells them she dropped out (**Scene 6, No Me Diga**). In the bodega, Usnavi, Benny, and Sonny debate whether it's better to earn money as an employee or a business owner. Usnavi discovers that a winning lottery ticket worth \$96,000 was purchased from his bodega. Everyone fantasizes about what they would do if they won the lottery (**Scene 7, 96,000**). Abuela Claudia goes on a walk and remembers her childhood in Cuba and moving with her mother to New York City to find work. She reveals she has the winning ticket and wonders what she will do with the money (**Scene 8, Paciencia Y Fe**). Nina and Benny remember growing up in Washington Heights. They admit their feelings for each other (**Scene 9, When You're Home**). Piragüero sells piraguas to the neighbors and worries about going out of business (**Scene 10, Piragua**). At dinner, Kevin announces to everyone that he sold his business to pay for Nina's tuition. Camila, furious, leaves. Benny, angry that he lost his job, also leaves (**Scene 11**). Everyone meets again at the club and dances (**The Club**). The lights go out in a blackout, and chaos erupts as everyone tries to get home safely and people begin looting the neighborhood. Sonny attempts to guard the bodega, and Abuela Claudia asks Usnavi to guard her lottery winnings (**Blackout**).

## Act II

The power is still out. Nina teaches Benny Spanish as they sit on the fire escape and watch the sunrise (**Scene 1, Sunrise**). Usnavi discovers that his bodega was looted. As he cleans up, Vanessa rebukes him for having abandoned her the night before. Meanwhile, Kevin and Camila look for Nina (**Scene 2**). Usnavi and Abuela Claudia make plans to move to the Dominican Republic with her lottery winnings (**Scene 3, Hundreds of Stories**). Nina and Benny find her parents. When Kevin forbids them to date, Benny storms off. Camila reminds her family that they solve problems together, and she forces her husband and daughter to make up (**Scene 4, Enough**). The neighbors gather and complain about the heat and the blackout, but Daniela convinces everyone to celebrate the holiday with a Latinx-styled *carnaval*. Everyone waves flags and sings about their motherlands. Usnavi announces that he is moving back home and leaves the bodega to Sonny, who voices concerns that, without Usnavi, the neighborhood will lose its sense of community (**Scene 5, Carnaval Del Barrio**). Abuela Claudia dies from a heart attack (**Scene 6, Atención**), and everyone mourns her death (**Scene 7, Alabanza**). Later, Usnavi and Nina sort through her possessions. Usnavi offers Nina some of the winnings to pay for tuition, but Nina declines (**Scene 8**). As Nina looks through Abuela Claudia's photo albums, she vows to make her surrogate grandmother proud of her by going back to school (**Everything I Know**). Daniela, Carla, and Vanessa close up the salon for the last time, and Daniela offers to cosign a lease for Vanessa (**Scene 9**). Piragüero marvels at the profits he makes because his main competitor cannot operate during the blackout (**Scene 10, Piragua (Reprise)**). As Usnavi prepares to move, Vanessa comes to make up with him. She urges him to stay and use his new money to fix the bodega and invest in the neighborhood (**Scene 11, Champagne**). Nina and Benny agree to stay together when she goes back to school (**Scene 12, When the Sun Goes Down**). Sonny commissions a mural of Abuela Claudia from Graffiti Pete, which he paints during the night (**Scene 13**). The following morning, the neighbors gather on the corner. After seeing the finished mural, Usnavi decides to stay in Washington Heights (**Scene 14, Finale**).

**Appendix B**  
**Scene Excerpts from *In the Heights***

English translations are the work of the creative team and appear in brackets.

**Act II Scene 4**

**Outside the Dispatch Booth**

*(CAMILA sits alone. KEVIN enters.)*

**KEVIN**

I went down to the park, nothing. Any word here?

**CAMILA**

Mostly voice mails, half of people's phones are out. I got to the letter M.

**KEVIN**

*Mira, allí está. [Look, there she is.]*

*(NINA enters)*

**NINA**

Mom, dad.

**KEVIN**

Start talking.

**CAMILA**

Where the hell have you been?

**NINA**

I should have called, I know.

**KEVIN**

Answer your mother! Where were you?

*(BENNY enters.)*

**BENNY**

Boss, Mrs. Rosario. Can I have a minute?

*(KEVIN shoots NINA a look)*

**NINA**

It's okay, dad.

**KEVIN**

Think very hard about what you say to me.

**NINA**

Just hear him out.

**KEVIN**

*(To himself)*

Actually, no.

*(To BENNY.)*

I'll say this nicely. Please stay away from my daughter.

**BENNY**

Sir, I've worked here since I was practically a kid. You know me.

**KEVIN**

Do you think you're anywhere close to her level?

**BENNY**

Of course not, sir. No one is.

**NINA**

Stop calling him "sir".

**KEVIN**

*(To NINA.)*

You stay out of this!

**NINA**

Jesus, Dad ...

**KEVIN**

*(To BENNY.)*

I taught you how to drive. I taught you how to tie a goddamn tie!

**BENNY**

And now I tie the same Windsor knot around my collar as you. We're not that different.

**KEVIN**

You know nothing about our culture!

**BENNY**

This bullshit again?

**CAMILA**

*(Overlapping.)*

Kevin, *calmate*. [*calm down*]

**KEVIN**

You will never be a part of this family, *entiendes?* [*understand?*]

**BENNY**

Loud and clear.

*(Goes to exit.)*

**NINA**

Benny!

**BENNY**

Why learn the language if they still won't hear you?

*(Exits.)*

**KEVIN**

*(To NINA.)*

*Sin verguenza!* Are you trying to shame me? [*Without shame!*]

**NINA**

Yes, dad that's exactly what I'm trying to do!  
**KEVIN**  
Well you have succeeded! /  
Congratulations, you succeed at everything-

**NINA**  
(*Overlapping.*)  
Sorry I embarrass you!

**Act II Scene 8**

(*USNAVI and NINA go through old boxes of ABUELA CLAUDIA's things.*)

**NINA**  
(*Finds an old ticket.*)  
New York Lotto, 1978.

**USNAVI**  
She thought it was bad luck to throw them away.

**NINA**  
(*She finds a piece of paper.*)  
"My Abuela's Front Door" by Usnavi de la Vega! 3rd grade.

**USNAVI**  
Man, I got a check minus on that thing.

**NINA**  
Nice handwriting. "My abuela's front door is busted up. It is falling off the-

(*Shows the paper to USNAVI.*)

**USNAVI**  
I believe that would be "hinges." Spelled with a j.

**NINA**  
"The doorbell don't work. Because so many people comes over to visit the doorknob be falling out." The poet laureate of 183rd Street.

**USNAVI**  
Nina, how much is your tuition?

**NINA**  
She asked me about it last night.

**USNAVI**  
Abuela would want you to have some.

**NINA**  
I have my parents, I can't take her money. But if you could spare some of these photos, my dad would appreciate it.

**Act II Scene 12**

(*Sunset BENNY is at the dispatch, KEVIN enters.*)

**BENNY**  
Thanks for coming, boss.

**KEVIN**  
You can call me Kevin. Look, if this is about Nina—

**BENNY**  
It's about you and me.

**KEVIN**  
She's going back in the fall

**BENNY**  
(*Pause.*)  
Tomorrow I'ma start planning my own business and I can't do that until I finish this. My uniform's on the counter, here's your keys. We're all squared away. I had your back, Kevin. Now I got my own.  
(*KEVIN exits. BENNY approaches NINA.*)



**Appendix C**  
**Lyrics to Quoted Songs**

*Please see attachment for lyrics to quoted songs.*

## Appendix D Audio Track List

*Track titles link to recordings of each song posted online by Miranda.*

1. [“Hurricane”](#) 1:09 – 1:33

I wrote my way to revolution I was louder than the crack in the bell  
I wrote Eliza love letters until she fell  
I wrote about The Constitution and defended it well  
And in the face of ignorance and resistance  
I wrote financial systems into existence  
And when my prayers to God were met with indifference  
I picked up a pen, I wrote my own deliverance

2. [“Alexander Hamilton”](#) 0:00 – 0:08

How does a  
Bastard, orphan,  
Son of a whore and a  
Scotsman

3. [“Your Obedient Servant”](#) 0:00 – 0:08

How does Hamilton  
An arrogant  
Immigrant, orphan  
Bastard, whoreson

4. [“Inútil”](#)

# Illustrations

Illustration 1: *Hamilton* cast album cover

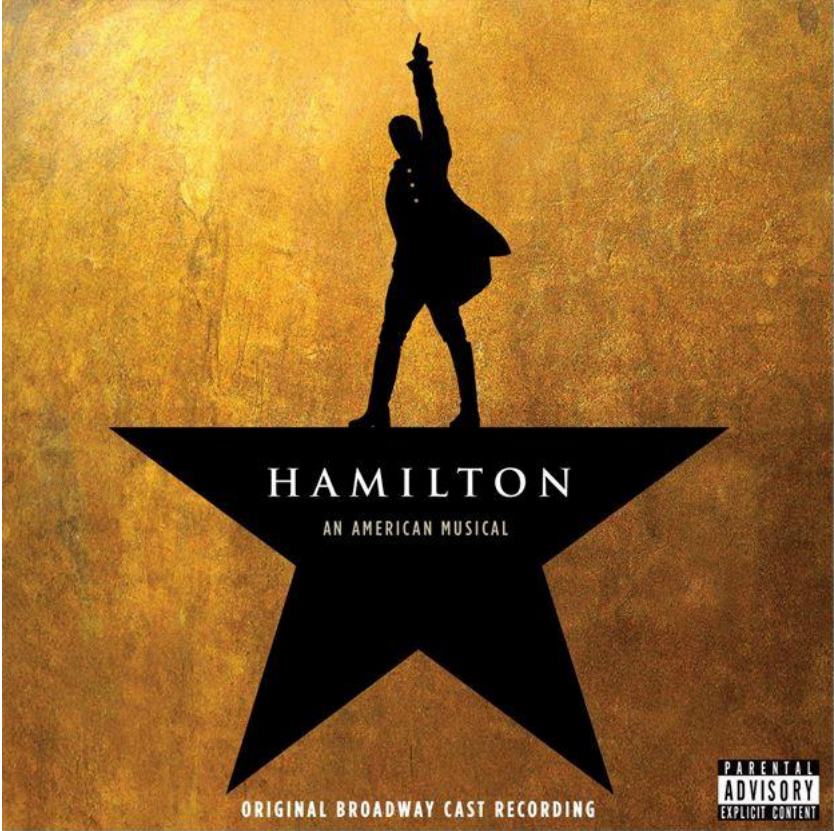
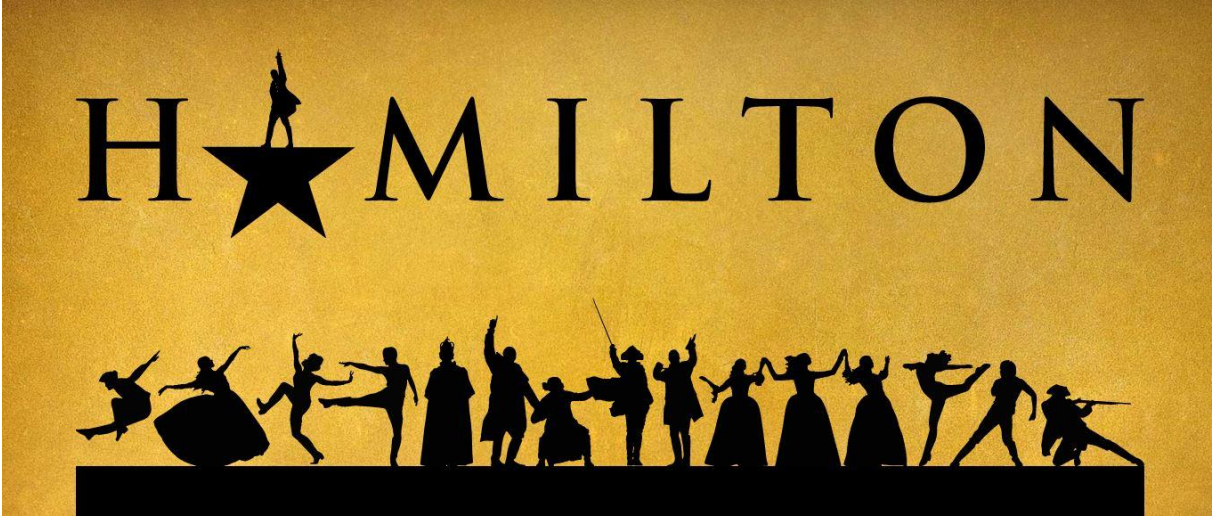


Illustration 2: *Hamilton* marketing poster



## Glossary of Casting Terms

Casting constitutes a large portion of performance and, in terms of race and ethnicity, can be (sub)categorized as traditional, nontraditional, race-conscious, or colorblind casting. While theater studies lack a codified set of *precise* definitions for each, they are generally defined as follows:

**Traditional** casting involves any casting strategy wherein the race and/or ethnicity of the actor corresponds to the race and/or ethnicity of the character they portray.

Actors' Equity Association defines **nontraditional** casting as “the casting of ethnic minority actors in roles where race, ethnicity, or gender is not germane.” In essence, it involves any casting strategy wherein the race and/or ethnicity of the actor *does not* correspond to the race and/or ethnicity of their character, and includes both race-conscious and colorblind casting.

**Race-conscious** casting denotes a strategy of *prescribed* races and/or ethnicities of actors for particular roles for which race and/or ethnicity of the actor do not match those of the character

**Colorblind** casting characterizes a strategy of casting each character irrespective of the race and/or ethnicity of the actor.

Theater scholar Brian Eugenio Herrera incorporates a fifth (sub)category he calls “**compositional** casting,” in which the playwright scripts casting as a constitutive part of the show’s composition” (233). While the other casting schemes may differ from production to production depending on the choices of a particular director, compositional casting dictates that the race/ethnicity of each actor must remain the same in all productions, including later restagings, as it has a significant effect on the overall story. I will further point out that a play’s casting strategy may be compositionally traditional, compositionally race-conscious, et cetera.

## Abstract

This thesis examines Broadway composer/lyricist Lin-Manuel Miranda's musicals *Hamilton: An American Musical* and *In the Heights* as a case study in the ability of Broadway to effect social change. Because Broadway occupies a space of intersecting artforms, it allows these musicals to provide a lens to look at the intersection between Latinx, African American, and mainstream cultures. I contend that, by reframing the stories of the American founding myth and the everyday life of Latinx immigrants, respectively, Miranda creates space for audiences to engage in conversations about race and racial inequality in the United States. This thesis finds that this is not enough to effect significant socio-cultural change. Particularly in the case of *Hamilton*, Miranda has created a blueprint of what America might look like with racial equality. I draw upon analysis of the text and performance; first-hand accounts from Miranda in social media, interviews, and his book *Hamilton: The Revolution*; and works by musical theater scholars on depictions of race and culture in other musicals.

**Keywords:** Hamilton, In the Heights, Broadway, Latinx, African American, race, mainstream

## Résumé

Ce mémoire de recherche analyse les comédies musicales *Hamilton: An American Musical* et *In the Heights* de Lin-Manuel Miranda comme une étude de cas sur la capacité de Broadway à produire des changements sociaux. En effet, Broadway occupe un espace intersectionnel de diverses formes d'art, ainsi celui-ci peut fournir une façon d'examiner l'intersection entre les cultures latino-américaines, afro-américaines, et *mainstream* aux États-Unis. Ce travail a pour but dans un premier temps d'interroger les recontextualisations du *founding myth* américain dans *Hamilton* ainsi que dans la vie quotidienne des immigrants latino-américains dans *In the Heights*, et dans un deuxième temps soutient l'idée que Miranda crée un espace d'échanges autour des inégalités raciales aux États-Unis. Or, ces dialogues peinent à apporter des changements socio-culturels majeurs. Dans le cas de *Hamilton*, Miranda a conçu le modèle d'un pays où les discriminations raciales n'existent pas. Ce projet se base sur l'analyse du texte et de la mise en scène ; des témoignages de Miranda sur les réseaux sociaux, des interviews, et son livre *Hamilton: The Revolution* ; ainsi que des travaux de certains chercheurs travaillant sur des représentations de la question raciale et de la culture dans le domaine de la comédie musicale américaine.

**Mots-clés :** Hamilton, In the Heights, Broadway, Latino-américain, questions raciales, Afro-américain, culture *mainstream*, comédie musicale

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5. Les écrits sur lesquels je m'appuie dans ce mémoire sont systématiquement référencés selon un système de renvoi bibliographique clair et précis.

NOM : ...MILKOVICH..... PRENOM : ...Isabel.....

DATE : ...23 septembre 2020.....

## Appendix C Lyrics to Quoted Songs

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# HAMILTON

## 1. Alexander Hamilton

[BURR]

How does a bastard, orphan, son of a whore and a  
Scotsman, dropped in the middle of a forgotten  
Spot in the Caribbean by providence, impoverished, in  
squalor  
Grow up to be a hero and a scholar?

[LAURENS]

The ten-dollar Founding Father without a father  
Got a lot farther by working a lot harder  
By being a lot smarter  
By being a self-starter  
By fourteen, they placed him in charge of a trading  
charter

[JEFFERSON]

And every day while slaves were being slaughtered and  
carted  
Away across the waves, he struggled and kept his guard  
up  
Inside, he was longing for something to be a part of  
The brother was ready to beg, steal, borrow, or barter

[MADISON]

Then a hurricane came, and devastation reigned  
Our man saw his future drip, dripping down the drain  
Put a pencil to his temple, connected it to his brain  
And he wrote his first refrain, a testament to his pain

[BURR]

Well, the word got around, they said, "This kid is insane,  
man"  
Took up a collection just to send him to the mainland  
"Get your education, don't forget from whence you  
came, and  
The world's gonna know your name. What's your name,  
man?"

[HAMILTON]

Alexander Hamilton  
My name is Alexander Hamilton  
And there's a million things I haven't done  
But just you wait, just you wait...

[ELIZA]

When he was ten his father split, full of it, debt-ridden  
Two years later, see Alex and his mother bed-ridden  
Half-dead sittin' in their own sick, the scent thick

[COMPANY except HAMILTON]

And Alex got better but his mother went quick

[WASHINGTON]

Moved in with a cousin, the cousin committed suicide

Left him with nothin' but ruined pride,  
Something new inside  
A voice saying  
"Alex, you gotta fend for yourself."  
He started retreatin' and readin' every treatise on the shelf

[BURR]

There would have been nothin' left to do  
For someone less astute  
He woulda been dead or destitute  
Without a cent of restitution  
Started workin', clerkin' for his late mother's landlord  
Tradin' sugar cane and rum and all the things he can't  
afford  
Scammin' for every book he can get his hands on  
Plannin' for the future see him now as he stands on  
The bow of a ship headed for a new land  
In New York you can be a new man

[COMPANY]

In New York you can be a new man  
In New York you can be a new man  
In New York you can be a new man  
In New York, New York  
Alexander Hamilton  
We are waiting in the wings for you  
You could never back down  
You never learned to take your time!  
Oh, Alexander Hamilton  
When America sings for you  
Will they know what you overcame?  
Will they know you rewrote the game?  
The world will never be the same, oh

[BURR]

The ship is in the harbor now  
See if you can spot him  
Another immigrant  
Comin' up from the bottom  
His enemies destroyed his rep  
America forgot him

[MULLIGAN, LAFAYETTE]

We fought with him

[LAURENS]

Me? I died for him

[WASHINGTON]

Me? I trusted him

[ELIZA, ANGELICA, MARIA REYNOLDS]

Me? I loved him

[BURR]

And me? I'm the damn fool that shot him

[COMPANY]

There's a million things I haven't done  
But just you wait!

