

The Program for Girls & Young Women at New Settlement
presents

IN THIS PLACE



Scenes, thoughts and moments from the land of Quarantine

Written and developed by the
Project V.I.P. Fall 2020 Ensemble



Project VIP Fall 2020:
In This Place

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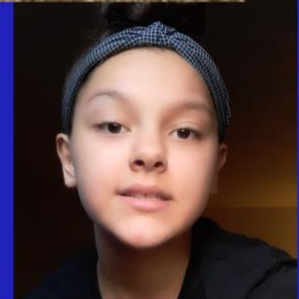
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Project VIP Fall 2020 Ensemble



DEAR Aniyah, Annalise, Ashante, Confident, Jaslene, Jendayi,
Khylah, Lana, Makayla & Shea ...

WELL! This was a semester like no other, ever in the history of VIP ... and y'all, we've been doing this since 1997, and have made more than 60 shows. Never have we ever spent an entire semester online, making work together with collaborators with out meeting even once in person. Some of you all have NEVER met each other face to face – imagine! This fall we sort of made a show, we just didn't get to show it to anyone else ... but hopefully you can share this manuscript and your memories with family and friends who will appreciate the humor, the ideas, and the poetry you found and created in a pretty dark place.

Yeah. 2020 can't be over soon enough, and early 2021 is still gonna be tough for awhile, we know. But you all have shown your resilience and strength, ingenuity and compassion, in the face of incredibly difficult times. It has been an honor to work with you, and we enjoyed seeing your faces, or hearing your voices, or sometimes just knowing you were out there on the other end of the Zoom connection – tuning in and turning out funny lines, improv ideas, and just being with each other. Sometimes just hanging in there was enough, and meant a lot.

We adapted, we re-invented familiar games and tried new things. We read and listened to poetry together, and talked about our world, how its changed and changing, and what it all means. We feel through the trapdoor in Spotlight, took silly Taxies to nowhere in particular, told wacky stories that went into every genre, and dug deep to find what it means to be human, to be kind, and to be in the place, in this moment, with each other.

Thank you all, and may we move into the new year and decade together, and see each other again or for the first time ... face to face!

Stay safe and be well!!



Tasheema Lucas



Joy Leonard

TODAY I AM ...

Today I am powerful.
Today I am loved.
Today I am happy (now).
Today I am stressed.
Today I am brave.
Today I am confident.
Today I feel fresh.
Today I will do homework.
Today I will listen when my little ones talk.
Today I am determined.
Today I will try my best.
Today I will sleep.
Today I was able to talk to my friends.
Today I was smiling.
Today I relaxed.
Today I was calm.
Today I saved a few bucks.
Today I dug deep.
Today I stood up for myself.
Today I overcame the voices in my head.

Tomorrow I will try my best.
Tomorrow I will feel better (for now).
Tomorrow will be a better day.
Tomorrow I will be a better person.
Tomorrow I will do it all over again.

Written by the Ensemble

TO PARTY OR NOT TO PARTY??

Characters:

Quovita (age 16)

Jerica (sister, age 13)

Raina (friend, 16)

Dad

Mom

News Announcer

Quovita: (On Facetime) Oh hey, Rai!

Raina: Hey girl wassup, I'm really looking forward to going out to party tonight, how about you girl?

Quovita: Uh oh -- party? Isn't it still corona? Is it just going to be us? Or other people?

Raina: It's going to be us and MORE people because we can't have a party with just two people, silly!

Quovita: I mean technically we CAN, we can invite my sister and just stay in the house and chill.

Raina: But then it's just gonna be us girls and we need a few guys there ... you know what I mean?

Quovita: You know I'm not supposed to have a boyfriend.

Raina: Well we never said boyfriend, but it can always be like, a one night stand -??

Quovita: Umm I don't know. I don't think that's ... I don't wanna catch the 'Rona.

Raina: Oh come on girl, you won't catch corona! You'll be safe -- we'll have hand sanitizer and we'll have on our masks (whispers) MOST of the time ... Besides you can use a little getting out! We've all been cooped up, you know, with our families.

Quovita: Well you know we can always go to the park -- the park is safer than inside.

Raina: Yea, but wouldn't you rather be inside? What if it rains? Or what if it snows?

Quovita: Well, if it rains we'll just stay in the house ... and it can just be us girls and no other people.

Raina: Nah, I'd rather have everyone, you know? It's always fun to have a big party because then BIG things happen. (Laughs)

Quovita: Umm (sighs) I guess ... but you know my mom, she might not let me go...yea.

