



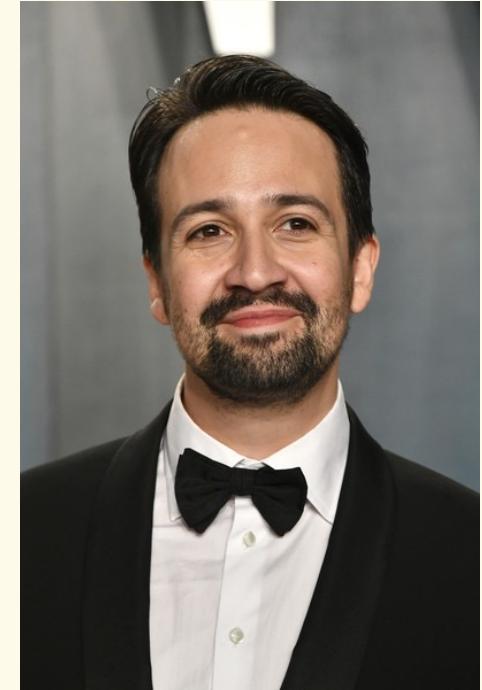
Ethnic America Artist

By Erica Ulloa

• Lin-Manuel Miranda

- Born on January 16, 1980 in New York City, New York

Lin-Manuel Miranda is an award-winning composer, lyricist, and actor. He is the creator and original star of Broadway's Tony-winning musicals, *Hamilton* and *In the Heights*.



Background story

Lin-Manuel Miranda was born on January 16, 1980 to parents of Puerto Rican descent. They settled in the Inwood neighborhood of northern Manhattan which was mostly hispanic populated. Growing up for Miranda and his sister their house was full of music, both siblings took piano lessons and their parents had a great appreciation for Broadway music which they shown to their children. From this Miranda grew a love of for music and broadway, especially hip-hop.





How it began

During middle school and high school Lin-Manuel Miranda performed in student stage productions and even won the lead role in Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance* in high school. He later on studied theatre at Wesleyan University, continuing and bettering his performances in musicals as well as wrote his own songs and shows. It was his sophomore year that he wrote his first draft for *In the Heights*.



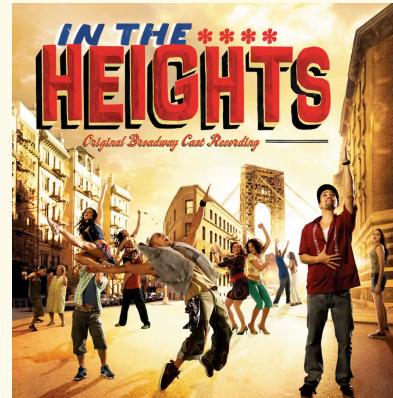
In the Heights

My acknowledgement of Lin-Manuel Miranda as an ethnic american artist will focus on his work of *In the Heights*. *In the Heights* as summarized on Stageagent.com, “..we encounter the many colorful residents of Washington Heights -- a New York City neighborhood on the brink of change. Usnavi, a first generation Dominican-American corner bodega owner, and his friends and family are dealing with the pressures of rising rents and closing neighborhood businesses. As one family struggles to figure out how to pay for an Ivy League tuition for their brilliant and hard working daughter, a young woman is trying to put a down payment on a new apartment, and Usnavi himself is trying to get back to the Dominican Republic to reconnect with his roots after the death of his parents. In Washington Heights, community is everything, and we see how each of these individuals struggles to survive and how these same individuals come together as a community to mourn their losses and rejoice in their triumphs. Over the course of the show, we see the hard-working residents of Washington Heights grapple with love and lust, identity and racism, all while the prospect of a winning lottery ticket hangs in the air, potentially changing the livelihoods of the people and the community forever. This revolutionary new musical combines Latin rhythms and dance with hip-hop lyrics to tell a captivating story about what it means to chase your dreams as you cling to your roots, and to celebrate the community from which you grew.”