[BURR]

What's your name, man?

[COMPANY]

Alexander Hamilton!

---

## 2. Aaron Burr, Sir

[COMPANY]

Seventeen seventy-six. New York City

[HAMILTON]

Pardon me. Are you Aaron Burr, sir?

[BURR]

That depends. Who's asking?

[HAMILTON]

Oh, well, sure, sir

I'm Alexander Hamilton, I'm at your service, sir  
I have been looking for you

[BURR]

I'm getting nervous

[HAMILTON]

Sir...

I heard your name at Princeton. I was seeking an  
accelerated course of study when I got sort of out of  
sorts with a buddy of yours. I may have punched him.  
It's a blur, sir. He handles the financials?

[BURR]

You punched the bursar

[HAMILTON]

Yes!

I wanted to do what you did. Graduate in two, then join  
the revolution. He looked at me like I was

stupid, I'm not stupid. So how'd you do it? How'd you  
graduate so fast?

[BURR]

It was my parents' dying wish before they passed

[HAMILTON]

You're an orphan. Of course! I'm an orphan  
God, I wish there was a war!

Then we could prove that we're worth more  
Than anyone bargained for...

[BURR]

Can I buy you a drink?

[HAMILTON]

That would be nice

[BURR]

While we're talking, let me offer you some free advice  
Talk less

[HAMILTON]

What?

[BURR]

Smile more

[HAMILTON]

Ha

[BURR]

Don't let them know what you're against or what you're  
for

[HAMILTON]

You can't be serious

[BURR]

You wanna get ahead?

[HAMILTON]

Yes

[BURR]

Fools who run their mouths off wind up dead

[LAURENS]

Yo yo yo yo yo!

What time is it?

[LAURENS, LAFAYETTE, MULLIGAN]

Show time!

[BURR]

Like I said...

[LAURENS]

Show time! Show time! Yo!

I'm John Laurens in the place to be!

Two pints o' Sam Adams, but I'm workin' on three, uh!

Those redcoats don't want it with me!

Cuz I will pop chick-a pop these cops till I'm free!

[LAFAYETTE]

Oui oui, mon ami, je m'appelle Lafayette!  
The Lancelot of the revolutionary set!  
I came from afar just to say "Bonsoir!"  
Tell the King "Casse toi!" Who's the best?  
C'est moi!

[MULLIGAN]

Brrrah brraaah! I am Hercules Mulligan  
Up in it, lovin' it, yes I heard ya mother said "Come  
again?"  
Lock up ya daughters and horses, of course  
It's hard to have intercourse over four sets of corsets...

[LAFAYETTE]

Wow

[LAURENS]

No more sex, pour me another brew, son!  
Let's raise a couple more...

[LAURENS, LAFAYETTE, MULLIGAN]

To the revolution!

[LAURENS]

Well, if it ain't the prodigy of Princeton college!

### 3. My Shot

[HAMILTON]

I am not throwing away my shot  
I am not throwing away my shot  
Hey yo, I'm just like my country  
I'm young, scrappy, and hungry  
And I'm not throwing away my shot  
I'ma get scholarship to King's College  
I prob'ly shouldn't brag, but dag, I amaze and astonish  
The problem is I got a lot of brains, but no polish  
I gotta holler just to be heard  
With every word I drop knowledge  
I'm a diamond in the rough, a shiny piece of coal  
Tryin' to reach my goal, my power of speech:  
unimpeachable  
Only nineteen, but my mind is older  
These New York City streets getting colder, I shoulder  
Ev'ry burden, ev'ry disadvantage  
I have learned to manage. I don't have a gun to brandish  
I walk these streets famished  
The plan is to fan this spark into a flame  
But damn, it's getting dark, so let me spell out my name  
I am the—

[MULLIGAN]

Aaron Burr!

[LAURENS]

Give us a verse, drop some knowledge!

[BURR]

Good luck with that: you're takin' a stand  
You spit. I'm 'a sit. We'll see where we land

[LAFAYETTE, MULLIGAN]

Boooo!

[LAURENS]

Burr, the revolution's imminent. What do you stall for?

[HAMILTON]

If you stand for nothing, Burr, what'll you fall for?

[MULLIGAN, LAFAYETTE, LAURENS]

Ooh

Who are you?

Who are you?

Who are you?

[MULLIGAN, LAFAYETTE, LAURENS]

Ooh, who is this kid? What's he gonna do?

[HAMILTON, LAFAYETTE, MULLIGAN,  
LAURENS]

A-L, E-X, A-N, D, E-R—we are—meant to be

[HAMILTON]

A colony that runs independently  
Meanwhile, Britain keeps shitting on us endlessly  
Essentially, they tax us relentlessly  
Then King George turns around, runs a spending spree  
He ain't never gonna set his descendants free  
So there will be a revolution in this century  
ENTER ME!

[LAURENS, LAFAYETTE, MULLIGAN]

(He says in parentheses)

[HAMILTON]

Don't be shocked when your hist'ry book mentions me  
I will lay down my life if it sets us free  
Eventually you'll see my ascendancy

[HAMILTON]

And I am not throwing away my shot  
I am not throwing away my shot  
Hey yo, I'm just like my country

I'm young, scrappy, and hungry

[HAMILTON, LAURENS]

And I'm not throwing away my shot

[HAMILTON, MULLIGAN, LAURENS,  
LAFAYETTE]

I am not throwing away my shot

I am not throwing away my shot

Hey yo, I'm just like my country

I'm young, scrappy, and hungry

And I'm not throwing away my shot

It's time to take a shot!

[LAFAYETTE]

I dream of life without the monarchy

The unrest in France will lead to 'onarchy

'Onarchy? How you say, how you s—Oh, anarchy!

When I fight I make the other side panicky

With my

[HAMILTON, MULLIGAN, LAURENS,  
LAFAYETTE]

Shot!

[MULLIGAN]

Yo, I'm a tailor's apprentice

And I got y'all knuckleheads in loco parentis

I'm joining the rebellion cuz I know it's my chance

To socially advance, instead of sewin' some pants

I'm gonna take a

[HAMILTON, MULLIGAN, LAURENS,  
LAFAYETTE]

Shot!

[LAURENS]

Eh, but we'll never be truly free

Until those in bondage have the same rights as you and  
me

You and I, do or die, wait till I sally in on a stallion

With the first black battalion

Have another

[HAMILTON, MULLIGAN, LAURENS,  
LAFAYETTE]

Shot!

[BURR]

Geniuses, lower your voices

You keep out of trouble, and you double your choices

I'm with you, but the situation is fraught

You've got to be carefully taught:

If you talk, you're gonna get shot!

[HAMILTON]

Burr, check what we got

Mr. Lafayette hard rock like Lancelot

I think your pants look hot

Laurens, I like you a lot

Let's hatch a plot blacker than the kettle callin' the pot

What are the odds the gods would put us all in one spot

Poppin' a squat on conventional wisdom, like it or not

A bunch of revolutionary manumission abolitionists

Give me a position, show me where the ammunition is

Oh, am I talkin' too loud?

Sometimes I get over excited, shoot off at the mouth

I never had a group of friends before

I promise that I'll make y'all proud

[LAURENS]

Let's get this guy in front of a crowd!

[COMPANY]

I am not throwing away my shot

I am not throwing away my shot

Hey yo, I'm just like my country

I'm young, scrappy, and hungry

And I'm not throwing away my shot

I am not throwing away my shot

I am not throwing away my shot

Hey yo, I'm just like my country

I'm young, scrappy, and hungry

And I'm not throwing away my shot

[LAURENS]

Everybody sing, woah-woah, wo-oh-oh

Hey, wo-oh-oh, wooh!! Wo-oh-oh

Sing let 'em hear ya

Let's go!

I said, shout it to the rooftops

Said to the rooftops

Now come on, now come on, let's go

Rise up

When you're living on your knees, you rise up

Tell your brother that he's got to rise up

Tell your sister that she's got to rise up

When are these colonies gonna rise up

When are these colonies gonna rise up

When are these colonies gonna rise up

When are these colonies gonna rise up

Rise up

<p>[HAMILTON]  I imagine death so much it feels more like a memory  When's it gonna get me?  In my sleep? Seven feet ahead of me?  If I see it coming, do I run or do I let it be?  Is it like a beat without a melody?  See, I never thought I'd live past twenty  Where I come from some get half as many  Ask anybody why we livin' fast and we laugh, reach for a  flask  We have to make this moment last, that's plenty  Scratch that  This is not a moment, it's the movement  Where all the hungriest brothers with something to prove  went  Foes oppose us, we take an honest stand  We roll like Moses, claimin' our Promised Land  And? If we win our independence?  'Zat a guarantee of freedom for our descendants?  Or will the blood we shed begin an endless  Cycle of vengeance and death with no defendants?  I know the action in the street is excitin'  But Jesus, between all the bleedin' 'n fightin'  I've been readin' 'n writin'  We need to handle our financial situation  Are we a nation of states? What's the state of our nation?  I'm past patiently waitin'! I'm passionately smashin' every  expectation  Every action's an act of creation  I'm laughin' in the face of casualties and sorrow  For the first time, I'm thinkin' past tomorrow</p>	<p>[HAMILTON, COMPANY]  And I am not throwin' away my shot  I am not throwin' away my shot  Hey, yo, I'm just like my country  I'm young, scrappy, and hungry  And I'm not throwin' away my shot</p> <p>[HAMILTON, MULLIGAN, LAURENS (ENSEMBLE)]  We're gonna rise up; time to take a shot  (Not thrown' away my shot)  We're gonna rise up; time to take a shot  (Not throwin' away my shot)  We're gonna (rise up, rise up)</p> <p>[HAMILTON]  It's time to take a shot</p> <p>[HAMILTON, MULLIGAN, LAURENS (ENSEMBLE)]  (Rise up, rise up)  It's time to take a shot (rise up, rise up)  (Wo-oah) Time to take a shot (rise up)  Take a shot, a shot, a shot, (Oh-Oh, oh)  A-yo, it's time to take a shot (Woah, oh-oh oh)  Time to take a shot (Woah-oh)  And I am (And I am)  Not throwing away my</p> <p>[COMPANY]  Not throwing away my shot!</p>
<p><b>14. Stay Alive</b>  [ELIZA]  Stay alive...</p> <p>[WOMEN]  Stay alive...</p> <p>[HAMILTON]  I have never seen the General so despondent  I have taken over writing all his correspondence  Congress writes, "George, attack the British forces."  I shoot back, we have resorted to eating our horses  Local merchants deny us equipment, assistance  They only take British money, so sing a song of sixpence</p> <p>[WASHINGTON]  The cavalry's not coming</p> <p>[HAMILTON]  But, sir!</p>	<p>[WASHINGTON]  Alex, listen. There's only one way for us to win this  Provoke outrage, outright</p> <p>[HAMILTON]  That's right</p> <p>[WASHINGTON]  Don't engage, strike by night  Remain relentless 'til their troops take flight</p> <p>[HAMILTON]  Make it impossible to justify the cost of the fight</p> <p>[WASHINGTON, HAMILTON]  Outrun  Outrun</p> <p>[WASHINGTON, HAMILTON]  Outlast  Outlast</p>

[WASHINGTON]  
Hit 'em quick, get out fast

[HAMILTON]  
Chick-a-plao!

[WASHINGTON]  
Stay alive 'til this horror show is past  
We're gonna fly a lot of flags half-mast

[HAMILTON, LAURENS, LAFAYETTE]  
Raise a glass!

[MULLIGAN]  
I go back to New York and my apprenticeship

[LAFAYETTE]  
I ask for French aid, I pray that France has sent a ship

[LAURENS]  
I stay at work with Hamilton  
We write essays against slavery  
And every day's a test of our camaraderie  
And bravery

[HAMILTON]  
We cut supply lines, we steal contraband  
We pick and choose our battles and places to take a stand  
And ev'ry day  
"Sir, entrust me with a command,"  
And ev'ry day

[WASHINGTON]  
No

[HAMILTON]  
He dismisses me out of hand  
Instead of me, he promotes Charles Lee  
Makes him second-in-command:

[LEE]  
I'm a General. Whee!!!!

[HAMILTON]  
Yeah. He's not the choice I would have gone with

[HAMILTON, LAURENS, LAFAYETTE]  
He shits the bed at the Battle of Monmouth

[WASHINGTON, LEE]  
Ev'ryone attack!  
Retreat!

[WASHINGTON, LEE]  
Attack!  
Retreat!

[WASHINGTON]  
What are you doing, Lee? Get back on your feet!

[LEE]  
But there's so many of them!

[WASHINGTON]  
I'm sorry, is this not your speed?!  
Hamilton!

[HAMILTON]  
Ready, sir!

[WASHINGTON]  
Have Lafayette take the lead!

[HAMILTON]  
Yes, sir!

[LAURENS]  
A thousand soldiers die in a hundred-degree heat

[LAFAYETTE]  
As we snatch a stalemate from the jaws of defeat

[HAMILTON]  
Charles Lee was left behind  
Without a pot to piss in  
He started sayin' this to anybody who would listen:

[LEE]  
Washington cannot be left alone to his devices  
Indecisive, from crisis to crisis  
The best thing he can do for the revolution  
Is turn n' go back to plantin' tobacco in Mount Vernon

[COMPANY]  
Oo!!

[WASHINGTON]  
Don't do a thing. History will prove him wrong

[HAMILTON]  
But, sir!

[WASHINGTON]  
We have a war to fight, let's move along

[LAURENS]

Strong words from Lee, someone oughta hold him to it	Then I'll do it Alexander, you're the closest friend I've got
[HAMILTON] I can't disobey direct orders	[HAMILTON] Laurens, do not throw away your shot
[LAURENS]	
<b>6. Farmer Refuted</b>	
[SEABURY] Hear ye, hear ye! My name is Samuel Seabury And I present "Free Thoughts on the Proceedings of the Continental Congress!" Heed not the rabble who scream revolution They have not your interests at heart	[SEABURY] They're playing a dangerous game
[MULLIGAN] Oh my God. Tear this dude apart	[HAMILTON] But strangely, your mangle is the same
[SEABURY] Chaos and bloodshed are not a solution Don't let them lead you astray This Congress does not speak for me	[SEABURY] I pray the king shows you his mercy
[BURR] Let him be	[HAMILTON] Is he in Jersey?
[SEABURY] They're playing a dangerous game I pray the king shows you his mercy For shame, for shame...	[SEABURY] For shame
[HAMILTON, SEABURY] Yo! He'd have you all unravel at the sound of screams Heed not the rabble who scream Revolution But the Revolution is comin' They have not your interests at heart The have-nots are gonna win this	[HAMILTON] For the Revolution
[HAMILTON] It's hard to listen to you with a straight face	[SEABURY] For shame!
[HAMILTON, SEABURY] Chaos and bloodshed already haunt us, honestly you shouldn't even talk! Chaos and bloodshed are not a solution And what about Boston? Look at the cost Don't let them lead you astray N' all that we've lost n' you talk about Congress?! This Congress does not speak for me	[COMPANY] For the revolution!
[HAMILTON] My dog speaks more eloquently than thee	[SEABURY] Heed—
	[HAMILTON] If you repeat yourself again I'm gonna—
	[SEABURY, HAMILTON] Scream—
	[HAMILTON] Honestly, look at me, please don't read!
	[SEABURY] Not your interests—
	[HAMILTON] Don't modulate the key then not debate with me! Why should a tiny island across the sea regulate the price of tea?
	[BURR] Alexander, please!

[HAMILTON]  
Burr, I'd rather be divisive than indecisive, drop the niceties

[ENSEMBLE]

### 15. Ten Duel Commandments

[MEN]  
One, two, three, four

[COMPANY]  
Five, six, seven, eight, nine...

[BURR, HAMILTON, LAURENS, LEE]  
It's the Ten Duel Commandments

[COMPANY]  
It's the Ten Duel Commandments  
Number one!

[LAURENS]  
The challenge: demand satisfaction  
If they apologize, no need for further action

[COMPANY]  
Number two!

[LAURENS]  
If they don't, grab a friend, that's your second

[HAMILTON]  
Your lieutenant when there's reckoning to be reckoned

[COMPANY]  
Number three!

[LEE]  
Have your seconds meet face to face

[BURR]  
Negotiate a peace...

[HAMILTON]  
Or negotiate a time and place

[BURR]  
This is commonplace, 'specially 'tween recruits

[COMPANY]  
Most disputes die, and no one shoots  
Number four!

Silence! A message from the King!  
A message from the King!

[FULL COMPANY]  
A message from the King!

[LAURENS]  
If they don't reach a peace, that's alright  
Time to get some pistols and a doctor on site

[HAMILTON]  
You pay him in advance, you treat him with civility

[BURR]  
You have him turn around so he can have deniability

[COMPANY]  
Five!

[LEE]  
Duel before the sun is in the sky

[COMPANY]  
Pick a place to die where it's high and dry  
Number six!

[HAMILTON]  
Leave a note for your next of kin  
Tell 'em where you been. Pray that hell or heaven lets  
you in

[COMPANY]  
Seven!

[LEE]  
Confess your sins. Ready for the moment  
Of adrenaline when you finally face your opponent

[COMPANY]  
Number eight!

[LAURENS, LEE, HAMILTON, BURR]  
Your last chance to negotiate  
Send in your seconds, see if they can set the  
record straight...

[BURR]  
Alexander

[HAMILTON]  
Aaron Burr, sir



[BURR]  
Can we agree that duels are dumb and immature?

[HAMILTON]  
Sure  
But your man has to answer for his words, Burr

[BURR]  
With his life? We both know that's absurd, sir

[HAMILTON]  
Hang on, how many men died because Lee was  
inexperienced and ruinous?

[BURR]  
Okay, so we're doin' this

[COMPANY]  
Number nine!

---

### 18. Guns and Ships

[BURR]  
How does a ragtag volunteer army in need of a shower  
Somehow defeat a global superpower?  
How do we emerge victorious from the quagmire?  
Leave the battlefield waving Betsy Ross' flag higher?  
Yo. Turns out we have a secret weapon!  
An immigrant you know and love who's unafraid to step  
in!  
He's constantly confusin', confoundin' the British  
henchmen  
Ev'ryone give it up for America's favorite fighting  
Frenchman!

