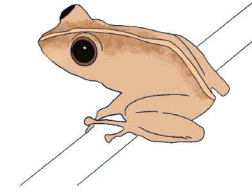
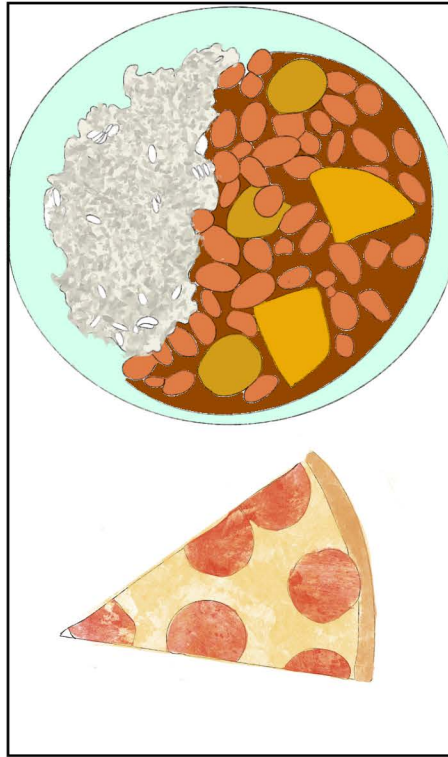


Mixed Puerto Rican Voices



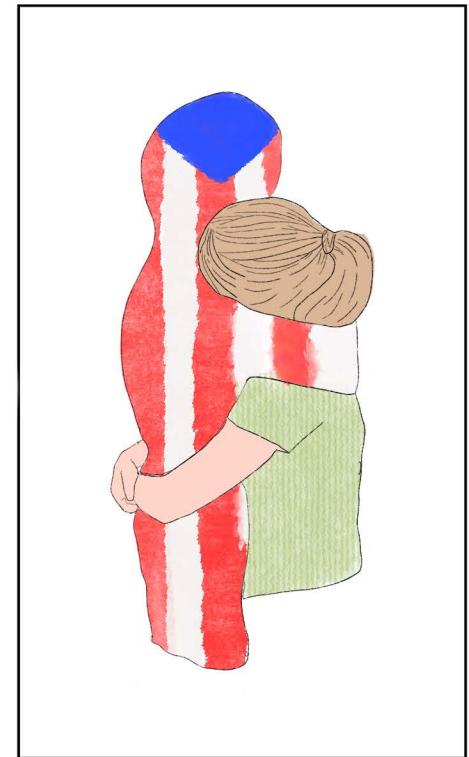
By Kailey Bambula

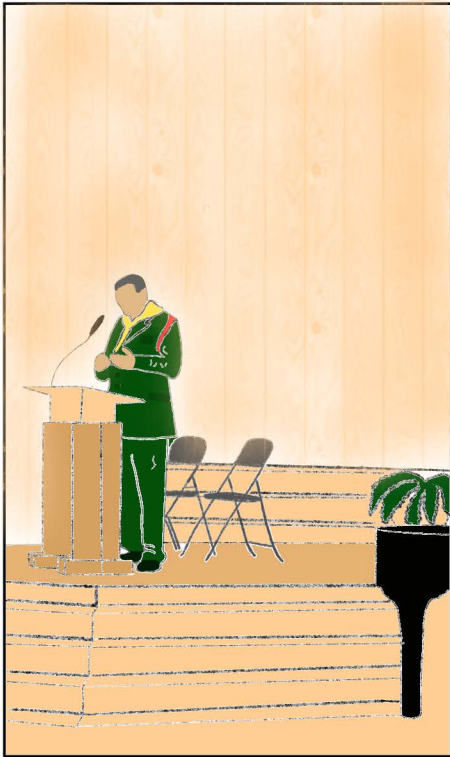
Alexa Yelenosky,
High School Student
from Illinois



From a young age Alexa grew up with both sides of her family being a huge influence on her life. Both Puerto Rican and Caucasian embraced who Alexa was. As a child, she ate both American cuisine and Puerto Rican, there was a balance.