In the Heights (cont.)

In the Heights does an amazing job of portraying the life and struggles of modern hispanic first and second generation immigrants. It displays the colors of a variety of characters who are overcoming stereotypes and challenges they face. These characters use their parent's sacrifices as well as their own sacrifices to conquer their endeavors and succeed individually as well as a community. I attached at the bottom the introduction song, "In the Heights."



.American Dream

In *In the Heights* though the characters all diverse facing different issues, you can see ultimately they're all trying to reach their "American Dream." Usnavi, who owns a bodega, struggles to figure out where he belongs in the world just trying to make his bodega succeed. As he quotes in the song "In the Heights," "Everybody's got a job; Everybody's got a dream... 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.." As stated in the quote we see Usnavi's parents made a sacrifice coming to America and starting their business making a little bit of money. Even though they didn't live to see it grow too much they still left Usnavi with that legacy and now he took over and try to make more money chasing that "american dream.



American Dream (cont.)

We see this chase for the dream within all of the main characters. Nina Rosario was always a great student and her parents worked and saved all their money so she can go to college. In the play Nina returns with news that she had dropped out, struggling with her communities expectations of her being the first to go to college, as well as her expenses and mostly what will she do and who will she be? She feels

like a failure after the sacrifices her parents made for her to be successful. Abuela Claudia, in "Paciencia y Fe" sings about the inherited dreams she has from her motherland how it came true now by winning the lottery, "Mama needs a job, Mama 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, imagine what you'd do Remembering what we went through... and ay Mama 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?..."





• American Dream (cont.)



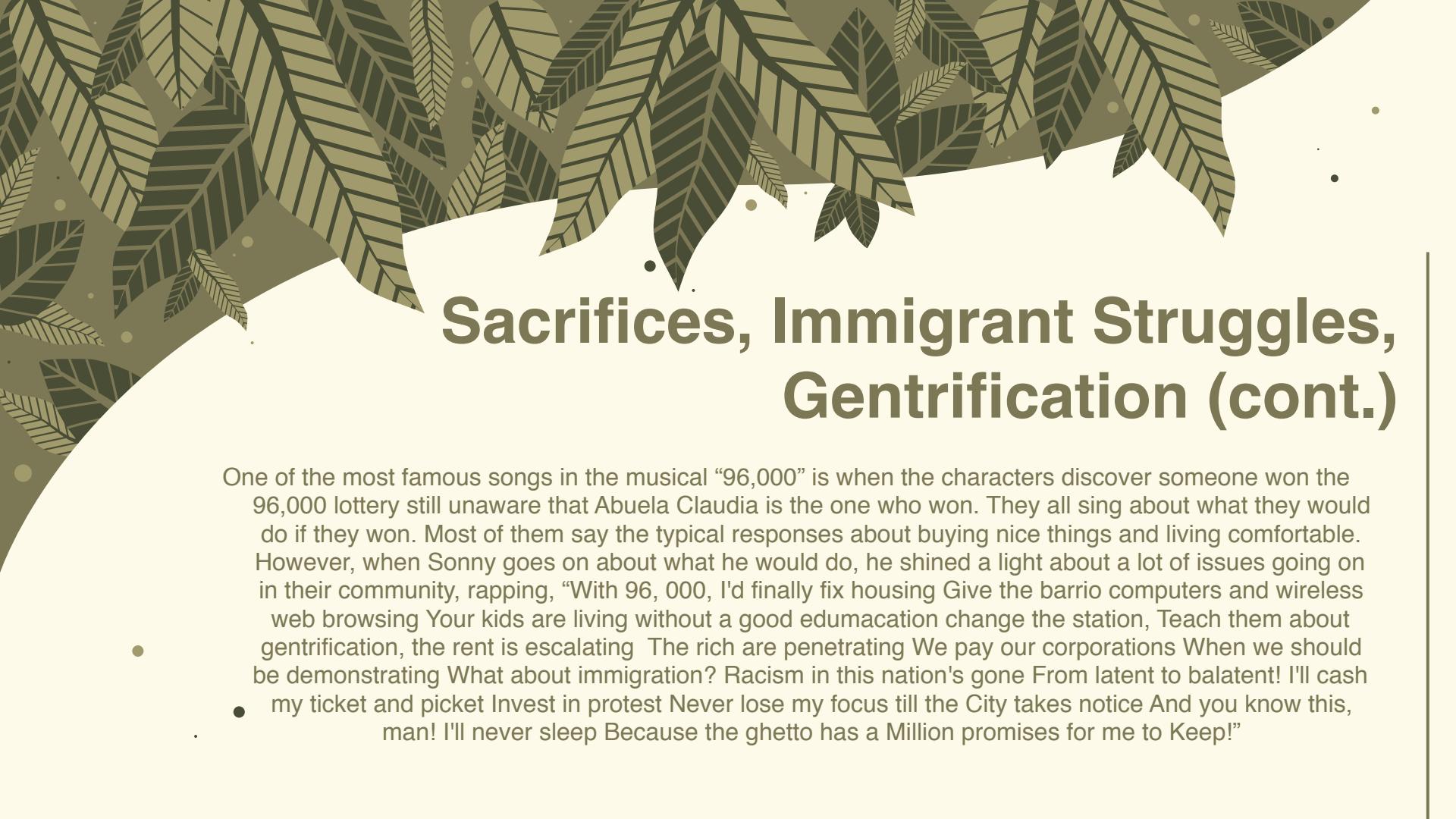
Of course there's the entire song "Inutil" sang by Kevin Rosario, Nina's father, who tells his story of coming to America and his work, "He came home late and prayed for rain, prayed for rain And on those days when nothing came My father's face was lined with shame He'd sit me down beside him and he'd 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'm gonna change the world someday.' 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... 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" We see the leap of faith he took resisting to follow in his father's footsteps and to immigrate to the U.S for the "american dream."



