



fade

by Tanya Saracho

directed by Yesenia Garcia Herrington

Student Resource Guide

FADE RESOURCE GUIDE

WELCOME

Welcome to the Resource Guide for the Austin Community College production of ***Fade*** by Tanya Saracho.

This Guide begins by looking behind the scenes of the production and meeting the team that brought this play to the stage. Next, explore some of the themes of ***Fade*** in depth. Finally, dive deeper with suggested reading, podcasts, or videos to enhance or expand upon the experience of this play.

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SYNOPSIS

When Lucia, a Mexican-born novelist, gets her first TV writing job, she feels a bit out of place on the white male-dominated set. Lucia quickly becomes friends with the only other Latino around, a janitor named Abel. As Abel shares his stories with Lucia, similar plots begin to find their way into the TV scripts that Lucia writes. *Fade* is a play about class and race within the Latinx community, as well as at large, and how status does not change who you are at your core.

(From [Concord Theatricals](#))



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MEET THE DIRECTOR: YESENIA GARCIA HERRINGTON

Director Yesenia Garcia Herrington discusses how *Fade* was chosen for this season, how she approached the play and the themes that draw her to this work.

VOCABULARY TO KNOW

Double cast: two separate casts of actors/performers playing the same characters.

Understudy: a performer who is tasked with taking over a single actor's role should that other actor be unable to perform.

Swing: a performer who is capable of taking over multiple actors' roles should any of them be unable to perform.

Fresa: Mexican or Latin American slang to describe someone who is upper class, educated, and sometimes shallow or superficial.

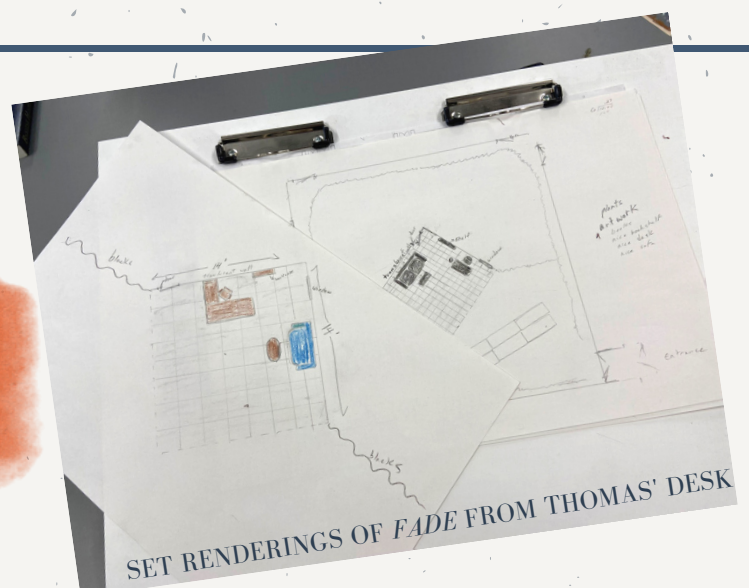


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MEET THE DESIGNERS: THOMAS SALAS *SET DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION*

Designer Thomas Salas discusses creating the world of *Fade*'s set, some of the unique challenges of this production, and how he sees his own experiences reflected in the play.

Learn more about
ACC's Zero Waste
initiatives by
clicking here.





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MEET THE DESIGNERS: STEPHANIE DUNBAR *COSTUME DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION*

Designer Stephanie Dunbar discusses the unique process of designing and reconstructing costumes for a contemporary play, the small design choices that flesh out a character, and how she connects with the text.

THE COSTUME DESIGN PROCESS

1. Read the script for costume cues.
2. Research
3. Rough draft/ first looks to present to the director
4. Final renderings
5. Build costumes



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MEET THE PLAYWRIGHT: TANYA SARACHO

Playwright Tanya Saracho talks with the Denver Center for the Performing Arts about an early reading of *Fade*, her real-life inspirations for the play, and the complexities of her own identity.

(From the Denver Center Performing Arts Youtube Channel)



Tanya Saracho is a successful playwright, television writer, showrunner, and entrepreneur. She's written for *How to Get Away With Murder*, HBO's *Looking*, and *Devious Maids*. She created and produced 3 seasons of *Vida* for Starz and currently is in pre-production for a new television series tentatively called *15 Candles*. Tanya, with Christine Dávila founded Ojalá, a media company focused on amplifying Latine voices. She was also a co-founder of Chicago's Teatro Luna.