[COMPANY]  
Lafayette!

[LAFAYETTE]  
I'm takin this horse by the reins makin'  
Redcoats redder with bloodstains

[COMPANY]  
Lafayette!

[LAFAYETTE]  
And I'm never gonna stop until I make 'em  
Drop and burn 'em up and scatter their remains, I'm

[COMPANY]  
Lafayette!

[LAFAYETTE]  
Watch me engagin' em! Escapin' em!

[HAMILTON]  
Look 'em in the eye, aim no higher  
Summon all the courage you require  
Then count

[MEN]  
One two three four

[FULL COMPANY]  
Five six seven eight nine

[HAMILTON, BURR]  
Number

[COMPANY]  
Ten paces!

[HAMILTON, BURR]  
Fire!

---

Enragin' em! I'm—

[COMPANY]  
Lafayette!

[LAFAYETTE]  
I go to France for more funds

[COMPANY]  
Lafayette!

[LAFAYETTE]  
I come back with more  
Guns and ships  
And so the balance shifts

[WASHINGTON]  
We rendezvous with Rochambeau, consolidate their gifts

[LAFAYETTE]  
We can end this war at Yorktown, cut them off at sea, but  
For this to succeed, there is someone else we need:

[WASHINGTON]  
I know

[WASHINGTON, COMPANY]  
Hamilton!

[LAFAYETTE]  
Sir, he knows what to do in a trench  
Ingenuitive and fluent in French, I mean—

[WASHINGTON, COMPANY]

Hamilton!

[LAFAYETTE]

Sir, you're gonna have to use him eventually  
What's he gonna do on the bench? I mean—

[WASHINGTON, COMPANY]

Hamilton!

[LAFAYETTE]

No one has more resilience  
Or matches my practical tactical brilliance—

[WASHINGTON, COMPANY]

Hamilton!

[LAFAYETTE, COMPANY]

You wanna fight for your land back? (Hamilton!)

[WASHINGTON, WOMEN]

I need my right hand man back! (Hamilton!)

---

## 20. Yorktown (The World Turned Upside Down)

[COMPANY]

The battle of Yorktown. Seventy eighty-one.

[LAFAYETTE]

Monsieur Hamilton

[HAMILTON]

Monsieur Lafayette

[LAFAYETTE]

In command where you belong

[HAMILTON]

How you say, no sweat  
We're finally on the field. We've had quite a run

[LAFAYETTE]

Immigrants:

[HAMILTON, LAFAYETTE]

We get the job done

[HAMILTON]

So what happens if we win?

[LAFAYETTE]

I go back to France  
I bring freedom to my people if I'm given the chance

[LAFAYETTE, ENSEMBLE]

Ah! Uh, get ya right hand man back

Get your right hand man back!

Hamilton!

You know you gotta get ya right hand man back

Your right hand man back!

Hamilton!

I mean you gotta put some thought into the letter

Ha—ha—Hamilton

But the sooner the better to get your right hand man back!

Hamilton, ha—ha—

[WASHINGTON]

Alexander Hamilton

Troops are waiting in the field for you

If you join us right now, together we can turn the tide

Oh, Alexander Hamilton

I have soldiers that will yield for you

If we manage to get this right

They'll surrender by early light

The world will never be the same, Alexander...

---

[HAMILTON]

We'll be with you when you do

[LAFAYETTE]

Go lead your men

[HAMILTON]

See you on the other side

[LAFAYETTE]

'Til we meet again, let's go!

[ENSEMBLE]

I am not throwin' away my shot!

I am not throwin' away my shot!

Hey yo, I'm just like my country, I'm young

Scrappy and hungry

And I'm not throwin' away my shot!

I am not throwin' away my shot!

[HAMILTON]

'Til the world turns upside down...

[ENSEMBLE]

'Til the world turns upside down!

[HAMILTON]

I imagine death so much it feels more like a memory

This is where it gets me: on my feet

The enemy ahead of me

If this is the end of me, at least I have a friend with me  
Weapon in my hand, a command, and my men with me  
Then I remember my Eliza's expecting me...  
Not only that, my Eliza's expecting  
We gotta go, gotta get the job done  
Gotta start a new nation, gotta meet my son!  
Take the bullets out your gun!

[ENSEMBLE]  
What?

[HAMILTON]  
The bullets out your gun!

[ENSEMBLE]  
What?

[HAMILTON]  
We move under cover and we move as one  
Through the night, we have one shot to live another day  
We cannot let a stray gunshot give us away  
We will fight up close, seize the moment and stay in it  
It's either that or meet the business end of a bayonet  
The code word is 'Rochambeau,' dig me?

[ENSEMBLE]  
Rochambeau!

[HAMILTON]  
You have your orders now, go, man, go!  
And so the American experiment begins  
With my friends all scattered to the winds  
Laurens is in South Carolina, redefining brav'ry

[HAMILTON, LAURENS]  
We'll never be free until we end slavery!

[HAMILTON]  
When we finally drive the British away  
Lafayette is there waiting—

[HAMILTON, LAFAYETTE]  
In Chesapeake Bay!

[HAMILTON]  
How did we know that this plan would work?  
We had a spy on the inside. That's right

[HAMILTON, COMPANY]  
Hercules Mulligan!

[MULLIGAN]  
A tailor spyin' on the British government!

I take their measurements, information and then I  
smuggle it  
To my brother's revolutionary covenant  
I'm runnin' with the Sons of Liberty and I am lovin' it!  
See, that's what happens when you up against the  
ruffians  
We in the shit now, somebody gotta shovel it!  
Hercules Mulligan, I need no introduction  
When you knock me down I get the fuck back up again!

[COMPANY]  
Left! Right! Hold!  
Go!  
What! What! What!

[HAMILTON]  
After a week of fighting, a young man in a red coat  
stands on a parapet

[LAFAYETTE]  
We lower our guns as he frantically waves a white  
handkerchief

[MULLIGAN]  
And just like that, it's over. We tend to our wounded, we  
count our dead

[LAURENS]  
Black and white soldiers wonder alike if this really  
means freedom

[WASHINGTON]  
Not. Yet.

[HAMILTON]  
We negotiate the terms of surrender  
I see George Washington smile  
We escort their men out of Yorktown  
They stagger home single file  
Tens of thousands of people flood the streets  
There are screams and church bells ringing  
And as our fallen foes retreat  
I hear the drinking song they're singing...

[MEN]  
The world turned upside down

[COMPANY]  
The world turned upside down  
The world turned upside down  
The world turned upside down  
Down, down, down, down

[LAFAYETTE]  
Freedom for America, freedom for France!

[COMPANY]  
Down, down, down

[HAMILTON]  
Gotta start a new nation  
Gotta meet my son

[COMPANY]  
Down, down, down

[MULLIGAN, LAFAYETTE, LAURENS]  
We won!

We won!

We won!

[MULLIGAN, LAFAYETTE, LAURENS, HAMILTON,  
WASHINGTON]  
We won!

[COMPANY]  
The world turned upside down!

## 22. Dear Theodosia

[BURR]  
Dear Theodosia, what to say to you?  
You have my eyes. You have your mother's name  
When you came into the world, you cried and it broke my  
heart  
I'm dedicating every day to you  
Domestic life was never quite my style  
When you smile, you knock me out, I fall apart  
And I thought I was so smart

You will come of age with our young nation  
We'll bleed and fight for you, we'll make it right for you  
If we lay a strong enough foundation  
We'll pass it on to you, we'll give the world to you  
And you'll blow us all away...  
Someday, someday  
Yeah, you'll blow us all away  
Someday, someday

[HAMILTON]  
Oh Philip, when you smile I am undone  
My son  
Look at my son. Pride is not the word I'm looking for  
There is so much more inside me now  
Oh Philip, you outshine the morning sun  
My son

When you smile, I fall apart  
And I thought I was so smart  
My father wasn't around

[BURR]  
My father wasn't around

[HAMILTON, BURR]  
I swear that  
I'll be around for you

[HAMILTON]  
I'll do whatever it takes

[BURR]  
I'll make a million mistakes

[BURR, HAMILTON]  
I'll make the world safe and sound for you  
You will come of age with our young nation  
We'll bleed and fight for you, we'll make it right for you  
If we lay a strong enough foundation  
We'll pass it on to you, we'll give the world to you  
And you'll blow us all away...  
Someday, someday  
Yeah, you'll blow us all away  
Someday, someday

## 23. Non-Stop

[BURR]  
After the war I went back to New York

[HAMILTON]  
A-After the war I went back to New York

[BURR]  
I finished up my studies and I practiced law

[HAMILTON]  
I practiced law, Burr worked next door

[BURR]  
Even though we started at the very same time  
Alexander Hamilton began to climb  
How to account for his rise to the top?  
Maaaaan, the man is

[BURR, ENSEMBLE]  
Non-stop!

[HAMILTON]  
Gentlemen of the jury, I'm curious, bear with me  
Are you aware that we're making hist'ry?

This is the first murder trial of our brand-new nation  
The liberty behind  
Deliberation—

[ENSEMBLE]  
Non-stop!

[HAMILTON]  
I intend to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt  
With my assistant counsel—

[BURR]  
Co-counsel  
Hamilton, sit down  
Our client Levi Weeks is innocent. Call your first witness  
That's all you had to say!

[HAMILTON]  
Okay!  
One more thing—

[BURR]  
Why do you assume you're the smartest in the room?  
Why do you assume you're the smartest in the room?  
Why do you assume you're the smartest in the room?  
Soon that attitude may be your doom!

[ENSEMBLE]  
Awwww!

[BURR, ENSEMBLE]  
Why do you write like you're running out of time?  
Write day and night like you're running out of time?  
Ev'ry day you fight, like you're running out of time  
Keep on fighting. In the meantime—

[ENSEMBLE]  
Non-stop!

[HAMILTON]  
Corruption's such an old song that we can sing along in  
harmony  
And nowhere is it stronger than in Albany  
This colony's economy's increasingly stalling and

[HAMILTON]  
Honestly, that's why public service  
Seems to be calling me

[BURR, ENSEMBLE]  
He's just non-stop!

[HAMILTON]

I practiced the law, I practi'ly perfected it  
I've seen injustice in the world and I've corrected it  
Now for a strong central democracy  
If not, then I'll be Socrates  
Throwing verbal rocks at these mediocrities

[ENSEMBLE]  
Awww!

[BURR]  
Hamilton, at the Constitutional Convention:

[HAMILTON]  
I was chosen for the Constitutional Convention!

[BURR]  
There as a New York junior delegate:

[HAMILTON, COMPANY]  
Now what I'm going to say may sound indelicate

[ENSEMBLE]  
Awww!

[BURR, COMPANY]  
Goes and proposes his own form of government! (What?)  
His own plan for a new form of government! (What?)

[BURR]  
Talks for six hours! The convention is listless!

[MAN]  
Bright young man...

[MAN]  
Yo, who the f is this?

[BURR, COMPANY]  
Why do you always say what you believe?  
Why do you always say what you believe?  
Ev'ry proclamation guarantees free ammunition for your  
enemies!

[COMPANY]  
Awww!

[BURR, ENSEMBLE]  
Why do you write like it's  
Going out of style?  
Write day and night like it's  
Going out of style?  
Ev'ry day you fight like it's  
Going out of style  
Do what you do

[BURR] Alexander?	[HAMILTON] I disagree
[HAMILTON] Aaron Burr, sir	[BURR] And if it fails?
[BURR] It's the middle of the night	[HAMILTON] Burr, that's why we need it
[HAMILTON] Can we confer, sir?	[BURR] The constitution's a mess
[BURR] Is this a legal matter?	[HAMILTON] So it needs amendments
[HAMILTON] Yes, and it's important to me	[BURR] It's full of contradictions
[BURR] What do you need?	[HAMILTON] So is independence We have to start somewhere
[HAMILTON] Burr, you're a better lawyer than me	[BURR] No. No way
[BURR] Okay	[HAMILTON] You're making a mistake
[HAMILTON] I know I talk too much, I'm abrasive You're incredible in court. You're succinct, persuasive My client needs a strong defense. You're the solution	[BURR] Good night
[BURR] Who's your client?	[HAMILTON] Hey What are you waiting for? What do you stall for?
[HAMILTON] The new U.S. Constitution?	[BURR] What?
[BURR] No	[HAMILTON] We won the war What was it all for? Do you support this constitution?
[HAMILTON] Hear me out	[BURR] Of course
[BURR] No way!	[HAMILTON] Then defend it
[HAMILTON] A series of essays, anonymously published Defending the document to the public	[BURR] And what if you're backing the wrong horse?

[HAMILTON]  
Burr, we studied and we fought and we killed  
For the notion of a nation we now get to build  
For once in your life, take a stand with pride  
I don't understand how you stand to the side

[BURR, ENSEMBLE]  
I'll keep all my plans close to my chest  
Wait for it, wait for it, wait...  
I'll wait here and see which way the wind will blow  
I'm taking my time watching the afterbirth of a nation  
Watching the tension grow

[ANGELICA]  
I am sailing off to London  
I'm accompanied by someone who always pays  
I have found a wealthy husband  
Who will keep me in comfort for all my days  
He is not a lot of fun, but there's no one  
Who can match you for turn of phrase  
My Alexander

[HAMILTON]  
Angelica

[ANGELICA]  
Don't forget to write

[ELIZA]  
Look at where you are  
Look at where you started  
The fact that you're alive is a miracle  
Just stay alive, that would be enough  
And if your wife could share a fraction of your time  
If I could grant you peace of mind  
Would that be enough?

[BURR]  
Alexander joins forces with James Madison and John Jay  
to write a series of essays defending the new United  
States Constitution, entitled The Federalist Papers.  
The plan was to write a total of twenty-five essays,  
the work divided evenly among the three men. In the  
end, they wrote eighty-five essays, in the span of six  
months. John Jay got sick after writing five. James  
Madison wrote twenty-nine. Hamilton wrote the other  
fifty-one!

[BURR, WOMEN]  
How do you write like you're running out of time?  
Write day and night like you're running out of time?

[BURR, ENSEMBLE]

Ev'ry day you fight like you're running out of time  
Like you're running out of time  
Are you running out of time?  
Awwww!

[COMPANY (except HAMILTON)]  
How do you write like tomorrow won't arrive?  
How do you write like you need it to survive?  
How do you write ev'ry second you're alive?  
Ev'ry second you're alive? Ev'ry second you're alive?

[WASHINGTON]  
They are asking me to lead  
I am doing the best I can  
To get the people that I need  
I'm asking you to be my right-hand man

[HAMILTON]  
Treasury or State?  
[WASHINGTON]  
I know it's a lot to ask

[HAMILTON]  
Treasury or State?

[WASHINGTON]  
To leave behind the world you know

[HAMILTON]  
Sir, do you want me to run the Treasury or State  
department?

[WASHINGTON]  
Treasury

[HAMILTON]  
Let's go

[ELIZA]  
Alexander...

[HAMILTON]  
I have to leave

[ELIZA]  
Alexander—

[HAMILTON]  
Look around, look around at how lucky we are to be alive  
right now

[ELIZA]  
Helpless...

[HAMILTON]

They are asking me to lead

[ELIZA]

Look around, isn't this enough?

[ANGELICA, ELIZA]

He will never be satisfied

What would be enough?

He will never be satisfied, satisfied

To be satisfied?

[BURR]

Why do you assume you're the smartest in the room?

Why do you assume you're the smartest in the room?

Soon that attitude's gonna be your doom!

Why do you fight like you're running out of time?

[WASHINGTON]

History has its eyes on you

History has its eyes on you

[ELIZA]

Look around, look around!

Isn't this enough?

What would be enough?

He will never be satisfied

Satisfied, satisfied

[ANGELICA, ELIZA, BURR]

Why do you fight like

[COMPANY]

History has its eyes on you

[HAMILTON, MEN]

I am not throwin' away my shot! (Just you wait!)

[HAMILTON, COMPANY]

I am not throwin' away my shot! (Just you wait!)

I am Alexander Hamilton!

[COMPANY]

Hamilton, just you wait!

[HAMILTON]

I am not throwin' away my shot!

## 25. Cabinet Battle #1

[WASHINGTON]

Ladies and gentlemen, you coulda been anywhere in the world tonight, but you're here with us in New York City. Are you ready for a cabinet meeting???

The issue on the table: Secretary Hamilton's plan to assume state debt and establish a national bank.

Secretary Jefferson, you have the floor, sir

[JEFFERSON]

'Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.'

We fought for these ideals; we shouldn't settle for less

These are wise words, enterprising men quote 'em

Don't act surprised, you guys, cuz I wrote 'em

But Hamilton forgets

His plan would have the government assume state's debts

Now, place your bets as to who that benefits:

The very seat of government where Hamilton sits

[HAMILTON]

Not true!

[JEFFERSON]

Ooh, if the shoe fits, wear it

If New York's in debt—

Why should Virginia bear it? Uh! Our debts are paid, I'm afraid

Don't tax the South cuz we got it made in the shade

In Virginia, we plant seeds in the ground

We create. You just wanna move our money around

This financial plan is an outrageous demand

And it's too many damn pages for any man to understand

Stand with me in the land of the free

And pray to God we never see Hamilton's candidacy

Look, when Britain taxed our tea, we got frisky

Imagine what gon' happen when you try to tax our whisky

[WASHINGTON]

Thank you, Secretary Jefferson

Secretary Hamilton, your response

[HAMILTON]

Thomas. That was a real nice declaration

Welcome to the present, we're running a real nation

Would you like to join us, or stay mellow

Doin' whatever the hell it is you do in Monticello?

If we assume the debts, the union gets

A new line of credit, a financial diuretic

How do you not get it? If we're aggressive and competitive

The union gets a boost. You'd rather give it a sedative?

A civics lesson from a slaver. Hey neighbor

Your debts are paid cuz you don't pay for labor

"We plant seeds in the South. We create."

