

Sabrina Valdes

Space/Materiality: Community

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Responses

1. How do you identify yourself? With what symbols, experiences, or beliefs, or other guides do you use to create your identity? (2-3 paragraphs)

I am a strong woman. I am a daughter, granddaughter, sister, niece, cousin, girlfriend, best friend, friend, and student. I am “Sabrina Nicole”, “Sabrinita”, “Sabri-bri”, “Sab”, “Girly”, “Sweetheart”, “Princess”, “Weenie”, “George” (that’s a story of its own) and every other loving nickname someone I care about has given me. In addition to my relationships with others and my roles, I am also my experiences, thoughts/beliefs and interests. As a person, I care about the wellbeing of those around me and empathize with them, and am always trying my best in all that I do. I am a hardworker, and have always believed that hard work takes you far - a belief my family has instilled in me. As far as interests are concerned, I am an avid sports fan, reader/writer, music enthusiast, ocean and chocolate lover. Above all, I am an artist - in the vaguest sense of the word.

I also identify myself through my family’s background. I am Cuban, and the third generation to be living in America. I hug when first meeting people, am expressive, enjoy dancing to spanish music and love my grandmother’s arroz con frijoles. My family’s history is a complicated one, and I feel like it has a lot to do with who I am and how I

was raised. Overall, my identity is a mix of the groups and people I associate myself with, my consciousness, and my background - I am all that I have mentioned and more, and this is how I create my identity.

2. How does your environment/community receive you? What part of this is inherent to the community? What part is due to how you engage in it? (2-3 paragraphs)

I feel that I am simultaneously a part of two different communities, but have physically moved from one environment to another - both communities and environments treating me in their own ways with different answers to these questions. On one hand, I am (and have been for many years) part of an art school community and am usually working amongst other creative types. I've found that this community is a very open, accepting and supportive one, and has really helped me to further develop my work and ideas. People talk about topics that really mean something and can even be a bit more mature when it comes to talking about mental/emotional health. The art scene has pulled me in wholeheartedly, and although I feel this behavior is inherent to the community, I also realize that you get out of it what you put into it - If you yourself are not actively engaging in it, it will be no help to you. This community is one where people feed off one another, and you should do your part if you want to grow. The art scene is where I feel comfortable. As far as New York is concerned, it too has taken me in easily. Again, I have to put myself out there, but it is a very diverse place with a lot to offer, both in general and when it comes to art and opportunities.

On the other hand, I am and will always be apart of the community I've created back home consisting of my family, friends and acquaintances - all the way down to the waitresses who know my order by heart at certain restaurants. Although I may not physically be present in

this community at the moment, I am still very in touch with everyone. I feel that this may also have to do with my background and how predominantly hispanic communities in general are very close, everyone present in each others lives. This community serves as yet another support system, and has nourished me in a different way. Unlike the art scene, though, this is one that I can't step in and out of if I wanted to, and there's never a possibility of being left out - this type of community will always be there for you. This group I've been fortunate enough to be apart of has also taken me in with open arms, and I feel that this behavior is very inherent to the community. This is common in Miami.