

# HUNDREDS OF STARS

by Sandra Delgado directed by Kimberly Senior





Dear Friends,

Welcome to the world premiere of Sandra Delgado's *Hundreds and Hundreds of Stars*.

We're thrilled to have you join us as we embark on our 29th season and a year of remarkable transformation for TimeLine, as we'll soon be opening our home in Uptown, beginning a new era for our organization.

Since our founding in 1997, TimeLine's mission has been about making connections—between past and present, between art and audience, and between the issues that define our time and the future we'll build together. That mission underscores our fervent belief in the importance of examining an unvarnished history, recognizing that we cannot build a more just future without understanding our collective past.

Today, that mission and commitment feel more important than ever, furthering our conviction to uplift everyone's history, while creating much-needed space for respectful discourse and contemplation about today's social and political issues.

Next spring, we'll welcome you to our new home at 5035 N. Broadway—a center that will allow TimeLine to embody our mission in expanded ways and extend our engagement with you beyond the stage with space designed to foster conversations, learning, and connections. This new home will allow us to grow and

innovate—taking our work to the next level while extending what an evening at the theatre can be, including exhibit galleries and a café and bar to encourage you to arrive early and stay late.

While we eagerly await welcoming you to Uptown, we're proud to bring our mission to the historic Water Tower Water Works, hosted by our friends at Lookingglass Theatre, for this timely, poignant, and heart-stirring story.

It's a play about this moment. It's about the United States. About Chicago. About immigration. And deportation. It's about what America means.

As I write this in mid-September, our city is at an inflection point, with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) amplifying a climate of fear with a surge called "Operation Midway Blitz." I can only speculate what headlines will be weeks from now when you read this note and attend this production.

Hundreds and Hundreds of Stars could not be more resonant, even though it is set in what might feel like the very distant past—2015—in a notably different national political climate and four years prior to the State of Illinois passing a law legalizing recreational marijuana use.

Through the lens of today, a decade ago seems in stark contrast with where we find ourselves. But this story depicts how seeds have been sown for a while, leading to what might feel like unprecedented times. In 2015, then President Barack Obama noted that "our immigration system is broken—and everybody knows it." This play embodies that sentiment in deeply personal ways, as a mother and daughter face devastating separation.

Making her TimeLine debut, playwright and star Sandra Delgado at the first rehearsal of Hundreds and Hundreds of Stars in September.











TimeLine's new home, currently under construction at 5035 N. Broadway in Chicago's Uptown neighborhood and scheduled to open in Spring 2026, will feature exhibit galleries, a flexible black-box theatre, café/bar, and more. (Renderings by HGA and Jeffrey D. Kmiec)

We're honored to welcome to TimeLine for the first time Sandra Delgado, a multi-hyphenate talent we've admired immensely throughout our company's history. She has distinguished herself as an essential artistic voice in Chicago, with a career that includes acting, writing, singing, and producing. That breadth of talent is celebrated in this production as both playwright and leading actor.

And we're thrilled to partner Sandra with her longtime friend and collaborator—and one of TimeLine's favorite directors—Kimberly Senior, returning for her fifth production with us.

The trajectory of their remarkable careers has been on parallel tracks with TimeLine's own evolution. We were all getting our start and meeting nearly 30 years ago, brimming with optimism and ambition. Since then, both have developed renowned, national careers, while maintaining an indelible connection with this city.

We're grateful to have these treasured Chicago artists at TimeLine, and we're so appreciative to have you join us for this play and ensuing conversations, as we launch a new, milestone season for TimeLine.

Can't wait for all that lies ahead!

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# THE TIMELINE: IMMIGRATION POLICY IN THE U.S.

1790 The Naturalization Act of 1790 determines citizenship eligibility for "free white person[s]."

1798 The Alien and Sedition Acts establish the first federal deportation laws, limiting free speech and targeting people deemed political threats.

**1830** The Indian Removal Act authorizes the forced removal of Native Americans west of the Mississippi River.

**1848** The U.S.-Mexico War ends, and Mexico relinquishes 55% of its territory to the U.S. through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

1857 The *Dred Scott v. Sanford*Supreme Court ruling determines that slaves and free African Americans are not U.S. citizens.

