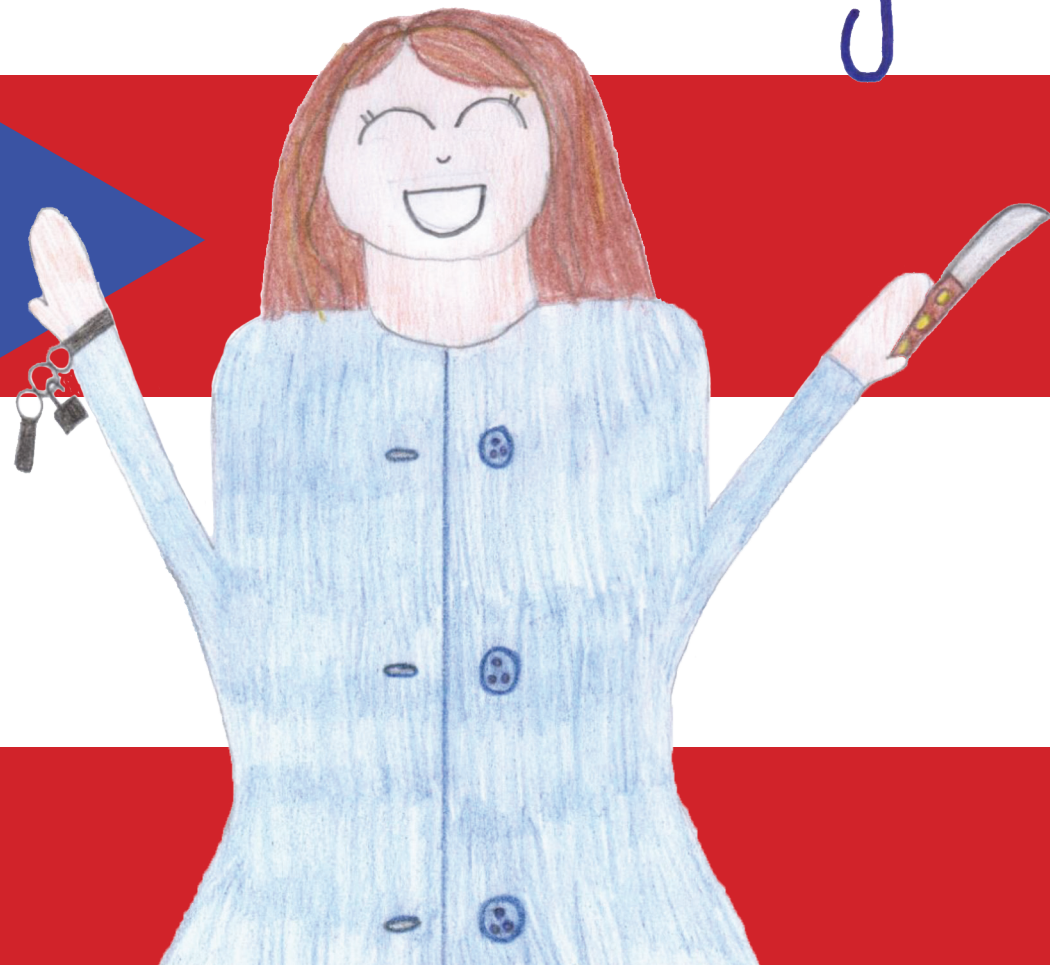


National Youth Foundation *Presents:*

Mariana's Calling



Written & Illustrated by Camila Litvachkes

2020

Amazing Women's Edition Sponsors



OUR MISSION

The National Youth Foundation is dedicated to enriching the lives of children through creative educational programming. Our mission is to promote diversity, inclusion, and gender equality, while helping young students develop their literary skills through academic and team-building projects.

Sophia Hanson, Executive Director

NationalYouthFoundation.org

“Mariana’s Calling, by Camila Litvachke, it’s an unusual take on the historical events of Puerto Rico’s independence movement of the 1860’s. The young author takes the reader along as she travels in time to interview Mariana Brachetti. We get to know this patriot and leader of the movement, through the eyes of the young author.