Sacrifices, Immigrant Struggles, Gentrification

Each character has their own struggles and goes through they're own sacrifices in the story. The previous slides exemplifies Kevin Rosario, Nina, and Usnavi's struggles a bit. Abuela Claudia's song "Paciencia y Fe" as I quoted before, also tells her story about what she had had to endure as an immigrant. "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..." The Piragua Guy (an ice cream vendor) struggling to make a living selling his piraguas because Mr. Softee is coming in the town and selling to the community. This struggle as well as gentrification is brought up a few times within the play. As Usnavi sings in the intro "In the Heights, "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 rent's went up It's gotten mad expensive But we live with just enough In the heights" then in the "Finale," "And who's gonna notice we're gone?...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?" Lastly, the biggest line "we are powerless" which has been sang in a few of the songs after the city's power went out but there is also the double meaning in the line that the characters feel literally powerless.





Sacrifices, Immigrant Struggles, Gentrification (cont.)

One of the most famous songs in the musical “96,000” is when the characters discover someone won the 96,000 lottery still unaware that Abuela Claudia is the one who won. They all sing about what they would do if they won. Most of them say the typical responses about buying nice things and living comfortable. However, when Sonny goes on about what he would do, he shined a light about a lot of issues going on in their community, rapping, “With 96, 000, I'd finally fix housing Give the barrio computers and wireless web browsing Your kids are living without a good edumacation change the station, Teach them about gentrification, the rent is escalating The rich are penetrating We pay our corporations When we should be demonstrating What about immigration? Racism in this nation's gone From latent to balatent! I'll cash my ticket and picket Invest in protest Never lose my focus till the City takes notice And you know this, man! I'll never sleep Because the ghetto has a Million promises for me to Keep!”



What kinds of secrets might America keep hidden? How does this artist's work open up such secrets?

