

Xavier Custodio
Artistic Director



Visión Latino Theatre Company Presents

Just Like Us

Written By: Karen Zacarías

Directed By: Xavier Custodio

Inspired by the non-fiction book by Helen Thorpe

Stage Manager/ Costume Designer: Yajaira Custodio

Set Designer: Johnathan Nieves

Technical Director: Jose Custodio

Just Like Us was given its premiere at Denver Center Theatre Company

A NOTE FROM THE CO-FOUNDERS OF VISIÓN LATINO THEATRE COMPANY

Welcome/ Bienvenido,

Welcome to our home! We are honored to have you here with us today for our production of *Just Like Us*. Visión Latino was created because it was important for us to bring Latino stories to the City of Chicago. We seek to bring Latino stories to our audiences to bridge the gap between cultures and communities of different colors and backgrounds. We want to touch lives through empowering work that allows us to grow as a multicultural community in Chicago.

As we started to select our story to share with you for this season, we wanted to choose a play that spoke to the events of our current climate. We came across Karen Zacarías play *Just Like Us*, based on Helen Thorpe's bestselling book, a true story about four Mexican girls coming of age in America, two who are undocumented and two who are not. *Just Like Us* goes beyond just talking about the status of Marisela, Yadira, Clara, and Elissa. *Just Like Us* asks the question, "What makes us American?".

We are honored to share a story that truly reflects our vision, which is to share the Latino struggles and perseverance. On April 22, 2016 Visión Latino Theatre Company became a 501(c)3 Not for Profit Organization. We felt it was important to become a Not for Profit because we want our voice to be heard around the City of Chicago. As we continue to grow and bring more stories like *Just Like Us*, we will need support from our community. We cannot do this alone and if you would like to be on this journey with us please contact us at info@visionlatino.com.

Again, Welcome to our home, and enjoy the show.

"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" - written by Emma Lazarus

Thank you for coming out and supporting our vision,

Johnathan Nieves
Associate Artistic Director

Yajaira Custodio
Associate Artistic Director

Xavier Custodio
Artistic Director



VISIÓN LATINO THEATRE COMPANY'S ARTISTIC TEAM

Xavier CustodioArtistic Director
Yajaira CustodioAssociate Artistic Director
Johnathan Nieves.....Associate Artistic Director

PRODUCTION STAFF:

Xavier CustodioDirector
Yajaira Custodio Stage Manager/Costume Designer
Johnathan Nieves.....Set Designer/Production Manager
Jose Custodio..... Technical Director

VISIÓN LATINO THEATRE COMPANY'S MISSION AND VISION

Mission: Visión Latino Theatre Company, Latinos with a Vision, brings awareness to Latinos past, present, and future through storytelling.

Vision: Visión Latino Theatre Company seeks to break down racial boundaries and to open the minds of audiences to latino struggles and perseverance through theatre



SPECIAL THANK YOU

We would like to thank the following people of their support; Wanda Baez, Jose Custodio, Stephanie Gonzalez, Janira Hernandez, Jose Bolanos Ivan Vega, Naomi Nakayama, and Omar Torres-Kortright. We are truly thankful for your time to help Visión Latino make their vision come true. Thank you to our continuous donor John Carlson for helping us tell our story.

Also, we would like to thank the Saints for all the wonderful work they do.

If you would like to help Visión Latino Theatre Company in anyway, please email us at info@visionlatino.com.

DONATION

Visión Latino Theatre Company is a 501(c)3 Organization all donations are Tax Deductible.
If you like to make a donation please see one of our volunteers
or visit us at www.visionlatino.com

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Hashtags for “Just Like Us”
#Justlikeus #vltc #visionwithaction #supportthevision

CAST (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

Jessica Goforth Helen Thorpe
Rebecca Escobedo Marisela
Vanessa Garcia..... Yadira
Elyssa Treviño..... Clara
Jocelyn Sanchez..... Elissa/Zulema
Dago Soto Fabian/Tom Tancredo /Recruiter (Tom Johnson)
/Cezar Mesquita/Carlos/Federico Peña/Cop/Ensemble
Ana Santos Josefa/Mrs.Smith/Carol Vizzi/Alma/Lisa Martinez
Flavia Pallozzi Yolanda/Ana/Cynthia/Poundstone/Lucy/Business Woman
Dylan Cruz..... Julio/Ramiro/Mike McGarry/Ensemble