By inserting herself into the past, Litvachke conveys an engaging immediacy to the story she tells. Part history, part fiction, part science fiction, this is a delightful read.”

Lulu Delacre

Bilingual Author

Three-time Pura Belpré Award Honoree

New York Times Best Selling Illustrator

Dear Readers,

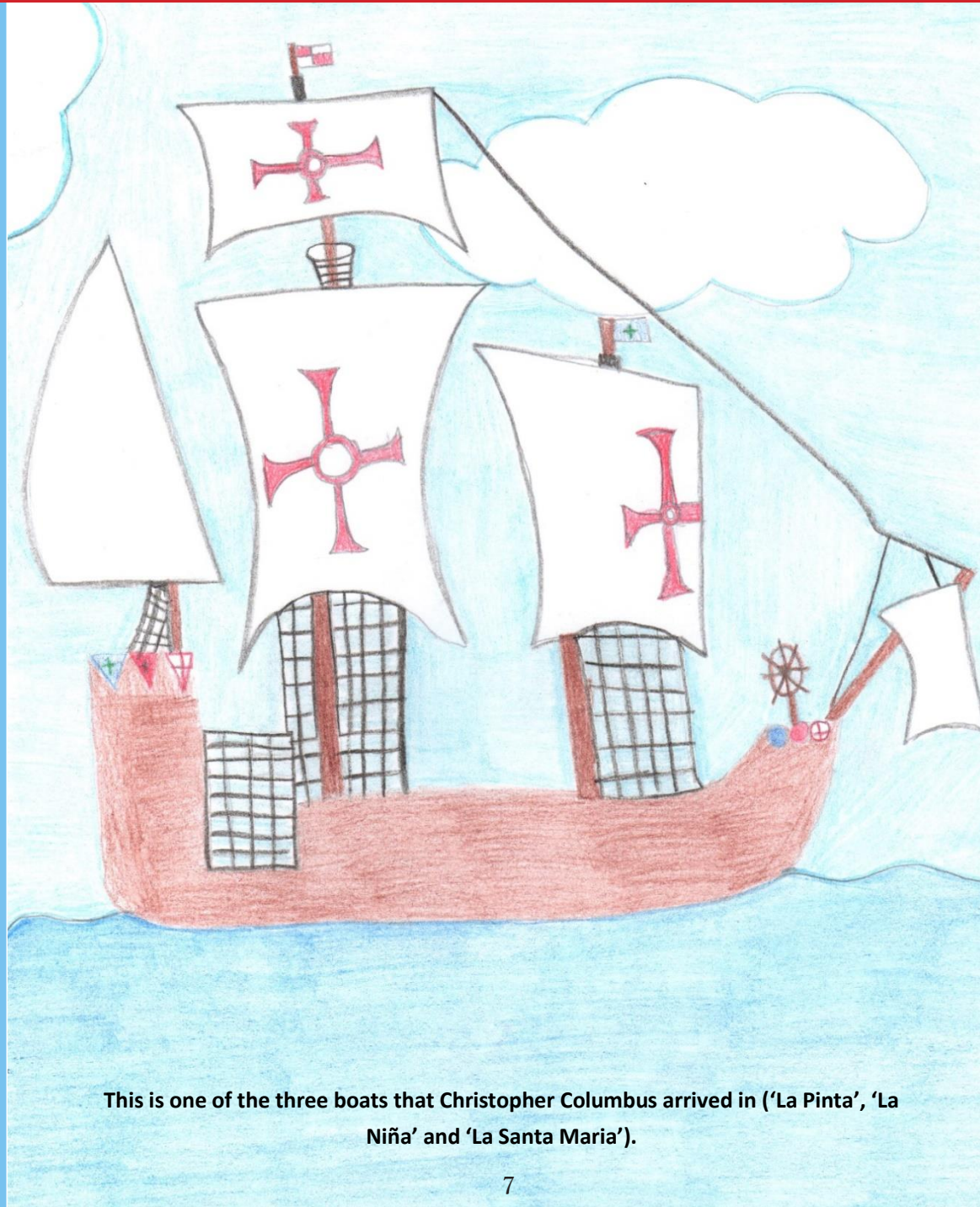
Here are a few things you need to know about Puerto Rico before you read my story:
In 1493, Christopher Columbus discovered Puerto Rico. Months after the discovery, the Spaniards started the process of colonizing the Taino natives.