Raina: Girl, you don't ask for permission! You sneak out, that's how it works.

Quovita: Uhh I don't want to sneak out though. I'd rather ask than sneak out.

Raina: And then when you ask and she says no?

Quovita: Then I stay in the house. Simple.

Raina: No girl you gotta live! You ain't gonna be a kid for long -- you ain't gonna get to do all this fun stuff. You gonna be bored, paying bills, taking care of the kids ... like, girl you need to live a little!

Quovita: (reluctant) Yea ... I don't think so cause what if my sister finds out and then she snitches and I get in more trouble?

Raina: That's why you sneak out when everybody is asleep -- you should KNOW this, girl, this is like Sneaking Out 101.

Quovita: But you know me and my sister share a room and she wakes up a lot -- so she's gonna know that I'm gone.

Raina: You know how in the movies they take their pillows and put them under their blanket--?? She ain't gonna come looking for you, she's just gonna be like 'oh she's in the bed, mkay'.

Quovita: No, my sister will dead come in the bed and try to wake me up.

Raina: Just tell her to leave you alone -- she's like what? 13 now? She's old enough to sleep in her own bed.

Jerica: (walks in) Quovita, what are you doing?

Quovita: I'm on the phone with my friend.

Jerica: What are you talking about?

Quovita: That's none of your concern.

Jerica: You don't have to be mean ... how bout I tell Mom you're on the phone?

Quovita: But it's none of your business what we're talking about!

Jerica: Yea, well you can't be on the phone with your friends without me knowing.

Quovita: Yes I could, I'm older than you! I don't have to always ask you for stuff.

Jerica: We'll see what Momma says about that.

Quovita: Okay (back to talking to Raina, loudly on purpose so Jerica will hear) So back to the PARTY we were talking about that we're gonna sneak out to ..

Raina: Finally! Girl you turned around, you wanna come? Let's goooo!!

Quovita: Yea I thought about it -- I don't wanna stay in the house with my ANNOYING sister so I rather go out. So what time?

Raina: Yasssss girl! We're going around 12, the party starts around like 10 but we gotta wait till your family is asleep, so we'll wait until 12 and stay till 4 cause that's when we can get you home right on time. No one will know anything!

Quovita: Okay good, that's perfect.

Jerica: Oooooohhhhhh I'm telling mom, Quovita!!

Quovita: (pretending innocence) Telling mom what??

Jerica: That you said you were gonna sneak out to go to a party with Raina! I'm snitching on you!!

Quovita: See, you always snitching on somebody -- can you ever keep a secret?

Jerica: No, because you're not letting me come with you so I can't.

Quovita: See?? This is why I could never do anything.

Raina: Ask her do she wanna come. Jerica, baby girl, wanna come with?

Jerica: No, but I'm gonna tell Mom so you can get in trouble, because you're not allowed to do that.

Quovita: You're a snitch! I'm allowed to do whatever I want.

Jerica: AND I'm telling Raina's mom.

Raina: You don't even have my mom's number! Haha, none of your family know my family so good luck...but Jerica... honey, you don't gotta do that you know you can always go out to the party, too ... I know you're a big girl now, you get to do your own thing, right? So let's go all three of us! We can have fun.

Jerica: Okaaaaay, as long as we're back at an appropriate time.

Quovita: Yea, we gotta be back before Mom wakes up.

Jerica: Okay.

Raina: Alright and y'all gotta be mad quiet -- y'all gotta wait until y'all parents go to sleep because if they don't we're ALL screwed. Mostly just y'all two, because they're YOUR parents.

Later that night ...

Jerica: (Whispers) Quovita, wake up wake up wake up!

Quovita: Huh? I'm up, I'm up!

Jerica: It's 12 -- we can go to the party now!

Quovita: Okay, let's get ready.

Jerica: Alright, I'm gonna go get your outfit.

Quovita: Okay, thank you -- imma call Raina.

Jerica: Okay.

Quovita: (calls Raina) Hey girl!

Raina: Hey girl, so y'all ready?

Jerica: We're getting ready now.

Raina: Yay! Y'all better come in y'all nice outfits you know we gotta look good and not like little kids.

Quovita: Yea, we are.

Jerica: I have your outfit!

Quovita: Thank you -- it looks nice!

Jerica: You're welcome.

Quovita: Now let's get ready and go.

Jerica: I BEEN ready.

Quovita: Okay, come on let's go.

Jerica: Okay.

They leave their room and head downstairs.

Quovita: Shh, be quiet

Jerica: I AM being quiet ... did you hear that?

