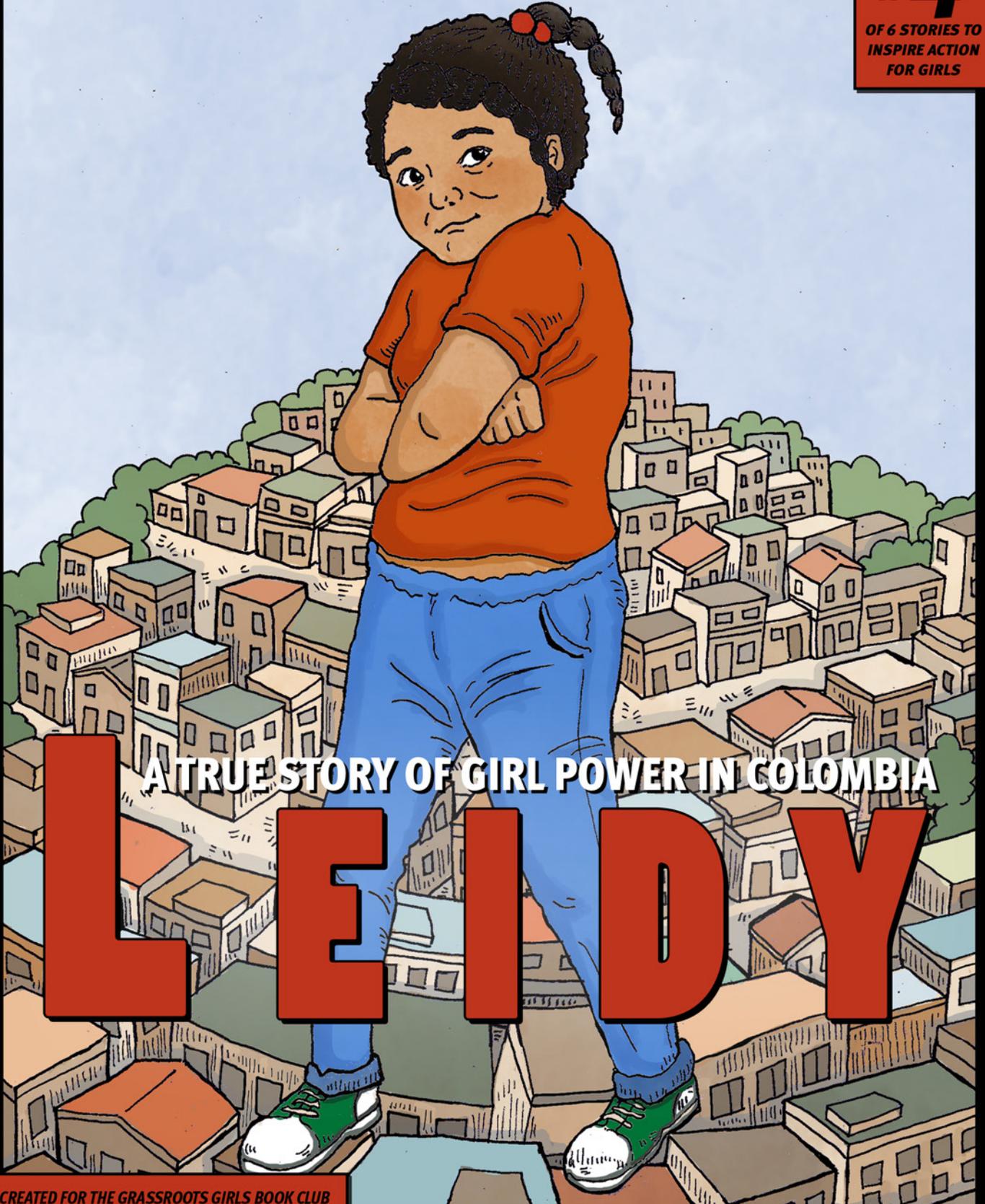


#4

OF 6 STORIES TO
INSPIRE ACTION
FOR GIRLS



A TRUE STORY OF GIRL POWER IN COLOMBIA

LEIDY

CREATED FOR THE GRASSROOTS GIRLS BOOK CLUB

The title 'LEIDY' is centered in a large, bold, black sans-serif font. It is surrounded by several black musical notes of various shapes and sizes, including eighth and sixteenth notes, scattered around the word.

LEIDY

CREATED THIS STORY WITH
LYDIA HOLDEN

ILLUSTRATED BY
JUNGHYEON KWON

DESIGNED BY
DANIEL HAWKINS

EDITED BY
MEGAN SHANK



INTRODUCTION

This graphic novella was made with Leidy Calderon in November 2012 at La Familia Ayara's Cultural Center in Bogotá, Colombia. Leidy, now 19 years old, experienced a turbulent youth that resulted in estrangement from her grandmother, her primary caregiver. Seeking acceptance, Leidy fell in with a rough group who often hung out on the streets of a dangerous barrio in Bogotá drinking, smoking and committing petty crimes. Leidy eventually found herself at the Claret Correction House. It was there she encountered the organization La Familia Ayara and learned how to positively express her emotions and deal with the struggles in her life by engaging in rap and breakdancing activities.

Founded in 1996 by a group of Colombian youth, La Familia Ayara draws on hip-hop culture's potential to promote positive youth development by engaging young people in a language that is relevant to their daily lives, as well as provide a social support network, a means of self-expression, a heightened social consciousness and an opportunity to be surrounded by positive role models. At Ayara's Cultural Center, youth engage in rap, breakdance and graffiti classes and find a supportive space amid the poverty

and violence that exist in Bogotá's poor barrios. Ayara's goal is to directly engage young people in efforts to build a culture of non-violence and solidarity while breaking down discriminatory attitudes and practices in Colombian society.

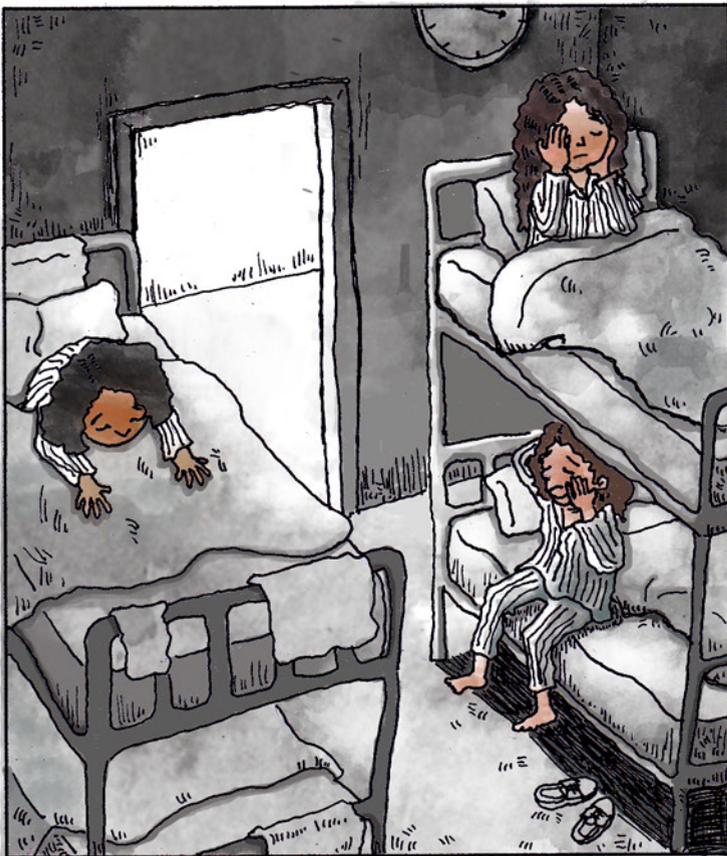
Leidy's story is part of the Grassroots Girls Book Club graphic novella series that depict the true stories of six incredible girls. Each girl co-authored her own story and a talented emerging female artist illustrated her words. These graphic novellas aim to show that positive change is happening for girls, and to also raise awareness for the many girls who still need urgent support from organizations like La Familia Ayara. Leidy's hope is that her story will inspire you to discuss the issues facing girls globally and learn more about the grassroots organizations that are changing girls' lives for the better. At the end of this graphic novella is a discussion guide to dig deeper into the issues Leidy faced, followed by a glossary with local language translations and explanations of important terms and concepts. Explore how you can take action with your friends and classmates online at grassrootsgirls.tumblr.com to help make the world better for girls everywhere.

La Familia Ayara is supported through the Grassroots Girls Initiative by EMpower—the Emerging Markets Foundation. EMpower invests in local organizations working to empower at-risk youth, through skills and opportunities, in emerging market countries.