SETTING

TIME:

Various years between 2004 – 2008

PLACE:

Just Like Us takes place various location in Denver, Colorado.
Roosevelt High School, Marisela’s Home, The Tattered Cover Bookstore,
University of Denver, Club Fantasía, The Bus Station, and Denver Capitol

There will be one fifteen-minute intermission

The use of cameras, videotape recorders, or audio recorders during
this performance is strictly prohibited by copyright laws.

WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST



**Rebecca
Escobedo**



Vanessa Garcia



Elyssa Treviño



**Jocelyn
Sanchez**



Jessica Goforth



Dago Soto



Ana Santos



Flavia Pallozzi



Dylan Cruz

“A nation ringed by walls will only imprison itself.”
— Barack Obama

Dylan Cruz (*Julio/Ramiro/Mike McGarry/Ensemble*) a native of the south suburbs of Chicago, began acting at the age of five, where he found himself becoming very passionate about the craft of acting over the years. With the dream of becoming an actor, he began auditioning for a plethora of projects-that he'd later wrap productions on. Being his first show with Visión Latino theater company, Dylan is very proud to work on Just Like Us as well as having the opportunity to take part in being a voice for the Latino community.

Rebecca Escobedo (*Marisela*) Rebecca Escobedo is a proud West Texan Latina, having moved to Chicago after completing her BFA in Theatre Performance at UTEP in May 2015. Her professional career includes a number of dramatic and comedic plays, musicals, sketch comedies, web series, short films, and lead roles in several episodes for NBC true crime shows; currently she can also be seen as Lacey in the YouTube web series "Anytown, USA" as well as performing with sketch comedy group Mass St. Productions. She would like to thank her family and friends for supporting her ventures, Andres for keeping her fed and happy, and everyone at Vision Latino for their companionship on this journey.

Vanessa Garcia (*Yadira*) is a recent graduate from Illinois State University where she received a BA in Acting and English Studies. She has also been a student at Second City and iO in Chicago for nearly five years where she has performed a number of times. She was recently seen at the Chicago Sketch Festival performing alongside her cast of Potluck. As a Latina, Vanessa is proud to be in the production of Just Like Us and looks forward to sharing this touching story that holds dear to her heart. When she's not on stage, you can catch Vanessa twerking or eating tortas de carne asada con todo."

Jessica Goforth (*Helen Thorpe*) was last seen in *7 Plays In 7 Days* (The Traveler and the Seeker). Past credits include *Oliver!* and *The Tempest* with Saint Sebastian Players, *The Comedy of Errors* with Spectralia Theatre Company, *The Wind in the Willows* with Theatre-Hikes, *The God Committee* with James Downing Theatre, *Off The Map* with Village Theatre Guild, *The House of Bernarda Alba* with Circle Theatre, and *The Player Queen* with Cave Painting Theater Company. Jessica has a B.A. in Theatre and Communications from Carthage College. She is a board member with Saint Sebastian Players and an artistic associate with Theatre-Hikes. She thanks Vision Latino Theatre Company, Dennis and her family and friends for their support. Thank you for supporting live theatre!

Flavia Pallozzi (*Yolanda/Ana/Cynthia/Poundstone/Lucy/Business Woman*) is an Uruguayan actress who is grateful to be working with this fabulous team on such a topical piece. Originally from Miami, FL, she has worked with the Chicago Shakespeare Project, Spartan Theatre, Lifeline Theatre, Teatro Vista, and Victory Gardens. Many thanks to Visión Latino and remember to KEEP FIGHTING through these strange times.