Quovita: Hear what?

Jerica: (spots Dad) Get back, it's Dad!

Quovita: Where?

Jerica: There in the kitchen!

Quovita: How are we supposed to get out now?

Jerica: I don't know...maybe we just make a run for it--??

Quovita: You think we can make it?

Jerica: (unsure) Yea ...

They run from the stairs to the door. Quovita drops her phone.

Both girls: Uh-oh.

The dad comes into the living room.

Dad: What are you doing down here...and why are you dressed?

Quovita: Umm, we were ... umm...

Jerica: We were just gonna watch some TV.

Dad: (suspiciously) You wanted to watch TV, so you got fully dressed and (looks closely) put on some makeup?

Jerica: Yea...we uuuhhh wanted to watch America's Next Top Model and you can't watch that in pajamas, that's just wrong!

Dad: You must think I'm a fool. (calls to Mom) Honey! Come here please!

Both girls: Damn it.

Mom: (entering) What's going on?

Dad: I caught our daughters here trying to sneak out...in the middle of the night ...during a PANDEMIC, of all things

Mom: Seriously? Why would y'all EVER try something like that?? Do you not understand how serious this pandemic is?

The girls stay quiet.

Mom: Go to your room -- you're both grounded.

Quovita: But we didn't DO anything!

Mom: But you were planning to...give me your phones, both of you -- NOW!!

The girls give their mom the phones and go upstairs.

Jerica: You just HAD to drop your phone, didn't you?

Quovita: It was an ACCIDENT!

Jerica: Whatever.

Five days later at breakfast.

News Announcer: We have reports that apparently a house party in the South Bronx five nights ago was a super spreader event ... 12 people from that party have now tested positive for COVID-19, and their contacts are currently being traced ...

Mom: (grills the girls) You SEE?? That's 12 people from the party you thought it was a good idea to go to during a pandemic...y'all could've been exposed and wouldn't have even cared, all cause you had fun.

Dad: I hope this teaches you girls a lesson and you take this pandemic more seriously!

Girls look at each other wide-eyed.

THE END

Before You ...

Before you know true loss, you have to lose someone you truly appreciated
Before you know somebody, you got to make sure they are good to talk to
Before you do anything, you gotta make sure you're done with everything else
Before you call it quits, make sure you've actually lost.
Before you give up, make sure you tried your best.
And that's on periodt

--Written by Lana & Shea

Before you can be my friend you must
Learn to be nice.
You must be loyal.
You must be by my side,
Through good and bad

Before you can be my friend you must
Learn how to communicate with me.
You must learn to be grateful for all you have.
You must be supportive of me.

Before you could be my friend,
You gotta be my enemy --
I want to know your ins and outs,
And you need to know mine.

Before you can be my friend you must
Learn how to cook
cuz I like to eat!

-- Written by Makayla, Tasheema & Shea

There's a Poem in This Place

By Shea Davis

There's a poem in this place
Where Corona Virus shows its horrid face

Here we hide like cowards
For our loved ones to be devoured

If we hide and stay away,
Will 6 feet apart really save the day?

And finally we just lost the Yellow Man
But what about his fans
All of the yellow bands?

Will we as a minority get pushed back somehow?
Have them with their will punch the U.S. in the face with a pow?

The election came and went as fast as a minute, wow!
But since it's gone, what do I look forward to now?

This is a plea from a Black girl who is short and not too tall
But with my minority, the world feels like our little ol' basketball.

I started in Queens, where my name started
To Manhattan, and soon my journey of NY will be departed

I hope no matter where I go I still hear the truck sirens
And throughout all my journeys, I'm still shining ... Vibrant.

Facetime Friends-Giving

Cynthia (age 25)
Mariah (21)
Becky (22)

Brittany (18, Becky's sis)
Amara (23)
Grandma (stopped counting)

Once upon a Group Facetime ...

Cynthia: So who wants to celebrate Thanksgiving dinner?

Becky: I'm down!

Amara: Same.

Becky: But like, whose house are we going to do it at?

Cynthia: Wanna do it at your house?

Becky: Sure -- I have a nice table.

Cynthia: Okay!

Mariah: I thought we were doing it on Facetime or Zoom - ??

Becky: How you gonna do Thanksgiving over FaceTime? Thanksgiving is where everybody eats food together!

Amara: Yea but it's COVID and I don't wanna get my little brother sick, because he has health issues.

Becky: Okay but you're not sick, I'm not sick, they're not sick, so if we're ALL not sick we can have Thanksgiving together, and no one will get sick.