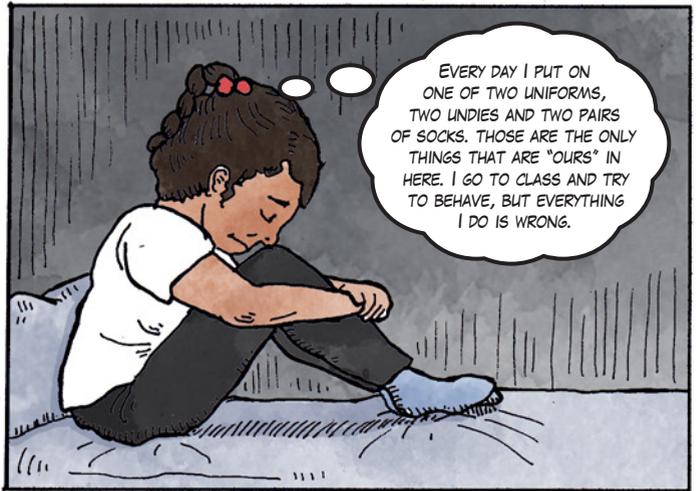
The Grassroots Girls Initiative is a partnership of six funders that believe grassroots organizations are uniquely qualified to create and implement effective, organic solutions for the most underserved girls in the communities where they work. Grassroots Girls Initiative partners are: American Jewish World Service, EMpower—the Emerging Markets Foundation, Firelight Foundation, Mama Cash, The Global Fund for Children and the Global Fund for Women.

Discover other Grassroots Girls Book Club graphic novellas made with girls in Poland, Kenya, the Dominican Republic, Malawi and India at grassrootsgirls.tumblr.com.









BUT I DID HAVE A LOT OF TIME TO THINK ABOUT HOW I GOT THERE...

MY MOM LEFT WHEN I WAS BABY. I WOULDN'T EVEN KNOW HER IF I PASSED HER ON THE STREET. I GREW UP WITH MY **ABUELA** (GRANDMOTHER) AS MY MOM.



MY DAD IS IN AND OUT OF THE HOUSE, AND MY LIFE. MOSTLY HE STAYS BY HIMSELF AN HOUR AWAY. SOMETIMES COUSINS OR AUNTS OR UNCLAS COME AND LIVE WITH ABUELA AND ME AND THEN LEAVE AGAIN.



WHEN I WAS YOUNG, LIFE DIDN'T SEEM SO BAD.



BUT BY THE TIME I WAS 10 YEARS OLD IT WAS CLEAR I WASN'T A GREAT STUDENT. I WASN'T INTERESTED IN WHAT THEY WERE TEACHING. IT WAS FRUSTRATING. I BARELY PASSED YEAR TO YEAR.



MY ABUELA WAS VERY BOSSY, ALWAYS COMING UP WITH NEW RULES FOR ME. I WOULD COMPLAIN ABOUT THE THINGS SHE SAID. I WOULD BREAK HER RULES. WE FOUGHT CONSTANTLY. IT MADE HER **MUY ENOJADA** (VERY ANGRY).

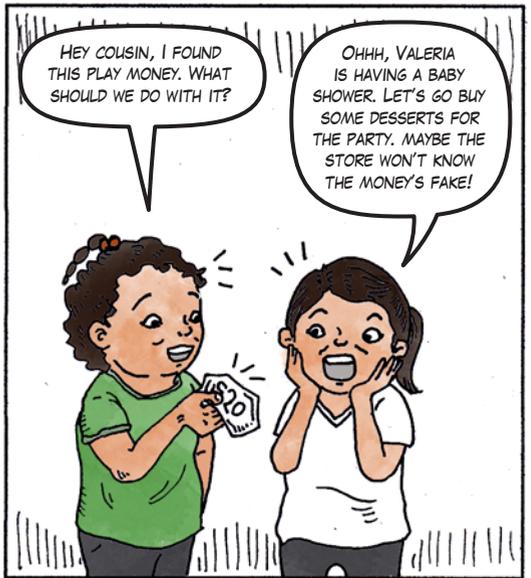


WHAT SAVED ME FROM GOING **LOCA** (CRAZY) WAS SINGING. I SANG WHENEVER AND WHEREVER I GOT A CHANCE. SONGS FLOW THROUGH MY VEINS. THE PEOPLE IN MY **BARRIO** (NEIGHBORHOOD) KNEW OF ME BECAUSE OF MY SINGING.



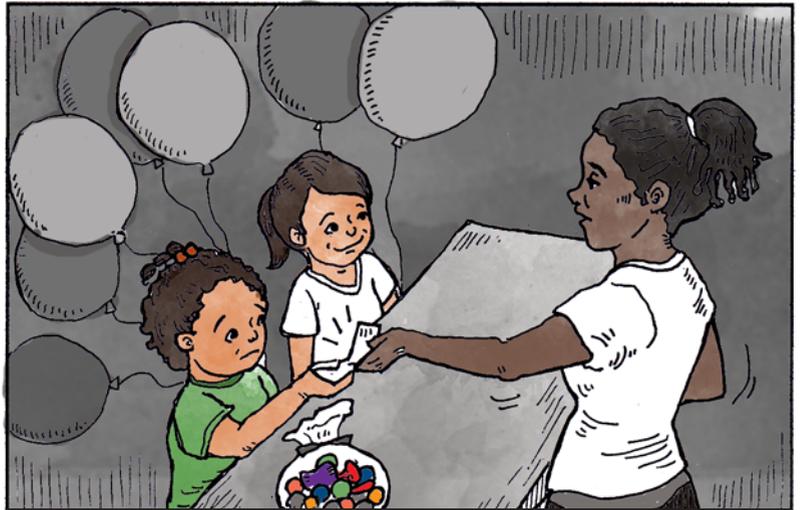


BUT MY LIFE REALLY CHANGED WHEN I FOUND 40,000 PESOS* IN A SHOE WHEN I WAS 12 YEARS OLD. SINCE IT WAS JUST IN A SHOE I THOUGHT IT MUST BE PLAY MONEY.



HEY COUSIN, I FOUND THIS PLAY MONEY. WHAT SHOULD WE DO WITH IT?

OHHH, VALERIA IS HAVING A BABY SHOWER. LET'S GO BUY SOME DESSERTS FOR THE PARTY. MAYBE THE STORE WON'T KNOW THE MONEY'S FAKE!



IMAGINE OUR SURPRISE WHEN THE STORE TOOK THE MONEY! WE THOUGHT WE WERE SO LUCKY.



HAPPY BABY SHOWER, VALERIA!

GRACIAS! COME JOIN THE PARTY!







AFTER THAT, WHENEVER THINGS WENT MISSING THEY BLAMED ME. FROM THAT DAY ON MY LIFE GOT WORSE.



MY ABUELA AND THE REST OF MY FAMILY STOPPED ASKING ME TO HELP WHEN WE HAD PARTIES OR FAMILY DINNERS. IT WAS LIKE I BECAME INVISIBLE TO THEM. THEY TURNED THEIR BACKS AND IGNORED ME WHEN I TALKED.



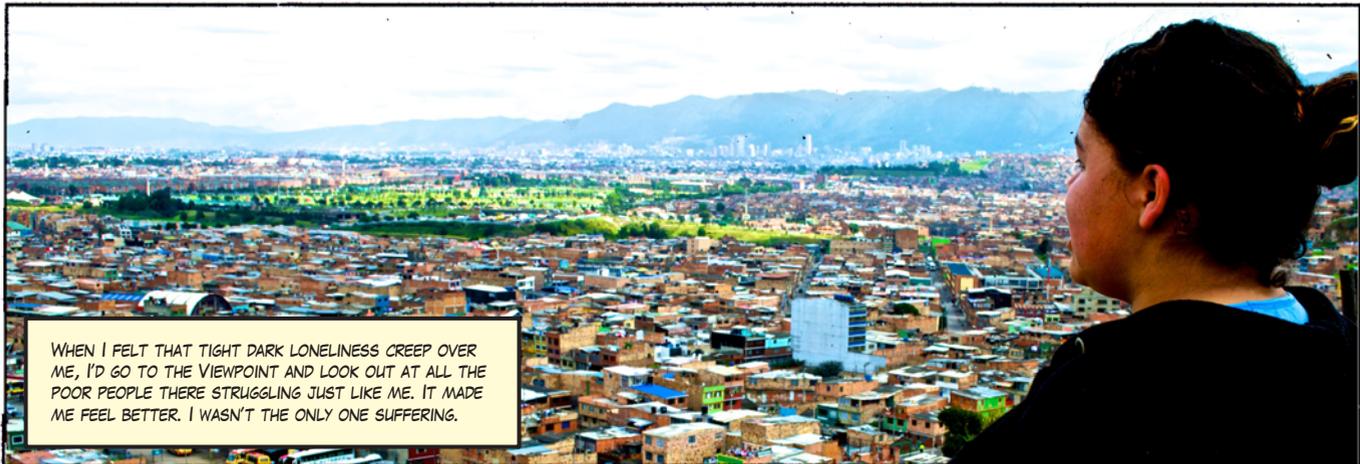
I COULDN'T BE LEIDY AT HOME ANYMORE BECAUSE SHE STOPPED EXISTING. SO I STARTED SPENDING A LOT MORE TIME OUTSIDE MY HOUSE.



I FELT SO BAD. I NO LONGER FELT ANY LOVE OR WARMTH FROM MY FAMILY. IT WAS LIKE WE WENT THROUGH A SEPARATION.

