

BORDERLESS



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Happy Saturday!

When was the last time you saw a stage play that portrayed your community's experiences in a positive light?

"[Port of Entry](#)," a new show from Albany Park Theater Project and Third Rail Projects, takes you into an imagined three-story apartment building in Chicago's diverse Albany Park neighborhood. As audience members walk through the apartments, they hear the stories of real immigrants living in the area. Community Reporting Intern Maia McDonald attended the show on Thursday and you can read her story about it below.

And in case you missed it, Pathways Reporting Fellow Katrina Pham was in downtown Chicago this week covering community members demanding that the city of Chicago allocate more resources to help the migrants being bused to Chicago. [You can read more about their protest here.](#)

Experience Life as Chicago Immigrant in New Interactive Theater Show



Photo by Eric Strom and Sarah Joyce

Audience members can get a close, intimate look at the lives of immigrants living in Albany Park at the Albany Park Theater Project's immersive new "Port of Entry" show, which opened this month.

The theater project's latest storytelling experience invites audiences to join a group of immigrants living in a 1929 warehouse that's been renovated to resemble a three-story Chicago apartment building, with patios, a courtyard, hallways and fully-furnished homes.

Ensemble member Ari Salgado, who's been part of the Albany Park Theater Project for four years, said audiences can expect to see a show that's about representation and is "a personal look into what it's like being a first-generation immigrant."

For many audience members who are immigrants themselves, the theater project's shows are often the first time they've seen their own experiences onstage in a positive light, Salgado said.

To create the show, Albany Park Theater Project partnered with [Third Rails Projects](#) to interview Chicago immigrants and refugees about their lives here. Their stories were compiled to make the interactive show, and audience members can learn about what life is like for some of the immigrants interviewed, who are trying to make a new life in a city they're still learning about.

Sara Romero, another Albany Park Theater Project ensemble member, said what audiences get from the show depends on what they bring with them.

"We don't know what an audience member specifically identifies with or what their experiences are, what their struggles have been," Romero said. "I think that that thing that the audience is looking out for will mean something different for each audience member."

When attending a performance of "Port of Entry," audience members wander through the set hearing stories and physically interact with a space that's supposed to evoke an Albany Park apartment building housing a group of immigrants.

Audience members are pulled aside by actors for conversations, games and other immersive story elements, such as wrapping silverware for a dinner with a Filipino family or helping a character pick out jewelry for her upcoming quinceañera. Interpretive dancing, music, projections, lighting, photographs, immigration documents and more all help tell a non-linear story of the multiple immigrant families that are the focus of Port of Entry — how they came to the United States and what their experience is like in the Albany Park apartment building that's now their home.

The show's nontraditional storytelling format of folding audiences into the story is something Third Rails Project's Co-artistic Director Jennine Willett hopes will connect them to the group the show focuses on.

"We found some very creative ways to welcome the audience, from the moment they step in from the street all the way into the first moments that they step across the threshold into someone's home," Willett said. "The idea is that by being welcomed and a part of this, you're seeing things from the inside looking out rather than from the outside, looking in, which is usually how a lot of traditional theater is."

Tickets are sold out for the summer season of "Port of Entry," which ends Aug. 12, 2023, but people can [sign up to be on the waitlist](#) to receive notice of when tickets for the fall and winter runs are available. The next run will start in October.

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