Cynthia: Maybe we can celebrate with our mask on?

Becky: How you gonna eat with your mask on?

Cynthia: We could take them off -??

Becky: If you gonna take it off to eat, you might as well have it off the whole time you in the house!

Cynthia: True.

Becky: So, my place?

Cynthia: Okay.

Brittany: I don't think we should invite people over for Thanksgiving, Becky.

Becky: Why?

Brittany: Because it's COVID going around -- and I don't want to get sick!

Becky: How you gonna get sick if none of us are sick?

Brittany: You never know who's sick and who's not sick!

Becky: Are any of y'all sick?

Amara: No.

Brittany: BUT did any of y'all get tested?

ALL: No.

Becky: Well I'm not sick and I trust that my friends aren't sick because they look regular -- no one's coughing, no one has a high fever ... we're good.

Amara: I got tested for COVID today, I had to for work.

Becky: See she got tested -- she's fine!

Brittany: But what if they're asymptomatic? They not showing no symptoms and then you get sick next week?

Becky: That's a next week problem.

Brittany: What if they come over, and it turns out they had it, and then we go and get Grandma sick?

Becky: Then we'll take Grandma to the hospital.

Brittany: It's not that simple for Grandma -- she can get really sick! You know she has diabetes and high blood pressure.

Grandma: (turns camera on) How you work this thing?...Becky is that you?

Becky: Hi, Grandma!

Grandma: I thought this is where we were supposed to do that Face thing.

Becky: Yea this IS Facetime, Grandma, but I'm talking with friends right now. We're talking about Thanksgiving. You and me were gonna Facetime later on.

Grandma: Oh, Okay ... Thanksgiving's next week, right?

Becky: Yea, I'm trying to talk everybody into coming over so we can all cook a nice meal together.

Grandma: What?

Becky: I'm trying to get everyone to come over here for Thanksgiving.

Grandma: Girl, you tryna kill me?

Becky: NO, I'm not.

Grandma: I- I- I can't come to your house.

Becky: No THEY'RE gonna come to my house and then we can bring you food!

Grandma: Oh okay ... you gonna bring me something?

Becky: Yea, we'll bring you some of everything.

Brittany: (quietly) Bring a side of Corona, maybe.

Grandma: Okay... you be careful now, hear?

Becky: We will, we're all safe. We're fine. No one has COVID.

Grandma: We'll you don't know ... I see on the news they say people could have it and not know.

Amara: That's what we're trying to explain to her but she's not understanding.

Becky: I KNOW I don't have it.

Grandma: Girl, you went to college and everything. I don't know what they taught you there!

Brittany: I know, Grandma. I been wondering the same thing.

Grandma: I gotta go now. You and your friends have a good FaceTalk.

Becky: Okay bye Grandma! (Grandma's camera turns off) I know for a fact I don't have COVID and I trust that y'all don't have COVID, and I really think we'll be okay!

Amara: But I think we should stay home.

Becky: But if we stay home how is that Thanksgiving?? You're supposed to be surrounded by people that you love and cherish, and you're all supposed to sit down to a nice meal, and say what you're thankful for. If we're all on zoom, it's not even a guarantee we'll be eating the same food!!

Amara: But we can cook for ourselves, and we can eat our food that we made.

Becky: That sounds like a very sad Thanksgiving.

Cynthia: The point of Thanksgiving is to eat food with our friends, the point is to gain a lot of pounds!

Becky: Exactly! And we have to do that together.

Amara: We can do that over zoom!

Mariah: We can do that after there's a vaccine and we all take it. For now, everyone can make their favorite dish and bring it to the zoom for everyone to see.

Brittany: Good, because I'm not trying to get sick.

Becky: You're not going to get sick!

Amara: You never know.

Mariah: Right, Becky, you're only saying this because you don't know how to cook.

All laugh.

Becky: Exactly! and I don't wanna risk burning my house down over a zoom call when you guys could just come over -- you guys are the chefs, come over, cook, and we'll all have a good time.

Mariah: I'll have something delivered to you so you don't starve

Amara: Same.

Becky: Or you guys could just come over --??

Cynthia: How about we just order something for you?

Becky: (sad) It won't be the same.

Mariah: How about I'll cook, and have it delivered to you that way we won't get COVID. I'll drop it on your doorstep and wave from the car.

Becky: But if you're coming to my doorstep, you might as well come say hi.

Mariah: NO! You're gonna stay inside and I'm gonna tell you when the food is there.