Yeah, keep ranting



<p>We know who's really doing the planting  And another thing, Mr. Age of Enlightenment  Don't lecture me about the war, you didn't fight in it  You think I'm frightened of you, man?  We almost died in the trench  While you were off getting high with the French  Thomas Jefferson, always hesitant with the President  Reticent—there isn't a plan he doesn't jettison  Madison, you're mad as a hatter, son, take your medicine  Damn, you're in worse shape than the national debt is in  Sittin' there useless as two shits  Hey, turn around, bend over, I'll show you  Where my shoe fits</p> <p>[WASHINGTON]  Excuse me? Madison, Jefferson, take a walk! Hamilton,  take a walk! We'll reconvene after a brief recess.  Hamilton!</p> <p>[HAMILTON]  Sir!</p> <p>[WASHINGTON]  A word</p> <p>[MADISON]  You don't have the votes</p> <p>[JEFFERSON, MADISON]  You don't have the votes</p> <p>[JEFFERSON, MADISON]  You're gonna need congressional approval and you don't  have the votes</p> <p>[JEFFERSON]  Such a blunder sometimes it makes me wonder why I  even bring the thunder</p> <p>[MADISON]  Why he even brings the thunder...</p> <p>[WASHINGTON]  You wanna pull yourself together?</p> <p>[HAMILTON]  I'm sorry, these Virginians are birds of a feather</p>	<p>[WASHINGTON]  Young man, I'm from Virginia, so watch your mouth</p> <p>[HAMILTON]  So we let Congress get held hostage by the South?</p> <p>[WASHINGTON]  You need the votes</p> <p>[HAMILTON]  No, we need bold strokes. We need this plan</p> <p>[WASHINGTON]  No, you need to convince more folks</p> <p>[HAMILTON]  James Madison won't talk to me, that's a nonstarter</p> <p>[WASHINGTON]  Winning was easy, young man. Governing's harder</p> <p>[HAMILTON]  They're being intransigent</p> <p>[WASHINGTON]  You have to find a compromise</p> <p>[HAMILTON]  But they don't have a plan, they just hate mine!</p> <p>[WASHINGTON]  Convince them otherwise</p> <p>[HAMILTON]  What happens if I don't get congressional approval?</p> <p>[WASHINGTON]  I imagine they'll call for your removal</p> <p>[HAMILTON]  Sir—</p> <p>[WASHINGTON]  Figure it out, Alexander. That's an order from your  commander</p>
<p><b>26. Take A Break</b>  [ELIZA. PHILIP]  Un deux trois quatre cinq six sept huit neuf  Good! Un deux trois quatre cinq six sept huit neuf  Sept huit neuf—</p>	<p>Sept huit neuf—  Sept huit neuf—  Sept huit neuf—</p> <p>[ELIZA, PHILIP]</p>

One two three four five six seven eight nine!

[HAMILTON]

My dearest, Angelica  
“Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day”  
I trust you’ll understand the reference to  
Another Scottish tragedy without my having to name the  
play  
They think me Macbeth, and ambition is my folly  
I’m a polymath, a pain in the ass, a massive pain  
Madison is Banquo, Jefferson’s Macduff  
And Birnam Wood is Congress on its way to Dunsinane

[HAMILTON, ANGELICA]

And there you are, an ocean away  
Do you have to live an ocean away?  
Thoughts of you subside  
Then I get another letter  
I cannot put the notion away...

[ELIZA]

Take a break

[HAMILTON]

I am on my way

[ELIZA]

There’s a little surprise before supper  
And it cannot wait

[HAMILTON]

I’ll be there in just a minute, save my plate

[ELIZA]

Alexander—

[HAMILTON]

Okay, okay—

[ELIZA]

Your son is nine years old today  
And he has something that he’d like to say  
He’s been practicing all day  
Philip, take it away—

[PHILIP]

Daddy, daddy, look—  
My name is Philip  
I am a poet  
I wrote this poem just  
To show it  
And I just turned nine

You can write rhymes  
But you can’t write mine  
What!

I practice French  
And play piano with my mother  
I have a sister  
But I want a little brother  
My daddy’s trying to start America’s bank  
Un deux trois quatre cinq!

[ELIZA]

Take a break

[HAMILTON]

Hey, our kid is pretty great

[ELIZA]

Run away with us for the summer  
Let’s go upstate

[HAMILTON]

Eliza, I’ve got so much on my plate

[ELIZA]

We can all go stay with my father  
There’s a lake I know...

[HAMILTON]

I know

[ELIZA]

In a nearby park

[HAMILTON]

I’d love to go

[ELIZA]

You and I can go when the night gets dark

[HAMILTON]

I will try to get away

[ANGELICA]

My dearest Alexander  
You must get through to Jefferson  
Sit down with him and compromise  
Don’t stop ‘til you agree  
Your fav’rite older sister  
Angelica, reminds you  
There’s someone in your corner all the way across the sea  
In a letter I received from you two weeks ago  
I noticed a comma in the middle of a phrase  
It changed the meaning. Did you intend this?

One stroke and you've consumed my waking days  
It says:

[HAMILTON, ANGELICA]  
"My dearest Angelica"

[ANGELICA]  
With a comma after "dearest." You've written

[HAMILTON, ANGELICA]  
"My dearest, Angelica."

[ANGELICA]  
Anyway, all this to say  
I'm coming home this summer  
At my sister's invitation  
I'll be there with your fam'ly  
If you make your way upstate  
I know you're very busy  
I know your work's important  
But I'm crossing the ocean and I just can't wait

[HAMILTON AND ANGELICA]  
You won't be an ocean away  
You will only be a moment away...

[ELIZA]  
Alexander, come downstairs. Angelica's arriving today!

[ELIZA]  
Angelica!

[ANGELICA]  
Eliza!

[HAMILTON]  
The Schuyler sisters!

[ANGELICA]  
Alexander

[HAMILTON]  
Hi

[ANGELICA]  
It's good to see your face

[ELIZA]  
Angelica, tell this man John Adams spends the summer  
with his family

[HAMILTON]

Angelica, tell my wife John Adams doesn't have a real  
job anyway

[ANGELICA]  
...you're not joining us? Wait

[HAMILTON]  
I'm afraid I cannot join you upstate

[ANGELICA]  
Alexander, I came all this way

[ELIZA]  
She came all this way—

[ANGELICA]  
All this way—

[ELIZA AND ANGELICA]  
Take a break

[HAMILTON]  
You know I have to get my plan through Congress

[ELIZA AND ANGELICA]  
Run away with us for the summer  
Let's go upstate

[HAMILTON]  
I lose my job if we don't get this plan through Congress

[ELIZA, ANGELICA]  
We can all go stay with our father

[ELIZA, ANGELICA]  
There's a lake I know  
I know I'll miss your face—  
In a nearby park  
Screw your courage to the sticking place—

You and I can go  
Eliza's right—  
Take a break and get away  
Run away with us for the summer—  
Let's go upstate

Where we can stay  
We can all go stay with our father  
If you take your time—  
Look around, look around  
At how lucky we are to be alive right now  
You will make your mark

Close your eyes and dream—  
We can go—  
When the night gets dark

Take a break

[HAMILTON]

### 30. Cabinet Battle #2

[WASHINGTON]

The issue on the table: France is on the verge of war with England. And do we provide aid and our troops to our French allies or do we stay out of it? Remember, my decision on this matter is not subject to congressional approval. The only person you have to convince is me Secretary Jefferson, you have the floor, sir

[JEFFERSON]

When we were on death's door, when we were needy  
We made a promise, we signed a treaty  
We needed money and guns and half a chance  
Who provided those funds?

[MADISON]

France

[JEFFERSON]

In return, they didn't ask for land  
Only a promise that we'd lend a hand  
And stand with them if they fought against oppressors  
And revolution is messy but now is the time to stand  
Stand with our brothers as they fight against tyranny  
I know that Alexander Hamilton is here and he  
Would rather not have this debate  
I'll remind you that he is not Secretary of State  
He knows nothing of loyalty  
Smells like new money, dresses like fake royalty  
Desperate to rise above his station  
Everything he does betrays the ideals of our nation

[ENSEMBLE]

Ooh!!

[JEFFERSON]

Hey, and if ya don't know, now ya know, Mr. President

[WASHINGTON]

Thank you, Secretary Jefferson. Secretary Hamilton, your response

[HAMILTON]

You must be out of your Goddamn mind if you think  
The President is gonna bring the nation to the brink  
Of meddling in the middle of a military mess  
A game of chess, where France is Queen and Kingless  
We signed a treaty with a king whose head is now in a basket

I have to get my plan through Congress  
I can't stop until I get this plan through Congress

Would you like to take it out and ask it?  
"Should we honor our treaty, King Louis' head?"  
"Uh... do whatever you want, I'm super dead."

[WASHINGTON]

Enough. Hamilton is right

[JEFFERSON]

Mr. President—

[WASHINGTON]

We're too fragile to start another fight

[JEFFERSON]

But sir, do we not fight for freedom?

[WASHINGTON]

Sure, when the French figure out who's gonna lead 'em

[JEFFERSON]

The people are leading—

[WASHINGTON]

The people are rioting  
There's a difference. Frankly, it's a little disquieting  
You would let your ideals blind you to reality  
Hamilton

[HAMILTON]

Sir

[WASHINGTON]

Draft a statement of neutrality

[JEFFERSON]

Did you forget Lafayette?

[HAMILTON]

What?

[JEFFERSON]

Have you an ounce of regret?  
You accumulate debt, you accumulate power  
Yet in their hour of need, you forget

[HAMILTON]

Lafayette's a smart man, he'll be fine  
And before he was your friend, he was mine

If we try to fight in every revolution in the world, we  
never stop  
Where do we draw the line?

[JEFFERSON]  
So quick-witted

[HAMILTON]  
Alas, I admit it

[JEFFERSON]  
I bet you were quite a lawyer

[HAMILTON]  
My defendants got acquitted

[JEFFERSON]  
Yeah. Well, someone oughta remind you

[HAMILTON]  
What?

[JEFFERSON]  
You're nothing without Washington behind you

[WASHINGTON]  
Hamilton!

[JEFFERSON]  
Daddy's calling!

---

### 31. Washington On Your Side

[BURR]  
It must be nice, it must be nice to have  
Washington on your side  
It must be nice, it must be nice to have  
Washington on your side

[JEFFERSON]  
Ev'ry action has its equal, opposite reactions  
Thanks to Hamilton, our cab'net's fractured into factions  
Try not to crack under the stress, we're breaking down  
like fractions  
We smack each other in the press, and we don't print  
retractions  
I get no satisfaction witnessing his fits of passion  
The way he primps and preens and dresses like the pits of  
fashion  
Our poorest citizens, our farmers, live ration to ration  
As Wall Street robs 'em blind in search of chips to cash  
in  
This prick is askin' for someone to bring him to task  
Somebody gimme some dirt on this vacuous mass so we  
can at last unmask him  
I'll pull the trigger on him, someone load the gun and  
cock it  
While we were all watching, he got Washington in his  
pocket

[JEFFERSON AND BURR]  
It must be nice, it must be nice to have  
Washington on your side  
It must be nice, it must be nice to have  
Washington on your side  
Look back at the Bill of Rights

[MADISON]  
Which I wrote

[JEFFERSON, MADISON, BURR]

The ink hasn't dried  
It must be nice, it must be nice to have  
Washington on your side

[MADISON]  
So he's doubled the size of the government  
Wasn't the trouble with much of our previous  
government size?

[BURR]  
Look in his eyes!

[JEFFERSON]  
See how he lies

[MADISON]  
Follow the scent of his enterprise

[JEFFERSON]  
Centralizing national credit  
And making American credit competitive

[MADISON]  
If we don't stop it we aid and abet it

[JEFFERSON]  
I have to resign

[MADISON]  
Somebody has to stand up for the South!

[BURR]  
Somebody has to stand up to his mouth!

[JEFFERSON]  
If there's a fire you're trying to douse

[MADISON, JEFFERSON]  
 You can't put it out from inside the house

[JEFFERSON]  
 I'm in the cabinet. I am complicit in  
 Watching him grabbin' at power and kiss it  
 If Washington isn't gon' listen  
 To disciplined dissidents, this is the difference:  
 This kid is out!

[MADISON, BURR, JEFFERSON]  
 Oh!  
 This immigrant isn't somebody we chose  
 Oh!  
 This immigrant's keeping us all on our toes  
 Oh!  
 Let's show these Federalists who they're up against!  
 Oh!

[JEFFERSON, MADISON]  
 Southern motherfuckin'—

[JEFFERSON, MADISON, BURR]  
 Democratic-Republicans!

Oh!

### 35. We Know

[HAMILTON]  
 Mr. Vice President  
 Mr. Madison  
 Senator Burr  
 What is this?

[JEFFERSON]  
 We have the check stubs from separate accounts

[MADISON]  
 Almost a thousand dollars, paid in different amounts

[BURR]  
 To a Mr. James Reynolds way back in  
 Seventeen ninety-one

[HAMILTON]  
 Is that what you have? Are you done?

[MADISON]  
 You are uniquely situated by virtue of your position

[JEFFERSON]  
 Though virtue is not a word I'd apply to this situation

Let's follow the money and see where it goes  
 Oh!  
 Because every second the Treasury grows  
 Oh!

If we follow the money and see where it leads  
 Get in the weeds, look for the seeds of  
 Hamilton's misdeeds

[JEFFERSON, MADISON, BURR]  
 It must be nice. It must be nice

[MADISON]  
 Follow the money and see where it goes

[JEFFERSON, MADISON, BURR]  
 It must be nice. It must be nice

[JEFFERSON]  
 The emperor has no clothes

[JEFFERSON, MADISON, BURR]  
 We won't be invisible. We won't be denied  
 Still  
 It must be nice, it must be nice to have  
 Washington on your side

[MADISON]  
 To seek financial gain, to stray from your sacred mission

[JEFFERSON]  
 And the evidence suggests you've engaged in speculation

[BURR]  
 An immigrant embezzling our government funds

[JEFFERSON, MADISON]  
 I can almost see the headline, your career is done

[BURR]  
 I hope you saved some money for your daughter and sons

[BURR, JEFFERSON, MADISON]  
 Ya best g'wan run back where ya come from

[HAMILTON]  
 Ha, you don't even know what you're asking me to  
 confess

[JEFFERSON, MADISON, BURR]  
 Confess

[HAMILTON]

<p>You have nothing, I don't have to tell you anything at all Unless</p> <p>[JEFFERSON, MADISON, BURR] Unless</p> <p>[HAMILTON] If I can prove that I never broke the law Do you promise not to tell another soul what you saw?</p> <p>[BURR] No one else was in the room where it happened</p> <p>[HAMILTON] Is that a yes?</p> <p>[JEFFERSON, MADISON, BURR] Um, yes</p> <p>[BURR] “Dear Sir, I hope this letter finds you in good health And in a prosperous enough position to put wealth In the pockets of people like me, down on their luck You see, that was my wife who you decided to”</p> <p>[JEFFERSON] Whaaaaat</p> <p>[HAMILTON] She courted me Escorted me to bed and when she had me in a corner That's when Reynolds extorted me For a sordid fee I paid him quarterly</p>	<p>I may have mortally wounded my prospects But my papers are orderly As you can see I kept a record of every check in my     checkered history Check it again against your list and see consistency I never spent a cent that wasn't mine You sent the dogs after my scent, that's fine Yes, I have reasons for shame But I have not committed treason and sullied my good     name As you can see I have done nothing to provoke legal     action Are my answers to your satisfaction?</p> <p>[JEFFERSON] My God</p> <p>[MADISON] Gentlemen, let's go</p> <p>[HAMILTON] So?</p> <p>[JEFFERSON AND MADISON] The people won't know what we know</p> <p>[HAMILTON] Burr How do I know you won't use this against me The next time we go toe to toe?</p> <p>[BURR] Alexander, rumors only grow And we both know what we know</p>
<p><b>36. Hurricane</b> [HAMILTON] In the eye of a hurricane There is quiet For just a moment A yellow sky</p> <p>When I was seventeen a hurricane Destroyed my town I didn't drown I couldn't seem to die I wrote my way out Wrote everything down far as I could see I wrote my way out I looked up and the town had its eyes on me</p> <p>They passed a plate around Total strangers</p>	<p>Moved to kindness by my story Raised enough for me to book passage on a Ship that was New York bound...</p> <p>I wrote my way out of hell I wrote my way to revolution I was louder than the crack in the bell I wrote Eliza love letters until she fell I wrote about The Constitution and defended it well And in the face of ignorance and resistance I wrote financial systems into existence And when my prayers to God were met with indifference I picked up a pen, I wrote my own deliverance</p> <p>In the eye of a hurricane There is quiet For just a moment A yellow sky</p>

I was twelve when my mother died  
She was holding me  
We were sick and she was holding me  
I couldn't seem to die

[BURR]  
Wait for it, wait for it, wait for it...

[HAMILTON]  
I'll write my way out...

[BURR, ENSEMBLE]  
Wait for it, wait for it, wait for it...

[HAMILTON]  
Write ev'rything down, far as I can see...

[BURR, ENSEMBLE]  
Wait for it, wait for it, wait for it, wait...

[WASHINGTON, ELIZA, ANGELICA, MARIA]  
History has its eyes on you

[HAMILTON]  
I'll write my way out...  
Overwhelm them with honesty  
This is the eye of the hurricane, this is the only  
Way I can protect my legacy...

[COMPANY (except HAMILTON)]  
Wait for it, wait for it, wait for it, wait...

[HAMILTON]  
The Reynolds Pamphlet

---

### 38. Burn

[ELIZA]  
I saved every letter you wrote me  
From the moment I read them  
I knew you were mine  
You said you were mine  
I thought you were mine

Do you know what Angelica said  
When we saw your first letter arrive?  
She said  
"Be careful with that one, love  
He will do what it takes to survive."

You and your words flooded my senses  
Your sentences left me defenseless  
You built me palaces out of paragraphs  
You built cathedrals  
I'm re-reading the letters you wrote me  
I'm searching and scanning for answers  
In every line  
For some kind of sign  
And when you were mine  
The world seemed to

Burn  
Burn

You published the letters she wrote you  
You told the whole world how you brought  
This girl into our bed  
In clearing your name, you have ruined our lives

Do you know what Angelica said  
When she read what you'd done?  
She said  
"You have married an Icarus  
He has flown too close to the sun."  
  
You and your words, obsessed with your legacy...  
Your sentences border on senseless  
And you are paranoid in every paragraph  
How they perceive you  
  
You, you, you...

I'm erasing myself from the narrative  
Let future historians wonder how Eliza  
Reacted when you broke her heart  
You have torn it all apart  
I am watching it  
Burn  
Watching it burn  
The world has no right to my heart  
The world has no place in our bed  
They don't get to know what I said  
I'm burning the memories  
Burning the letters that might have redeemed you  
You forfeit all rights to my heart  
You forfeit the place in our bed  
You sleep in your office instead  
With only the memories  
Of when you were mine  
I hope that you burn

---

### 41. It's Quiet Uptown

[ANGELICA]

There are moments that the words don't reach  
There is suffering too terrible to name



You hold your child as tight as you can  
And push away the unimaginable  
The moments when you're in so deep  
It feels easier to just swim down

[ANGELICA, ENSEMBLE]

The Hamiltons move uptown  
And learn to live with the unimaginable

[HAMILTON]

I spend hours in the garden  
I walk alone to the store  
And it's quiet uptown  
I never liked the quiet before  
I take the children to church on Sunday  
A sign of the cross at the door  
And I pray  
That never used to happen before

[ANGELICA, WOMEN]

If you see him in the street, walking by  
Himself, talking to himself, have pity

[HAMILTON]

Philip, you would like it uptown  
It's quiet uptown

[ANGELICA, WOMEN]

He is working through the unimaginable

[MEN except HAMILTON]

His hair has gone grey. He passes every day  
They say he walks the length of the city

[HAMILTON]

You knock me out, I fall apart

[COMPANY]

Can you imagine?

