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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

Cultivating Compassionate Leadership:
A Personal Journey through "*The Promise*"

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

in

Theatre and Dance (Stage Management)

by

Stephanie Carrizales

Committee in charge:

Professor Lisa Porter, Co-Chair
Professor Lora Powell, Co-Chair
Professor David Barner
Professor Stephen Buescher

2024

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University of California San Diego

2024

DEDICATION

For my family: Baubles, Cirilla, and Dandelion, you are my purest happiness.

For my father, who passed before he got to live.

For my mother, my first teacher.

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LIST OF SUPPLEMENTAL FILES

File 1. Carrizales *The Promise* Calling Script. Selected Pages.pdf

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Erik, whose love and support lit up my darkest of nights.

To my father, thank you for the freedom to explore.

To my UCSD Stage Management Cohort of Allison, Gillian, Karina, Caleb, Alina, Katie, Huai, and Lily, your friendship means the world to me.

To directors Ludmila de Brito and Stephen Buescher for being the rockstars of collaborators.

To my mentors Lisa Porter and Lora Powell, thank you for this opportunity. I would truly not be the person I am today without your mentorship, love, and support. If I've gained even a sprinkle of your genius, I would cherish it for a lifetime.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Cultivating Compassionate Leadership:
A Personal Journey through “*The Promise*”

by

Stephanie Carrizales

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Stage Management)

University of California San Diego, 2024

Professor Lisa Porter, Co-Chair
Professor Lora Powell, Co-Chair

The play *The Promise* by José Rivera shines light on the unsustainable nature of colonization and the impact of human sacrifices carried throughout generations of black, indigenous, and other people of color [BIPOC]. The story centers on a Puerto Rican family desperately trying to accomplish their dreams, exploring themes of survival, loss, freedom, and release. In this play, the main character, Guzman, is trapped in an “American Dream” that perpetuates the colonizer mentality. Being tortured by inequality, this “Dream” causes Guzman to almost lose the most important thing he’s ever had: his relationship with his family.

I joined *The Promise* as the Production Stage Manager with a wealth of compassion, trust, and joy, prioritizing personal connections rooted in empathy. With this approach, I nurtured the ability to authentically present myself, assert my authority, and forge a unique identity as a leader. With a company of 88% BIPOC artists, myself included, creating a play in an educational institution, my journey encompassed theatre-making while consciously diverging from production choices historically influenced by “White American Theatre” practices.

My upbringing predominantly reflected an American capitalist culture intertwined with the pervasive influence of white supremacy—the social, economic, and political systems that collectively enable white people to maintain power over people of other races. I unconsciously internalized and applied to myself and others the practices of white supremacy, particularly through my work as a theatrical stage manager. As I consciously confronted and relinquished the pursuit of perfectionism—a white supremacist standard—I redirected my focus toward cultivating a loving community that embraced multiple truths, identities, and perspectives.

Reflecting on my transformative journey through *The Promise*, I stand enriched by the profound lessons learned. This experience shattered the confines of traditional norms implanted within me and ignited a passion for advocating inclusive, compassionate leadership in the theatrical landscape. It marks a professional milestone and a personal evolution of values, guiding me toward leadership immersed in empathy and understanding, and a steadfast commitment to dismantling systemic barriers. Diverging from Guzman, my promise is a fierce commitment to anti-racist practices, nurturing inclusive spaces, and leading with unwavering authenticity and compassion.