Becky: But I mean you're gonna be right at the door--

Mariah: I'll wave to you from the car.

Cynthia: She doesn't wanna get sick.

Becky: She's not gonna get sick -- I'm not sick!

Mariah: How you know I'M not sick? I don't wanna get you OR your grandma sick.

Becky: If you're cooking me food, you can't be sick.

Amara: She could be asymptomatic -- like she has the energy, but that don't mean she's not gonna be sick on the weekend, or never feel sick but still pass it on.

Mariah: Becky probably got the virus and she's bored.

Cynthia: (laughing) Yea and she's trying to give it to all of us, that's what it is.

Becky: I do NOT have Covid -- I got tested and they told me that I was negative!

Amara: When was that test? Thanksgiving's next Thursday -- if you don't get the test on Wednesday I don't know that you're not sick, do I?

Becky: I got tested 4 days ago.

Amara: That's 4 days that you could've got exposed to something.

Becky: But I didn't even go anywhere!

Mariah: So?? You probably had food delivered because you don't know how to cook -- the delivery man could have gave you something.

Becky: All I had was Domino's.

Cynthia: Those be the dirtiest delivery people.

Becky: They have the "no contact" delivery!

Amara: Yea, but he still gotta touch your box, and then YOU touch the box ...

Becky: (unsure) I don't think Dominos gave me corona ...

Amara: Brittany, talk some sense into your sister!

Becky: Brittany is like in high school, she doesn't know what she's talking about, okay??

Cynthia: Bet she has more college credits than YOU.

Laughs and teasing comments from the group.

Brittany: THANK you!

Becky: That doesn't mean anything ... she doesn't know what she's talking about! We got tested, we're negative, YOU guys are negative ... let's just celebrate together!

Cynthia: You may be negative but I didn't get no recent test -- I don't know what I am.

Mariah: Me either.

Becky: Okay well ... I got tested, Amara got tested, like we're negative so we're not gonna get you guys sick, ok?

Mariah: I don't KNOW that, and I can't be sick because I need to go away for Christmas ... so I'm staying away from people until then. Becky, we are not meeting together, face it, girl. We're gonna enjoy this zoom Thanksgiving and hopefully by the New Year we can all get together, because there will be a vaccine. And, meantime, we'll make sure you don't starve.

Becky: (resigned) Okaaaaaay. I GUESS since you guys don't wanna come over, you can just send me some of your food and I'll do the zoom and just deal with it. I guess.

Amara: Becky, go to sleep!

Becky: I'll go to sleep after you guys feed me.

Cynthia: How about we just do what everybody keeps sayin', and go on the zoom call.

Amara: We're gonna go on the zoom call, and if Becky can't cook she can order some food since she's so positive that she's negative.

Cynthia: Ok, we got a plan, now let's end this Facetime. My brain is fried from screens all day.

Brittany: For real -- I never thought I would get tired of my phone, but sometimes I just need to put it down. (sad) I miss actual school. And actual people. My senior year sucks.

Mariah: I know, Boo. Hang in there! You got college to look forward to, after all this mess is fixed. I miss ALL of y'all. Even you, Becky.

Becky: (sarcastic) THANKS.

Mariah: It's been way too long since we had a girls night out!

Cynthia: Yasssssss. Cheers to that! Love you ladies!

Amara: Love you back, see you next week for Friends-Giving!

Becky: Don't forget to send food, y'all! I'm not playing!

The End

There's a Poem in the Bronx

By

Ashanti, Aniyah, Jendayi, Khylah, Lana, Makayla, Shea, Tasheema & Joy
inspired by Amanda Gorman's "In This Place"

There's a poem in the Bronx where lines for the emergency rooms go around the corner

There's a poem in the Bronx where stores are near houses,
and no matter how many super markets there are, it's never enough.

Where's there's not enough healthy food, but a hundred fast food joints

Bacon, egg and cheese is the fruit of the day

The lyrics of the Bronx find us in our homes --
sirens: police, ambulance, and fire.

Music from passing cars: rap, gospel, harmonies and beats,
merengue in the bodega,
Cardi B's WAP will get you wapped in the mouth --
if you sing it in the house

The sound of the elevated trains pulses, trembles the buildings ...
platforms wobble in the wind.

Fresh air, smoke and cigarettes.

Nature and gasoline.

Smell the sanitation trucks as they drive by,
and so much delicious food -- country food, from all over the world,
All the flavors there on Tremont Avenue.

There's a bunch of poems in the Bronx, written in spray paint: tags, messages,
murals to the lost, the loved.