IT WASN'T JUST AT HOME THAT I WAS ALONE. AT SCHOOL I HAD NO FRIENDS AND WAS TEASED.





WHEN I FELT THAT TIGHT DARK LONELINESS CREEP OVER ME, I'D GO TO THE VIEWPOINT AND LOOK OUT AT ALL THE POOR PEOPLE THERE STRUGGLING JUST LIKE ME. IT MADE ME FEEL BETTER. I WASN'T THE ONLY ONE SUFFERING.



HEY **CHICA** (GIRL), WE'VE SEEN YOU HANGING AROUND A LOT LATELY.

YEAH, DON'T YOU GO TO SCHOOL NO MORE?



I UM, WELL, I SOMETIMES GO.



DON'T WATCH THAT, **CHICA**. WE DON'T GO NEITHER. MAYBE YOU WANT TO CHILL WITH US?

YEAH, COME ON!



HOLA (HI), I'M LEIDY.



ALMOST IMMEDIATELY I FELT AT HOME. WE ALL CAME FROM HARD FAMILIES AND SPENT MOST OF OUR TIME HANGING OUT IN THE STREETS. THEY BECAME MY STREET FAMILY.

BUT IT'S NO JOKE FOR A GIRL ON BOGOTÁ'S STREETS.

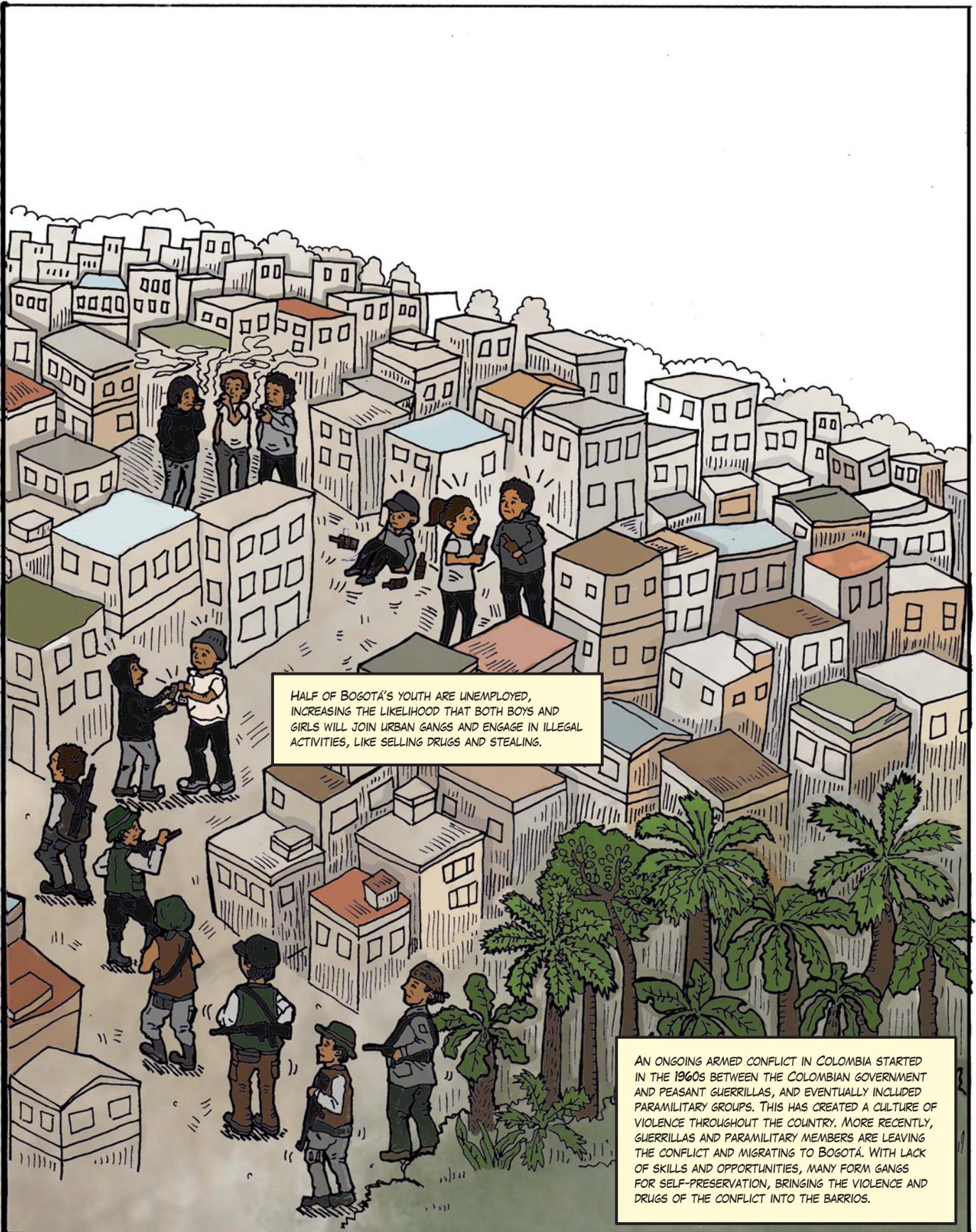
11 MILLION PEOPLE LIVE IN BOGOTÁ, INCLUDING THE UNOFFICIAL RESIDENTS DISPLACED BY THE ARMED CONFLICT. MUCH NEEDED SOCIAL SERVICES DON'T REACH THE POOR NEIGHBORHOODS, AND CHAOS OFTEN REIGNS IN THE BARRIOS.

HALF OF BOGOTÁ'S YOUTH LIVE IN POVERTY. THEY LACK ACCESS TO THE OPPORTUNITIES AND RESOURCES NECESSARY TO BECOME SELF-SUFFICIENT CITIZENS AND AGENTS OF POSITIVE CHANGE IN THEIR COMMUNITIES.



1 IN 5 ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN COLOMBIA HAS BEEN OR IS CURRENTLY PREGNANT.

GIRLS ARE AFRAID TO WALK ALONE OR GO OUT AFTER DARK IN THE BARRIOS WHERE THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO FACE STREET HARASSMENT, RAPE AND VIOLENCE.



HALF OF BOGOTÁ'S YOUTH ARE UNEMPLOYED, INCREASING THE LIKELIHOOD THAT BOTH BOYS AND GIRLS WILL JOIN URBAN GANGS AND ENGAGE IN ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES, LIKE SELLING DRUGS AND STEALING.

AN ONGOING ARMED CONFLICT IN COLOMBIA STARTED IN THE 1960S BETWEEN THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT AND PEASANT GUERRILLAS, AND EVENTUALLY INCLUDED PARAMILITARY GROUPS. THIS HAS CREATED A CULTURE OF VIOLENCE THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. MORE RECENTLY, GUERRILLAS AND PARAMILITARY MEMBERS ARE LEAVING THE CONFLICT AND MIGRATING TO BOGOTÁ. WITH LACK OF SKILLS AND OPPORTUNITIES, MANY FORM GANGS FOR SELF-PRESERVATION, BRINGING THE VIOLENCE AND DRUGS OF THE CONFLICT INTO THE BARRIOS.





I BECAME TOUGH AFTER THAT. STREET TOUGH. WHERE COULD I GO?



LEIDY, THE ONLY WAY YOU CAN SAVE YOURSELF FROM THIS LIFE IS IF YOU GO TO THE CORRECTIONAL HOUSE. THEY'LL STRAIGHTEN YOU OUT.



FOR A WHILE I SLEPT AT A FRIEND'S HOUSE. BUT HER MOTHER WAS A DRUG ADDICT AND SAID IT WASN'T CONVENIENT FOR ME TO STAY THERE.

LEIDY, YOU BELONG AT HOME. COME BACK. IT'S NOT SAFE FOR YOU ON THE STREETS.

OK, BUT LET'S NOT FIGHT SO MUCH ANYMORE.



I SAID NO! IF YOU'RE LIVING HERE YOU FOLLOW THE RULES.

THEN MAYBE I'LL LEAVE!



IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG BEFORE WE WERE FIGHTING AGAIN. I TRIED TO FOLLOW THE RULES AND ASK FOR PERMISSION TO GO OUT WITH MY FRIENDS, BUT SHE ALWAYS SAID NO.

LEIDY, WHERE YA BEEN? WE HAVEN'T SEEN YOU AROUND.

I'VE BEEN TRYING TO WORK THINGS OUT WITH MY ABUELA, BUT IT'S JUST ONE FIGHT AFTER ANOTHER. I'M SO SICK OF IT!



YOU NEED A BREAK! SOME OF US ARE HEADING TO LA VEGA. WE'LL CHILL, PARTY, YOU KNOW, JUST HAVE A GOOD TIME. YOU SHOULD COME. WE'RE LEAVING NOW THOUGH SO NO TIME TO GO HOME.

THAT SOUNDS BRUTAL! I'M IN!





LA VEGA IS A REALLY BEAUTIFUL PLACE JUST AN HOUR WEST OF BOGOTÁ. THERE I WAS ABLE TO RELAX FOR EIGHT DAYS AWAY FROM ALL MY FAMILY STRESS.