**1863** President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation declares freedom for slaves.

1868 To fill labor shortages during construction of the Transcontinental Railroad, the Burlingame Treaty secures rights for Chinese immigration and trade opportunities in China. The 14th Amendment is ratified, guaranteeing birthright citizenship for all people born in the U.S., as well as equal protections and due process for all legal residents.

**1870** The Naturalization Act of 1870 extends naturalization rights to people of African descent.

**1882** The Chinese Exclusion Act becomes the first federal law to ban immigration based on race, prohibiting Chinese immigration.

**1891** Congress creates the Immigration Bureau to oversee immigration.

**1896** The *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court ruling justifies racial segregation under the 14th Amendment as "separate but equal."

WRITTEN BY **ANNA ROGELIO JOAQUIN** ASSISTANT DRAMATURG

Hundreds and Hundreds of Stars takes us back to Chicago in 2015, where we meet a family caught in shifting immigration policies under President Barack Obama. The legality of their lives as they know it is jeopardized, a pattern in the fabric of the United States that neither ended nor began in 2015.

"We didn't cross the border-the border crossed us" is a popular rallying cry for challenging the notion of illegal immigration. The slogan emerged following the U.S.-Mexico War in 1848, which ended with the U.S. seizing more than half of Mexico's territory. Through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, this territory became what is now known as Texas, California, Utah, Nevada, New Mexico, and parts of Arizona, Colorado, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Wyoming. Mexicans living on this land became immigrants without crossing the border-the border crossed them.

Today, the U.S. criminalizes movement across the U.S.-Mexico border while continuing the legacy of violence that created it. In 1954, the CIA backed a coup in Guatemala that led to war and genocide. In the 1980s, the U.S. funded human rights abuses by the military in El Salvador during the Salvadoran Civil War. In the 2000s, the U.S. supported a coup and exploitative trade policies in Honduras. Simultaneously, the U.S. backed coups and severe economic sanctions in Venezuela.

Leaving these homelands is typically not an easy choice, but rather a last resort. Whether or not people are forced to leave, the right to immigrate is one the U.S.—despite

# "We didn't cross the border—the border crossed us"

contributing to the instability and poverty causing people to flee these countries and others—is likely to restrict.

U.S. immigration policy is historically exclusive. The first law to determine eligibility for U.S. citizenship was the Naturalization Act of 1790, a right initially reserved for "free white person[s]." Only in 1870 was it extended to people of African descent, despite most having been forced to come to the U.S. through the transatlantic slave trade. The first federal deportation laws came with the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, which limited freedom of speech and authorized the deportation of noncitizens deemed political threats.

The first federal law to ban immigration based on race came with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which was imposed only after the U.S. relied on Chinese laborers to build the Transcontinental Railroad. In 1924, the Immigration Act of 1924, also known as the Johnson-Reed Act, established national origin quotas that gave preference to northern and western Europeans. The U.S. then shifted policies to prioritize family ties and occupational skills with the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, also known as the Hart-Celler Act. Numerous iterations and tweaks continue to succeed these

President Barack Obama meets with Dreamers, 2015. (Pete Souza / Wikimedia Commons)





Map of the United States following the U.S.-Mexico War, 1848. (Wikimedia Commons)

foundational policies, all fluctuating to reflect political priorities and convenience of the moment.

Under President Obama, in office from 2009 to 2017, immigration policies both opened and closed doors. In 2012, the Obama administration established DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), offering temporary protection from deportation and work authorization to select undocumented immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children. Though the program was not a pathway to citizenship, DACA provided relief to more than 800,000 people, referred to as "Dreamers" after the DREAM Act (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors).

At the same time, the Secure Communities Program, an initiative launched in 2008 under President George W. Bush and expanded under President Obama, strengthened collaboration between local law enforcement and federal immigration authorities. Deportations hit record highs as the Obama administration deported more people—more than 3 million—than any previous administration. While President Obama targeted "felons, not families," people with minor offenses or no criminal record were still deported. Such is the backdrop of *Hundreds and Hundreds of Stars*, as well as the precedent for immigration policy today.