Around middle school, Alexa felt a shift with her two families. Her mother stopped teaching her Spanish and her Puerto Rican relatives would call her Casper the ghost regarding her skin complexion. It was all in the name of fun, but it pushed Alexa toward her Caucasian side of the family.

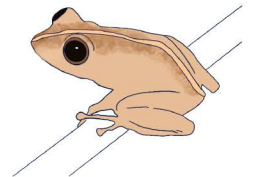
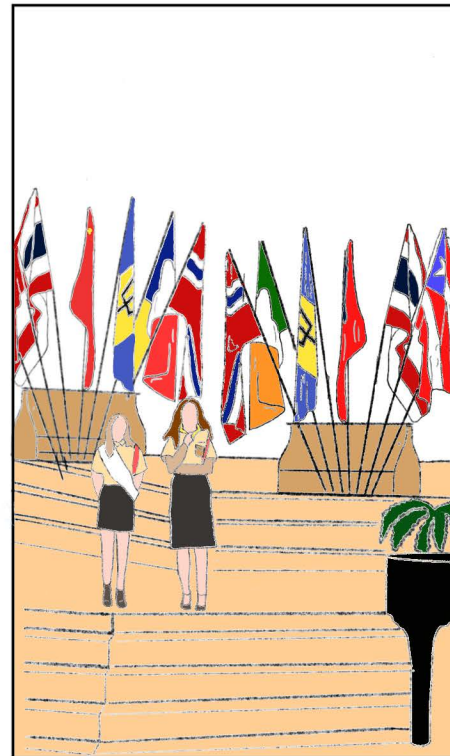
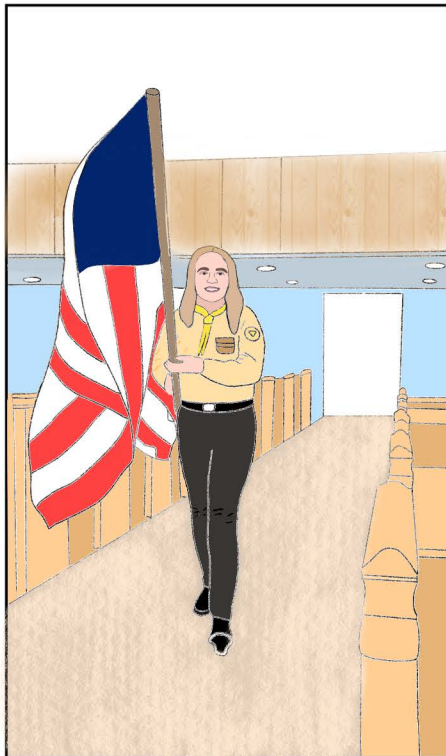
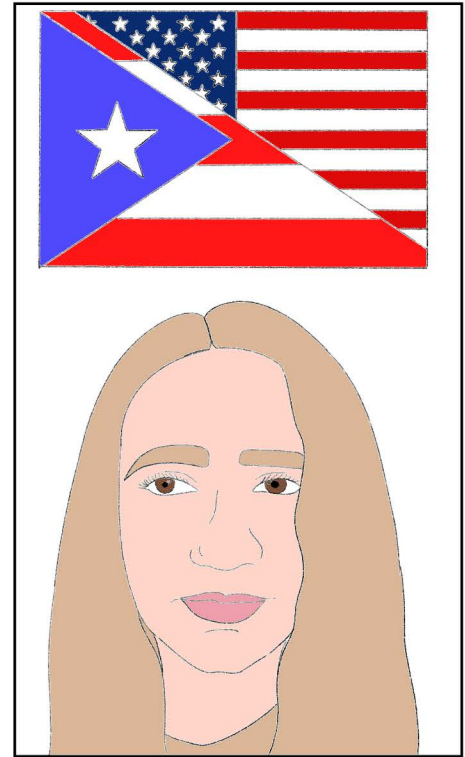