THIS PLACE IS SO CHEVERE (COOL)! IT'S GOOD TO GET AWAY FROM LIFE IN BOGOTÁ, RIGHT LEIDY?



WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? I CALLED THE POLICE. I PUT UP FLYERS! WHY DO YOU DO THIS TO YOUR POOR ABUELA?

AFTER THAT I WAS ON LOCKDOWN. SITTING IN MY ROOM ALL DAY LISTENING TO ABUELA LECTURE ME WAS TOO MUCH. HER ATTITUDE NEVER CHANGES. SO I DECIDED TO LEAVE AGAIN, THIS TIME PERMANENTLY.



FINALLY I AM OUT OF THIS HELL!



WE GOT A CALL ABOUT A RUNAWAY. YOU'RE COMING WITH US!

I WASN'T EVEN AT MY FRIEND'S HOUSE FOR A DAY BEFORE THE POLICE CAUGHT ME AND TOOK ME TO THE CLARET CORRECTIONAL HOUSE.



SO HERE I AM.

SO MANY MISTAKES, SO MUCH FIGHTING. IF I COULD DO IT AGAIN I'D TRY HARDER TO WORK THINGS OUT WITH ABUELA.



¿QUE ONDA CHICAS (WHAT'S HAPPENING GIRLS)? DID YOU HEAR THAT THERE IS A NEW CLASS WE CAN GO TO TODAY?

WHAT IS IT? IT'S PROBABLY WACK.

HELL NO! IT'S SINGING.



OH! I FORGOT HOW MUCH I LOVE MUSIC. JUST HEARING THIS PIANO MAKES ME WANT TO SING!



HEY GUYS! SO I'M FROM AN ORGANIZATION CALLED LA FAMILIA AYARA. WE'RE ALL ABOUT USING HIP-HOP, LIKE RAP, BREAKDANCE AND GRAFFITI, TO EMPOWER YOUTH. TODAY WE'RE GOING TO GET GOING WITH RAP.



RAP IS POETRY SET TO DOPE BEATS. IF YOU CAN CHANNEL YOUR EMOTIONS INTO RAP YOU'LL BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND AND PROCESS THE CHAOS IN YOUR LIVES. AYARA USES HIP-HOP TO ENGAGE YOUTH ALL OVER BOGOTÁ. WE'RE ALL ABOUT CREATING A FAMILY, POSITIVELY EXPRESSING OURSELVES AND IMPROVING OUR BEHAVIOR. BUT LET'S NOT GET AHEAD OF OURSELVES: TODAY'S JUST ABOUT WARMING UP OUR VOICES.



THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE FELT GOOD IN THIS PLACE!



IT'S BEEN A FEW WEEKS NOW AND I KNOW ALL OF YOU HAVE BEEN WORKING ON YOUR FIRST ORIGINAL RAP. IT'S TIME TO GET 'BOUT IT. LEIDY, TAKE THE STAGE!



THIS IS SO EMBARRASSING! THERE'RE GOING TO LAUGH AT ME.

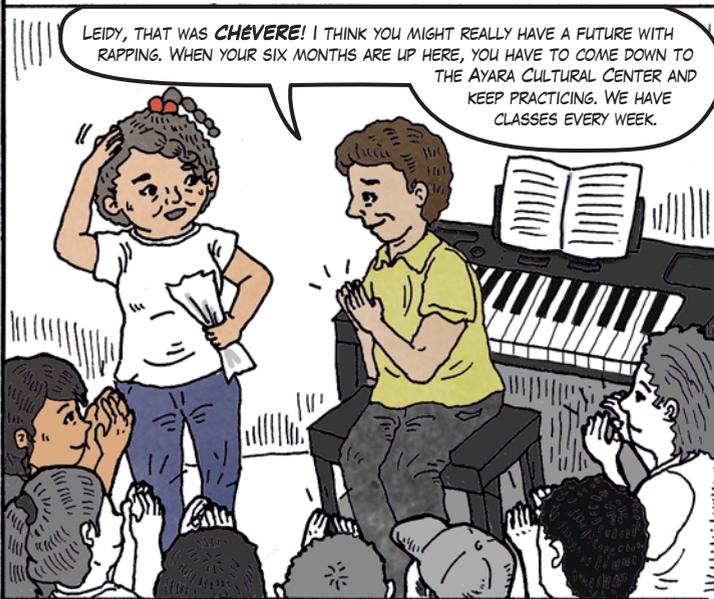
ALRIGHT LEIDY!



VIVES EN TU PROPIA BURBUJA IMAGINARIA (LIVE IN YOUR OWN IMAGINARY BUBBLE)

QUE SI SE TE ESTALLA ALGO FALLA Y QUE FALLA (IF YOU BREAK SOMETHING YOU FAIL AND FAIL)

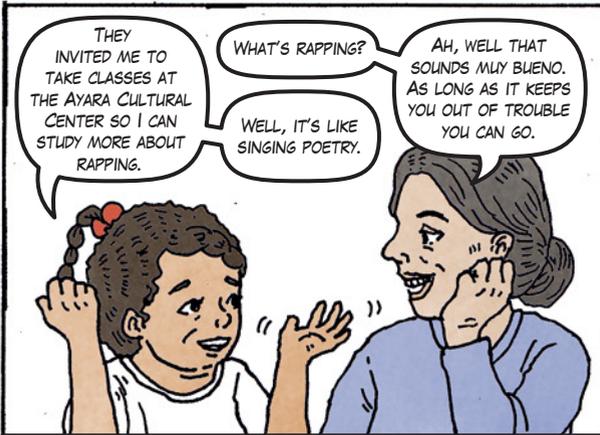
YO NO SE PERO EL DESTINO ES DEMASIADO CRUEL (I DON'T KNOW, BUT FATE IS TOO CRUEL)



LEIDY, THAT WAS **CHEVERE!** I THINK YOU MIGHT REALLY HAVE A FUTURE WITH RAPPING. WHEN YOUR SIX MONTHS ARE UP HERE, YOU HAVE TO COME DOWN TO THE AYARA CULTURAL CENTER AND KEEP PRACTICING. WE HAVE CLASSES EVERY WEEK.



I THOUGHT THOSE SIX MONTHS WERE LIKE SIX YEARS! I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M FINALLY FREE!



AFTER LEAVING THE CLARET HOUSE I WENT BACK TO LIVE WITH ABUELA. I WAS EXCITED TO TELL HER ABOUT LA FAMILIA AYARA.



WHEN I GOT TO THE CULTURAL CENTER THERE WAS A GROUP OF GIRLS AND GUYS RAPPING. I FELT I FOUND A NEW HOME!





KATHERINE! YOU'RE HERE!

YEAH, I JUST GOT OUT OF CLARET HOUSE AND THE FIRST THING I WANTED TO DO WAS COME HERE AND CHECK IT OUT! I LIKED RAPPING, BUT LOOK AT HOW CHÈVERE THOSE GUYS LOOK BREAKDANCING. LET'S TRY IT!



THIS IS BRUTAL!

WHO KNEW I COULD BREAKDANCE? I WAS THE KID WHO FAILED P.E. NOW MOVEMENT MAKES ME FEEL POWERFUL!



YOU'RE REALLY DEDICATING YOURSELF TO OUR CENTER LEIDY! I SEE YOU HERE A LOT AND IT'S DEFINITELY PAYING OFF. WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT ASSISTING IN A CLASS? WHICH DO YOU WANT TO PURSUE MORE, RAP OR BREAKDANCE?

THANKS DON POPO! BOTH MOTIVATE ME. BOTH COULD PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES. SINGING FLOWS THROUGH MY VEINS, BUT I'VE DISCOVERED DANCING CHEERS ME UP.

DON POPO, AYARA DIRECTOR



WHEN I AM DANCING, I FORGET ALL THE PROBLEMS AND PRESSURES IN MY LIFE.

BREAKDANCING IT IS THEN!



AFTER I STARTED ASSISTING IN AYARA'S BREAKDANCING CLASSES THE CULTURAL CENTER BECAME EVEN MORE OF A HOME FOR ME AND I FINALLY STARTED FEELING GOOD ABOUT MYSELF AND MY LIFE!

