My eyes are blue, my hair is light, and I speak English, but when I hear the percussion of the Caribbean, my body needs to move and I am reminded of my Puerto Rican heritage. I represented this innate movement in these paintings, which are the traces my feet made while dancing to traditional and modern Latin music. Similarly to the way Latin music has been passed between and shaped by generations, I found it fitting that I should learn dances from someone in my family. My sister, a ballroom dancer, taught me Bachata, Cha-Cha, and Salsa. I have always been struck by the vibrancy of Latin music. The blaring horns, pounding percussion, and the strong voices fill me with joy and excitement, which I have represented with vibrant colors.

Through this process, I have created a representation of my personal experience and a record of my reintroduction to my Latin heritage. Through dance, I feel connected to my Puerto Rican family and the culture I am learning to call my own.

Grace

I cannot speak Spanish fluently, or read it, or write it well. I do not eat Puerto Rican food frequently (although I love when Abuela makes it) or look Latino (even though I am 1/4 Puerto Rican.) Music is one thing that connects me to my Latino identity. Even though I don't often know what the singer is saying, I feel the music in my soul. I hear the beats and I want to move; I want to dance. I understand the passion that these musicians have. In their music I hear their joy, their pride, and their sorrows. There is this connection I feel to my roots and to the deeper part of who I am; the part that is not a product of my American youth, but of my Puerto Rican blood.

From a young age, music has been a focal point in my life. As a child, my parents exposed me to many different types of music and often Putumayo world music could be found in the CD player. I grew up listening to "Tres Gotas de Agua Bendita" by Gloria Estefan and the music from "West Side Story" , a musical about Puerto Ricans in New York City. However, like many Latino-American children, as I entered school, my taste in music, especially the songs connected to my Latino roots, began to fade out. Surrounded by Caucasian children in elementary school, I no longer heard the Spanish language often or the music associated.

My reintroduction to Latino music in middle school began with Shakira. The Columbian born artist began to be featured on pop radio stations with songs like "Hips Don't Lie" and "Whenever, Wherever." These songs were mainly in English, so I understood the words, but the backbeat was distinctly Latin. They had Caribbean drumming, like traditional Puerto Rican music, and Hispanic guitar rhythms. During this time, Zumba workouts came into fashion featuring Latino music and when I tried these classes, I felt at home. I understood the beat and it felt natural to move my hips in the Latin way that Zumba taught.

As a teenager trying to find my place in the world, I have begun to explore my Hispanic identity and feel connection most strongly with music. I feel as though I can connect with Latin music on a much deeper level, which led me to the questions... How does one connect with their musical heritage while growing up in a modern society? How have Latinos before me, as first, second, and third generation Americans honored the music of their ancestors while combining it with their own music tastes?

Accompanying music can be found at https://youtu.be/nKc4dmrZSKA

0:00- The Cup of Life - Ricky Martin

The crowds wait in anticipation for the act. Sixteen years later, watching the video from my computer, I feel the same anticipation. Caribbean beats start, trumpets begin blaring and there he is-Ricky Martin. "*The cup of life, this is the one. Now is the time, don't ever stop, Push it along, gotta be strong. Push it along, right to the top,*" he begins singing in English. "*Como Cain y Abel, es un partido cruel. Tienes que pelear, por una estrella, consigue con honor, la copa del amor, Para sobre vivir y luchar por ella, luchar por ella,*" he continues in Spanish... and the crowd goes wild. This 1999 Grammy Award show was the first ever to have a live feature act in Spanish (*The Cup of Life Ricky Martin Grammy Performance*). Ricky Martin, like many other Latinos, came to America in search of new opportunities.

People move to new places often out of hope for a new life, but that does not mean that remnants of their old life are unimportant. Being so close to the United States, Caribbean Hispanics often come to the United States bringing their distinct Latin beats

and music. The migrations and interactions of these people cause new hybrid music genres to be created.