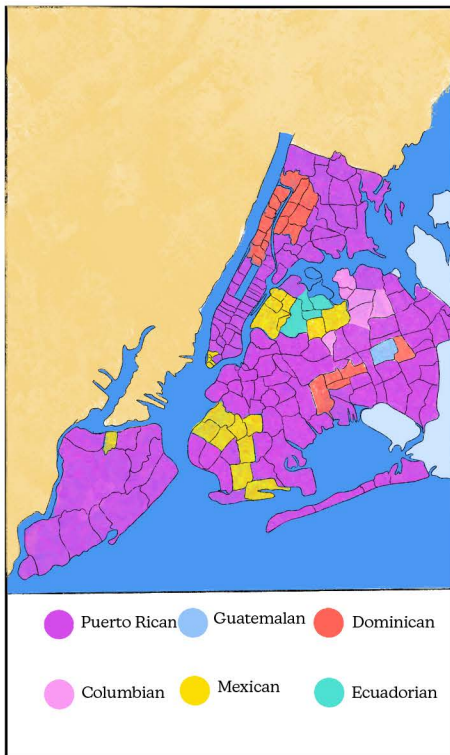
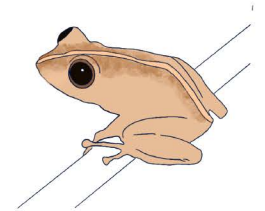
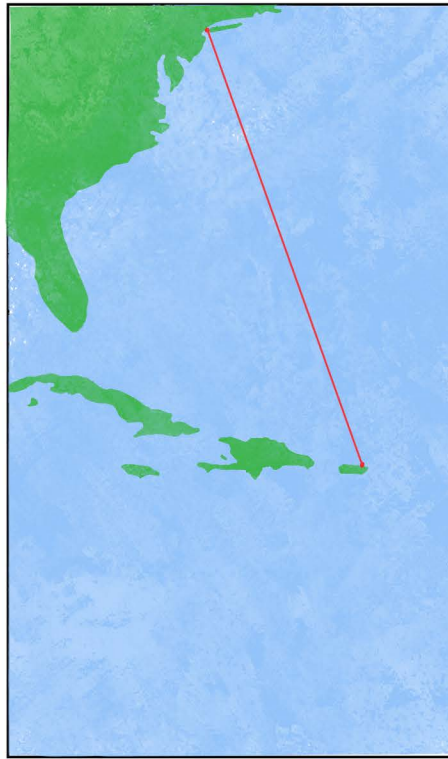
When Alexa was around the age of 10, she joined a church group called Pathfinders. Every year, they would take over church service and do their own. This involved all of the children to walk down the aisles carrying a flag that represented their culture. Then they would put the flag down and stand next to it.

Alexa did not know which flag to carry nor stand by. She did not want to carry the Puerto Rican flag for fear of being judged or questioned for her fair skin tone. Most of the kids were darker than her so to make it easy on herself, she carried the flag that people assumed she would. She carried the flag of the United States.

Today Alexa, struggles with her Puerto Rican identity but she can proudly say she is working on it. She is learning Spanish and trying classic Puerto Rican dishes.



Heather MacLeish, Business Owner from New York

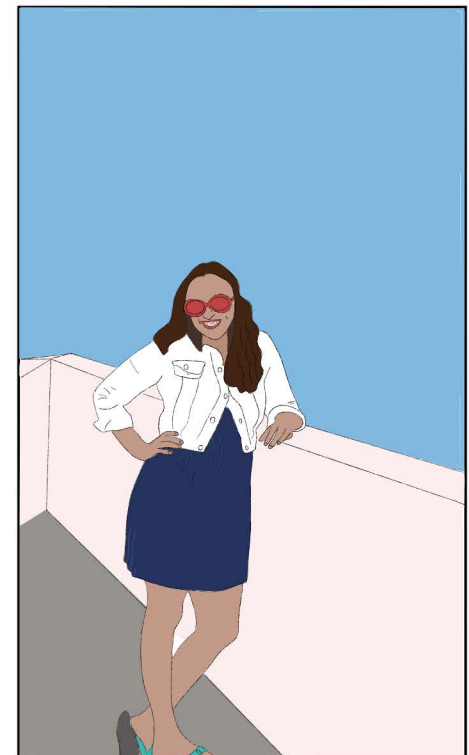


Born and raised in Brooklyn New York, Heather is a proud “Newterican” A New Yorker who is Puerto Rican. With a large Puerto Rican population in New York, Heather felt right at home with being a part of the community.