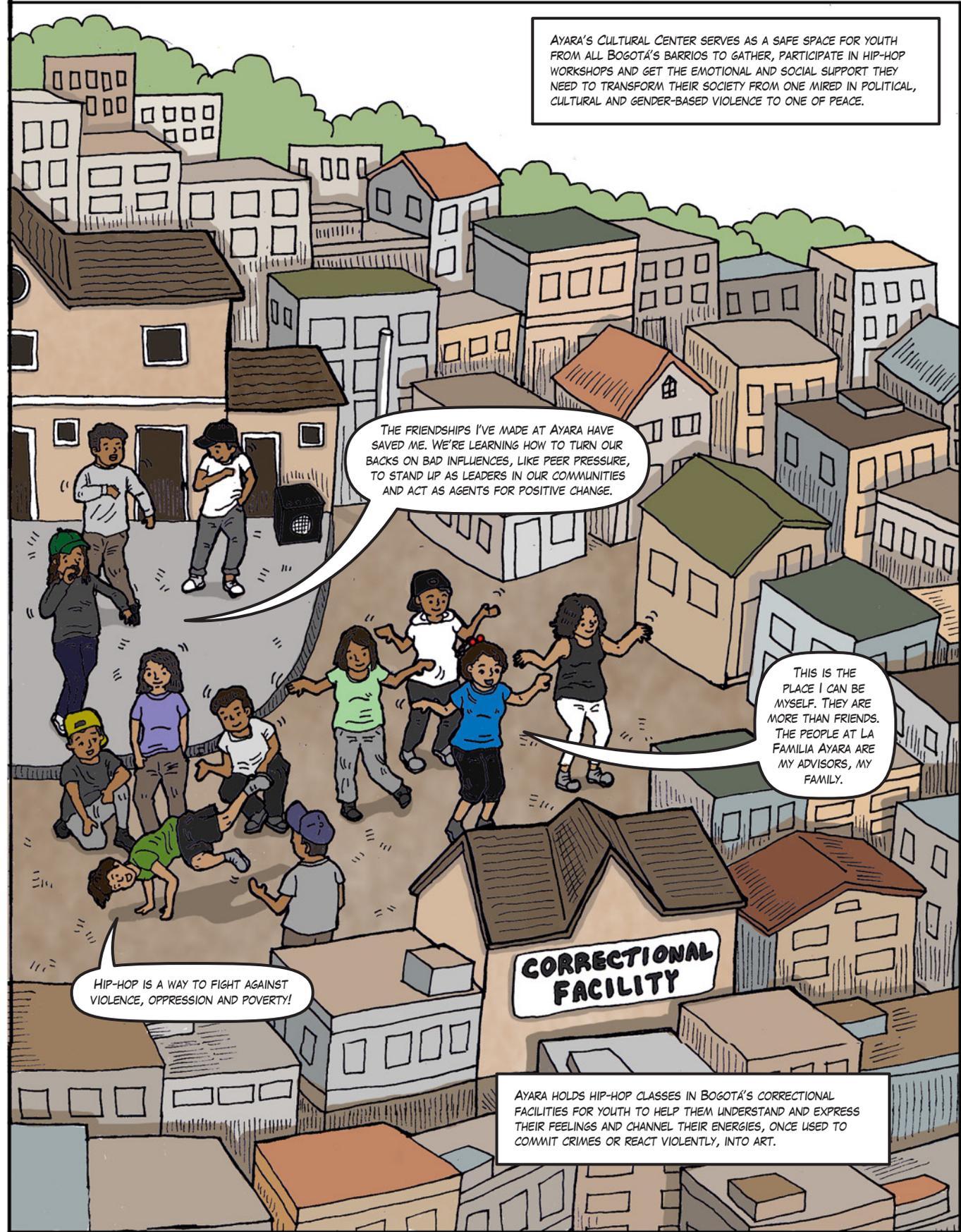
FOUNDED IN 1996 IN BOGOTÁ BY A GROUP OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND CURRENTLY LED BY ONE OF THE ORIGINAL FOUNDERS JEYFFER RENTERIA AKA DON POPO, A FORMER RAP STAR TURNED BUSINESSMAN, LA FAMILIA AYARA USES HIP-HOP TO ENGAGE URBAN YOUTH. AYARA RECOGNIZES HIP-HOP'S POTENTIAL TO PROVIDE A SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORK, EXPOSURE TO POSITIVE ROLE MODELS AND THE MEANS OF SELF-EXPRESSION TO HELP PROCESS THE CHAOS OF LIFE IN BOGOTÁ.

I'VE LEARNED TO EXPRESS MYSELF IN POSITIVE WAYS.

AT AYARA, WHEN YOU NEED LOVE THEY GIVE IT TO YOU UNCONDITIONALLY. THEY ARE REALLY INTERESTED IN YOU AND HOW YOU ARE DOING.

AYARA HELPS US DEVELOP AND PROMOTE OUR ANTI-DRUG RAP MUSIC. ONCE YOUNG PEOPLE CHOOSE DRUGS, THEY GET LOST. MUSIC AND ART PROVIDE AN EXIT FROM THAT LIFESTYLE!

INVOLVEMENT IN HIP-HOP CULTURE CAN OFFER AN ALTERNATIVE TO TROUBLED YOUTH WHO MIGHT OTHERWISE BE RECRUITED INTO GANGS OR ARMED GROUPS, WHICH ARE OFTEN THE ONLY OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO YOUNG PEOPLE FROM LOW-INCOME AREAS OF BOGOTÁ.



AYARA'S CULTURAL CENTER SERVES AS A SAFE SPACE FOR YOUTH FROM ALL BOGOTÁ'S BARRIOS TO GATHER, PARTICIPATE IN HIP-HOP WORKSHOPS AND GET THE EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL SUPPORT THEY NEED TO TRANSFORM THEIR SOCIETY FROM ONE Mired IN POLITICAL, CULTURAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE TO ONE OF PEACE.

THE FRIENDSHIPS I'VE MADE AT AYARA HAVE SAVED ME. WE'RE LEARNING HOW TO TURN OUR BACKS ON BAD INFLUENCES, LIKE PEER PRESSURE, TO STAND UP AS LEADERS IN OUR COMMUNITIES AND ACT AS AGENTS FOR POSITIVE CHANGE.

THIS IS THE PLACE I CAN BE MYSELF. THEY ARE MORE THAN FRIENDS. THE PEOPLE AT LA FAMILIA AYARA ARE MY ADVISORS, MY FAMILY.

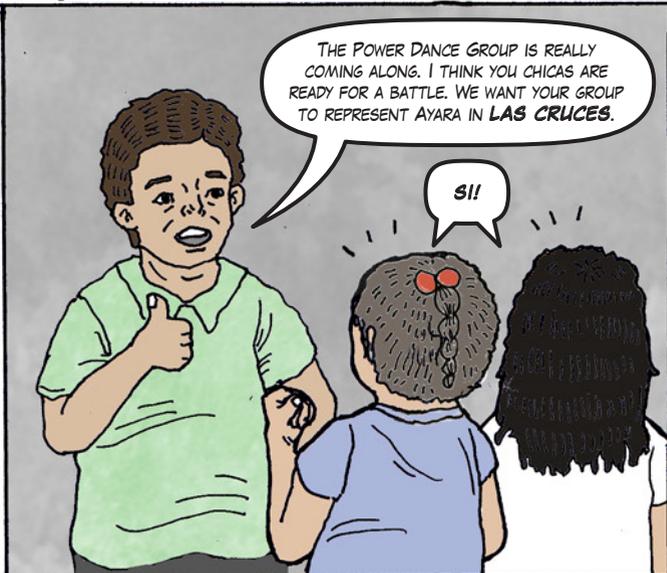
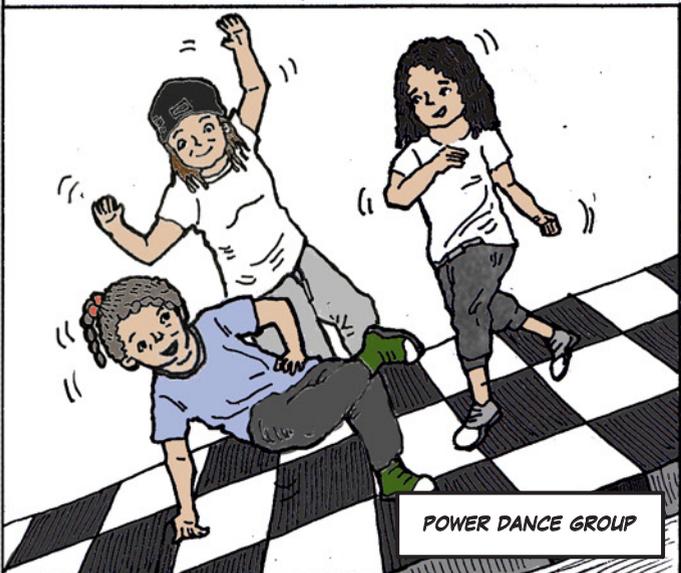
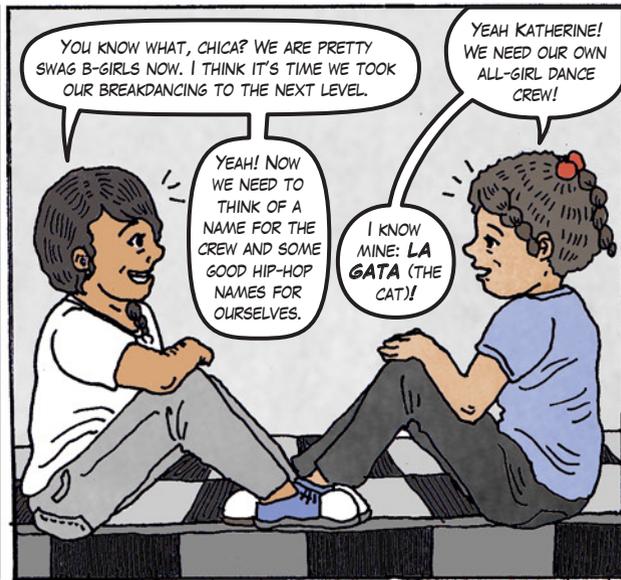
HIP-HOP IS A WAY TO FIGHT AGAINST VIOLENCE, OPPRESSION AND POVERTY!