The terms for Spanish speaking people are often quite confusing and for the purpose of clarity I will explain the titles I will be using. *Hispanic* refers to people of Spanish-speaking descent, meaning that it includes most of Latin America and Spain. *Latino* refers to someone who is of Latin American origin. These Latin American countries include countries like Brazil who do not speak Spanish but are still in Latin America (Chapa). Caribbean Hispanics, the group I will be mostly focusing on, although not an official term, would refer to the countries in the Caribbean who speak Spanish, mainly Puerto Rico and Cuba.

New Life, New Music, New York

0:52- Tanga - Machito and the Afro-Cubans

Few Cubans or Puerto Ricans entered the United States before the 1940s, but Mario Bauza, commonly called the "Father of Latin Jazz," was an exception. Born and raised in Havana, Cuba, Bauza learned to play many different instruments including oboe and bass clarinet. He began playing with large orchestras as a child (Garcia). While visiting New York City, he was inspired by jazz in Harlem and moved there in the 1930's. Being very dark skinned, Bauza had experienced racism in his native Cuba, however this was not the case in Harlem and he fit in well with the Harlem music scene. Bauza began playing in big bands, but had trouble adjusting to swing and jazz, because of his classical training and Latin roots ("Latin Music USA"). As someone who plays classical violin, I understand Bauza's struggle. Classical music is based on coordination and order, but the thrill of jazz is the incalculable and the unpredictable, with its measures of improvisation.

In 1940, Bauza brought his brother-in-law and fellow musician, Francisco Grillo to the United States. Francisco Grillo, nicknamed Machito, had grown up in Havana as well and heard both American jazz and the traditional Caribbean beats while he worked as a delivery boy for his father's restaurant (Méndez). Caribbean music, is a mixture of indigenous music of the islands, music from the Spaniards, and African music. It often features instruments such as bongos, maracas, marìmbula, and guiros (Smith). Machito and Bauza created a musical group called "Machito and the Afro Cubans" which became popular for their song "Tanga." This song helped bring Latin jazz into fashion (Mendez). By the mid 1940's, as many new immigrants began entering the United States from the Caribbean, a new music form was created: *mambo*.

In the mid 1940's, Puerto Rico was experiencing a recession. Eager to start a new life, thousands of Puerto Ricans migrated to the United States. In 1945, 13,000 Puerto Ricans were living in New York City, but by 1946, that population had grown to 50,000 (Donlan). The lives of these immigrants inspired the musical *West Side Story,* which I watched obsessively as a child. I remember examining the Puerto Rican female characters, Anita and Maria, trying to see similarities between myself and them, aware of our common descent. Growing up, I knew the word "mambo" only from a scene in *West Side Story* in which the characters at a dance all shout at a certain point in the music: "Mambo!"

1:34-Mambo No.5 - Perez Prado

The first to coin the term *mambo* was Perez Prado, a Cuban musician, who was living in Mexico in 1948. While on vacation in Mexico, producer Sony Burke heard Perez Prado's "Mambo Number 5" and brought it to New York

City. With a new group to cater to and new beats to play, big band groups began to play *mambo*. This style featured saxophones and trumpets blaring on beat while a large percussion section simultaneously produced syncopated rhythms ("Latin Music USA"). Listening to the original "Mambo No.5" by Perez brought back memories of my childhood, when my sister and I danced around the living room in costume jewelry to the remix of "Mambo No.5" by Lou Bega. This later version included a more electronic sound and lyrics.

2:09-Cha Cha Cha - Tito Puente

Although *mambo* was quite popular in mainstream America, for non-Latinos it was difficult to dance to and the *Cha Cha* was created. *Cha cha* with its slower and less syncopated rhythms. It quickly gained popularity in mainstream America with the help of Tito Puente ("Latin Music USA"). Puente, born in New York to Puerto Rican parents, did not want to play the traditional music of his parents but turned, like Bauza, to swing and jazz. He eventually began to play more hybrid music like mambo and other Latin styles. Combining his heritage and American youth, Puente's song "Cha-Cha-Cha" popularized the *cha-cha* genre (Méndez). Listening to this song, I hear the familiar ra-ta-ta ra-ta-ta of the guirro, a gourd instrument that is native to Puerto Rico.