The Tainos didn't fight back because they thought that the Spaniards were Gods.

Then, they drowned one of the Spaniards and they realized that they were mortals.

In 1514, the Tainos declared war. When the war ended, between eighty-five and ninety percent of the Tainos were killed.

Three and a half centuries later...



This is one of the three boats that Christopher Columbus arrived in ('La Pinta', 'La Niña' and 'La Santa Maria').

She looked at me with eyes full of fury. Mariana Bracetti was sewing the flag of the war to come, 'El Grito de Lares'. She kept telling me that she was doing it for her country and people.

Suddenly, she froze. She pictured her people working hard for the Spaniards and just getting nothing.

The Spaniards took everything the Puerto Ricans had, including power. Mariana imagined the Puerto Ricans having their own leader that they chose. She also imagined the danger they were about to face. A group of people were going to rebel and attack the Spaniards, even when they knew the Spaniards had a militia and weapons. The odds were definitely against Mariana's crew.

She then realized that she had been talking to a stranger.

She asked, "who are you?"

"I am Camila. I am a 10-year-old student, and I want to interview you," I responded. "But as a friend, I want to warn you that you are in grave danger. I come from the future, and I know your story. I don't want to change it, but be sure to be careful."

Startled, but calmly, she stared at me and declared, "I know that the consequences can be terrible, but I am ready to face them. I would be honored to be interviewed by you."



“First, I want to know, what does the flag represent?” I asked.

“Well, the red is for the blood of the heroes in the revolution. The white cross is for desire of patriotism. The star in the blue square stands for liberty and freedom.”

“Very interesting.” I said, with great admiration.

Mariana continued, “I was given this job by Don Ramón Emeterio Betances. He is a writer, doctor, and politician.”

“Was a...” I said under my breath.

“What?”

“Nothing, nothing.” I replied.

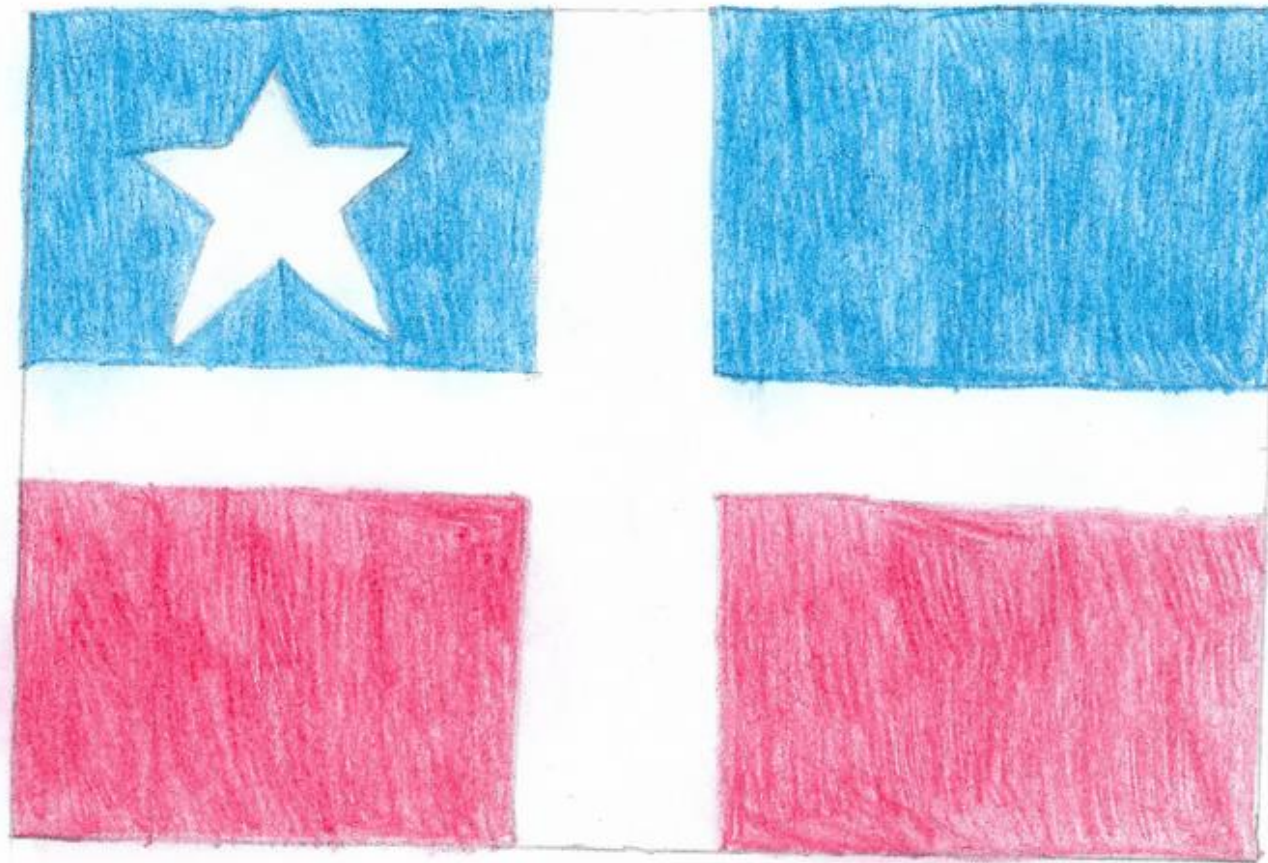
“My dream is that if we get independence, this will become Puerto Rico’s flag,” said Mariana.