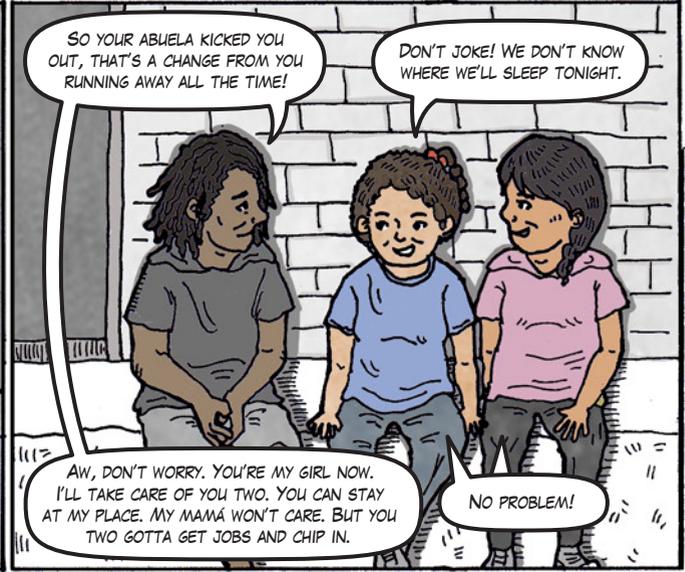
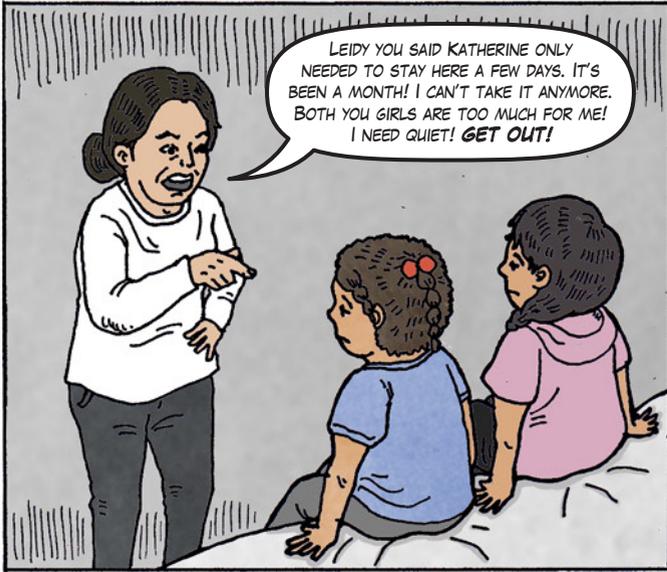
CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

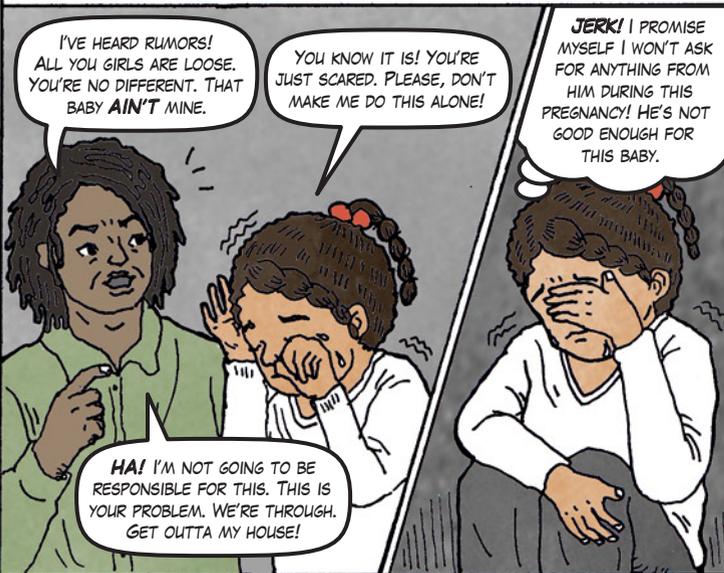
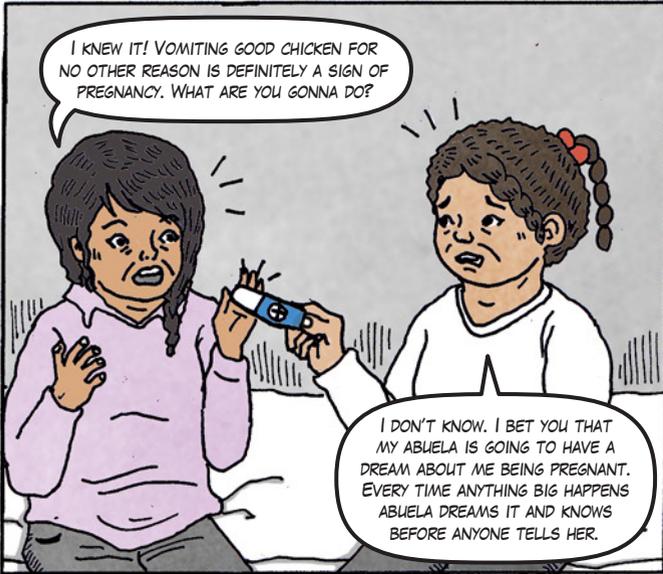
AYARA HOLDS HIP-HOP CLASSES IN BOGOTÁ'S CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES FOR YOUTH TO HELP THEM UNDERSTAND AND EXPRESS THEIR FEELINGS AND CHANNEL THEIR ENERGIES, ONCE USED TO COMMIT CRIMES OR REACT VIOLENTLY, INTO ART.

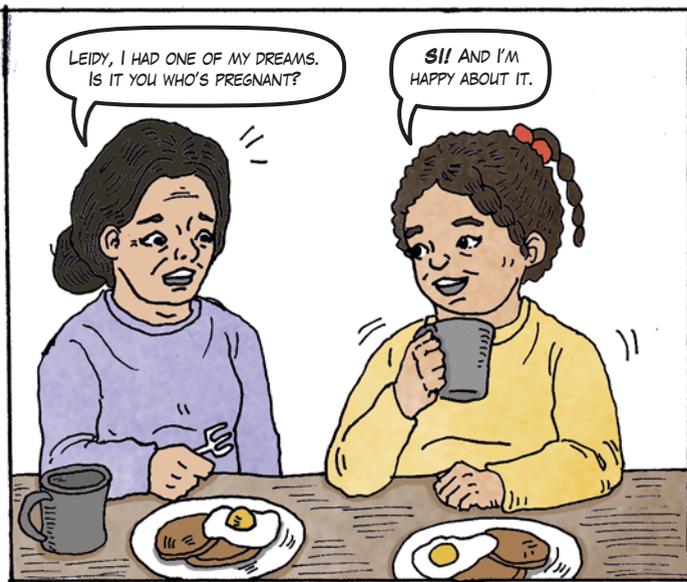


IT FELT GREAT TO LEARN HOW TO BREAKDANCE. I FINALLY FELT ENCOURAGED TO DEVELOP A SKILL AND DO SOMETHING FOR MY FUTURE.











LIFE WITH ABUELA CALMED DOWN A LITTLE AFTER THAT. I KEPT GOING TO AYARA TO HELP CHANNEL MY EMOTIONS INTO SOMETHING POSITIVE INSTEAD OF ARGUING WITH ABUELA.



THAT WAS A GREAT BATTLE LEIDY! I'M REALLY IMPRESSED WITH HOW FAR YOU'VE COME.

THANKS POPO! ALSO THANKS FOR TAKING ME HOME. YOU SHOULD COME IN. ABUELA ALWAYS ASKS TO SEE YOU. YOU'RE FAMOUS IN MY BARRIO FOR ALL THE WORK YOU'RE DOING WITH AYARA!



AY POPO, I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH THIS GIRL. SHE WAS DOING MUCH BETTER GOING TO AYARA AND STAYING OUT OF TROUBLE. BUT NOW THAT SHE'S PREGNANT, WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO HER?



¿QUÉ (WHAT)? YOU'RE PREGNANT, LEIDY?



I'M GOING TO HELP YOU. LET'S FIND A JOB FOR YOU AT AYARA. WHAT CAN YOU DO?

I CAN CLEAN.

AS LUCK WOULD HAVE IT, OUR CUSTODIAN JUST QUIT. DO YOU THINK YOU AND KATHERINE WOULD BE ABLE TO TAKE ON THAT RESPONSIBILITY?



YES, POPO, WE WOULD BE SO HAPPY TO WORK AT AYARA!



¡GRACIAS, POPO!

SEE YOU TOMORROW POPO!