SOCIAL CONTEXT

Fade explores many themes: gender, the functions of class in the United States and Mexico, the underrepresentation of Latinx people in media, the complexities of identity, and so much more. This section expands on only a few of the many pertinent issues that arise in Tanya Saracho's work.

First, learn about the complicated and ever-changing world of cultural identity and nomenclature/naming. Next, examine Latino representation in contemporary media, before, finally, considering what it means to be "Latino enough," in the Americas today.





WHAT'S IN A NAME? HISPANIC, LATINO, CHICANO, & LATINX

How a culture names itself changes throughout time due to a myriad of factors. Some of these factors range from how the culture sees itself in relation to others, how they are legally recognized within a nation, or how gender is recontextualized over time. For Latinx/Latino/Latine/Hispanic peoples, this naming has only become all the more complicated and politicized over recent years. (You may, for instance, notice that this Guide uses multiple versions of these names. This is intentional)

It is helpful to note that, like the characters in *Fade*, such naming can be very personal and spark controversy. A helpful rule of thumb is to listen for what one calls themselves and respect their choice, rather than imposing nomenclature on another.

Below is an insightful article from the History Channel that explains how these various terms have changed and continue to change for this diverse swath of people in the Americas:

"Latino, Hispanic, Latinx, Chicano: The History Behind the Terms"