2:51-I Like it Like That - Pete Rodriguez

Like Tito Puente, many second-generation Puerto Rican-Americans were living in New York City. Often this generation didn't identify with being completely American or identify with the origin country of their parents, resulting in the creation of new labels (Taylor). These newly labeled Nuyoricans, New York born Puerto Ricans were no different. "I was tired of traditional music. I was tired of bands and frilly dresses and perfume. I was tired of it," said Felipe Luciano, a Nuyorican broadcaster who grew up in the 1960s ("Latin Music USA"). Like Luciano, many Nuyoricans wanted new music for their generation. With influence from rock and R&B mixed with Latin roots, Boogaloo was created and popularized by songs like "Watermelon Man" and "I Like It Like That" (Boogaloo, American Sabor). Fifty-three percent of second-generation Americans were bilingual, so naturally their music was bilingual too. ("Latin Music USA"). As a Latina who does not speak Spanish fluently, I can see the appeal of songs like this because they allow me to understand the lyrics, while also practicing my Spanish.

"Oh I used to dance all the time," Abuela told me as she laughed, remembering the old days. Abuela, born in Puerto Rico, but now living in Texas, is still rather wild despite being the ripe age of 93 years old. (Yes, she still requests to go to Vegas for her birthday.) She reminisces about life in her twenties on the island, "In the dance club there were many colored men playing; they were very good." This makes a lot of sense because dances like mambo were combos of jazz, which started in Harlem, a mainly dark skinned community. "I used to dance all the time in Puerto Rico where there were amazing musicians and many places to dance. My favorite dance was the salsa," Abuela informed me. As someone who is learning salsa and other Latin dances, I must agree. Salsa is fun. "Sweetheart, I'm sorry I don't remember as much as I used to," she apologizes to me, which makes me realize how important it is to learn these stories from her now, before she remembers even less. Abuela is one of the strongest connections I have to my heritage.

In the late 1950's, the population of Latinos grew with the addition of another group. In 1959, dictator Fidel Castro came into power in Cuba, causing Cubans to seek refuge in the United States, doubling the Cuban-American population between 1950 and 1960 (Pedraza). These new immigrants gravitated to music like mambo and cha-cha as a reminder of their homeland.

3:23-Pedro Navaja - Ruben Blades

In 1960, Salsa, a combination of traditional Son rhythms from Cuba and Rhumba rhythms from Puerto Rico came into fashion ("Latin Music USA"). This genre was popularized by Fania Records. The Fania "All-Stars" featured Latin stars of the day including Willie Colon, Ruben Blades, and Celia Cruz (Moore). Celia Cruz was born in Havana, Cuba in 1929 and grew up playing in small bands on the island. As she became a power player in the salsa music world, Fidel Castro was becoming a power player in politics. Conveniently leaving Cuba to go on tour in Mexico, Cruz then escaped Castro's regime and moved to the United States. She found success in the U. S. performing with Tito Puente. Eventually Cruz was asked to join the Fania "All-Stars." As the only woman in the group, and an amazing salsa singer, she was deemed the "Queen of Salsa" (Mèndez). When I watch music videos of Celia Cruz's last performances, she reminds me of my Abuela --elderly but glamorous, full of a passion for life.

The manager of Fania, Jerry Masuchi, a Jewish man who grew up listening to Latino music, filmed the concerts. For one film, *Salsa*, he even rented out Yankee Stadium and had his bands play to thousands of Latinos. This film made Fania Records and salsa music a sensation, but with so many groups to manage, Masuchi was exhausted by his endeavors and eventually sold Fania Records in 1979 ("Latin Music USA"). However, even with a new manager, Fania Records could not be restored to its former glory and salsa music waned for a time on the East Coast.