RECOGNIZING THAT GIRLS GAIN MORE CONFIDENCE AND FEEL FREER TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES IN ALL-GIRL GROUPS WITHIN THE TESTOSTERONE-FILLED WORLD OF HIP-HOP, AYARA IS INVESTING IN FEMALE LEADERSHIP IN BOGOTÁ'S HIP-HOP MOVEMENT. AYARA STARTED SUPPORTING THESE GROUPS IN 2009 TO TEACH OTHER GIRLS RAP, BREAKDANCE AND AFRO-COLOMBIAN DANCE AT THE AYARA CULTURAL CENTER AND TO PARTICIPATE IN LOCAL PROTESTS AGAINST VIOLENCE AND EVENTS TO RAISE GIRLS' AND WOMEN'S VOICES.

DURING THE NOVEMBER 25TH INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, AYARA'S ALL-GIRL GROUPS DANCED AND RAPPED TO PROMOTE MESSAGES LIKE "LEAVE YOUR FEARS, CATCH YOUR RIGHTS" AND "THIS BODY IS MINE, DON'T TOUCH IT, DON'T RAPE IT AND DON'T KILL IT."



Tribunewen B. Girls

TRIBUNEWEN

MORE THAN AN IMPORTANT PART OF BOGOTÁ'S HIP-HOP MOVEMENT, TRIBUNEWEN IS ALSO A MOBILE SCHOOL TRAVELING TO THE POORER BARRIOS TO ENGAGE GIRLS IN BREAKDANCING.



BULLETPROOF

FROM A HARD PAST, LIZBETH HAS TRANSFORMED HER ENERGIES INTO RAP, SINGING ABOUT THE MEMORY OF THE FALLEN PEOPLE FROM THE COLOMBIAN CONFLICT.



CAIROS CUMBRE

SISTERS JENNY AND JAKELIN RAP POSITIVE MESSAGES OF EMPOWERMENT: "WE HAVE TO LEARN TO VALIDATE OURSELVES AS WOMEN. WE HAVE TO GET RID OF OUR FEARS BY TRUSTING OURSELVES AND KNOWING WE CAN SUCCEED."



MUJER JOVEN

AS THE YOUNGEST ALL-GIRL GROUP AT AYARA, THESE GIRLS, AGES 8-16, PROMOTE NON-VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN THROUGH COLOMBIAN DANCES, LIKE THE CUMBIA.



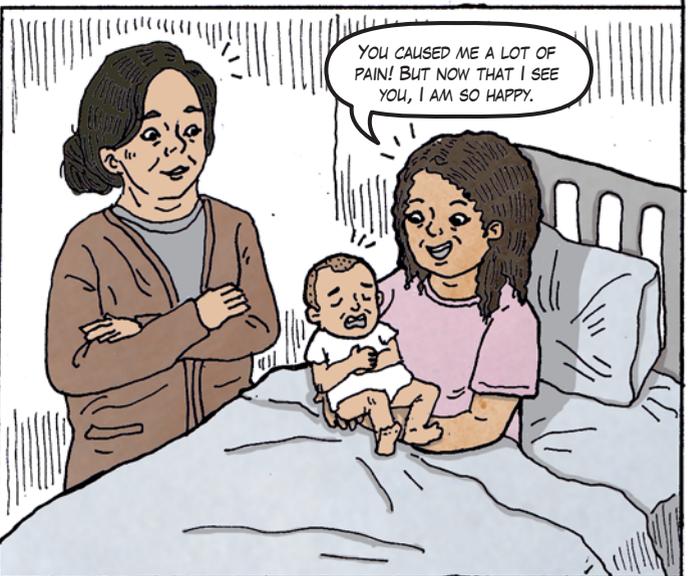
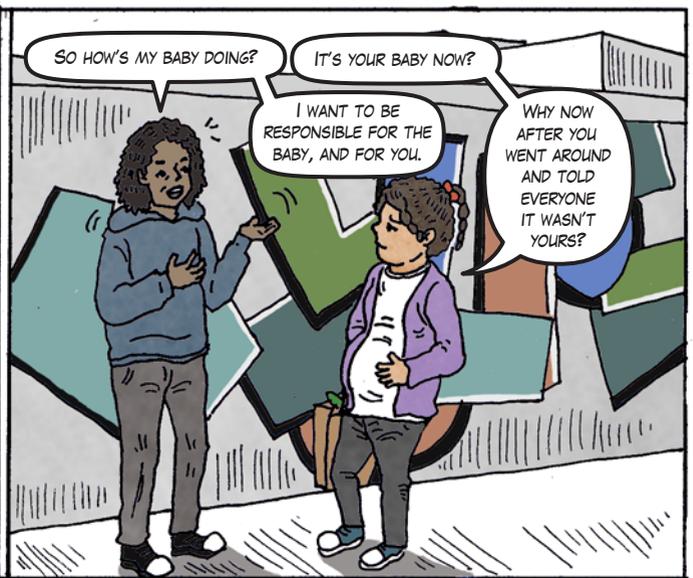
BLACK DANCE CREW

BRINGING TOGETHER GIRLS FROM VARIOUS BARRIOS IN BOGOTÁ, THIS CREW DANCES IN PROTEST AGAINST VIOLENCE: "WE LIVE IN A SOCIETY THAT TEACHES US THAT WOMEN HAVE TO BE CAREFUL NOT TO BE RAPED. INSTEAD WE SHOULD TEACH SOCIETY THAT MEN DON'T HAVE TO RAPE."



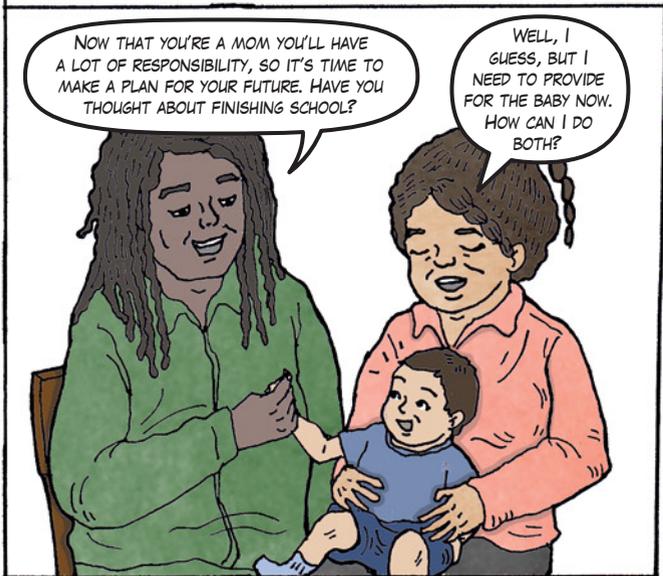
ZARAKUA

THE ONLY CREW TEACHING AFRICAN DANCE, ZARAKUA USES MOVEMENT TO POSITIVELY ENGAGE BOGOTÁ'S MARGINALIZED AFRO-COLOMBIAN POPULATION.



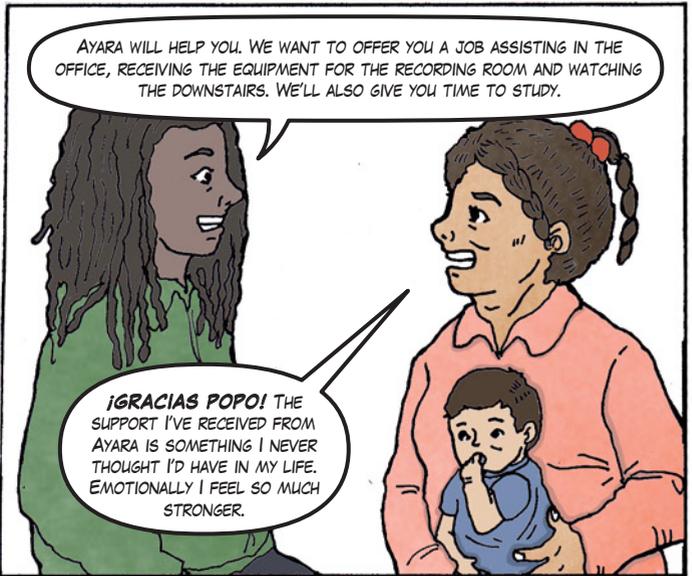


EVEN THOUGH ABUELA WAS MAD WHEN SHE FOUND OUT I WAS PREGNANT, ONCE THE BABY ARRIVED SHE FELL IN LOVE WITH HIM. NOW HE IS MY ENGINE TO CONTINUE AND ACCOMPLISH PROJECTS.