Well, she’s in for a big surprise. As the story goes, they lose the battle and Mariana goes to jail. The flag becomes Lares’s, I thought.

Suddenly, Miguel Rojas, Bracetti’s husband, came in.

“Hi, sweetie.” Mariana greeted her husband.

“Cariño, I’ve got bad news. Manuel, my brother, told me that the Spaniards found out about our plan, so we’ll have to move the date to much sooner.”



Red = Blood of the heroes
White Cross = Desire of patriotism
Star in the blue square = Liberty and freedom

This flag became Lares's official flag in 1952.

“Oh no! Don’t worry, we’ll figure it out together,” replied Mariana.

Then, I excused myself and politely left to go home.

The next day, I went back to Mariana’s house. I stepped into the kitchen as Mariana was adding the finishing touches to the flag. I asked her a few questions:

“When were you born?”

She replied, “I was born in the year of 1825.”

“Where were you born?”

“I was born in Añasco, Puerto Rico.”

“Where is your husband from?”

“He is from Venezuela.”

“So, I am curious, how did you meet Miguel Rojas?”

“Well, he was visiting Añasco because together, he and his brother owned a coffee plantation called ‘El Triunfo’, near Lares. One day when I was sitting on a bench getting some air, he sat next to me, and we started talking. After some time, we got married.”

“What did your parents teach you as child that you apply to life?”



“They taught me how to seam, embroider, and draft. They also taught me religion, geography, and history.”

“What do you like to do?”

“Oh, I like to read, help others, give money to people in need and also teach people how to read and write.”

“Very nice! How many children do you have?”

“Three.”

“Well, thank you for your answers. I will be heading home now.”

“Ok, bye!”

And then I left.

‘El Triunfo’

Manuel and Miguel Rojas were owners of a coffee plantation called ‘El Triunfo’.

It was located near Lares.

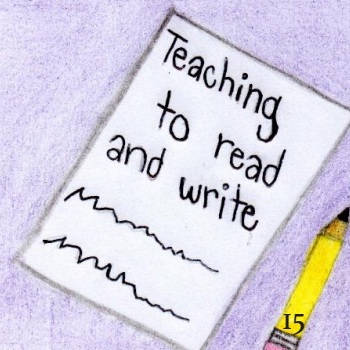
When Mariana got married to Miguel, she moved to ‘El Triunfo’ with him.

It became the clandestine center of the revolution.

Likes to read



Giving money to people in need



A few days later, Mariana was ready for the battle. It was September 23rd, 1868.

I was disguised as one of the Spaniards. All I had to do was take notes and hope they didn't kill me. Obviously, I was not actually going to be using my weapon. I didn't want to hurt anyone.