[HAMILTON]

Look at where we are  
Look at where we started  
I know I don't deserve you, Eliza  
But hear me out. That would be enough  
If I could spare his life  
If I could trade his life for mine

---

### 43. Your Obedient Servant

[BURR]

How does Hamilton  
An arrogant  
Immigrant, orphan

He'd be standing here right now  
And you would smile, and that would be enough  
I don't pretend to know  
The challenges we're facing  
I know there's no replacing what we've lost  
And you need time  
But I'm not afraid  
I know who I married  
Just let me stay here by your side  
That would be enough

[COMPANY]

If you see him in the street, walking by her  
Side, talking by her side, have pity

[HAMILTON]

Eliza, do you like it uptown? It's quiet uptown

[COMPANY]

He is trying to do the unimaginable  
See them walking in the park, long after dark  
Taking in the sights of the city

[HAMILTON]

Look around, look around, Eliza

[COMPANY]

They are trying to do the unimaginable

[ANGELICA]

There are moments that the words don't reach  
There is a grace too powerful to name  
We push away what we can never understand  
We push away the unimaginable  
They are standing in the garden  
Alexander by Eliza's side  
She takes his hand

[ELIZA]

It's quiet uptown

[COMPANY]

Forgiveness. Can you imagine?  
Forgiveness. Can you imagine?  
If you see him in the street, walking by her  
Side, talking by her side, have pity  
They are going through the unimaginable

---

Bastard, whoreson

Somehow endorse

Thomas Jefferson, his enemy

A man he's despised since the beginning

Just to keep me from winning?

I wanna be in the room where it happens—

[BURR, COMPANY]  
The room where it happens  
The room where it happens

[BURR]  
You've kept me from—

[BURR, COMPANY]  
The room where it happens

[BURR]  
For the last time

Dear Alexander:

I am slow to anger  
But I toe the line  
As I reckon with the effects  
Of your life on mine  
I look back on where I failed  
And in every place I checked  
The only common thread has been your disrespect  
Now you call me "amoral,"  
A "dangerous disgrace,"  
If you've got something to say  
Name a time and place  
Face to face

I have the honor to be Your Obedient Servant  
A dot Burr

[HAMILTON]  
Mr. Vice President:

I am not the reason no one trusts you  
No one knows what you believe  
I will not equivocate on my opinion  
I have always worn it on my sleeve  
Even if I said what you think I said  
You would need to cite a more specific grievance  
Here's an itemized list of thirty years of disagreements

#### 45. The World Was Wide Enough

[MEN]  
One two three four

[COMPANY]  
Five six seven eight nine—

[BURR]  
There are ten things you need to know

[BURR]  
Sweet Jesus

[HAMILTON]  
Hey, I have not been shy  
I am just a guy in the public eye  
Tryin' to do my best for our republic  
I don't wanna fight  
But I won't apologize for doing what's right

I have the honor to be Your Obedient Servant  
A dot Ham

[BURR]  
Careful how you proceed, good man  
Intemperate indeed, good man  
Answer for the accusations I lay at your feet or  
Prepare to bleed, good man

[HAMILTON]  
Burr, your grievance is legitimate  
I stand by what I said, every bit of it  
You stand only for yourself  
It's what you do  
I can't apologize because it's true

[BURR]  
Then stand, Alexander.  
Weehawken. Dawn.  
Guns. Drawn.

[HAMILTON]  
You're on.

[BURR AND HAMILTON]  
I have the honor to be Your Obedient Servant

[HAMILTON]  
A dot Ham

[BURR]  
A dot Burr

[COMPANY]  
Number one!

[BURR]  
We rowed across the Hudson at dawn  
My friend, William P. Van Ness signed on as my—

[BURR, COMPANY]  
Number two!

[BURR]  
 Hamilton arrived with his crew:  
 Nathaniel Pendleton and a doctor that he knew

[COMPANY]  
 Number three!

[BURR]  
 I watched Hamilton examine the terrain  
 I wish I could tell you what was happ'ning in his brain  
 This man has poisoned my political pursuits!

[COMPANY]  
 Most disputes die and no one shoots!  
 Number four!

[BURR]  
 Hamilton drew first position  
 Looking, to the world, like a man on a mission  
 This is a soldier with a marksman's ability  
 The doctor turned around so he could have deniability

[COMPANY]  
 Five!

[BURR]  
 Now I didn't know this at the time  
 But we were—

[BURR AND PHILIP, HAMILTON]  
 Near the same spot  
                     Near the same spot  
 Your son died, is that  
                     My son died, is that why—

[COMPANY]  
 Six!

[BURR]  
 He examined his gun with such rigor?  
 I watched as he methodically fiddled with the trigger

[COMPANY]  
 Seven!

[BURR]  
 Confession time? Here's what I got:  
 My fellow soldiers'll tell you I'm a terrible shot

[COMPANY]  
 Number eight!

[BURR, HAMILTON, MEN]

Your last chance to negotiate  
 Send in your seconds, see if they can set the record  
 straight

[BURR]  
 They won't teach you this in your classes  
 But look it up, Hamilton was wearing his glasses  
 Why? If not to take deadly aim?  
 It's him or me, the world will never be the same  
 I had only one thought before the slaughter:  
 This man will not make an orphan of my daughter

[COMPANY]  
 Number nine!

[BURR]  
 Look him in the eye, aim no higher  
 Summon all the courage you require  
 Then count:

[COMPANY]  
 One two three four five six seven eight nine  
 Number ten paces! Fire!—

[HAMILTON spoken]  
 I imagine death so much it feels more like a memory  
 Is this where it gets me, on my feet, sev'ral feet ahead of  
 me?  
 I see it coming, do I run or fire my gun or let it be?  
 There is no beat, no melody  
 Burr, my first friend, my enemy  
 Maybe the last face I ever see  
 If I throw away my shot, is this how you'll remember  
 me?  
 What if this bullet is my legacy?  
 Legacy. What is a legacy?  
 It's planting seeds in a garden you never get to see  
 I wrote some notes at the beginning of a song someone  
 will sing for me  
 America, you great unfinished symphony, you sent for  
 me  
 You let me make a difference  
 A place where even orphan immigrants  
 Can leave their fingerprints and rise up  
 I'm running out of time. I'm running, and my time's up  
 Wise up. Eyes up  
 I catch a glimpse of the other side  
 Laurens leads a soldiers' chorus on the other side  
 My son is on the other side  
 He's with my mother on the other side  
 Washington is watching from the other side  
 Teach me how to say goodbye  
 Rise up, rise up, rise up

Eliza

My love, take your time  
I'll see you on the other side  
Raise a glass to freedom...

[BURR AND COMPANY]  
He aims his pistol at the sky—

[BURR]  
Wait!

I strike him right between his ribs  
I walk towards him, but I am ushered away  
They row him back across the Hudson  
I get a drink

I hear wailing in the streets  
Somebody tells me, "You'd better hide."  
They say

[BURR AND ANGELICA]

#### **46. Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story?**

[WASHINGTON]  
Let me tell you what I wish I'd known  
When I was young and dreamed of glory  
You have no control:

[WASHINGTON AND COMPANY]  
Who lives  
Who dies  
Who tells your story?

[BURR]  
President Jefferson:

[JEFFERSON]  
I'll give him this: his financial system is a  
Work of genius. I couldn't undo it if I tried  
And I tried

[WASHINGTON AND COMPANY]  
Who lives  
Who dies  
Who tells your story?

[BURR]  
President Madison:

[MADISON]  
He took our country from bankruptcy to prosperity  
I hate to admit it, but he doesn't get enough credit  
For all the credit he gave us

Angelica and Eliza—

[BURR]  
Were both at his side when he died  
Death doesn't discriminate  
Between the sinners and the saints  
It takes and it takes and it takes  
History obliterates  
In every picture it paints  
It paints me and all my mistakes  
When Alexander aimed  
At the sky  
He may have been the first one to die  
But I'm the one who paid for it  
I survived, but I paid for it

Now I'm the villain in your history  
I was too young and blind to see...  
I should've known  
I should've known  
The world was wide enough for both Hamilton and me  
The world was wide enough for both Hamilton and me

[WASHINGTON AND COMPANY]  
Who lives  
Who dies  
Who tells your story?

[ANGELICA]  
Every other founding father's story gets told  
Every other founding father gets to grow old

[BURR]  
But when you're gone, who remembers your name?  
Who keeps your flame?

[BURR AND MEN]  
Who tells your story?  
Who tells your story?

[ANGELICA AND WOMEN]  
Who tells your story?  
Your story?

[WOMEN]  
Eliza

[ELIZA]  
I put myself back in the narrative

[WOMEN]  
Eliza

[ELIZA]  
I stop wasting time on tears

I live another fifty years  
It's not enough

[COMPANY]  
Eliza

[ELIZA]  
I interview every soldier who fought by your side

[MULLIGAN/LAFAYETTE/LAURENS]  
She tells our story

[ELIZA]  
I try to make sense of your thousands of pages of writings  
You really do write like you're running out of—

[ELIZA AND COMPANY]  
Time

[ELIZA]  
I rely on—

[ELIZA AND ANGELICA]  
Angelica

[ELIZA]  
While she's alive—

[ELIZA AND ANGELICA]  
We tell your story

[ELIZA]  
She is buried in Trinity Church

[ELIZA AND ANGELICA]  
Near you

[ELIZA]  
When I needed her most, she was right on—

[ELIZA AND COMPANY]  
Time

[ELIZA]  
And I'm still not through  
I ask myself, "What would you do if you had more—"

[ELIZA AND COMPANY]  
Time

[ELIZA]  
The Lord, in his kindness  
He gives me what you always wanted  
He gives me more—

[ELIZA AND COMPANY]  
Time

[ELIZA]  
I raise funds in D.C. for the Washington Monument

[WASHINGTON]  
She tells my story

[ELIZA]  
I speak out against slavery  
You could have done so much more if you only had—

[ELIZA AND COMPANY]  
Time

[ELIZA]  
And when my time is up, have I done enough?

[ELIZA]  
Will they tell our story?

[COMPANY]  
Will they tell your story?

[ELIZA]  
Oh. Can I show you what I'm proudest of?

[COMPANY]  
The orphanage

[ELIZA]  
I established the first private orphanage in New York City

[COMPANY]  
The orphanage

[ELIZA]  
I help to raise hundreds of children  
I get to see them growing up

[COMPANY]  
The orphanage

[ELIZA]  
In their eyes I see you, Alexander  
I see you every—

[ELIZA AND COMPANY]  
Time

[ELIZA]  
And when my time is up  
Have I done enough?  
Will they tell my story?

[COMPANY]  
Will they tell your story?

[ELIZA]

Oh, I can't wait to see you again  
It's only a matter of—

[ELIZA AND COMPANY]  
Time

[COMPANY]  
Will they tell your story?  
Who lives, who dies, who tells your story?  
Will they tell your story?

## ***IN THE HEIGHTS***

### **1. In the Heights**

[USNAVI]  
Lights up on Washington Heights, up at the break of day  
I wake up and I got this little punk I gotta chase away  
Pop the grate at the crack of dawn, sing  
While I wipe down the awning, hey y'all, good morning

[PIRAGUËRO spoken]  
Ice cold piragua! Parcha. China. Cherry.  
Strawberry. And just for today, I got mamey!

[USNAVI spoken]  
Oye, piragüero, como estas?

[PIRAGUËRO spoken]  
Como siempre, Señor Usnavi.

[USNAVI]  
I am Usnavi and you prob'ly never heard my name  
Reports of my fame are greatly exaggerated  
Exacerbated by the fact  
That my syntax  
Is highly complicated  
'Cuz I immigrated  
From the single greatest little place in the Caribbean:  
Dominican Republic!  
I love it!  
Jesus, I'm jealous of it.  
And beyond that,  
Ever since my folks passed on  
I haven't gone back.  
God damn! I gotta get on that...  
The milk has gone bad, hold up just a second  
Why is everything in this fridge warm and tepid?  
I better step it up, and fight the heat.  
'Cuz I'm not makin' any profit  
If the coffee isn't light and sweet!

[ABUELA CLAUDIA spoken]  
Ooo-oo!

[USNAVI spoken]  
Abuela, my fridge broke. I got café but no "con leche."

[COMPANY]  
Time...  
Time...  
Time...

[FULL COMPANY]  
Who lives, who dies—  
Who tells your story?

[ABUELA CLAUDIA spoken]  
Try my mother's old recipe: one can of condensed milk.

[USNAVI spoken]  
Nice.

*[Usnavi gives Abuela Claudia her lottery tickets, which she kisses and holds up to the sky.]*

[ABUELA CLAUDIA spoken]  
Ayy! Paciencia y fe...

[USNAVI]  
That was Abuela,  
she's not really my "abuela,"  
But she practically raised me,  
this corner is her escuela.  
Now, you're prob'ly thinkin:  
"I'm up shit's creek!  
I've never been north of Ninety-Sixth Street!"  
Well, you must take the A Train.  
Even farther than Harlem to northern Manhattan  
and maintain.  
Get off at 181st, and take the escalator.  
I hope you're writing this down,  
I'm gonna test ya later.  
I'm getting tested; times are tough on this bodega.  
Two months ago somebody bought Ortega's  
Our neighbors started packin' up and pickin' up  
And ever since the rents went up  
It's gotten mad expensive  
But we live with just enough.

[ENSEMBLE]  
In the heights  
I flip the lights and start my day  
There are fights

[WOMEN]  
And endless debts

[MEN]  
And bills to pay

[ENSEMBLE]

In the Heights  
I can't survive without café

[USNAVI]  
I serve café

[ENSEMBLE]  
'Cuz tonight seems like a million years away!  
En Washington—

[USNAVI]  
Next up to bat, the Rosarios  
They run the cab company, they struggle in the barrio  
See, their daughter Nina's off at college,  
tuition is mad steep  
So they can't sleep, everything they get is mad cheap!

[KEVIN]  
Good morning, Usnavi!

[USNAVI]  
Pan caliente, café con leche!

[KEVIN]  
Put twenty dollars on today's lottery

[CAMILA]  
One ticket, that's it!

[KEVIN]  
Hey! A man's gotta dream...

[CAMILA]  
Don't mind him, he's all excited  
'Cuz Nina flew in at 3 A.M. last night!

[KEVIN]  
Don't look at me, this one's been cooking all week!

[CAMILA]  
Usnavi, come over for dinner

[KEVIN, CAMILA]  
There's plenty to eat!

[DANIELA]  
So then dona Yesenia walks in the room—

[CARLA spoken]  
Aha...

[DANIELA]  
She smells sex and cheap perfume!

[CARLA spoken]  
Uh oh...

[DANIELA]  
It smells like one of those trees  
That you hang from the rear view!

[CARLA spoken]  
Ah, no!

[DANIELA]  
It's true! She screams, "Who's in there with you, Julio?"  
Grabs a bat and kicks in the door.  
He's in bed with José from the liquor store!

[CARLA, USNAVI]  
No me diga!

[USNAVI spoken]  
Daniela and Carla, from the salon.

[DANIELA, CARLA]  
Thanks, Usnavi!

[USNAVI spoken]  
Sonny, you're late.

[SONNY spoken]  
Chillax, you know you love me.

[USNAVI]  
Me and my cousin runnin' just another dime-a-dozen  
Mom-and-pop stop-and-shop.  
And, oh my god, it's gotten  
Too darn hot, like my man Cole Porter said.  
People come through for a few cold waters and  
A lottery ticket, just a part of the routine.  
Everybody's got a job, everybody's got a dream.  
They gossip, as I sip my coffee and smirk.  
The first stop as people hop to work,  
Bust it— I'm like:  
"One dollar, two dollars, one fifty, one sixty-nine.  
You got it! You want a box of condoms? What kind?  
That's two quarters.  
Two quarter waters. The New York Times.  
You need a bag for that? The tax is added."  
Once you get some practice at it,  
You do rapid mathematics automatically,  
Sellin' maxipads, fuzzy dice for taxicabs,  
and practically  
Everybody's stressed, yes!  
But they press through the mess,  
Bounce checks and wonder what's next.

[ENSEMBLE 1]  
In the heights  
I buy my coffee and I go

[ENSEMBLE 2]  
I buy my coffee and—

[ALL]  
Set my sights

[ENSEMBLE 1]  
On only what I need to know

[ENSEMBLE 2]  
What I need to know

[ALL]  
In the heights  
Money is tight

[ENSEMBLE 1]  
But even so.

[ENSEMBLE 2]  
But even so,

[ENSEMBLE]  
When the lights go down I blast my radio!

[BENNY]  
You ain't got no skills!

[USNAVI]  
Benny!

[BENNY]  
Lemme get a—

[USNAVI]  
Milky Way

[BENNY]  
Yeah, lemme also get a—

[USNAVI]  
Daily News—

[BENNY]  
And a—

[USNAVI]  
Post—

[BENNY]  
And most important, my—

[USNAVI]  
Boss' second coffee, one cream—

[BOTH]  
Five sugars

[BENNY]  
I'm the number one earner—

[USNAVI, SONNY]  
What?!

[BENNY]  
The fastest learner—

[USNAVI, SONNY]  
What?!

[BENNY]  
My boss can't keep me on the damn back burner!

[USNAVI]  
Yes, he can

[BENNY]  
I'm makin' moves, I'm makin' deals, but guess what?

[USNAVI]  
What?

[BENNY, SONNY]  
You still ain't got no skills!

[USNAVI]  
Hardee-har

[BENNY]  
Vanessa show up yet?

[USNAVI]  
Shut up!

[BENNY]  
Hey little homie, don't get so upset

[USNAVI, spoken]  
Man...

[BENNY]  
Tell Vanessa how you feel, buy the girl a meal,  
On the real, or you ain't got no skills

[VANESSA (*on the phone*)]  
Nooo!  
No no nooo!  
No no nooo, no-no-no!  
Nooo, no-no-no!  
No-no-no-no-no-no-no, no-no-no-no-no!  
Mr. Johnson, I got the security deposit.  
It's locked in a box in the bottom of my closet.  
It's not reflected in my bank statement.  
But I've been savin' to make a down payment  
and pay rent  
No, no, I won't let you down—

[BENNY]



Yo, here's your chance; ask her out right now!

[VANESSA]

I'll see you later, we can look at that lease.

[BENNY]

Do somethin', make your move, don't freeze!

[USNAVI]

Hey!

[VANESSA]

You owe me a bottle of cold champagne!

[USNAVI]

Are you moving?

[VANESSA]

Just a little credit check and I'm on that downtown train!

[USNAVI]

Well, your coffee's on the house

[VANESSA]

Okay!

[BENNY]

Usnavi, ask her out

[SONNY]

No way!

[VANESSA]

I'll see you later, so...

[BENNY]

Oooh... Smooth operator, aw, damn, there she go!

Yo, bro, take five, take a walk outside!

You look exhausted, lost, don't let life slide!