“Bright, intelligent , dark skinned young girl”

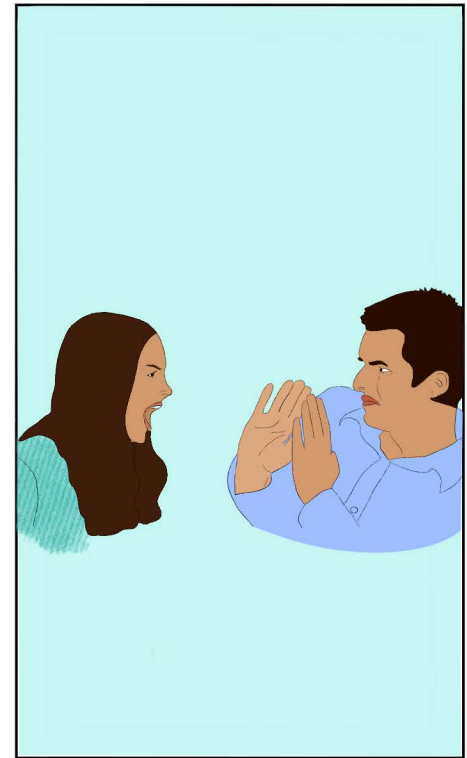
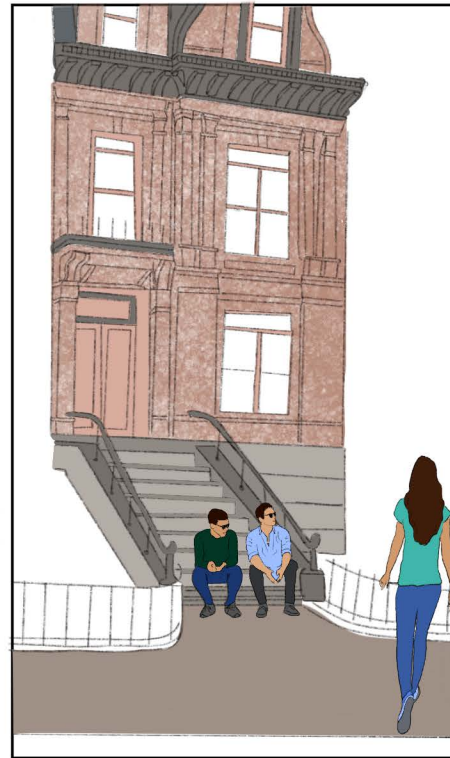
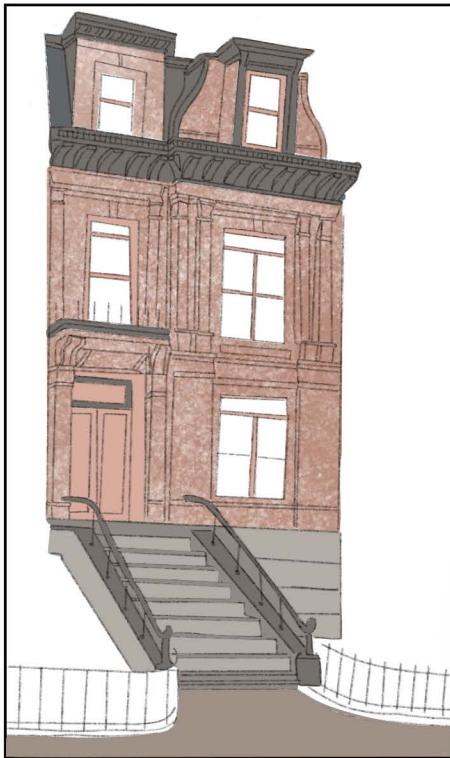
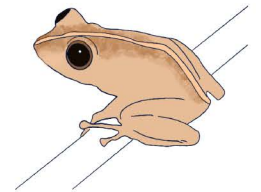
By attending private school, she entered a Elementary gifted program. There she made a diverse group of friends and they became invincible together. Still back handed comments were made such as being called “Bright, intelligent , dark skinned young girl”. She would consider herself light skinned.