The Latin Explosion and Onward

As salsa began losing steam in New York City, a new form of Latino music began to grow in a new city. Many young Cuban immigrants moved to Miami in the 1950s and 1960s. Missing their homelands, they tried to remember through music. One of these Cubans was Emilio Estefan, a teenage musician. " [Music] was the only thing that kept me alive while being separated from my family. It was the only thing that made me happy," Estefan later said in an interview. Estefan and the four-member band he created, *The Miami Latin Boys* performed mainly American songs and some traditional music ("Latin Music USA")

4:00-Conga - The Miami Sound Machine

After hearing another Cuban American singer, Gloria Fajardo, Estefan asked her to join the band and changed the name to *The Miami Sound Machine* (Blanco). Gloria and Emilio soon married and Gloria Fajardo became Gloria Estefan. Performing songs in mostly Spanish, but with many different American influences, MSM always retained Afro-Cuban beats in the background. They finally recorded a small hit in 1984, "Dr. Beat." Inspired by this new success, they created more hybrid songs, striking gold in 1986 with the song, "Conga." "Too Cuban for Americans and too American for Cubans," the producer told Gloria. "Good, because that is who we are," Gloria replied ("Latin Music USA"). With lyrics in English beckoning people to join in and a Cuban beat on the bottom, the catchy tune rose to top 10 on the Billboard Hot 100 and created a new fusion--Latin Pop

(Brinbaum). To find gain more insight, I turned to the one person I knew who loved Gloria Estefan and *The Miami Sound Machine*-- my father.

When asking my father (who I call Papi) how he felt about *"*Conga" he replied, "How could you not like it? It has a great rhythm and a great beat. You can easily listen." Papi, following standard embarrassing dad protocol, decided to sing the first few lines. He then disappeared into our storage room, emerging later with a cassette tape, an ancient technology revealing his age. The album was titled *Primitive Lov*e by *The Miami Sound Machine*. Song number six was "Conga." As if he needed to prove his point more he exclaimed, "It was good enough that I went out and *bought* the cassette!"

"The record-buying public, the younger [Hispanic] kids, they want to be considered American. They think in English. And we've become almost like an alternative,'' said Mr. Rausenblat, a music producer of CBS, in 1999 (Brinbaum). He was right, by second generation Latino children think mostly in English (Taylor). Although they spoke Spanish in the home, these children heard English everywhere else. The shows they went to, the signs they saw, and the books they read in school, were all in English. They also tended to listen to music in English (Taylor). By listening to songs in English with a Latino beat, Hispanic children who did not know Spanish, could feel connected to their roots while still enjoying the music. Inspired by the Miami Sound Machine, a younger generation of musicians began to play Latin pop, including Ricky Martin and singer-songwriter, Marc Anthony.

4:53-Livin La Vida Loca
- Ricky Martin

"A new generation of Latin artists, nurtured by Spanish-language radio, schooled in mainstream pop, are lifting their voices in English," *Time* magazine described this generation (Farley). The year 1999 would be marked by what came to be known in the music world as the Latin Explosion. This"explosion" started with Ricky Martin's performance on the Grammy Awards in February of that year, the first Spanish act to spark the interest of the American populace. Growing up in Puerto Rico, Martin was in a very popular Latin boy band, Menudo, and had gained a large fan base in Latin America. His albums were in Spanish until his May 1999 album, *Ricky Martin* (Méndez). His first hit, "The Cup of Life," was in both English and Spanish and featured on the successful English album that gained him an American following. Another song on this album, "Livin La Vida Loca", made it to No.1 on the Billboard Hot 100 (Farley).