All of a sudden, a man yelled, "Incoming! Manuel and troop!"

I took my "position" and got ready.

The Spaniards were ready for the "surprise" attack. In front were Manuel Rojas and... Mariana Bracetti!

She stared at me and I winked at her.

If I had one word to describe it all, it would be: blood.

In the end, according to the story, the Spaniards won and all the survivors in Mariana's crew were put into cuffs and sent to trial.

I felt so bad for Mariana, but I knew this was going to happen.

Like expected, the judge sentenced all of them to jail. It was a strange moment, watching all of them giving big, heavy steps toward the carriages to take them to the cells. I watched as the carriages left.

El Grito de Lares

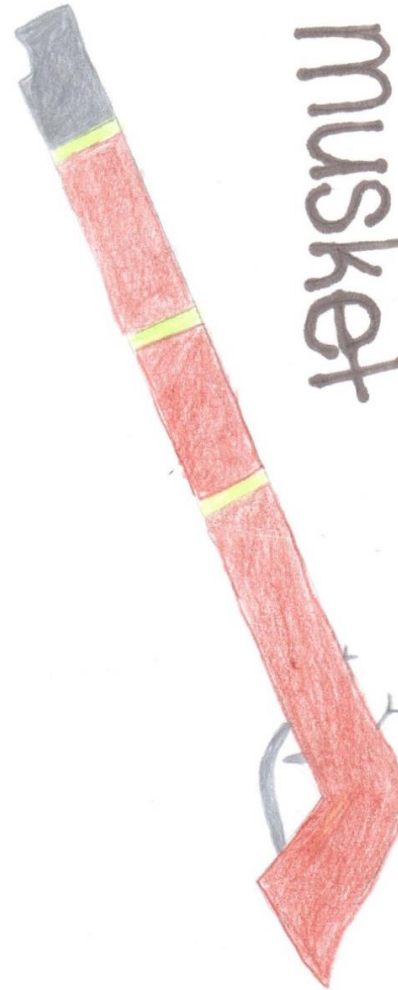
machete



Locals



V/S



musket

Spaniards

The next day, I went to visit Mariana in jail. When I got to her cell, she screamed at me “I hate you! You knew this was going to happen and you didn’t tell me! Now I am going to die!”

“What do you mean that you are going to die?” I asked.

“Oh, you didn’t know? I am sentenced to death!”

“I-I didn’t know, but don’t worry, you get pardoned in the end. Anyway, your kids sent you a letter,” I said, trying to change the subject. “They were really sweet. They didn’t look like Miguel, though.” I handed her the letter.

“They are not Miguel’s kids. I had another husband before Miguel, but he passed away.”

“Do you mind if I ask you how and when?”

“He died from a cholera epidemic in 1856.” She looked at me with sad eyes.

I quickly jolted down the information in my notebook.

“Well, I have to go. Have a nice day!” I said.