Jocelyn Sanchez (*Elissa/Zulema*) is an alumnus of Curie High School for the Performing Arts. She majored in vocal music and was involved in the theater department. She was also a member of Musicality Vocal Ensemble for three years and is currently part of Musicality's board of directors. After high school she decided to enroll to The School of Life in which one never stops learning. Jocelyn is part of the worship band at Epic Church in Wicker Park. She was also recently seen in the Chicago Musical Theater Festival originating the role of Kit in *Nine Lives A New Musical*. As a Mexican-American, being part of the production Just Like Us fills her with compassion and pride for roots, and she is honored to be part of telling such an important story. Jocelyn stands by the

quote of Leo Buscaglia, "Your talent is God's gift to you. What you do with it is your gift back to God."

Ana Santos (*Josefa/Mrs. Smith/Carol Vizzi/Alma/Lisa Martinez*) Actress, singer, director, playwright and costume designer from Cidra, Puerto Rico. Ana began singing and acting for her church at the age of three. She was a student of Sociology and Theatre at the University of Puerto Rico where she adopted the techniques of Augusto Boal under the mentorship of the actor-mime Rafael Fuentes and voice technique under the mentorship of Dr. Amilcar Rivera-Diaz. She has participated in film, music and theater in Puerto Rico, France, Spain, Florida and Chicago; and the International Theater Festival; Franche Comte, Busançon, France. Ana had a lead singing role for the group David Hernandez and his Chicago Street Sounds and is an active member of the music group NuBambu. Recent stage roles include *The Vagina Monologues* with Grinlight Theater Company, *Perfectamente Loca* (a staged reading for the Carnival Festival of New Latin@ Works at DePaul University) and *Tren al Sur* for Santodomingo Productions. Ana is part of the Agujijón Theater ensemble. Her credits with Agujijón include *La Chunga*, *The House of Bernarda Alba*, *Epopeya*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Adverses*.

Dago Soto (*Fabian/Tom Tancredo/Recruiter (Tom Johnson)/Cezar Mesquita/Carlos/Federico Peña/Cop/Ensemble*) is a native resident from Little Village, one of Chicago's most vibrant and colorful Latino neighborhoods, and has been performing in both local and national audiences over the last 20 years. His love for acting began at an early age entertaining his family with impersonations of his favorite childhood actors. His passion for acting came to fruition in high school when he auditioned and landed a lead role for a theater stage play and hasn't looked back since. Dago has appeared in an array of supporting to lead roles in TV shows such as General Hospital, Chicago Fire,

Animal Planet, Gangland and features called Shadows of Death, Fangs vs Spurs, Roundabout American, including the hilarious web series The Guys Book Club as well as national and local TV commercials. On stage Dago, has performed for The New Colony Theatre (ensemble member) Broken Nose Theatre, Teatro Vista, Green House Theatre, Gorilla Tango and Clockwise Theatre. He extended his actor role into film production and is a founding member of Structure Productions, an indie film production house which has produced and recently won various picture awards. Dago attended two of Chicago's premier actor training programs at Second City and Piven Theater and currently is enrolled at IO theatre. He lives by the quote, "I am a dreamer, but above all a doer." When Dago is not performing, he is actively involved in his community coaching the local youth baseball team or entertaining the crowds for the Chicago Bulls.

Elyssa Treviño (*Clara*) is honored to be a part of this pivotal piece of theatre! Born and raised in Texas she is a graduate of Texas State University where she obtained her BFA in Theatre with an emphasis on Performance. Some of her past credits include Ghost of Christmas Present in *A Christmas Carol*, Deb in *Ordinary Days*, Dr. Emma Brookner in *The Normal Heart*, and Ouiser Budreaux in *Steel Magnolias*. She would like to thank first and foremost her family, who have always been her biggest supporters, as well as her cast for helping bring this beautiful story to life.

Xavier Custodio (*Director*) is one of the Co-Founders of Visión Latino Theatre Company. Currently, Xavier is the Director of Music at South Shore International College Prep. Xavier Custodio holds a Bachelor of Music Education from VanderCook College of Music and a Master of Arts in School Leadership from Concordia University of Chicago. He has been in the following productions: *The Scarecrow* (Minster Dodge), *Rent* (Benny), *Godspell* (John the Baptist), *Man of La*

Mancha (Juan), *Nine Lives: A Musical Web Series* (BFPS Manger), *Evita*, *Ragtime*, and *The Wiz*. His directing credit includes: *Fame*, *In The Heights*, *Yellow Eyes*, and *Parachute Man* (Assistant Director). Xavier Custodio has trained with Randy Buescher (Your True Voice Studio) and Janet Louer (Acting).