Also appearing on the scene during the "Latin Explosion" was singer songwriter, Marc Anthony. Born to Puerto Rican parents in the Bronx, Anthony grew up a second generation American. Listening to R&B, pop, and rock, but also to salsa music at home, younger generations, like Anthony, had the perfect background to Latin pop. Anthony mainly recorded songs in Spanish, but released his album, *Marc Anthony*, in English in September 1999 (Garcia). The American public clamored for more Latin pop and they got it with the English releases of Ricky Martin, Marc Anthony, Colombian singer, Shakira, and the Nuyorican singer and actress, Jennifer Lopez, singers that I grew up listening to.

My mother stayed at home with my sister, a three year-old, and me, a one year-old, in 1999. When asking her if she remembered the "Latin Explosion," she smiled. "At that time you girls were babies. I was at home with you a good part of the time and would make up my own dances and dance around with you guys a lot. I would hold you and

twirl around, singing Ricky Martin and Marc Anthony songs," my mom recounted, her voice full of warmth and happiness, making me wish I could remember those times.

Although the "Latin Explosion" was spectacular, it did not last long. With so many Latin hits, these artists kept trying to top their last hit and their musical styles started to shift more and more towards mainstream pop music. "When it became so uncontrollably large, it became overwhelming. By the time we made it over to [the song] She-bang something in my gut said it's time to go," Martin said in a later interview. Many other artists felt this way and began creating Spanish albums again in an attempt to connect to their roots ("Latin Music USA"). As the Latin explosion began to fizzle out, a new type of music was on the horizon—reggaetòn.

5:50-Gasolina - Daddy Yankee

Emerging from the barrios of San Juan, Puerto Rico in the 1990's, was reggaetòn. Clubs in San Juan played dancehall music featuring Jamaican beats and free styling local rappers. One of these rappers was Ramon Ayala, who would later be known as the entertainer Daddy Yankee. Born in the projects of San Juan to musician parents, Ramon grew up singing as well. As a teenager, he started to rap (Rovi). The musical artists of the projects rapped about problems of their rough neighborhoods in often explicit lyrics. This music had traditional Caribbean beats combined with rap music style, making it both current and meaningful. "The music that I enjoy and that runs through my veins is Afro-Caribbean music," said another reggaetòn rapper, Tego Calderon ("Latin Music USA"). Although very popular in San Juan clubs, reggaetòn was unknown to the rest of the world until the hit song "Gasolina" was released in 2004 by Daddy Yankee.

As an 11 year old, I listened to "Gasolina" with my sister, loving the beat in the background. This song, although provocative, connected me to my roots as a Puerto Rican. My dad was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico, like this rapper, and this rapper was part of my culture.

6:14-The Anthem - Pitbull

6:48-El Africano - Wilfrido Vargas

Around this time, another Latino artist was sweeping the United States: Armando Perez, also known as "Pitbull." Of Cuban descent, Perez was raised in Miami listening to the club music and traditional Cuban music, which he would later mix to create something a new generation could identify with. An example of this hybrid sound being "The Anthem," a song with a house/club feel but some lyrics from an old Cuban song called "El Africano" ("Latin Music USA"). While listening to both of these songs, one can hear the similar melody, although "The Anthem" is electronic and contains rapping portions.

Latin jazz, mambo, boogaloo, cha-cha, salsa, Latin pop, reggaeton… the evolution of popular Latin music in the United States spans three generations of my family. When I see old videos of Abuela playing the guiro and recounting her dance memories, I see something in her eyes, passion. It is the same passion I hear in my dad's voice when he sings while baking in the kitchen and the passion seen when my sister ballroom dances to salsa and cha-cha. It is the passion I feel when I listen to Latin music. As I sit here now listening to a playlist of Ricky Martin and Machito and The Afro Cubans, hearing the Caribbean influences of mambo and cha-cha, I am proud. My people influenced this music. I am listening to the same music as my parents and my grandparents with a modern twist. I am part of this Latino music hybrid culture. I am part of this family.

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