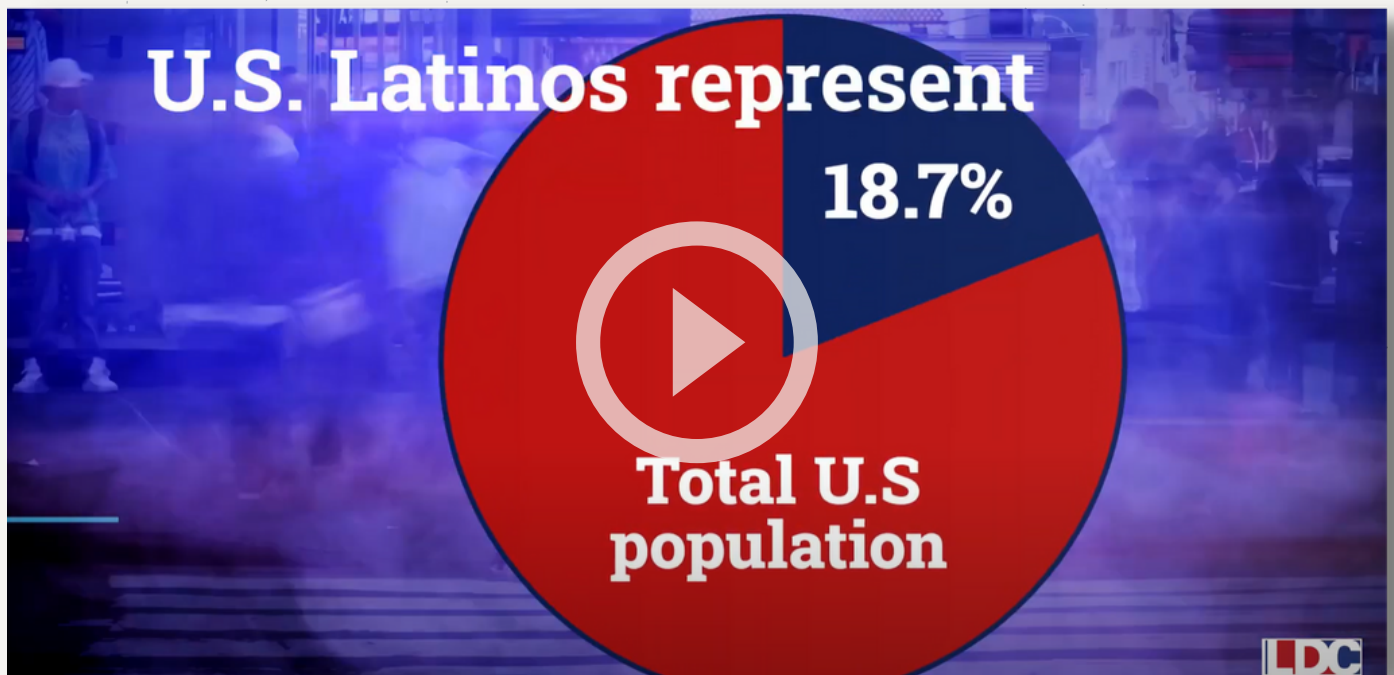
From History.com



LATINO REPRESENTATION IN MEDIA

One of the pertinent issues in *Fade* is the lack of Latino/x/e representation in media. The character Lucia struggles with the idea of being the only Latina in the room and the burden of representing a whole large swath of people. With the explosion of film and television streaming platforms, there have been some great strides towards representation on screen, but even that often reads as two steps forwards, three steps back. Often, critically-acclaimed shows, such as Tanya Saracho's *Vida* or Netflix's *Gentified* or *One Day at a Time*, only get two to three seasons before getting the axe.

The video and graphic below come from a 2021 study commissioned by the [Latino Donor Collaborative](#), a DC-based think tank dedicated to the stronger representation of Latino people in politics and society.



CLICK THE ABOVE IMAGE FOR A VIDEO

LATINO REPRESENTATION IN MEDIA

(CONTINUED)

2021 LATINOS IN MEDIA REPORT



UNCOVERING THE OPPORTUNITY OF LATINO REPRESENTATION IN FILMS AND SHOWS

Latinos are the largest minority in America and the motor of demographic and economic growth. **(18.7% of the U.S. population)** Yet, they are **vastly underrepresented in mainstream content.**