The whole hood is struggling, times are tight,

And you're stuck to this corner like a streetlight!

[USNAVI]

Yeah, I'm a streetlight,

Chokin' on the heat.

The world spins around

While I'm frozen to my seat.

The people that I know

All keep on rolling down the street.

But every day is different

So I'm switchin' up the beat.

'Cuz my parents came with nothing,

They got a little more

And sure, we're poor, but yo,

At least we got the store.

And it's all about the legacy

They left with me, it's destiny.

And one day I'll be on a beach

With Sonny writing checks to me.

[ENSEMBLE]

In the Heights, I hang my flag up on display

[USNAVI]

We came to work and to live and we got a lot in common

[ENSEMBLE]

It reminds me that I came from miles away.

[USNAVI]

D.R., P.R., we are not stoppin'

[ENSEMBLE]

In the Heights

Ooh

Ooh

Ooh

[ABUELA CLAUDIA]

Every day, paciencia y fe

[USNAVI]

Until the day we go from

Poverty to stock options.

[ENSEMBLE]

In the Heights

I've got today!

[USNAVI]

And today's all we got, so we cannot stop

This is our block!

[ENSEMBLE]

In the Heights

I hang my flag up on display.

[PIRAGUËRO]

Lo le lo le lo lai lai lo le!

[ENSEMBLE]

It reminds me that I came from miles away.

[USNAVI, PIRAGUËRO, NEIGHBORS]

My family came from miles away—

[ENSEMBLE]

In the Heights

It gets more expensive every day,

[USNAVI, PIRAGUËRO, ENSEMBLE]

Every day

[ENSEMBLE]  
And tonight is so far away—

[USNAVI]  
But as for mañana, mi pana  
Ya gotta just keep watchin’

[USNAVI, MEN]  
You’ll see the late nights  
Late nights!  
You’ll taste beans and rice

## 2. Breathe

[PIRAGUËRO]  
Sigue andando el camino por toda su vida  
Respira...

[NINA]  
Breathe

[COMMUNITY]  
Y si pierdes mis huellas  
Que dios te bendiga  
Respira

[NINA]  
This is my street  
I smile at the faces  
I’ve known all my life. They regard me with pride  
And everyone’s sweet  
They say, “You’re going places!”  
So how can I say that while I was away,  
I had so much to hide!  
“Hey guys, it’s me!  
The biggest disappointment you know.”  
The kid couldn’t hack it,  
She’s back and she’s walkin’ real slow,  
Welcome home.  
Just breathe...

[COMMUNITY]  
Sigue andando el camino por toda su vida.  
Respira—

[NINA]  
Just breathe—

[COMMUNITY]  
Y si pierdes mis huellas que dios te bendiga  
Respira—

[NINA]  
As the radio plays old forgotten boleros  
I think of the days when this city was mine.  
I remember the praise,

Beans and rice!  
The syrup and shaved ice,  
Shaved ice!  
I ain’t gonna say it twice.  
Say it twice!  
So turn up the stage lights  
We’re takin’ a flight  
To a couple of days  
In the life of what it’s like

[ALL]  
En Washington Heights!

[NINA]  
“Ay, te adoro, te quiero,”  
The neighborhood waved, and  
Said, “Nina, be brave and  
You’re gonna be fine!”  
And maybe it’s me,  
But it all seems like lifetimes ago

[COMMUNITY]  
Te adoro  
Te quiero  
Respira!  
Respira!

[NINA]  
So what do I say to these faces that I used to know?  
“Hey, I’m home?”

[WOMAN]  
Mira Nina

[NINA]  
Hey...

[COMMUNITY]  
No me preocupo por ella.

[NINA]  
They’re not worried about me...

[COMMUNITY]  
Mira, allí esta nuestra estrella!

[NINA]  
They are all counting on me to succeed

[COMMUNITY]  
Ella sí da la talla!

[NINA]  
I am the one who made it out!  
The one who always made the grade,  
But maybe I should have just stayed home...

When I was a child I stayed wide awake  
Climbed to the highest place  
On every fire escape,  
Restless to climb.

I got every scholarship,  
Saved every dollar,  
The first to go to college,  
How do I tell them why  
I'm coming back home?  
With my eyes on the horizon.

[COMMUNITY]

Ah! Ah, aah...

Mira Nina

Respira...

Respira...

[NINA]

Just me and the GWB, asking, "Gee Nina, what'll you be?"

Straighten the spine  
Smile for the neighbors.  
Everything's fine.  
Everything's cool.

## 5. Inútil

[KEVIN]

This isn't happening.

Inútil! Useless.

Just like my father was before me:

Inútil! Useless.

And every day

He cut the cane,

He came home late and prayed for rain.

Prayed for rain.

And on the days

When nothing came

My father's face was lined with shame.

He'd sit me down beside him and he'd say,

"My father was a farmer,

His father was a farmer,

And you will be a farmer."

But I told him, "Papi, I'm sorry, I'm going farther.

I'm getting on a plane.

And I am gonna change the world someday!"

## 7. 96,000

[USNAVI]

Ninety-six thousand!

[SONNY, BENNY]

Damn!

[USNAVI]

The standard reply:

"Lots of tests, lots of papers."

Smile, wave goodbye,

And pray to the sky, oh, god...

And what will my parents say?

[COMMUNITY]

Nina...

[NINA]

Can I go in there and say

[COMMUNITY]

Nina...

[NINA]

"I know that I'm letting you down..."

[ABUELA CLAUDIA]

Nina...

[NINA]

Just breathe...

And he slapped my face.

He stood there, staring at me, useless.

Today my daughter's home and I am... useless.

And as a baby she amazed me with

The things she learned each day.

She used to stay on the fire escape

While all the other kids would play.

And I would stand beside her and I'd say:

"I'm proud to be your father,

'Cuz you work so much harder,

And you are so much smarter

Than I was at your age."

And I always knew that she would fly away.

That she was gonna change the world someday.

I will not be the reason

That my family can't succeed.

I will do what it takes.

They'll have everything they need.

Or all my work, all my life,

Everything I've sacrificed will have been useless.

Ninety-six thousand!

[SONNY]

Dollars? Holler!

[USNAVI]

Ninety-six thousand!

[BENNY, spoken] Yo, somebody won!	No me diga!
[USNAVI] Ninety-six thousand!	[SONNY] Ninety-six thousand!
[BENNY] Yo, If I won the lotto tomorrow, Well, I know I wouldn't bother goin' on no spendin' spree I pick a business school and pay the entrance fee! Then maybe if you're lucky, you'll stay friends with me! I'll be a businessman, richer than Nina's daddy! Donald Trump and I on the links, and he's my caddy! My money's makin' money, I'm goin' from po' to mo' dough! Keep the bling, I want the brass ring, like Frodo!	[VANESSA] I never win shit!  [SONNY] Ninety-six thousand!  [BENNY] For real, though, imagine how it would feel goin' real slow Down the highway of life with no regrets And no breakin' your neck for respect or a paycheck For real, though, I'll take a break from the wheel and we'll throw The biggest block party, everybody here It's a weekend when we can breathe, take it easy
[USNAVI] Oh no, here goes Mr. Braggadocio Next thing you know, you're lying like Pinocchio—	[NEIGHBORS] Yo! Ma, it's me, check my tickets!
[BENNY] Well, if you're scared of the bull, stay out the rodeo!	[CARLA] Check one two three What would you do with ninety-six G's—
[GRAFFITI PETE] Yo, I got more hoes than a phone book in Tokyo!	[DANIELA] Who me?
[USNAVI] Ooh, you better stop rappin', you're not ready It's gonna get hot and heavy and you're already sweaty—	[CARLA] I mean if it's just between you and me—
[GRAFFITI PETE] Y-y-yo! Yo!	[DANIELA] Esa pregunta es tricky!
[USNAVI] Yo! Yo! I'm sorry was that an answer? Shut up, go home and pull ya damn pants up! As for you, Mr. Frodo of the Shire— 96 G's ain't enough to retire	[CARLA] I know  [DANIELA] With ninety-six G's I'd start my life with a brand new lease! Atlantic City with a Malibu Breeze
[BENNY] C'mon, I'll have enough to knock your ass off its axis!	[CARLA] And a brand new weave!
[USNAVI] You'll have a knapsack full of jack after taxes!	[DANIELA] Or maybe just bleach...
[SONNY] Ninety-six thousand!	[VANESSA] Y'all are freaks.
[ABUELA CLAUDIA] Ay, alabanza!	[USNAVI, spoken] Yo, I'm just sayin'...
[SONNY] Ninety-six thousand!	[sung] It's silly when we get into these crazy hypotheticals
[DANIELA]	

<p>You really want some bread? Then go ahead create a set of goals. And cross them off the list as you pursue 'em And with those ninety-six, I know precisely what I'm doin'</p>	<p>[SONNNY] Politicians be hatin'.</p>
<p>[VANESSA] What'chu doin'?</p>	<p>[GRAFFITI PETE] What?!</p>
<p>[USNAVI] What'm I doin? What'm I doin? It takes most of that cash just to save my ass from financial ruin Sonny can keep the coffee brewin', and I'll spend a few on you, 'Cause the only room with a view's a room with you in it! And I could give Abuela Claudia the rest of it. Just fly me down to Puerto Plata, I'll make the best of it! You really love this business?</p>	<p>[SONNNY] Racism in this nation's gone from latent to blatant.</p>
<p>[SONNNY] No</p>	<p>[COMMUNITY] Ooooooh!</p>
<p>[USNAVI] Tough, Merry Christmas. You're now the youngest tycoon in Washington Hiznits!</p>	<p>[SONNNY] I'll cash my ticket and picket, invest in protest, Never lose my focus 'til the city takes notice And you know this man! I'll never sleep Because the ghetto has a million promises for me to keep!</p>
<p>[SONNNY] Yo! With ninety-six thousand, I'd finally fix housin', Give the barrio computers with wireless web browsin', Your kids are livin' without a good edjumentation, Change the station, teach 'em about gentrification. The rent is escalatin'.</p>	<p>[VANESSA spoken] You are so cute!</p>
<p>[GRAFFITI PETE] What?!</p>	<p>[SONNNY spoken] I was just thinking off the top of my head.</p>
<p>[SONNNY] The rich are penetratin'.</p>	<p>[USNAVI spoken] Ninety-six K: Go.</p>
<p>[GRAFFITI PETE] What?!</p>	<p>[VANESSA] If I win the lottery, you'll never see me again.</p>
<p>[SONNNY] We pay our corporations when we should be demonstratin'.</p>	<p>[USNAVI] Damn, we only jokin', stay broke then.</p>
<p>[GRAFFITI PETE] What?!</p>	<p>[VANESSA] I'll be downtown Get a nice studio, I'll get out of the barrio</p>
<p>[SONNNY] What about immigration?</p>	<p>[VANESSA] If I win the lottery, you'll wonder where I've been.</p>
<p>[GRAFFITI PETE] What?!</p>	<p>[BENNY] For real though, Imagine how it would feel Goin' real slow, Down the highway of life with no regrets And no breakin' your neck for respect or a paycheck—</p>
<p>[SONNNY] What about immigration?</p>	<p>[VANESSA] I'll be downtown, see you around, If I win the lottery, you won't see a lot of me! I'll be downtown, see you around!</p>
<p>[GRAFFITI PETE] What?!</p>	<p>[WOMEN] Why-oh!</p>
<p>[GRAFFITI PETE] What?!</p>	<p>[VANESSA] Around!</p>

[WOMEN]

Why-oh!

[BENNY]

For real though, I'll take a break from the wheel  
And we'll throw, the biggest block party  
Everybody here, a weekend  
When we can breathe, take it easy,  
For real though, imagine how it would feel  
Goin' real slow,  
Down the highway of life with no regrets  
And no breakin' your neck for respect or a paycheck  
For real though, I'll take a break from the wheel  
And we'll throw the biggest block party everybody here,  
A weekend when we can breathe, take it easy

[USNAVI]

Yo!

It's silly when we get into these crazy hypotheticals,  
You really want some bread?  
Then go ahead create a set of goals,  
And cross 'em off the list as you pursue 'em,  
And with those ninety-six I know precisely what I'm doin'  
Yo!  
It's silly when we get into these crazy hypotheticals,

[COMMUNITY]

Ninety-six thousand

[CARLA]

No me diga!

[COMMUNITY]

Ninety-six thousand

[DANIELA, CARLA, SONNY]

No me diga!

[COMMUNITY]

Why-oh!

[WOMEN]

Check one two three  
With ninety-six G's  
Between you and me  
With ninety-six G's

## 8. Paciencia y Fe

[ABUELA CLAUDIA]

Calor... calor... calor...

Calor... calor... calor...

Ay Mamá!

The summer's hottest day!

Paciencia y fe! Paciencia y fe!

Ay, carajo, it's hot!

But that's okay!

A brand new lease

A Malibu Breeze

[MEN]

And with the dollah dollah  
We get to hollah hollah  
We rock the hot Impala  
With ninety-six G's  
We movin' on tomorrah  
We rock beyond mañana

[COMMUNITY]

Why-oh!

We drop the mama drama  
We stop at the Bahamas!  
We drink piña coladas!  
Poppin' lockin' up the block  
Drop it like it's hot!

[VANESSA]

I'll be downtown!

[USNAVI, BENNY, SONNY]

We could pay off the debts we owe!

[VANESSA, CARLA, DANIELA]

We could tell everyone we know!

[USNAVI]

I could get on a plane and go!

[USNAVI, BENNY, SONNY]

We be swimmin' in dough, yo!

[ALL]

Once we get goin' we're never gonna  
Stop tip-toein' we'll get the dough an'

Once we get goin' we're never gonna—

[COMMUNITY]

We'll get the dough 'n' once we get goin'

[COMPANY]

We'll get the dough 'n'

Once we get goin'

We're never gonna stop!

Mamá would say, "Paciencia y fe!"

It was hotter at home in La Víbora

The Washington Heights of Havana!

A crowded city of faces the same as mine!

Back as a child in La Víbora

I chased the birds in the plaza

Praying, Mamá, you would find work

Combing the stars in the sky for some sort of sign!

Ay, Mamá, so many stars in Cuba...

En Nueva York we can't see beyond our streetlights...  
To reach the roof you gotta bribe the supa'...  
Ain't no Cassiopia in Washington Heights...  
But ain't no food in La Víbora...  
I remember nights, anger in the streets, hunger at the  
windows  
Women folding clothes, playing with my friends in the  
summer rain...  
Mamá needs a job, Mamá says we're poor, one day you  
say,  
"Vamos a Nueva York..."  
And Nueva York was far  
But Nueva York had work and so we came...

And now, I'm wide awake  
A million years too late  
I talk to you, imagining what you'd do  
Remembering what we went through

Nueva York! Ay Mamá!  
It wasn't like today,  
You'd say:  
"Paciencia y fe,

[NEW YORKERS]  
"Paciencia y fe,

[ABUELA CLAUDIA]  
Paciencia y fe!"

[NEW YORKERS]  
Paciencia y—

[ABUELA CLAUDIA]  
Fresh off the boat in America  
Freezing in early December  
A crowded city in 1943!  
Learning the ropes in America  
In español, I remember  
Dancing with Mayor La Guardia  
All of society welcoming mami and me!  
Ha!

[EMPLOYERS]  
You better clean this mess!

[ABUELA CLAUDIA]  
Paciencia y fe...

[EMPLOYERS]  
You better learn inglés!

## 9. When You're Home

[NINA]  
I used to think we lived at the top of the world  
When the world was just a subway map  
And the one-slash-nine

[ABUELA CLAUDIA]  
Paciencia y fe...

[EMPLOYERS]  
You better not be late!  
You better pull your weight!  
Are you better off than you were with the birds of La  
Víbora?

[ABUELA CLAUDIA]  
Sharing double beds, trying to catch a break, struggling  
with English  
Listening to friends, finally got a job working as a maid.  
So we cleaned some homes, polishing with pride,  
Scrubbing the whole of the Upper East Side  
The days into weeks, the weeks into years, and here I  
stayed

[NEW YORKERS]  
Paciencia y fe...  
Paciencia y fe...  
Paciencia y fe...

[ABUELA CLAUDIA]  
And as I feed these birds  
My hands begin to shake  
And as I say these words  
My heart's about to break  
And ay Mamá  
What do you do when your dreams come true?  
I've spent my life  
Inheriting  
Dreams from you.

What do I do with this winning ticket?  
What can I do but pray?

I buy my loaf of bread  
Continue with my day.  
And see you in my head  
Imagining what you'd say  
The birds, they fly away;  
Do they fly to La Víbora?

[spoken] Alright, Mamá. Okay

[sung] Paciencia y fe

[NEIGHBORS]  
Calor, calor, calor!

Climbed a dotted line to my place

[BENNY]  
There's no nine train now

[NINA]  
Right  
I used to think the Bronx was a place in the sky  
When the world was just a subway map  
And my thoughts took shape

[NINA, BENNY]  
On that fire escape...

[NINA]  
Can you remind me of what it was like  
At the top of the world?

[BENNY]  
Come with me  
We begin July  
With a stop at my corner fire hydrant

[NINA]  
You would open it every summer!

[BENNY]  
I would bust it with a wrench  
Till my face got drenched  
Till I heard the sirens  
Then I ran like hell!

[NINA]  
You ran like hell!

[BENNY]  
Yeah, I ran like hell!

[NINA]  
I remember well!

[BENNY]  
To your father's dispatch window  
"Hey, let me in, yo!  
They're coming to get me!"

[NINA]  
You were always in constant trouble—

[BENNY]  
Then your dad would act all snide, but he'd let me hide  
You'd be there inside—

[NINA]  
Life was easier then

[BENNY]  
Nina, everything is easier  
When you're home...  
The street's a little kinder when you're home  
Can't you see  
That the day seems clearer

Now that you are here or  
Is it me?  
Maybe it's just me...

We gotta go I wanna show you all I know  
The sun is setting and the light is getting low

[NINA]  
Are we going to Castle Garden?

[BENNY]  
Maybe, maybe not, but way to take a shot, when the day is  
hot  
I got a perfect shady spot  
A little ways away that oughta  
Cool us down

[NINA]  
Cool us down—

[BENNY]  
Welcome back to town...

[NINA]  
Now, back in high school when it darkened  
You'd hang out in Bennett Park and

[BENNY]  
Usnavi would bring his radio...

[NINA]  
As I walked home from Senior Studies  
I'd see you rapping with your buddies

[BENNY]  
With the volume high

[NINA]  
I walked on by

[BENNY]  
You walked on by—

[NEIGHBORS]  
No pare! Sigue, sigue! (Woah)  
No pare! Sigue, sigue! (Oh)  
No pare! Sigue, sigue! (Woah)  
No pare! Sigue, sigue! (Oh)  
No pare! Sigue, sigue! (Woah)  
No pare! Sigue, sigue! (Oh)  
No pare! Sigue, sigue! (Woah)  
No pare! Sigue, sigue! (Oh)  
No pare! Sigue, sigue! (Woah)  
No pare! Sigue, sigue! (Oh)

[BENNY, COMMUNITY]  
When you're home

[BENNY]



Oh, the summer nights are cooler

[BENNY, COMMUNITY]

When you're home!