With a childhood filled with visiting Puerto Rico, practicing Spanish with her grandmother, and living in Miami for a brief time, Heather has fully embraced being a mixed Puerto Rican.



A time where Heather did feel that being herself put her at risk was when a some guys cat called her. She then went over to tell them that it was wrong and soon realized she knew one of the guys. She asked him what would have happened if that was his sister? She was trying to get him to think about what he had done and how it could hurt the women he did this to.

Heather felt more marganalized by being a women than being Puerto Rican. Today, she has her own business, constantly practices her Spanish, and recommends that every Puerto Rican experiance Miami.



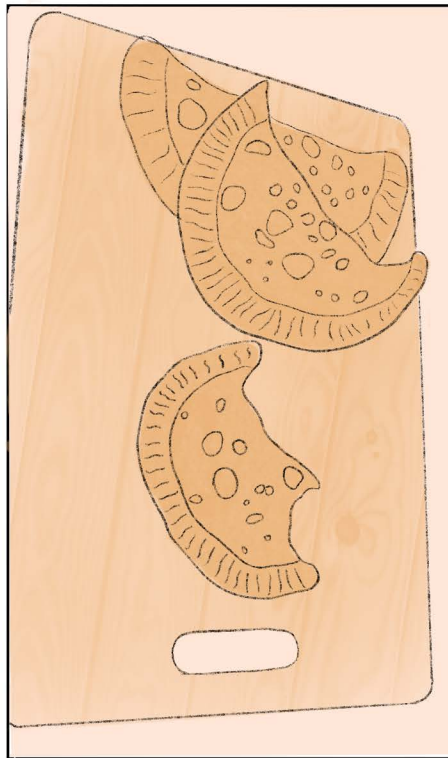
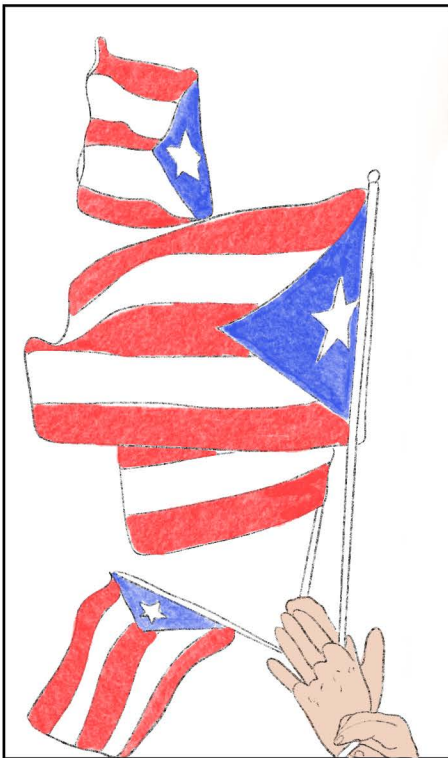
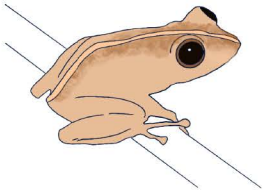
Jackie has lived in Bolingbrook Illinois, most of her life. She has been fortunate enough to be exposed to a very diverse community. As Jackie was growing up, she always thought it was common to have parents who were biracial. With her Puerto Rican mother being so close to her grandparents, learning Spanish for Jackie was a must! She bonds with her grandparents with cooking and conversation.

Jackie Yelenosky, College Graduate from Illinois

Being a blonde, blue eyed Puerto Rican, Jackie stood out but also felt accepted by her family and the Puerto Rican community. She attended many Puerto Rican Pride Parades and even volunteered to help out with these parades most years to stay connected with her roots.

People make the assumption that she is just Caucasian so she will encounter people saying racially offensive comments towards hispanics. She often surprises them by saying It's not okay and she has to explain why they are wrong being apart of that community herself.