The play shows how lots of the characters immigrated to America expected to succeed because in many foreign countries they see what America wants others to think, that it is the best. However, after they came they learned not everybody in America is doing well off living the "american dream" as it shows in my previous slide Kevin thinking he was going to change the world someday and now he is hoping his daughter will. Also Abuela Claudia coming to the US as a young girl worked as a maid her whole life then when she finally wins the lottery, soon after she dies. Exemplifying how there's people in America that never make it and some that work for a better life until the end of their life.

Representation of America

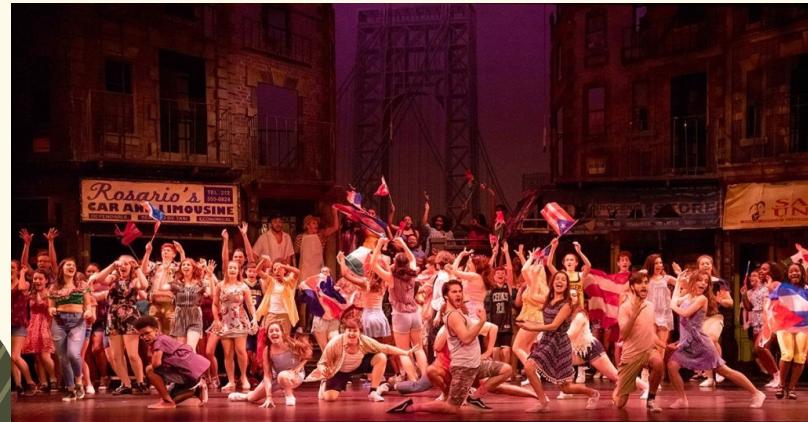
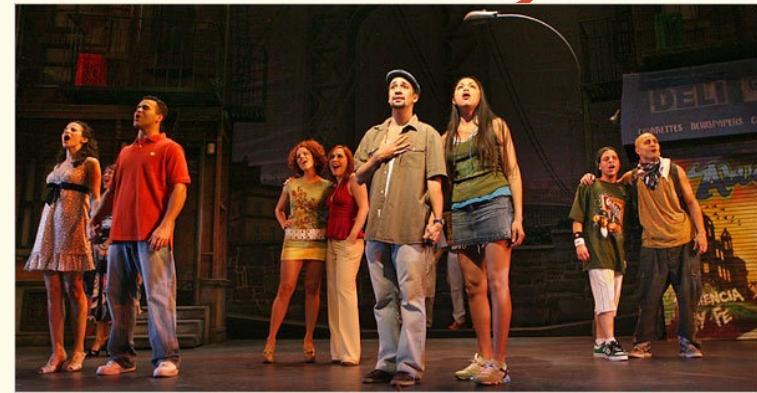


How does this work challenge/confirm /deconstruct the overall understanding of America?

The story in a way does all three. It may challenge or deconstruct one's understanding if you aren't a first or second generation immigrant you may have never experienced or understood the challenges and sacrifices we see the characters go through as immigrants in America. It may also confirm one's understanding if you do believe it is possible to be able to prosper in America as we see when the Usnavi gets the lottery money or how Kevin Rosario came to America and started his successful taxi cab business.

What it means to be American

Lin-Manuel Miranda does a beautiful job at portraying what it really means to be American in his play. One of the brighter sides to America I believe is community. As an audience we witness each individual going through many hardships as well as the unfortunate struggles immigrants face in America. The characters can always come together as a community especially when Abuela Claudia died, we really saw the strengths that exist within a community.



Closing

In essence, I believe Lin-Manuel Miranda's work on *In the Heights* was not only a beautiful and well done show but it also shined a light on the Washington Heights hispanic populated community as well as life for many immigrants in America. Through music he brings up a lot of important issues of America and we can relate to the

- individual characters as well as see the community as a whole. As a result of this I believe Lin-Manuel Miranda is
 - an exceptional ethnic american artist.