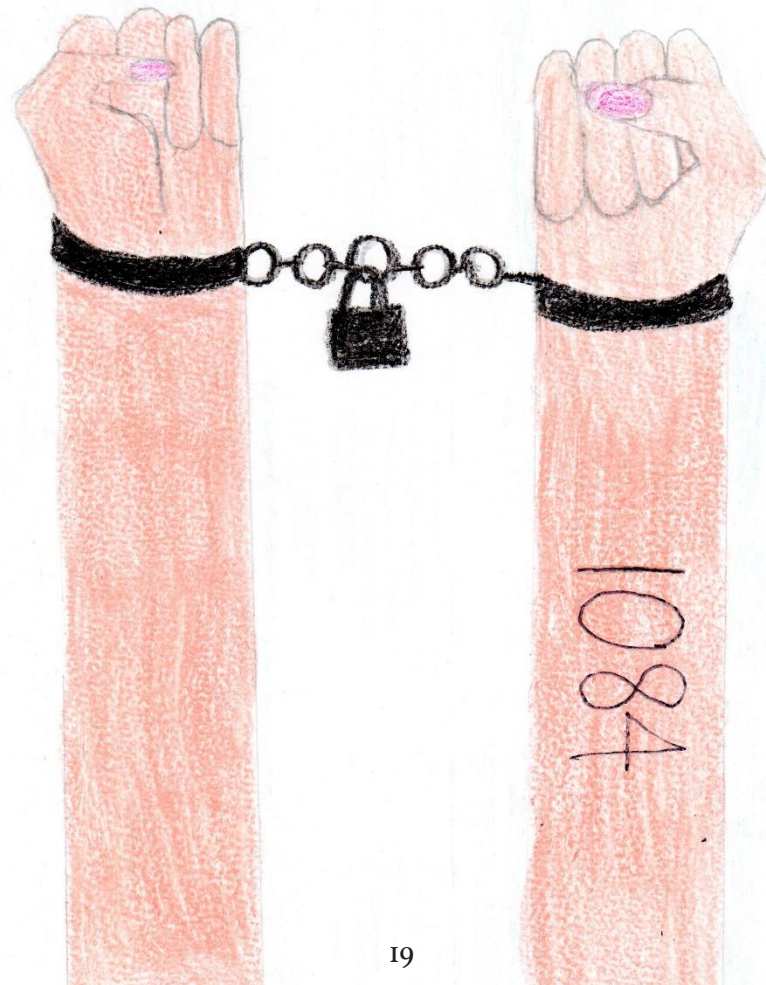
She nodded, and then I went home.

Cholera Epidemic

Cholera is a disease that causes watery diarrhea in humans. You can develop severe dehydration so grave, that it can lead to death.

By the beginning of 1856 a cholera epidemic hit the west side of Puerto Rico very hard.

Paying the Consequences



When I got to my room, I did some research. I found out that the Spanish leader would soon be changed. “I have to tell Mariana,” I thought.

And so, I went right back to the past. I said, “Hi, again!”

Mariana jumped. I scared her so badly!

“I’ve got news! The Spanish leader will change soon!”

“So?” she asked.

“I can persuade him to let you go!”

“Oh, thanks! I really appreciate what you are doing for me.”

“Thank you. Bye.” I said.

A few days later, I went to talk to the new Spanish leader.

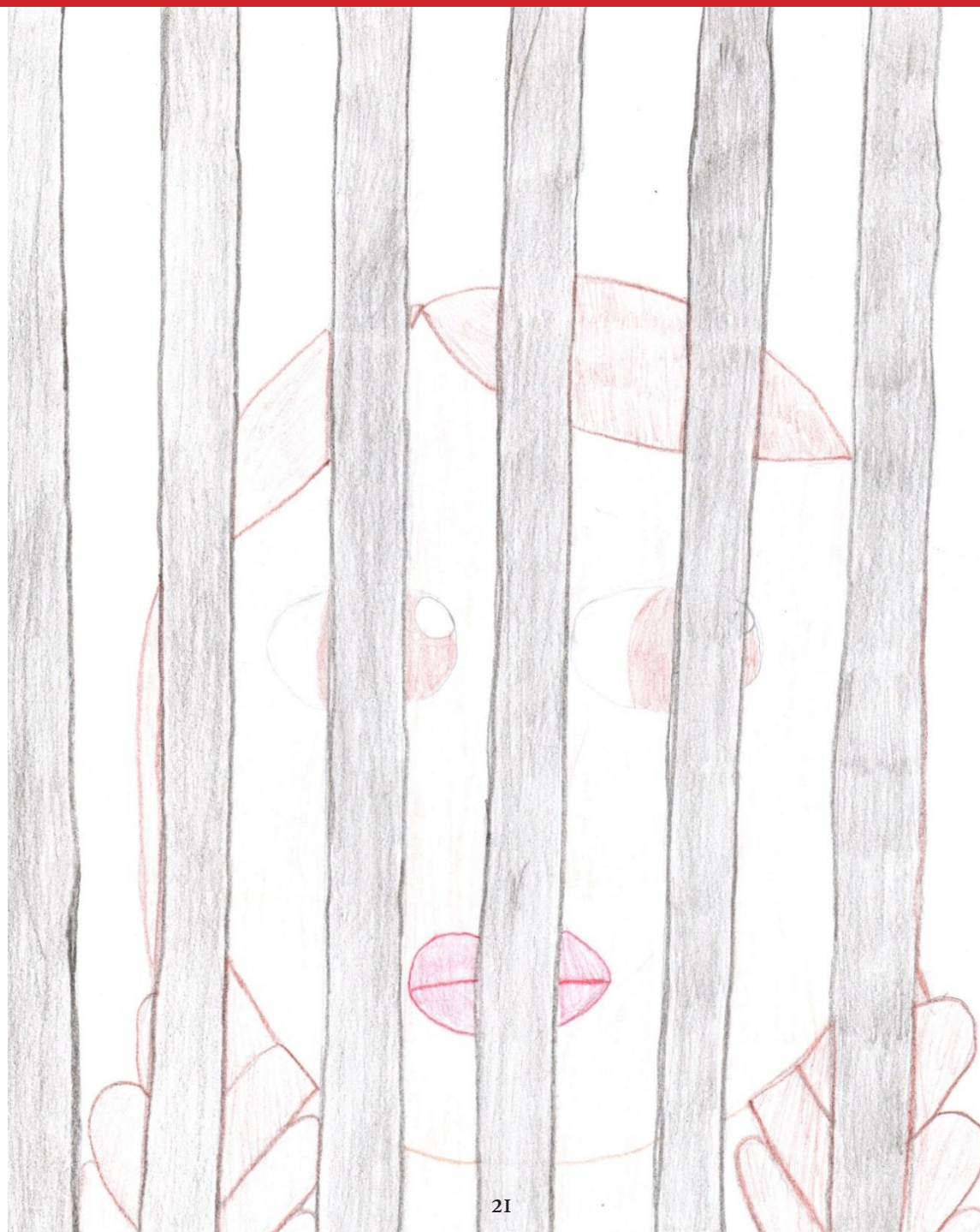
“Hello, sir. I wanted to tell you that there are a lot of locals that are in prison for no reason, and they would make great, strong workers. There are even two brothers that own a coffee plantation!” I told him.