2.9%

OF LATINO
LEADS IN
SHOWS



5.0%

OF LATINO
LEADS IN FILM



3.7%

OF LATINO
ENSEMBLES IN
SHOWS



3.4%

OF LATINO
CO-LEADS AND
ENSEMBLES IN
FILM



2.5%

OF LATINO
SHOWRUNNERS
IN SHOWS



4.4%

OF LATINO
WRITERS IN
FILM



2.5%

OF LATINO
DIRECTORS IN
SHOWS



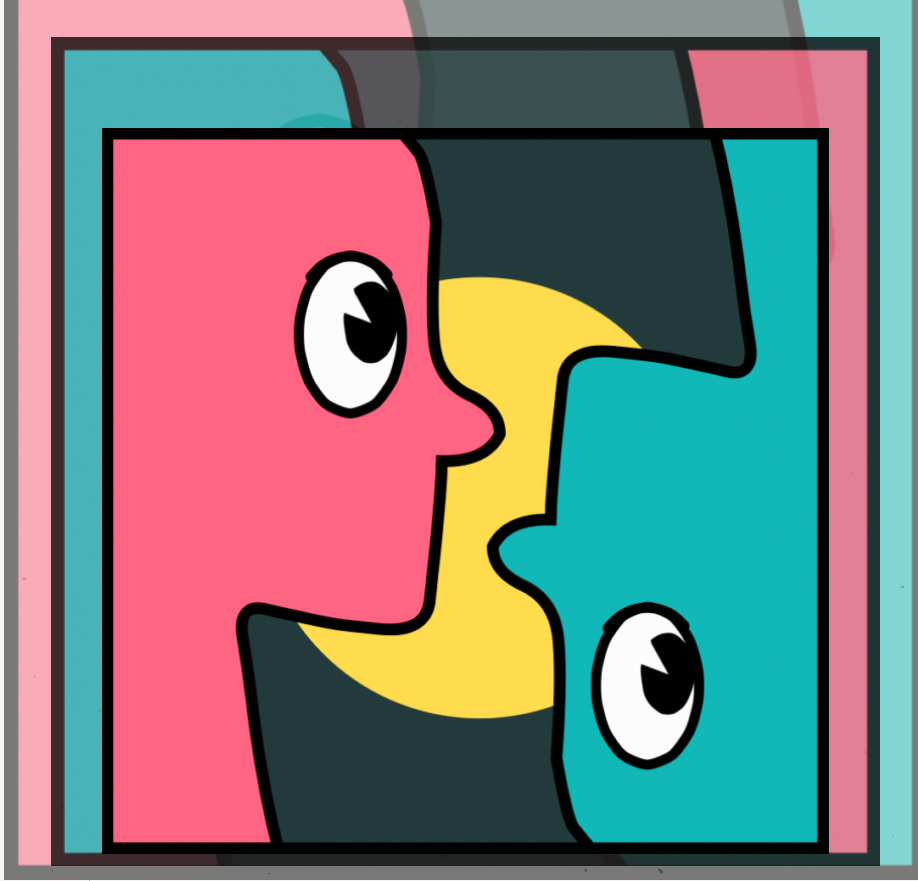
6.7%

OF LATINO
DIRECTORS IN
FILM

For more information and details of the report,
please email us at info@latinocollaborative.org
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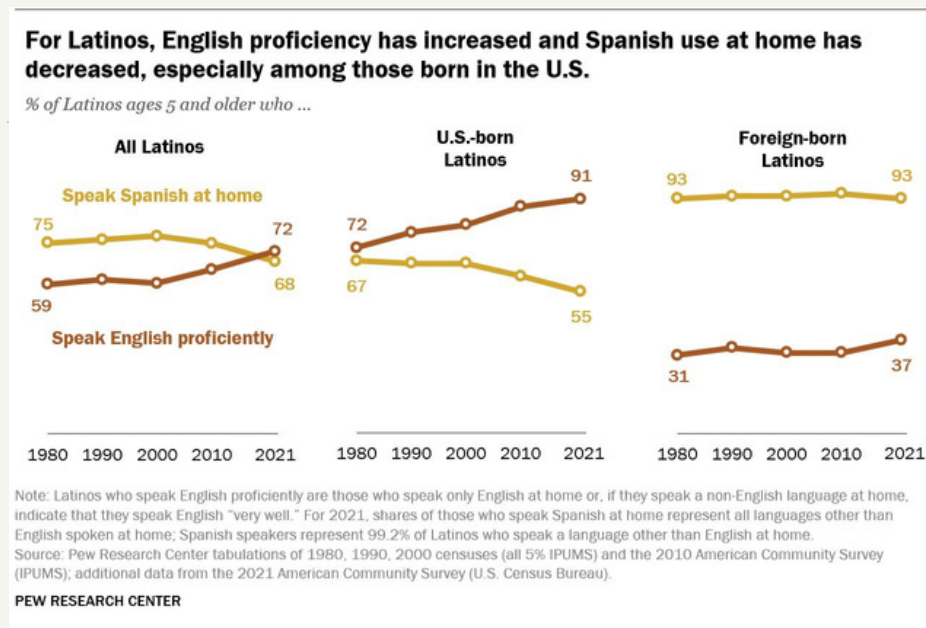
WHO IS LATINO ENOUGH?

BY JAMES MONTAÑO

Often being Latino/x/e in the United States involves living in what some researchers call a “liminal space”, or an in-between space. It is a space where one balances living out the various aspects of one’s cultural identity, such as language (usually Spanish), food (think: frijoles, platanos, chiles), dress, and music, while also adopting the aspects of being an “American”, such as speaking English, engaging in U.S. pop culture, and eating American cuisine. A complicated part of such liminality or in-between-ness is that one can feel criticized by both the larger U.S. culture for not being American enough and while at home, by the family for not being Latino enough. This tension plays out in the classic film *Selena*, in a scene where the young pop star (played by Jennifer Lopez) thrills at the idea of performing in Mexico. Her father, played by Edward James Olmos, patiently explains, “Being Mexican American is tough. Anglos jump all over you if you don’t speak English perfectly. Mexicans jump all over you if you don’t speak Spanish perfectly. We gotta be twice as perfect as everybody else.”

The complexity of navigating the dual identity of U.S. Latinidad becomes clearer when one looks at the changing demographics in the country. A 2022 Pew Research Center report notes that, from 2010 to 2021, Hispanics—the term the U.S. government commonly used to broadly describe Latinx peoples—made up over 50% of U.S. population growth, despite a decline in immigration. For scale, this growth has exponentially exploded from the 1970s to the current moment. In 1970, the Hispanic population in the U.S. was around 9.6 million, a drop in the bucket compared to the 62.5 million Hispanics in 2021.