Yajaira Custodio (*Stage Manager/Costume Designer*) is honored to be a part of such an important piece of theatre! She is one of the Co-Founders and Associate Artistic Director of Visión Latino Theatre Company. Yajaira is a graduate of The American Musical and Dramatic Academy (AMDA), where she attended both New York City and Los Angeles campuses. She has been fortunate enough to perform in Puerto Rico, Mexico, and most of the States in the US. Her favorite credits include: *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Ragtime*, *In The Heights*, and most recently the role of Dolores (Lulu) Tirado in *Yellow Eyes*. She would like to thank our director, cast, and production team for sharing this story in such a beautiful way. Also, a special thank you to my closest friends, family, and last but not least her parents for whom none of this would be possible. Always remember no human being is illegal!

Johnathan Nieves (*Set Designer*) Previous stage credits; *Sycamore* (Raven Theatre), *How We Got On* (Haven Theatre), *Compass* (Steppenwolf), *Jesus Hopped the A Train* (Eclipse Theatre) | <3 *Juliet* (Q Brothers/Sketchbook Festival), *Yellow Eyes* (Visión Latino), *My Mañana Comes* (Teatro Vista) *Balm in Gilead* (Griffin Theatre), *Taming Of The Shrew* (Oak Park Theatre Festival), *In The Heights*, (The Center Theatre), *Cabaret* (Actors Training Center). Upcoming: *The River Bride* (Halcyon Theatre) Television credits: Empire, Chicago Fire, and Shameless.

Karen Zacarías (*Playwright*) award-winning plays include the sold-out/extended comedy THE BOOK CLUB PLAY, the sold-out world premiere drama JUST LIKE US (adapted from the book by Helen

Thorpe) at Denver Theater Center, the Steinberg –citation award play LEGACY OF LIGHT, the Francesca Primus Award winning play MARIELA IN THE DESERT, the Helen Hayes Award winning play THE SINS OF SOR JUANA, the adaptation of Julia Alvarez’s HOW THE GARCIA GIRLS LOST THEIR ACCENTS. Karen also has a piece in the Arena Stage premiere of OUR WAR. Her TYA musicals with composer Debbie Wicks la Puma include JANE OF THE JUNGLE, EINSTEIN IS A DUMMY, LOOKING FOR ROBERTO CLEMENTE, CINDERELLA EATS RICE AND BEANS, FERDINAND THE BULL, and FRIDA LIBRE. Her musical CHASING GEORGE WASHINGTON premiered at The Kennedy Center for Performing Arts and went on a National Tour. Her plays have been produced at The John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts, Arena Stage, The Goodman Theater, Round House Theater, The Denver Center, Alliance Theater, Imagination Stage, GALA Hispanic Theater, Berkshire Theater Festival, South Coast Rep, La Jolla Playhouse, Cleveland Playhouse, San Jose Repertory Theater, GEVA Theater, Horizon’s Theater, People’s Light and Theater, Walnut Street Theater, Arden Theater, Milagro Theater, Teatro Vista, Aurora Theater, and many more. Her awards include: New Voices Award, 2010 Steinberg Citation-Best New Play, Paul Aneillo Award, National Francesca Primus Prize, New Voices Award, National Latino Play Award, Finalist Susan Blackburn, Helen Hayes for Outstanding New Play. Karen is the first playwright-in-residence at Arena Stage in Washington, DC and has taught playwriting at Georgetown University. She is the founder of Young Playwrights’ Theater, an award-winning theater company that teaches playwriting in local public schools in Washington, DC. YPT won the 2010 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award from the White House as one of the most innovative arts programs in the nation. The YPT curriculum is currently being used in public schools in DC, VA, MD, New Orleans, Detroit, and Texas and is published on Amazon as “WRITE TO DREAM.”