[NINA]

Now that you're here with me...

[BENNY & COMMUNITY]

And that song you are hearing is the (ooh, ooh)  
Neighborhood just cheering you along (ooh, ooh)

[NINA]

Don't say that

[BENNY]

What's wrong?

[NINA]

Don't say that!

When I was younger, I'd imagine what would happen  
If my parents had stayed in Puerto Rico  
Who would I be if I had never seen Manhattan  
If I lived in Puerto Rico with my people  
My people!

I feel like all my life, I've tried to find the answer  
Working harder, learning Spanish, learning all I can  
I thought I might find the answer out at Stanford  
But I'd stare out at the sea  
Thinking, where'm I supposed to be?  
So please don't say you're proud of me, when I've lost  
my way

[BENNY]

## 12. Blackout

[PIRAGUËRO]

¿Oye, qué pasó?  
Vino el apagón  
¡ay dios!

[USNAVI]

Blackout, blackout!

[USNAVI]

Yo! I!  
Can't see!  
Quit shovin' you son-of-a  
It's an oven  
And we gotta back out  
This is a blackout!  
Chill, for real or we're gonna get killed!

[KEVIN]

Calling all taxis!

[KEVIN, USNAVI]

Then can I say:

I couldn't get my mind off you all day

Now listen to me!

That may be how you perceive it

But Nina please believe

That when you find your way again

You're gonna change the world and then

We're all gonna brag and say we knew her when...

This was your home

[NINA]

I'm home—

[BENNY]

Welcome home—

[NINA]

When you're here with me—

[BENNY]

Welcome home—

[NINA]

I used to think that we lived at the top of the world!

[BENNY]

Welcome home—

[NINA]

I'm home—

[BENNY & NINA]

You're finally home (I'm home)

You're home! (I'm home)

Everyone relax please

[BENNY, VANESSA]

Somebody better open these goddamn doors!

[VANESSA]

And I can't find Usnavi...

[MEN]

Oh, no!

[USNAVI]

Blackout, blackout!

[BENNY]

Hold up, wait! Hold up, wait!

Nina, where'd you go

I can't find you—

Nina take it slow

I'm behind you—

[SONNY]

What's going on?  
 What's going on?  
 Suddenly I find  
 The electricity is gone  
 What's going on?  
 What's going on?  
 I gotta guard the store make sure that nothing's going  
 wrong!  
 What's going on?  
 What's going on?  
 I gotta find Usnavi tell him what is going on  
 Nothing is on!  
 Nothing is on!  
 And I can't find Usnavi...

[ENSEMBLE]

Oh, no!  
 No! No! No!  
 Oh No!  
 Oh No!  
 Oh No! No! No!

[BENNY, NINA, USNAVI, VANESSA]

Nina where'd you go  
           Has anyone seen Benny?  
                   Vanessa  
                                   Usnavi Help me!

Nina where'd you go  
           Benny?  
                   Vanessa  
                                   Usnavi Help me!

Nina where'd you go  
           Has anyone seen Benny?  
                   Vanessa  
                                   Usnavi Help me!

I can't find you!  
           Benny?  
                   I gotta go...  
                                   Usnavi Help me!

[BENNY, KEVIN, USNAVI, VANESSA]

Nina where'd you go  
           Please find Nina!  
                   Vanessa  
                                   Usnavi Help me!

Nina where'd you go  
           Find Camila!  
                   Vanessa  
                                   Find my way home!

Nina where'd you go  
           If you see my family  
                   Vanessa  
                                   Usnavi Help me!

I can't find you!  
           Bring them Home!  
                   I gotta go...  
                                   You left me alone!

[SONNY, NEIGHBORS]

We are powerless  
 We are powerless!  
 [GRAFFITI PETE]  
 Yo! Yo! They throwin' bottles in the street!  
 People lootin' and shootin'  
 Sonny, they wanna see a robbery  
 We gotta keep movin'!

[SONNY]

Naw, man, I can't leave  
 We gotta guard the store!

[GRAFFITI PETE]

They gonna bombard the store  
 Until you ain't got a store no more!

[SONNY]

I got a baseball bat on a rack in the back

[GRAFFITI PETE]

I got a couple o' Roman candles  
 We can distract the vandals!

[SONNY]

Hey yo I see some thugs comin'  
 Man, we gonna get jacked up!

[GRAFFITI PETE]

Gimme a light, I'll be right back. Back up—

[GRAFFITI PETE, SONNY]

Back up! Back up!

[GROUP 1, GROUP 2]

Look at the fireworks...  
                                   Look at the fireworks fly!  
 Light up the night sky...  
                                   Light up the night sky!  
 Look at the fireworks...  
                                   Look at the fireworks fly!  
 Light up the night sky!  
                                   Light up the night sky...

[SONNY]

It's late and this grate won't come down  
 Come down!  
 It's late and this grate won't come down!

[SONNY, MEN]

We are powerless  
 We are powerless  
 We are powerless  
 We are powerless! Powerless!

[CARLA]

Oh god so much panic!

The crowd was manic With everybody screaming and shoving and shouting and slapping And everyone's frantic! What's happening with you?	[NINA] I've gotta go!
[CARLA, VANESSA, WOMEN] We are powerless! We are powerless!	[BENNY] I'll get you out of here tonight!
[DANIELA] Mira, mi amor Házme un favor! Despiérta la abuela y a lo mejor ella tiene una vela! Estuve bailando cuando vino el apagón Aqui hay gente pero no sé quienes son!	[NINA] I don't need anything tonight! I can find my way home
[COMMUNITY] Look at the fireworks...	[BENNY] Find your way home!
[USNAVI, COMMUNITY, ABUELA CLAUDIA] Abuela are you alright? Light up the night sky... The stars are out tonight! Look at the fireworks... You're not alone tonight... Light up the night sky... You're not alone tonight... I'm not alone tonight...	[NINA] Without you—
[ABUELA CLAUDIA] Usnavi, please promise me You'll guard this with your life	[NINA, BENNY] Without you!
[USNAVI] Abuela, I've never seen—	[GROUP 1] Look at the fireworks... Look at the fireworks... Light up the night sky...
[USNAVI, ABUELA CLAUDIA] This much money in my life!	[ALL] En Washington... Look at the fireworks... Look at the fireworks...
[BENNY] Nina there you are!	[GROUP 1] Light up the night sky...
<b>13. Sunrise</b>	[GROUP 2] Look at the fireworks... Look at the fireworks... Light up the night sky... Light up the night sky...
[NINA] Are you ready to try again?	[Benny finds Nina. They kiss.]
[BENNY] I think I'm ready	[ALL] En Washington Heights!
[NINA, spoken] Okay. Here we go.	
[sung] Esquina	[NINA] Tienda
[BENNY] Corner	[BENNY] Store
	[NINA] Bombilla
	[BENNY] Lightbulb
	[NINA] You're sure?

[BENNY] I'm... sure	And how do you say "hold me"? [NINA] Abrázame Al amanecer. At sunrise
[NINA] Three out of three, you did alright!	[NINA, BENNY] Anything at all can happen just before the sunrise
[BENNY] Well teach me a little more...	[NINA] Al amanecer
[NINA] Calor	[BENNY] Al amanecer
[BENNY] Heat	[SONNY] Sunrise
[NINA] Anoche	[CARLA] Sunrise
[BENNY] Last night	[VANESSA] Sunrise
[NINA] Dolor	[DANIELA] Sunrise
[BENNY] Pain	[PIRAGUËRO, MEN] Sigue andando el camino por toda su vida
[NINA] That's right Llámame	[CARLA] Sunrise
[BENNY] Call me	[VANESSA] Sunrise
[NINA] Azul	[DANIELA] Sunrise
[BENNY] Blue	[PIRAGUËRO, MEN] Respira
[NINA] Ámame	[DANIELA, CARLA, VANESSA, SONNY] Sunrise
[BENNY] Love me	[KEVIN] Nina...
[NINA] Perhaps I do—	[BENNY] I don't know
[BENNY] Well, how do you say "kiss me"?	[NINA] Yo no sé
[NINA] Bésame	[BENNY] What to do
[BENNY]	[NINA]

Qué hacer	[BENNY] And how do you say "kiss me"?
[BENNY] Now that I've found you	[NINA] Bésame
[NINA] Ahora que te encontré	[BENNY] Bésame
[BENNY] What will he say?	[NINA] Bésame
[NINA] Qué dirá?	[BENNY] And how do you say "always"?
[BENNY] When he sees me around you? So how do you say "help me"?	[NINA] Para siempre...
[NINA] Ayúdame	[BENNY] Para siempre...
[BENNY] And how do you say "promise me"?	[SONNY, PIRAGUËRO] Sunrise
[NINA] Prométeme	[CARLA, VANESSA] Sunrise
[NINA, BENNY] Promise me you'll stay beyond the sunrise I don't care at all what people say beyond the sunrise	[DANIELA, WOMEN] Sunrise
[NINA] Promise me you'll stay	[USNAVI, GRAFFITI PETE, MEN] Sunrise
[BENNY] I'll stay	[COMMUNITY] Al amanecer
[SONNY, PIRAGUËRO, MEN] Sunrise	[NINA] Al amanecer
[CARLA, VANESSA, WOMEN] Sunrise	[BENNY] Al amanecer
[DANIELA, WOMEN] Sunrise	[COMMUNITY] Al amanecer
[USNAVI, GRAFFITI PETE, SONNY, MEN] Sunrise	[NINA, BENNY] I will be there... Al amanecer
<b>14. Hundreds of Stories</b>	Paciencia y fe! Paciencia y fe!
[USNAVI] Abuela!	[USNAVI] Let me see it again!
[ABUELA CLAUDIA] Are you OK?	[ABUELA CLAUDIA] We kept it safe
[ABUELA CLAUDIA, USNAVI]	

[USNAVI]  
 So we survived the night;  
 What happens today?

[ABUELA CLAUDIA]  
 A third for you

[USNAVI]  
 Uh huh, uh huh! Uh huh, uh huh!

[ABUELA CLAUDIA]  
 A third for me!

[USNAVI]  
 No pare! Sigue, sigue!

[ABUELA CLAUDIA]  
 The rest for Sonny—  
 And with our share of the money  
 And with our share of the money—

Dream of the seaside air!  
 See me beside you there!  
 Think of the hundreds of stories we will share!  
 You and I!

[USNAVI, ABUELA CLAUDIA]  
 Ayy...

[ABUELA CLAUDIA]  
 Now you can sell your store!  
 Open a bar by the shore!  
 I've told you hundreds of stories  
 About home; make some more

[USNAVI, ABUELA CLAUDIA]  
 More...

[USNAVI]  
 Yo! I know just where to go!  
 There's a little beach named Playa Rincón  
 With no road, you need a rowboat or motorbike  
 To reach this beach, it's just a stone's throw  
 From home  
 My folks' home  
 Before I was born  
 Before they passed on  
 And left me on my own, in New York, with the grocery  
 store  
 They would talk about home, I listened closely for  
 The way they whispered to each other  
 'Bout the warmer winter weather  
 Inseparable, they even got sick together  
 They never got better... passed away that December

And left me with these memories like dyin' embers  
 From a dream I can't remember...  
 Ever since then it's like  
 Another day deeper in debt with different dilemmas  
 The bodega's a mess, I'll be seeing less of Vanessa  
 Abuela I don't know how I can keep it together!

[ABUELA CLAUDIA]  
 Remember the story of your name...  
 It was engraved on a passing ship on the day your family  
 came  
 Your father said "Usnavi,  
 That's what we'll name the baby."

[USNAVI]  
 It really said "U.S. Navy," but hey...  
 I worked with what they gave me okay...

[ABUELA CLAUDIA]  
 They'd be so proud of you today!

[USNAVI]  
 Then by the end of July

[ABUELA CLAUDIA]  
 Uh huh, uh huh! Uh huh, uh huh!

[USNAVI]  
 Out where the sea meets the sky!

[ABUELA CLAUDIA]  
 No pare! Sigue, sigue!

[USNAVI, ABUELA CLAUDIA]  
 Think of the hundreds of stories  
 We'll create  
 You and I!  
 Ay...

[ABUELA CLAUDIA]  
 We'll find your island—

[USNAVI]  
 I'll find my island sky

[ABUELA CLAUDIA]  
 Ay, find your island—

[USNAVI]  
 But whatever we do it's—

[USNAVI, ABUELA CLAUDIA]  
 You and I!

**16. Carnaval del Barrio**  
 [DANIELA]

Hey! Hey!  
 What's this tontería that I'm seeing on the street?

I never thought I'd see the day...  
Since when are Latin people scared of heat?  
When I was a little girl  
Growing up in the hills of Vega Alta  
My favorite time of year was Christmas time!  
Ask me why!

[CARLA, spoken]  
Why?

[DANIELA]  
There wasn't an ounce of snow  
But oh, the coquito would flow!  
As we sang the Aguinaldo  
The carnival would begin to grow!  
Business is closed, and we're about to go...  
Let's have a carnaval del barrio!

[PIRAGUËRO]  
¡Wepa!

[Community groans]

[DANIELA]  
¡Carnaval del barrio!  
¡Carnaval del barrio!  
Carnaval...

[PIRAGUËRO]  
¡Carnaval!

[DANIELA]  
Del barrio...

[PIRAGUËRO]  
¡Barrio!

[DANIELA]  
Carnaval...

[SONNY, PIRAGUËRO, GRAFFITI PETE]  
¡Carnaval!

[DANIELA]  
Del barrio...

[SONNY, PIRAGUËRO, GRAFFITI PETE]  
¡Barrio!

[DANIELA]  
We don't need electricidad!  
Get off your butt, ¡avanza!  
Saca la maraca, bring your tambourine  
Come and join the parranda

[PIRAGUËRO]  
¡Wepa!

[DANIELA, CARLA, PIRAGUËRO, GROUP 1]  
Carnaval...  
¡Del barrio!  
Carnaval...  
¡Del barrio!

[GROUP 1, GROUP 2]  
Carnaval...  
¡Carnaval!  
¡Del barrio!  
¡Barrio!  
Carnaval...  
¡Carnaval!  
¡Del barrio!  
¡Barrio!

[CARLA]  
Oh, me, me, me! Dani I have a question  
I don't know what you're cantando

[DANIELA]  
Just make it up as you go!  
We are improvisando!  
Lai le lo lai lo le lo lai!  
You can sing anything!

[CARLA]  
What?

[DANIELA]  
Carla, whatever pops into your head  
Just so long as you sing!

[CARLA]  
Uh... My mom is Dominican-Cuban  
My dad is from Chile and P.R. which means:  
I'm Chile-Domini-Curican...  
But I always say I'm from Queens!

[PIRAGUËRO]  
¡Wepaaa!

[GROUP 1, GROUP 2]  
Carnaval...  
¡Carnaval!  
¡Del barrio!  
¡Barrio!  
Carnaval...  
¡Carnaval!  
¡Del barrio!  
¡Barrio!

[VANESSA]  
Why is everyone so happy?  
We're sweating and we have no power!  
I gotta get out of here soon  
This block's getting worse by the hour!

You can't even go to a club with a friend  
Without having somebody shove you!

[DANIELA]

Ay, por favor  
Vanessa, don't pretend that Usnavi's your friend  
We all know that he loooooove you!

[COMMUNITY]

Ohhhh!!

[CARLA]

Wow, now that you mention that sexual tension is easy to see!

[VANESSA]

Yo, this is bogus!

[DANIELA]

Haven't you noticed you get all your coffee for free?

[Community cheers]

[GROUP 1, GROUP 2]

Carnaval...

¡Carnaval!

¡Del barrio!

¡Barrio!

Carnaval...

¡Carnaval!

¡Del barrio!

¡Barrio!

[NEIGHBOR]

Here comes Usnavi!

[USNAVI]

Yo! Yo! Yo, y-y-yo-yo!  
Now, now, everyone gather 'round, sit  
Down, listen, I got an announcement  
Wow, it involves large amounts, it's  
Somewhere in the range of ninety-six thousand!  
Atención, I'm closin' shop!  
Sonny, grab everybody a soda-pop!  
Yo, grab a bottle, kiss it up to God  
'Cause Abuela Claudia just won the lotto!  
Abuela Claudia won the lotto!  
We're bookin' a flight for D.R. tomorrow!

[COMMUNITY]

Oh my gah!

[COMMUNITY except VANESSA, SONNY)]

Alza la bandera

¡La bandera Dominicana!

Alza la bandera

¡La bandera Puertorriqueña!

Alza la bandera

¡La bandera Mexicana!

Alza la bandera

¡La bandera Cubana!

[PIRAGUËRO]

¡Pa'ribba esa bandera!

¡Álzala donde quiera!

¡Recuerdo de mi tierra!

[PIRAGUËRO, USNAVI]

¡Me acuerdo de mi tierra!

¡Esa bonita bandera!

¡Contiene mi alma entera!

Y cuando yo me muera

¡Entiérrame en mi tierra!

[COMMUNITY]

Hey!

Hey!

Hey!

Hey!

[Dance break]

[DANIELA]

Everything changes today!

[COMMUNITY]

Hey!

[DANIELA, CARLA]

Usnavi's on his way!

[COMMUNITY]

Hey!

[DANIELA, CARLA]

Off to a better place!

[COMMUNITY]

Hey!

[DANIELA, CARLA]

Look at Vanessa's face!

[COMMUNITY]

Hey!

[BENNY]

Everything changes today!

[COMMUNITY]

Hey!

[BENNY]

Goodbye, Mr. Rosario!



[USNAVI]

Okay!

[BENNY]

I'm taking over the barrio!

[USNAVI, DANIELA, CARLA]

We're getting out of the barrio!

[DANIELA]

Hey, Mr. Benny: have you seen any horses today?

[COMMUNITY]

Hey!

[BENNY]

What do you mean?

[DANIELA]

I heard you and Nina went for a roll in the hay!

[ALL]

Hey! Ohhhh...

[WOMEN]

Benny and Nina

Sitting in a tree!

K-I-S-S-I-N-G!

¡Qué bochinche!

Nina and Benny!

K-I-S-S-I-N-G!

[MEN]

Benny and Nina

Sitting in a tree!

K-I-S-S-I-N-G!

¡Qué bochinche!

Nina and Benny!

K-I-S-S-I-N-G!

[SONNY]

Hold up

[SONNY, GRAFFITI PETE]

Wait a minute!

[SONNY]

Usnavi's leavin' us for the Dominican Republic?

And Benny went and stole the girl

That I'm in love with?

She was my babysitter first!

[GRAFFITI PETE]

Hoo!

[SONNY]

Listen up, is that

What y'all want?

We close the bodega

The neighborhood is gone!