WHO IS LATINO ENOUGH? (CONTINUED)



At the same time, Spanish use in Latino households has precipitously declined. In 1980, 75% of Latinos spoke Spanish in their homes, while only 59% spoke English proficiently. Those numbers have gradually flipped. As of 2021, only 68% of Latinos speak Spanish at home while 72% utilize English. And yet, the marker of language as a facet of "true" Latinx identity

remains difficult. A 2015 Pew Research Study asked Hispanics if "it is/is not necessary for a person to speak Spanish to be considered Hispanic/Latino." A full 71% of Latinos said that Spanish was not a necessary marker of Latino identity.

Despite this assertion, pressures to prove one's Latino-ness through language remain. *Fade* director Yesenia Garcia Herrington remarked in a recent interview that the play asks the question "What is 'enough'?" when it comes to Latinx identity. Yesenia was raised in a Mexican American family of first-generation migrant farmworkers. She notes that they "weren't quite Mexican, like our cousins were [in Mexico], but we weren't quite American because of where we came from... This duality is something that a lot of people struggle with, especially people that I know that call themselves 'no sabe' kids—they don't speak Spanish. This brings the idea of 'what does it mean to be enough'?"



FADE DIRECTOR YESENIA GARCIA HERRINGTON

One way to identify how aspects of identity are performed/enacted and enforced is to look at other theories around similar performances, such as gender. While it is often taken for granted that culture is a fixed, unchanging aspect of identity like gender, contemporary gender theory has noted that many facets of identity are constructed and "instituted through a stylized repetition of acts." Performance feminist Judith Butler, in their seminal 1988 article "[Performance Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay on Phenomenology and Feminist Theory](#)" (*Theatre Journal*) notes how gender is "performed" through clothing (think: costuming), styles of speech (performance dialogue), and how people move (choreography). All those elements of performance make up a culturally constructed definition of gender.

WHO IS LATINO ENOUGH? (CONTINUED)

Those elements of performance also have changed over time and will continue to change and yet, like *Latinidad*, are policed and maintained internally and externally. Butler also notes that the policing of gender is often done through “kinship” or family ties first, meaning that early on, the family defines what it means to be a gendered person. To extend this to Latinx culture, we can presume that many of those same aspects of performance—costume, dialogue, and choreography—are embedded in cultural identity as well and are policed from inside Latinx families and culture first. Criticism about one’s identity then emerges from the broader U.S. culture next.

The pressure to define oneself as “Latino enough” is something that is sure to only become more complicated as U.S. demographics continue to change. And while the intricacies of identity can be uncomfortable and sometimes isolating, it is also helpful to note that one is not alone in this discomfort. Many people are questioning whether they are “enough,” but the reality is that everyone is simply who they are, built from whatever environment nurtured them. Simply stated: we all are enough.



THE LEARN MORE LIST



This section provides the opportunity to explore some of the themes and topics in *Fade* on your own. Below is a short resource list that expands on some of the ideas in the play.

On Latinx Representation in Media

LISTEN: "[Latinos in Hollywood](#)" NPR series on Latino history, representation, and futures on the silver screen.

LISTEN: [Tanya Saracho on Latino USA](#) (NPR) discussing *Vida* and the rarity of complex Latina stories.

WATCH: [Rep. Joaquin Castro](#) on NPC Newsmakers discussing congressional research into Latino representation in media.

READ: "[Hispanic Underrepresentation in the Media](#)", a 2021 report from the Government Accountability Office.

On Identity

READ: "[When Labels Don't Fit: Hispanics and Their Views of Identity](#)" from the Pew Research Center.

LISTEN: "[Latinx: The Ungendering of the Spanish Language](#)" a short conversation about nomenclature from LatinoUSA (NPR).

WATCH: "[Struggles of Not Feeling Latino Enough](#)" personal reflections from the *Pero Like* Youtube crew.

On Women in Hollywood

READ: "[Behind the Scenes: The State of Inclusion and Equity in TV Writing](#)", a 2021 study by the Think Tank for Inclusion and Equity.

WATCH: "[Celluloid Ceilings: Women Directors Speak Out](#)" Bloomberg Quicktake talks to female directors about the limitations placed on women directors in film.

READ: "[What it's like being the 'only woman in the room' on a TV show](#)", Todd VanDerWerff interviews tv writer Nell Scovell (*The Simpsons*, *NCIS*) following the release of her book.