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Letting Myself Be Seen: Everybody's Radical Self-Love Journey

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

Letting Myself Be Seen: *Everybody's* Radical Self-Love Journey

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Master of Fine Arts

in

Theatre and Dance (Acting)

by

Natalia Quintero-Riestra

Committee in charge:

Professor Ursula Meyer, Chair
Professor Marco Alexander Barricelli
Professor Stephen W Buescher
Professor Manuel Rotenberg

2022

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The Thesis of Natalia Quintero-Riestra is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically.

University of California San Diego

2022

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family, both genetic and chosen. I would also like to dedicate this thesis to all of the mentors, colleagues, and beautiful friends who have helped me get to this point in my life and career. Thank you for your acceptance, accountability, grace, and support.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Letting Myself Be Seen: *Everybody*'s Radical Self-Love Journey

by

Natalia Quintero-Riestra

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Acting)

University of California San Diego, 2022

Professor Ursula Meyer, Chair

During my last costume fitting for *Everybody*, I stood still, staring at myself through the mirror; the only thing on my body: a sports bra and tight shorts. And as I stood there, I took in every flaw and began cataloging every unwanted thing about myself. I let myself spiral for a moment, letting physical flaws I saw turn into emotional ones. What if I am not beautiful enough? What if I am not talented enough? What if I am not enough to make an impact in this play? And slowly, I realized how vulnerable, in every sense of the word, I was going to feel in front of an audience. “Well, isn’t that the point?” my mind calmly asked. “Do you think you are the only one asking themselves these questions? Aren’t you supposed to feel extremely vulnerable and exposed like this? Be brave enough to be seen. If this is the heart of the play, then your body and you, yourself, are perfect for this role.”

In *Everybody*, I am a vehicle for the audience. I go on the journey for them, hoping they connect and grow with me. My job is not to be funny or inspirational. My duty is to be honest, present, and be open enough to be moved. This is the foundation I lean on to play Everybody in Branden Jacobs-Jenkins *Everybody*.

The major themes of my training have been owning space, taking my time, and revealing the fullness of myself. Through Linklater and singing, I was able to unlock all the different facets of my voice, full and free and colorful; a voice that can fill every corner of a large space. Clowning and movement training made me present and deeply available, highlighting my inner thoughts or feelings and translating them into physical, tactile language. My classical training challenged me to rise to enormous circumstances and show the most heightened states of myself. And finally, my Meisner training and acting processes taught me that if I just simply give and receive what is on my mind and my heart, I can create a performance that is dazzling and moving to watch if I just let myself be witnessed.

In the end, I've realized that everything I needed to be a successful, captivating, and truthful actor was already within me when I was accepted into UCSD's MFA program. It just took three years and every tool I was given throughout my graduate school experience to finally realize it.