The U.S. is a nation of immigrants, but not without dissonance. Migration is forced and criminalized. Immigrants are welcomed and villainized. Lady Liberty beckons, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free." The latest immigration policy determines their future.

1898 The Spanish-American War ends. The U.S. establishes sovereignty over Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines, as well as a protectorate over Cuba.

1903 The Immigration Act of 1903 targets anarchists for exclusion and deportation.

**1907** The Expatriation Act of 1907 strips U.S. citizenship from women if they marry non-citizen immigrant men.

**1917** The Immigration Act of 1917, or the Barred Zone Act, bars entry to the U.S. from the Asia-Pacific region and implements a literacy test in the immigration process.

The Jones-Shafroth Act grants U.S. citizenship to Puerto Ricans.

**1918** The Wartime Measure of 1918 enforces immigration restrictions during WWI, targeting political radicals.

**1921** The Emergency Quota Law imposes caps on immigration.

1922 The Cable Act of 1922 restores U.S. citizenship to women who had lost it under the Expatriation Act of 1907.

The *Ozawa v. United States* Supreme Court ruling determines that Asians are not racially white and are therefore not eligible for citizenship.

In *United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind*, the Supreme Court rules that Thind is not eligible for citizenship, despite Asian Indians being technically Caucasian.

**1924** The Indian Citizenship Act declares that all Native Americans born in the U.S. are citizens by birth.

The Immigration Act of 1924, or the Johnson-Reed Act, limits immigration by establishing national origin quotas.

**1929–1936** Border Patrol enforces Mexican Repatriation in response to the Great Depression, detaining and deporting approximately 2 million Mexicans.

1929 The Undesirable Aliens Act of 1929, or Blease's Law, criminalizes border crossing outside ports of entry. 1934 The Tydings-McDuffie Act limits

Filipino immigration to 50 per year.



"America" makes its debut on Martin Waldseemüller's map in 1507. (Library of Congress / Wikimedia Commons)

WRITTEN BY **ANNA ROGELIO JOAQUIN**, ASSISTANT DRAMATURG

Who is an American? Residents of the United States of America? Citizens? What about South Americans? Or people in U.S. territories like Puerto Rico?

On a voyage in the early 1500s, Italian explorer Amerigo Vespucci realized that land previously believed to be part of Asia was something else entirely—a "New World," as he called it. In 1507, German cartographer Martin Waldseemüller drew a world map and labeled this area "America" after the explorer. The land would later become part of South America, and the term "America" would encompass both North and South America.

Beyond lexical debates, residency alone also fails to suffice in determining claim to the term and its benefits. By the time Europeans discovered and conquered the Americas, millions of Indigenous peoples were already living there. From the 16th to the 19th century, Europeans kidnapped millions of Africans and brought them to the

Americas through the transatlantic slave trade. And yet, neither of these groups would officially be considered Americans for centuries to come.

One path to becoming a U.S. American is citizenship. However, this exclusive route has historically been contingent on whiteness, another identity with legal trappings. In the 1922 Supreme Court case of *Ozawa v. United States*, Takao Ozawa, who was Japanese, was denied U.S. citizenship for not being Caucasian. A year later, *United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind* resulted in Thind being denied citizenship due to his Indian identity, despite being technically Caucasian. Following the 9/11

Braceros arrive in Los Angeles, 1942. (Dorothea Lange / Wikimedia Commons)



attacks in 2001, the U.S. restricted immigration from Southwest Asian and North African countries, despite the legal classification of many people from those regions as white in the U.S. census. Whiteness, like United States citizenship, has proven to be a manipulatable construct.





(Top) Plaque recognizing the contributions of Chinese workers to building the Southern Pacific Railroad.

(Bottom) Poster announcing the democratic passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act.