“Oh. I had no idea. Thank you. Tomás, release the prisoners!”

“Goodbye, sir.” I told him.

“Goodbye. And thank you.” He responded.

Well that was easy, I thought.



A few days later, I stood in my classroom, giving a report about Mariana Bracetti.

“In conclusion, Mariana risked her life for the Puerto Ricans’ rights, which makes her a true hero,” I told my class. Everyone was amazed by her inspiring story. They all started clapping with lots of enthusiasm. The teacher liked it so much, she gave me an A+.

Finally, it was the moment I’d been dreading. It was time to go say goodbye to Mariana. If I didn’t, I wouldn’t be able to visit other people in the past! There is so much to learn about in life! I did not want to miss a thing! And so, I traveled to the past.

In
conclusion...



“Hi, Cami!” Mariana greeted me.

“Hi, Mariana!” I said glumly. We had grown so close, that this moment was really sad for me.

“Why so glum, dear?” she asked.

“Th-This is the last time I will see you” I said through tears. So much for trying to contain my tears, I thought.

“Oh dear!” she replied. Then she pulled me into a deep hug. “Well, thanks for getting me out of jail,” she said, trying to lighten the mood.

“No problem. Goodbye, ‘Brazo de Oro,’” I said.

“Brazo de what?” she asked.

“You’ll find out soon.” And then, for the last time, I disappeared.

Brazo de Oro

Means: Golden Arm.

She was later nicknamed ‘Brazo de Oro’, because of her sewing abilities.





Camila Litvachkes

She is ten years old and studies at Baldwin School in Puerto Rico. She enjoys to dance, read and act. Since she was little, she has written stories in English and Spanish.

MEET THE JUDGES



ERIN FALLIGANT
Author, *A Smart Girl's Guide to
Getting it Together & The Legend
of the Shark Goddess*



DANIEL JAMES BROWN
Author, *The Boys in the Boat*



RUDINE SIMS BISHOP
Professor Emerita, Ohio State
University
Author
Winner: 2017 Coretta Scott
King/Virginia Hamilton Lifetime
Achievement Award (American
Library Association)

Locals v/s Spaniards