She had to take on the education role because there would be insensitive comments made and everyone has a lot to learn about the culture

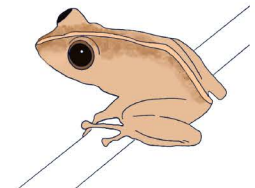


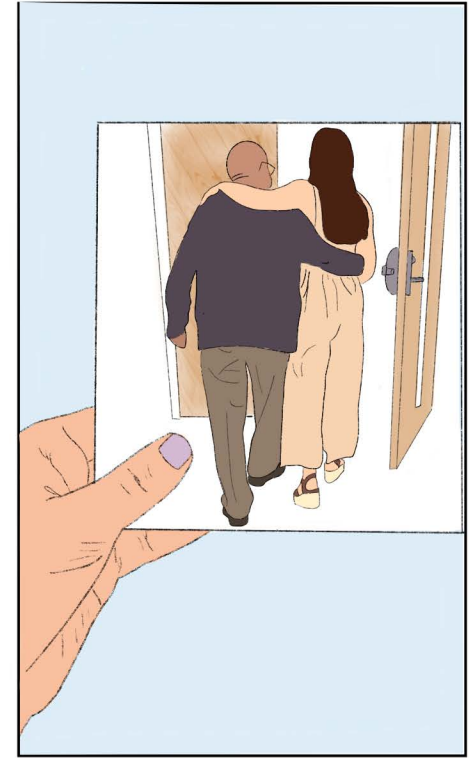
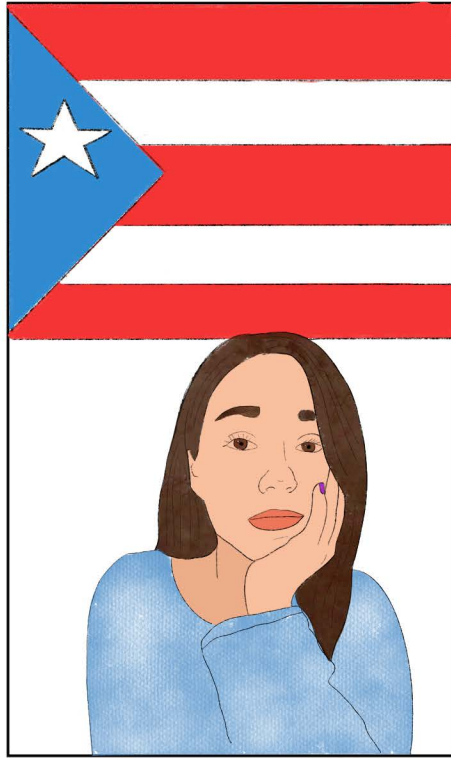


She was fortunate enough to see much diversity within her education systems and feels very lucky to have had that experience. She also recognizes that by being “white passing” she has not had to experience what other Puerto Ricans have. On the Census and other official documents, she will always check the Puerto Rican box.

Today, despite people making assumptions about her background, she is learned to become more than just a conversational Spanish speaker and looking to share her experiences with others. She is always opened to sharing her love for Puerto Rican Culture where ever she can.

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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, Puerto Rican											
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Another Hispanic- Print Origin											
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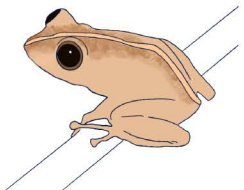




Kailey Bambula, College student from Illinois

From a young age, Kailey Bambula was taught to embrace being Puerto Rican. Her mother would go on to teach her Spanish. She would read books to Kailey in Spanish, sing to her in Spanish, and would even take her on trips to Puerto Rico. She would see her grandparents often and her grandfather would never shame her for her mistakes while learning Spanish.

Around the age of 10 years old, Kailey's mother would stop teaching her Spanish, without a reason. At the time, Kailey did not question or have concern for this change. As she grew up, she knew that she wanted to embrace part of who she was.



Kailey began her journey of embrace Puerto Rican culture in high school. She began cooking Puerto Rican dishes such as Tostones and Arroz con Gandules. She was losing her grasp on understanding Spanish, so she began listening to Spanish music. After visiting Puerto Rico with her family at the age of 16, she felt much more connected to the people, the food, and the over all culture of Puerto Rico. She knew then that she must return in the future.v

Kailey is still on her journey to embracing this part of her life. Today, she is proud to be a part of the Puerto Rican Community, proud to learn from strong Puerto Rican women, and proud to say she is a Puerto Rican Woman.