The U.S. has been especially inclined to bend the rules when in need of labor. To fill labor shortages during the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad, the Burlingame Treaty of 1868 allowed for Chinese immigration. To fill agricultural labor shortages during and after World War II, the Bracero Program permitted Mexican men

to work in the U.S. In both cases, the U.S. was swift to retract its welcoming arms, implementing the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 and mass deportations of Mexicans who participated in the Bracero Program. These groups followed legal protocol, but that wasn't enough to secure legal status.

Today, opponents of immigration will occasionally qualify that they do support immigration—they just want people to come here the "right" way. However, time and time again, the legality of American identity has been a moving target out of aim. Asylum seekers flee violence, poverty, climate change, and political instability aggravated by the U.S., only to be denied by the U.S. Babies are born in the U.S. to families who are undocumented and grow up navigating mixed status households. Children come to the U.S. and know no other home, only to be told as adults they don't belong. Others arrive and depart as they please, without doubt or fear. American identity was built on movement, a freedom selectively withheld today.

1942–1964 To fill World War II-related labor shortages, the Bracero Program allows Mexican men to work in the U.S. Exploitative labor practices lead to the formation of farmworker unions and the end of the program in 1964.

1942–1945 Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt authorizes the forced relocation of Japanese Americans from the West Coast into internment camps via Executive Order 9066.

1943 China's importance as a World War II ally leads the U.S. to repeal Chinese Exclusion laws.

1945-1946 The War Brides Acts make exceptions to national origin quotas to help World War II soldiers return with partners they had met abroad.

1948 The Displaced Persons Act authorizes admission of refugees from Europe and legal status for asylum seekers already in the U.S.

1952 The McCarran-Walter Act ends racial restrictions on citizenship but maintains national origin quotas and expands immigration enforcement. The Immigration and Nationality Act creates the H-2 non-immigrant visa category for temporary workers.

1953 The Refugee Relief Act provides more than 200,000 visas to refugees.

1954 The Immigration Bureau starts a mass deportation of Mexicans through "Operation Wetback," titled after a slur referring to Mexican immigrants.

**1965** The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, or Hart-Celler Act, establishes preferences for immigration categories: 75% family reunification, 20% employment, and 5% refugees.

1966 The Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966 expedites the immigration process for Cubans in response to the Cuban Revolution led by Fidel Castro.

1975 The Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act allows about 135,000 Vietnamese and other Southeast Asians to come to the U.S.

WRITTEN BY YASMIN ZACARIA MIKHAIEL, DRAMATURG

Logan Square, once a stronghold of working-class, multi-generational families—particularly among Chicago's Latino communities—has undergone dramatic change since 2015. *Hundreds and Hundreds of Stars*, with characters who call this neighborhood home, is situated on the cusp of change.

For decades, the neighborhood's housing stock of two-flats, three-flats, and greystones supported extended families living together or in close proximity. Multi-generational living allowed for shared economic support, childrearing, and the preservation of cultural traditions.

However, the past decade has seen a rapid shift. Gentrification has reshaped the neighborhood's demographics, with long-time residents being priced out due to rising rents and property taxes. The central family in the play has mixed thoughts, with some members leaning into nostalgia and some appreciating fewer parking lots.

What's clear from our 2025 vantage point is that the conversion of multi-unit homes into single-family residences and luxury condos has further reduced the availability of family-friendly housing. As Logan Square became majority white





(Top) Aerial view of the Illinois Centennial Monument and the historic Logan Square Boulevard. (Wikimedia Commons) (Bottom) View of Encuentro Square construction, circa 2023. (Department of Housing / Chicago Housing Authority)

around 2017, the community's historical character and housing dynamics began to erode.

Despite these pressures, some efforts to preserve multi-generational living remain. Community organizations and land trusts have stepped in to protect affordable housing and resist displacement. Projects like Encuentro Square secured 55 affordable housing units for families, while groups like the Here to Stay Community Land Trust work to keep homes in the hands of long-time residents.

The legacy of multi-generational living in Logan Square serves as a reminder of what's at stake in urban change: not just housing, but the interwoven lives, stories, and support systems that define a neighborhood.