They selling the dispatch

And they closing the salón

And they'll never turn the lights back on, 'cause—

[SONNY, VANESSA]

We are powerless, we are powerless!

[SONNY]

And y'all keep dancin' and singin' and celebratin'

And it's gettin' late and this place disintegratin' and—

[SONNY, VANESSA]

We are powerless, we are powerless!

[USNAVI]

Alright, we're powerless, so light up a candle!

There's nothing going on here that we can't handle!

[SONNY]

You don't understand, I'm not trying to be funny!

[USNAVI]

We're gonna give a third of the money to you Sonny!

[SONNY]

What?

[USNAVI]

Yeah, yeah...

[SONNY]

For real?

[USNAVI]

Yes!

Maybe you're right, Sonny, call in the coroners!

Maybe we're powerless, a corner full of foreigners

Maybe this neighborhood's changing forever

Maybe tonight is our last night together, however!

How do you want to face it?

Do you wanna waste it, when the end is so close you can  
taste it?

Y'all could cry with your head in the sand

I'm a fly this flag that I got in my hand!

[PIRAGUËRO]

¡Pa'rriba esa bandera!

[COMMUNITY]

Hey!

[PIRAGUËRO, DANIELA]

¡Álzala donde quiera!

<p>[COMMUNITY] Hey!</p> <p>[USNAVI] Can we raise our voice tonight? Can we make a little noise tonight?</p> <p>[COMMUNITY] Hey!</p> <p>[PIRAGUËRO, DANIELA, CARLA] ¡Esa bonita bandera!</p> <p>[COMMUNITY] Hey!</p> <p>[PIRAGUËRO, DANIELA, CARLA] ¡Contiene mi alma entera!</p> <p>[COMMUNITY] Hey!</p> <p>[USNAVI] In fact, can we sing so loud and raucous They can hear us across the bridge in East Secaucus?</p> <p>[PIRAGUËRO, DANIELA, CARLA, SONNY, MEN] ¡Pa'rriba esa bandera! ¡Álzala donde quiera!</p> <p>[COMMUNITY] ¡Carnaval del Barrio!</p> <p>[USNAVI] From Puerto Rico to Santo Domingo Wherever we go, we rep our people and the beat go...</p> <p>[PIRAGUËRO, DANIELA, CARLA, MEN] ¡Esa bonita bandera! ¡Contiene mi alma entera!</p> <p>[COMMUNITY] Carnaval del Barrio</p>	<p>[USNAVI] Vanessa, forget about what coulda been Dance with me, one last night, in the hood again</p> <p>[DANIELA, CARLA] ¡Wepa!</p> <p>[Vanessa and Usnavi slowly begin to dance.]</p> <p>[COMMUNITY] ¡Carnaval del barrio! ¡Carnaval del barrio!</p> <p>[DANIELA] ¡Pa'rriba esa bandera! ¡Oye! Y cuando yo me muera Entiérrame en mi tierra ¡Del barrio! Alza la bandera! Adios! Adios! Adios!</p> <p>[COMMUNITY] ¡Carnaval del barrio! ¡Carnaval del barrio! ¡Del barrio! Alza la bandera La bandera Dominicana! Alza la bandera ¡La bandera Puertorriqueña! Alza la bandera ¡La bandera Mexicana!</p> <p>[COMMUNITY] Alza la bandera La bandera La bandera La bandera La bandera ¡Alza la bandera! Hey!</p>
<p><b>20. Piragua (Reprise)</b> [PIRAGUËRO] It's hotter than the islands are today And Mister Softee's truck has broken down And here come all his customers my way I told you, I run this town! Piragua, piragua One-twenty-five, piragua!</p>	<p>Piragua, piragua Two-twenty-five, piragua! New block of ice, hike up the price Lai lo le lo lai, lai lo le lo lai Blackouts are nice, blackouts are nice Lo le lo lai Keep scraping by Piragua!</p>
<p><b>23. Finale</b> [BOLERO SINGER]</p>	<p>No te vayas Si me dejas</p>

Si te alejas de mi  
Seguirás en mis recuerdos para siempre  
Para siempre, para siempre  
Para siem—  
Para siem—  
Para siempre...

[USNAVI]  
Lights out on Washington Heights  
And now the crack of dawn  
The blackout goes on and on and on...

[BOLERO SINGER]  
Para siempre

[USNAVI]  
Sonny's out back, sortin' the trash  
As I think about the past with a sack full of cash

[BOLERO SINGER]  
Para siempre

[USNAVI]  
Abuela really wanted me up on a beach  
With margaritas in my reach, and  
Soon that's how it's gonna be...

[BOLERO SINGER]  
Para siempre

[USNAVI]  
Imagine me, leavin' today  
On a seven-forty-seven boardin' JFK...

[CARLA]  
The hydrants are open  
Cool breezes blow...

[CARLA, DANIELA]  
The hydrants are open  
Cool breezes blow...

[PIRAGUËRO, KEVIN, & CARLA, DANIELA]  
Piragua!  
Good morning  
The hydrants are open  
Piragua!  
New block of ice, piragua!  
Cool breezes blow  
So sweet and nice, piragua!  
Piragua!  
Piragua!

[PIRAGUËRO, KEVIN, CARLA, DANIELA,  
(CAMILA)]  
Piragua!  
Good morning

The hydrants are open  
(Siempre)  
Piragua!  
New block of ice, piragua!  
(Seguirás en mis recuerdos)  
Cool breezes blow  
So sweet and nice, piragua!  
(Para siempre...)  
Piragua!  
Piragua!

[PIRAGUËRO, KEVIN, CARLA, DANIELA,  
VANESSA, (CAMILA)]  
Piragua!  
Good morning  
The hydrants are open  
I'll be downtown...  
(Siempre)  
Piragua!  
New block of ice, piragua!  
(Seguirás en mis recuerdos)  
Cool breezes blow  
So sweet and nice, piragua!  
It won't be long now...  
(Para siempre...)  
Piragua!  
Piragua!

[USNAVI]  
There's a breeze off the Hudson  
And just when  
You think you're sick of living here the memory floods in  
The morning light, off the fire escapes  
The nights in Bennett Park blasting Big Pun tapes  
I'm 'a miss this place, to tell you the truth:  
Kevin dispensin' wisdom from his dispatch booth  
And at dawn, Vanessa at the salon, we gotta move on  
But who's gonna notice we're gone?

When our job's done, as the evening winds  
Down to a crawl, son, can I ease my mind  
When we're all done? When we've resigned  
In the long run, what do we leave behind?  
Most of all, I'll miss Abuela's whispers  
Doin' the Lotto Pick Six every Christmas  
In five years, when this whole city's rich folks and hipsters  
Who's gonna miss this raggedy little business?

[GRAFFITI PETE, spoken]  
What it do? Ha ha, great sunlight this morning.

[SONNY, spoken]  
Yo cuz! We fixed the grate!

[USNAVI, spoken]  
What did I tell you about this punk?

[SONNY, spoken] You have to commission an artist while his rate is still good.	But Sonny's gotta eat, and this corner is my destiny
[GRAFFITI PETE, spoken] It's the first work in my new series.	[SONNY, NINA, CARLA, DANIELA] We're home!
<i>He rolls down the grate. Silence</i>	[USNAVI] Brings out the best in me, we pass a test and we Keep pressin' and yes indeed, you know I'll never leave If you close your eyes that hydrant is a beach That siren is a breeze, that fire escape's a leaf on a palm tree!
[GRAFFITI PETE, spoken] He hates it.	[CARLA, DANIELA, NINA, CAMILA, VANESSA, SONNY, PIRAGUËRO, KEVIN] We're home!
[SONNY, spoken] Shh. He's forming an artistic opinion.	[USNAVI] Abuela I'm sorry But I ain't goin' back because I'm telling your story And I can say goodbye to you smilin', I found my island I been on it this whole time I'm home!
[USNAVI, sung] You did this last night?	[COMMUNITY] We're home! The hydrants are open Cool breezes blow!
[GRAFFITI PETE] Yeah.	[USNAVI] It's a wonderful life that I've know "Merry Christmas you ole' Building and Loan!" I'm home!
[USNAVI] There goes my flight.	[COMMUNITY 1 & COMMUNITY] We're home! The hydrants are open Cool breezes blow!
[SONNY] What?	[USNAVI] Abuela that ain't a stoop, that's your throne Long after ya birds have all flown
[USNAVI] Graffiti Pete you're gonna need some new cans Here's some money, finish up There's been a slight change of plans!	[USNAVI] I'm home! Where the coffee's non-stop And I drop this hip-hop In my mom and pop shop I'm home! Where people come People go Let me show all of these People what I know There's no place like home! And let me set the record straight! I'm steppin' to Vanessa I'm gettin' a second date I'm home!
[GRAFFITI PETE] Nice!	
[USNAVI] Listen up guys, you got a job, I'm not playin' You gotta go now, tell the whole block I'm stayin'! Go ahead, tell everyone we know! Sonny... Alright, go!	
Yeah, I'm a streetlight! Chillin' in the heat! I illuminate the stories of the people in the street Some have happy endings Some are bittersweet But I know them all and that's what makes my life complete	
[NINA] We're home!	
[USNAVI] And if not me, who keeps our legacies? Who's gonna keep the coffee sweet with secret recipes? Abuela, rest in peace, you live in my memories	

Where it's a hundred in the shade  
But with patience and faith  
We remain unafraid  
I'm home!

You hear that music in the air?  
Take the train to the top of the world  
And I'm there  
I'm home!

## ***THE HAMILTON MIXTAPE***

### **2. My Shot**

[Intro]

The Hamilton Mixtape

[Verse 1: BLACK THOUGHT]

Ayo mugshots, gun shots, dope shots, jump shot  
Take your pick, but you only get one shot  
Advice from a schoolteacher to a young tot  
Applyin' a sticker to his Spiderman lunchbox  
When even role models tell us we're born to be felons  
We're never gettin' into Harvard or Carnegie Mellon  
And we gon' end up either robbin' somebody or killin'  
It's not fair that's all they can tell us  
That's why you hustle hella hard, never celebrate a  
    holiday  
That'll be the day I coulda finally hit the lottery  
I refuse to ever lose or throw my shot away  
Or chalk it up as just another one that got away  
So I'm unapologetic, I'm on my calisthenics  
If I have given it all I got I cannot regret it  
My point of destination's different from where I was  
    headed  
'Cause I'ma shoot for the stars to get it  
One shot

[Hook: BLACK THOUGHT]

I said I'm not throwin' away my shot  
I said I'm not throwin' away my shot  
Yo I'm just like my country  
I'm young, scrappy and hungry  
And I'm not throwin' away my shot  
I said I'm not throwin' away my shot  
No I'm not throwin' away my shot  
Yo I'm just like my country  
I'm young, scrappy and hungry  
And I'm not throwin' away my shot

[Verse 2: JOELL ORTIZ]

When opportunity knock, you don't send anyone to get it  
Answer the door, welcome it, let it in or regret it  
They said if you can't beat 'em you join 'em  
I said, "Forget it"  
'Cause once you join 'em you're buildin' a ceilin' the way  
    you're headed  
Be American, express how you feel and take the credit  
Don't settle for 87, go premium unleaded and

Take off, shake all the hate off, it's over  
It's they loss, the payoff's their weight off your shoulders  
Must admit, I'm feelin', I'm kind of um  
Lighter as a writer with this fire and desire to go higher  
Than a stealth fighter pilot with my eye on every prize  
I surprise you guys, I'm a prize fighter  
My nine to five describe, your scribe survive minor  
Setbacks and take steps back from pied pipers  
Be leaders, believers in yourself and mean it  
I mean you only get one shot, take it or leave it

[Hook: BLACK THOUGHT]

I said I'm not throwin' away my shot  
I said I'm not throwin' away my shot  
Yo I'm just like my country  
I'm young, scrappy and hungry  
And I'm not throwin' away my shot  
I said I'm not throwin' away my shot  
No I'm not throwin' away my shot  
Yo I'm just like my country  
I'm young, scrappy and hungry  
And I'm not throwin' away my shot

[Bridge: BUSTA RHYMES]

Rise up  
If you livin' on your knees, you rise up  
Tell your brother that he's gotta rise up  
Tell your sister that she's gotta rise up  
When are folks like me and you gonna rise up?  
Every city, every hood, we need to rise up  
All my soldiers, what's good? We need to rise up  
We ain't got no other choice, we need to rise up  
Rise up!

[Verse 3: BUSTA RHYMES]

Throughout my travels and journeys through life I've  
    been searchin'  
And been learnin' to be the type of person to display how  
    determined I get  
When I'm certain, inside I feel that fire that's burnin'  
Like a knife that is turnin', I fight while I'm hurtin'  
Sometimes they're right 'cause life is a burden  
Like the pain from a bite that'll worsen  
Tryna stifle the light that'll shine on me first and  
Before I ride in a hearse and...  
My breathing stops and

You'll never take my one shot I got 'fore I lie in the earth  
And now I kill again on that Hamilton Hercules Mulligan  
Readin' in Vanity Fair or the Huffington  
Done with the sufferin', we in the guts again, family  
rushin' in  
Wonder where Busta been  
Feelin' the hunger and feedin' the lust to win  
See I've been patiently waitin' for this moment  
To rise up again, that's the way I was molded  
And as the last one standin' as the rest of them foldin'  
Give me my one chance to grab the torch and properly  
hold it

[Hook: BLACK THOUGHT]

I said I'm not throwin' away my shot  
I said I'm not throwin' away my shot  
Ayy, yo I'm just like my country  
I'm young, scrappy and hungry  
And I'm not throwin' away my shot  
I said I'm not throwin' away my shot

## 11. Immigrants (We Get the Job Done)

[Intro: J. PERIOD]

You know, and it gets into this whole issue of border  
security, you know, who's gonna say that the  
borders are secure? We've got the House and the  
Senate debating this issue, and it's... it's really  
astonishing that in a country founded by  
immigrants, "immigrant" has somehow become a  
bad word. So the debate rages on and we  
continue....

[Intro: "Yorktown" sample]

[HERCULES MULLIGAN]

And just like that it's over, we tend to our wounded,  
we count our dead

[JOHN LAURENS]

Black and white soldiers wonder alike if this really  
means freedom...

[GEORGE WASHINGTON]

Not yet

[Verse 1: K'NAAN]

I got 1 job, 2 job, 3 when I need them  
I got 5 roommates in this one studio, but I never  
really see them  
And we all came America trying to get a lap dance  
from Lady Freedom  
But now Lady Liberty is acting like Hilary Banks  
with a pre-nup  
Man, I was brave, sailing on graves  
Don't think I didn't notice those tombstones  
disguised as waves  
I'm no dummy, here is something funny

No I'm not throwin' away my shot  
Yo I'm just like my country  
I'm young, scrappy and hungry  
And I'm not throwin' away my shot  
I said I'm not throwin' away my shot  
I said I'm not throwin' away my shot  
Ayy, yo I'm just like my country  
I'm young, scrappy and hungry  
And I'm not throwin' away my shot  
I said I'm not throwin' away my shot  
No I'm not throwin' away my shot  
Ayy yo I'm just like my country  
I'm young, scrappy and hungry  
And I'm not throwin' away my shot  
It's time to take a shot

[Outro: NATE RUESS]

Woah, woah, woah, woah  
Woah, woah, woah, woah

You can be an immigrant without risking your lives  
Or crossing these borders with thrifty supplies  
All you got to do is see the world with new eyes

[CHORUS]

Immigrants, we get the job done

Look how far I come  
Look how far I come  
Look how far I come  
We get the job done

Look how far I come  
Look how far I come  
Look how far I come  
Immigrants, we get the job done

[Verse 2: SNOW THA PRODUCT]

It's a hard line when you're an import  
Baby boy, it's hard times  
When you ain't sent for  
Racists feed the belly of the beast  
With they pitchforks, rich chores  
Done by the people that get ignored  
Ya se armó  
Ya se despertaron  
It's a whole awakening  
La alarma ya sonó hace rato  
Los que quieren buscan  
Pero nos apodan como vagos  
We are the same ones  
Hustling on every level  
Ten los datos  
Walk a mile in our shoes  
Abróchense los zapatos

I been scoping ya dudes, ya'll ain't been working like  
I do  
I'll outwork you, it hurts you  
You claim I'm stealing jobs though  
Peter Piper claimed he picked them, he just  
underpaid Pablo  
But there ain't a paper trail when you living in the  
shadows  
We're America's ghost writers, the credit's only  
borrowed  
It's a matter of time before the checks all come  
But...

[CHORUS]  
Immigrants, we get the job done

Look how far I come  
Look how far I come  
Look how far I come  
We get the job done

Look how far I come  
Look how far I come  
Look how far I come  
Immigrants, we get the job—  
Not yet

[Bridge: SNOW THA PRODUCT]  
The credit is only borrowed  
It's America's ghost writers, the credit's only  
borrowed  
It's America's ghost writers  
America's ghost writers  
America's ghost writers, the credit's only borrow-  
borrowed  
It's Americas ghost writers, a credit is only borrowed  
It's Americas ghost writers, a credit is only borrowed  
It's Americas ghost writers, a credit is only borrowed  
It's

[CHORUS]  
Immigrants, we get the job done

[Verse 3: RIZ MC]  
Ay yo aye, immigrants we don't like that  
Na they don't play British empire strikes back  
They beating us like 808's and high hats  
At our own game of invasion, but this ain't Iraq  
Who these fugees what did they do for me  
But contribute new dreams  
Taxes and tools, swagger and food to eat  
Cool, they flee war zones, but the problem ain't ours  
Even if our bombs landed on them like the  
Mayflower

Buckingham Palace or Capitol Hill  
Blood of my ancestors had that all built  
It's the ink you print on your dollar bill, oil you spill  
Thin red line on the flag you hoist when you kill  
But still we just say "look how far I come"  
Hindustan, Pakistan, to London  
To a galaxy far from their ignorance  
Cos-

[CHORUS]  
Immigrants, we get the job done

[Verse 4: RESIDENTE]  
Por tierra o por agua  
Identidad falsa  
Brincamos muros o flotamos en balsas  
La peleamos como Sandino en Nicaragua  
Somos como las plantas que crecen sin agua  
Sin pasaporte americano  
Porque La mitad de gringolandia Es terreno  
mexicano  
Hay que ser bien hijo e puta  
Nosotros Les Sembramos el árbol y ellos se comen la  
fruta  
Somos los que cruzaron  
Aquí vinimos a buscar el oro que nos robaron  
Tenemos mas trucos que la policia secreta  
Metimos la casa completa en una maleta  
Con un pico, una pala  
Y un rastrillo  
Te construimos un castillo  
Como es que dice el coro cabrón?

[CHORUS]  
Immigrants, we get the job done

Look how far I come  
Look how far I come  
Look how far I come  
We get the job done

Look how far I come  
Look how far I come  
Look how far I come  
Immigrants, we get the job done

Look how far I come  
Look how far I come  
Look how far I come  
Immigrants, we get the job done

Not yet.