

Biography:

Rosario Santiago (they/we) is a Lesbian Puerto Rican writer, scholar, and activist from Philadelphia. We write from a world that is tender, unleashed, and free. We want, as Octavia Butler once wrote, “to take root among the stars.” They are currently working on their first novel. You can follow them on instagram @/comingofagestories

Artist Statement:

Around the time I realized I was a Lesbian, I had read a graphic novel titled *The Times I Knew I Was Gay* by Eleanor Crewes. Despite all the signs (always prioritizing my female friendships, disassociating when I kissed my one and only boyfriend, going to a historically women’s college, and many more!) I was still in denial about the extent of how much I liked women. Reading Crewes’ book felt very relatable to me, as the author describes not just one specific moment that they knew they were gay, but multiple ones. I can also conceive of different moments in my life that sort of pinpoint that coming-out story, and to be honest, I feel like I am still having them. Capital T Time is such an influence for me, and to be able sort of throw darts around in my life and capture these small moments of queerness was something I wanted to emulate in this work.

The stars metaphor and symbols throughout my piece allude to a personal motto I have in my life, which is “Find your north stars”. The north star, also known as Polaris, is the brightest star in the sky. It is a star that we can anchor ourselves to, no matter the circumstances. The stars also allude to my queer love of Peter Pan (another big tell in my life that I am a Lesbian; I absolutely LOVED Wendy as a kid and I wanted to be Peter so. fucking. bad.) and the quote “Second star to the right and straight until morning”. Such stars are the ones that bring us home. As both a mode of survivance and finding my place in this world, I’ve been trying to trace my lineages as a Lesbian of color. I have been endlessly inspired by the work of Audre Lorde, Cheryl Clarke, Emily Dickinson, Adrienne Rich, Qiu Miaojin, Mary Oliver, May Ayim, Alice Wu,

Judith Butler, and many other Lesbian influences. Such people I've mentioned, and many many others, are my Polaris, my home star.

Lastly, I wanted to measure a through-line between the intersections of my identity as a writer and as a Lesbian. It is important for me, one, to call myself a capital L Lesbian because of the current societal context of the word. A lot of people think it is a dirty, nasty word, and I've been very forceful about calling myself a Lesbian and have been met with people calling me "queer", "gay" or "sapphic" instead. I don't have issues with any of these words, but I very much prefer being called a Lesbian, and seeing others hesitate to call me a Lesbian writer or just generally use the word Lesbian because of their own personal lesbophobia is why I am so dedicated to the word. Secondly, I see calling myself a Lesbian not just as a sexuality but as a political stance. Such a stance for me is also rooted in a Black, trans, disabled ethic, as without such intersections there is no liberation.

I don't want to sugarcoat myself or to be easily soluble to anyone; my repetition of the word Lesbian in the piece is reminiscent of my unwavering devotions and manifestations of a Lesbian world, which is also a free world. (Read Cheryl Clarke's *Lesbianism as Resistance* to learn more!)