Logan Square streets feature greystones, brownstones, frame houses, and more, which have become increasingly less accessible to multi-generational familes in the past decade. (Leo Heisenberg / Unsplash; James Andrews / Dreamstime)





# **HE INTERVIEW**

SENIOR

PLAYWRIGHT SANDRA DELGADO AND DIRECTOR KIMBERLY





Playwright Sandra Delgado (left) and director Kimberly Senior.

During the pre-production process for TimeLine's world premiere *Hundreds and Hundreds of Stars*, director Kimberly Senior (KS) spoke with playwright Sandra Delgado (SD). They discussed Sandra's writing process at the heart of a Chicago story steeped in history, movement, and magic.

THIS INTERVIEW WAS FACILITATED, TRANSCRIBED, AND EDITED BY DRAMATURG YASMIN ZACARIA MIKHAIEL

**(KS)** Can you describe to me what it feels like to write something alone in your room and then to hear other people—who are not you—say those words out loud?

(SD) It's honestly one of the greatest gifts of my life. I don't think I will ever get over the feeling of a group of artists getting together and engaging with something that I've imagined, written down, and think about how to turn it into a three-dimensional reality. Actors are magic.

(KS) Working on new work has been my life's work. I love it so much. All of our actors have different levels of familiarity with the script since some of them have been involved in prior workshop processes.

(SD) I did find myself in our workshop going into a sort of fix-it mode, but I was also like, "wait now," we are actually going into a rehearsal process. We have time to really dig into the text and figure it out.

(KS) Where did this play come from?

(SD) This play started from a very special place. There's two layers. There's this magical layer of the play that actually was born out of a María Irene Fornés workshop that I attended through the Latinx Theatre Commons. We were given prompts by Migdalia Cruz, one of the keepers of Fornés' methodology. I started writing and these characters came into focus. I just started writing disconnected scenes.

Then there's a layer rooted in reality inspired by a story that I heard on NPR. It was about a man

**1980** The Refugee Act of 1980 creates adjustable refugee admissions quotas.

**1986** The Immigration Reform and Control Act increases border enforcement and expands work visa programs.

1990 The Immigration Act of 1990 creates H-1B visas for temporary workers.

1996 The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 increases border policing and employment verification.

1997 The Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act grants asylum to Salvadorans, Guatemalans, and Nicaraguans.

**1998** The Haitian Refugee Immigrant Fairness Act creates a path for Haitians living in the U.S. to become legal permanent residents.

2002 Immigration enforcement tightens post-9/11, including through the Homeland Security Act, which creates the Department of Homeland Security.

**2003** Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is created.

2012 Under President Barack Obama, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) offers protection for people who came to the U.S. as children.

**2017** President Donald Trump bans Syrian refugees and imposes a travel ban on six mostly Muslim countries.

2020 President Trump invokes
Title 42 to expel migrants at the border
due to COVID-19 concerns.

2021 President Joe Biden halts border wall construction, increases refugee resettlement capacity, and loosens asylum seeker restrictions.

Upon U.S. military withdrawal from Afghanistan, around 100,000 Afghans become eligible for a U.S. Special Immigrant Visa.

**2022** The U.S. accepts refugees from Ukraine in the face of Russia's invasion.

**2025** President Trump heightens military presence at the U.S.-Mexico border and tightens asylum restrictions.



Director Kimberly Senior at first rehearsal.

from Guyana who had come [to the U.S.] very young on a visa and later faced deportation issues. He was in his mid 30s and he had a son, a wife. It broke their family. It broke my heart. He was sent back to a place where he didn't really have any relationships. These ideas swirled together.

(KS) You are a multi-hyphenate artist—singer, dancer, producer, actor. Why write plays?

(SD) When I started acting, I found myself quickly falling into the new play world. I got to work with some of the greatest Latine playwrights of our generation—Luis Alfaro, Migdalia Cruz, Karen Zacarias, Nilo Cruz, José Rivera. Being in the room, in service to them figuring out what these new plays were—I loved that.

Then after having my daughter, Stella, something changed inside of me. Even after having an amazing career as an actor, there were still characters I hadn't gotten to play and I was interested in elements beyond text. As a young child, I came from a dance, music, and singing background. This play has movement moments and magic and TimeLine has made the space for me to explore that. This is a Chicago story with details I think will delight the audience in a Chicago home.