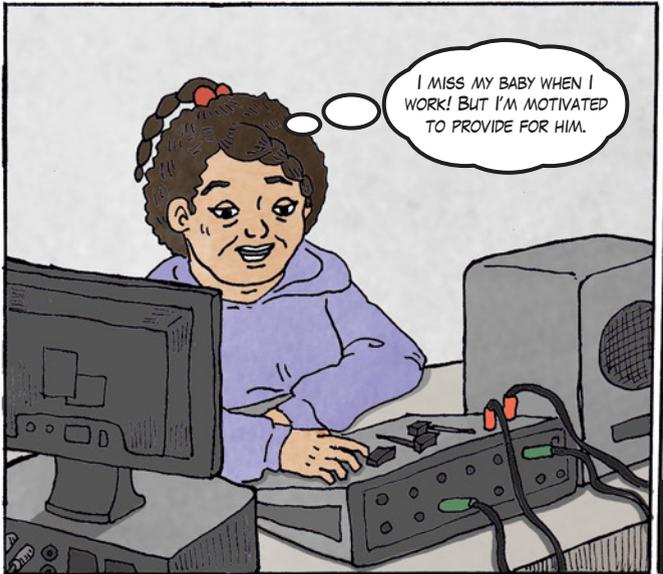
NOW THAT YOU'RE A MOM YOU'LL HAVE A LOT OF RESPONSIBILITY, SO IT'S TIME TO MAKE A PLAN FOR YOUR FUTURE. HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT FINISHING SCHOOL?

WELL, I GUESS, BUT I NEED TO PROVIDE FOR THE BABY NOW. HOW CAN I DO BOTH?

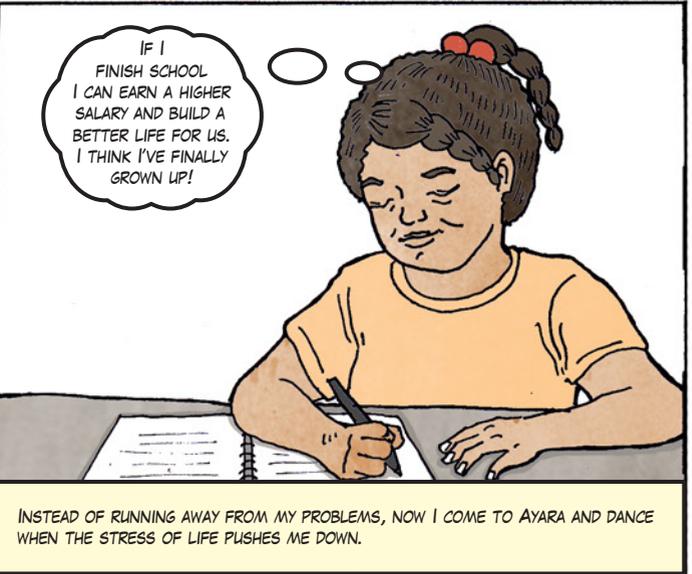


AYARA WILL HELP YOU. WE WANT TO OFFER YOU A JOB ASSISTING IN THE OFFICE, RECEIVING THE EQUIPMENT FOR THE RECORDING ROOM AND WATCHING THE DOWNSTAIRS. WE'LL ALSO GIVE YOU TIME TO STUDY.

¡GRACIAS POPO! THE SUPPORT I'VE RECEIVED FROM AYARA IS SOMETHING I NEVER THOUGHT I'D HAVE IN MY LIFE. EMOTIONALLY I FEEL SO MUCH STRONGER.



I MISS MY BABY WHEN I WORK! BUT I'M MOTIVATED TO PROVIDE FOR HIM.



IF I FINISH SCHOOL I CAN EARN A HIGHER SALARY AND BUILD A BETTER LIFE FOR US. I THINK I'VE FINALLY GROWN UP!

INSTEAD OF RUNNING AWAY FROM MY PROBLEMS, NOW I COME TO AYARA AND DANCE WHEN THE STRESS OF LIFE PUSHES ME DOWN.

I'M LEIDY. I'M LA GATA. I'M A FRIEND, A MOTHER, AN EMPLOYEE, A STUDENT AND AN ARTIST. MY BODY CAN FLY. MY BODY CAN PRODUCE LIFE. I FOUND A FAMILY IN AYARA. AND I DISCOVERED A PASSION FOR DANCE. I STILL WANT TO SOMEDAY EARN A LIVING AS AN ARTIST AND I AM BREAKDANCING EVERY CHANCE I GET. I WORK HARD AND RELY ON MY PEOPLE TO MAKE IT HAPPEN. GIRLS NEED TO KNOW THEY'RE WORTHWHILE. THEY NEED TO KNOW THEY DESERVE SUPPORT. BELIEVE ME: YOUR HAPPINESS IS WITHIN REACH. ALL IT TAKES IS A DREAM AND A COMMUNITY. MY DREAM IS HIP-HOP AND MY SUPPORT IS AYARA. NOW GO OUT AND FIND YOURS.



READ, DISCUSS, ACT

This is Leidy’s story, but there are other girls from many different countries also facing these challenges and seeking solutions. Grab some friends, talk to your classmates or get your after-school clubs interested to discuss the issues below, learn more and get involved. After reading Leidy’s story we hope you’re feeling inspired and fired up to take action for girls everywhere!



WHY WE LOVE GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS

CONSIDER: Marginalized by cultural practices, poverty and discrimination, girls are often outside the reach of larger development projects led by governments and international aid agencies. Grassroots organizations are smaller and created by members of the community to address specific problems. Grassroots organizations are familiar with local language, culture and the challenges that shape girls’ lives, which makes them uniquely equipped to address girls’ urgent needs and create effective solutions. They also stay put, and offer girls support for the long run.

ASK: How does La Familia Ayara address the problems of Bogotá’s youth, specifically the challenges that arise from living in densely populated, poor, urban barrios?

DISCUSS: If an organization from outside of Colombia tried to offer hip-hop workshops and activities in Bogotá, how would it be different? What might work and what wouldn’t work?

WHY WE LOVE GIRL POWER

CONSIDER: Bands in the 1990s like Bikini Kill and the Spice Girls made the phrase “girl power” popular, but we’re not talking about pop culture. Girl power means that all girls everywhere are empowered to take control of their lives. We know that if a girl stays in school, has access to health services and is given an opportunity to earn a good wage, she will marry later, have fewer and healthier children and earn an income that she’ll invest back into her family and community. That’s amazing! But girls are still facing exploitation and injustice. Girls in poverty, navigating the tricky years of adolescence, face additional challenges like child marriage, early pregnancy and violence.

ASK: Why did La Familia Ayara start all-girl dance and rap groups? How are these groups helping spread girl power in Bogotá?

DISCUSS: What problem in your community can you confront with girl power to create a positive solution?

WHY WE LOVE ARTS PROGRAMS FOR GIRLS

CONSIDER: Arts education helps develop a more informed perception, the ability to solve problems, make decisions and articulate a vision. It also increases self-confidence and self-discipline, building the ability to imagine what might be and accept responsibility to complete tasks from start to finish. These life skills are critical for adolescent girls to be able to deal with problems that arise in their lives, especially girls living in a chaotic city like Bogotá. La Familia Ayara uses hip-hop to positively transform the lives of youth because of hip-hop’s history of transcending socioeconomic and environmental situations, exposing the ills of society and inserting a critique of what is happening on the streets of impoverished neighborhoods. La Familia Ayara’s Cultural Center offers girls the opportunity to grow their skills in girl-only groups, build their confidence in co-ed workshops and participate in local and national activities protesting violence against women and promoting women in the arts.

ASK: How did participating in rap and breakdance classes help Leidy work through and understand the negative things that were happening in her life? Beyond the hip-hop classes, what did the Cultural Center provide Leidy that she hadn’t previously found in her life?

DISCUSS: How has art affected your life or that of your friends’ lives? Other than hip-hop, what are some arts programs that help grow your confidence and process the world you live in?

Discover how EMpower—the Emerging Markets Foundation supports local organizations working to empower at-risk youth in emerging market countries at www.empowerweb.org.

Interested in La Familia Ayara’s work? Connect with this organization at www.ayara.org (Spanish only).

Curious about the situation of girls globally? www.girleffect.org is bursting with videos, stats, stories and more. Dig into “The Girl Declaration” to learn the five goals and seven principles that can create a better future for girls and end poverty for the world: www.girleffect.org/2015-beyond-the-declaration/

GLOSSARY

ABUELA: grandmother

AREPA: a flatbread made of ground corn dough or cooked flour, often eaten for breakfast

AY DIOS MÍO: oh my God

B-GIRLS: breakdancing girls

BARRIO: neighborhood

BATTLE (SLANG): the core system of hip-hop, you battle on the mic (rap), you battle on the floor (breakdance), you battle on the wall (graffiti)

BRUTAL (SLANG): awesome/cool

CHÉVERE (SLANG): cool/good/awesome

CHICAS: girls

COMPRENDE: understand

CUMBIA: the Cumbia originated in Colombia's Caribbean coastal region, from the musical and cultural fusion of Native Colombians, slaves brought from Africa and the Spanish during colonial times

DESAYUNO: breakfast

DINERO: money

DON'T WATCH THAT (SLANG): don't worry

LA GATA: the cat (also Leidy's hip-hop name)

LOCA: crazy

MALDITA SEA: damn it

MOTA: weed

MUY BIEN: very good

MUY ENOJADA: very angry

POR FAVOR: please

QUÉ: what

QUÉ ONDA: what's happening

SAPO (SLANG): informant, snitch, tattletale

SWAG (SLANG): from "swagger," to have confidence/style



Enriching young lives in emerging markets

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Some names were changed to protect the privacy of other parties.