**(KS)** To be working with you, now, on this deeply personal and very impor-

tant play, feels like another important milestone on our very long timeline together as friends, artists, and creative partners. In his book *Powers of Two*, Joshua Wolf Shenk talks about a resonator/generator relationship, which ultimately ends up feeling like you don't know where the idea even began. I feel similarly about collaborating with you, Sandra.

(SD) 1996. I wasn't a theater artist at the time, but many were among my closest friends. I was singing at my boyfriend's, now husband's, birthday party, in a backyard in Wicker Park. Immediately afterwards, you ran up to me and said, "I want you to be a part of Collaboraction's next production. I want you to sing." And that's how my theater career started. With Kimberly's invitation to play.

(KS) I know our first actual project was you singing a live preshow set for Collaboraction's play *The Most Massive Woman Wins*. We also worked together on shows for Steppenwolf's education programs where you were acting in shows and I was a resident artist. We collaborated as producers on dozens of projects at Collaboraction, spent countless hours reading and debating short scripts for Sketchbook.

(SD) Fast forward through several decades of friendship, through countless collaborations, through marriages, motherhood and a whole lot of life, we meet again in a new way, as director and playwright-actor. It feels so right to be collaborating with you on this play at this time—a dreaming, playing and creating that is fueled by our history and our belief in each other.

**(KS)** We've spent a life developing a language and an aesthetic, learning one another's tastes and preferences and points-of-view. It's been so exciting to build on our trust and the creative energy machine that we've been nurturing for 30 years!

"This play started from a very special place. There's two layers. There's this magical layer [and] then there's a layer rooted in reality ... These ideas swirled together."

— Playwright Sandra Delgado

# DID YOU KNOW TICKET SALES COVER ONLY HALF THE COST OF PRODUCING THE SHOW YOU'RE SEEING?

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YOUR ROLE: VITAL TO SUSTAINING TIMELINE'S WORK

Donations are vital to sustaining our work and YOU are a crucial part of shaping Time-Line's future. Your contributions not only help keep theatre accessible, they also enable us to:

- Invest in 200+ artists, staff, and teaching artists who bring TimeLine's mission to life as we grow into our next era.
- Share the power of theatre with more than 600 students annually through our Living History program.
- Present and nurture groundbreaking new and acclaimed plays—like the one you're about to see!

As we stand on the precipice of making our new home in Uptown a reality—a vibrant space where audiences, artists, and students can gather to learn, grow, and imagine the future together—we invite you to join us by making a gift to TimeLine's Annual Fund!

#### **BECOME A HISTORY MAKER!**

Deepen your connection to TimeLine and meet others who share your passion by joining The History Makers Society.

With a gift of \$1,000 or more by the end of 2025, you'll receive a special invitation to our Winter 2026 History Makers Social, featuring an exclusive look at an upcoming production.



TO MAKE A DONATION and learn more about TimeLine's giving levels, visit timelinetheatre.com/individual-giving or scan the OR Code.







TOP): Members of the 2025 TimeLine South ensemble perform their original piece Shattered: The Fears That Lie Within; Anish Jethmalani and Tina Muñoz Pandya in Dhaba On Devon Avenue; members of TimeLine's Staff, Board, and Company toured construction progress at our new home in Septembers.

# **BACKSTORY:** THE CREDITS

Dramaturgy & Research by Yasmin Zacaria Mikhaiel and Anna Rogelio Joaquin

Written by Yasmin Zacaria Mikhaiel, Anna Rogelio Joaquin and PJ Powers

Editing and Graphic Design by Lara Goetsch

Hundreds and Hundreds of Stars promotional image design by Michal Janicki with photography by Joe Mazza / brave lux, inc.

Backstory is published to accompany each production

#### **OUR MISSION**

TimeLine Theatre presents stories inspired by history that connect with today's social and political issues.

Our collaborative organization produces provocative theatre and educational programs that engage, entertain and enlighten.

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