

Vieques
by Jorge González



Búfalo Herido
by Jorge Celaya



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JULIO: *Tus discursitos universitarios no van a cambiar mi idea. Los gringos no son tan malos como la gente cree.*

Búfalo: *¡No lo maté porque era la única forma de salvarme yo! ¿Me entiendes? ¡Porque si lo hubiera matado, ahora yo también estaría muerto, aunque estuviera lleno de dinero y viajando por todo el mundo! ¡Me sentiría muerto! ¡La culpa mata! ¡Tú lo sabes!*

INTRODUCTION

It is our pleasure to introduce you, through this Study Guide, to one of Repertorio Español's most successful and exciting programs: the "Nuestras Voces" Playwright Competition sponsored by The Metropolitan Life Foundation, The National Endowment for the Arts & The Jerome Foundation. In this first booklet we cover the first two winners (2000 and 2001) of the competition: *Vieques*, by Puerto Rican playwright Jorge González, and *Búfalo herido* (Wounded Buffalo) by Mexican playwright Jorge Celaya.

We hope that the materials collected here will convince teachers to bring their classes to see these insightful and entertaining plays. For those teachers who decide to bring their classes, we hope these pages are useful in preparing themselves and their students for the experience. And we especially hope this booklet will allow students who always have been a vital audience to Repertorio Español, to have a much richer and informed theatre-going experience.

For each of the plays, the Study Guide includes a synopsis of the story; a profile of the author; representative scenes from the play, in Spanish; brief texts that provide additional cultural and historical information to help the students understand the stories in context; reviews and commentaries; quotes that catch the soul of each character; study questions for class activity and discussion; and a list of suggested readings and websites, for those students who wish to know more about the various aspects of Latino life and culture presented in each play.

Since 1968, Repertorio Español has produced Siglo de Oro classics, romantic dramas, musical reviews, zarzuelas, dances, modern masterpieces, and specially commissioned new plays about the Hispanic American experience. No Hispanic theater in the United States has brought such a broad selection of plays to Spanish speaking audiences. No theater of any kind in this country has kept so many plays current in a revolving repertory. As their many grants and awards prove, Repertorio Español is a national treasure.

Don't miss the fun and education of seeing great Hispanic plays in the hands of these wonderful, experienced professionals.

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LOLA: ¿Escuchaste eso Julio? Nuestra hija se va a casar con el enemigo.

Don (a Búfalo): ¡Te digo! ¡Ahí está! Tragas como un pinche cavernícola ¡Bebes de lo peor! ¡Y vistes como pordiosero! ¡Por eso no ganas en el ring! ¡El box en el ring, es lo mismo que uno conteniendo en la vida! ¡Si no vences tus culpas! ¡Si no das ese salto, no serás feliz! ¡Si no sabes vivir, no sabes boxear! ¿Me entiendes?

ABOUT METLIFE FOUNDATION

METLIFE FOUNDATION was established in 1976 by MetLife for the purpose of supporting various educational, health and welfare, and civic and cultural organizations. Since then the Foundation has contributed over \$179 million to non-profit organizations and programs and social investments. In the area of arts and culture, The Foundation is committed to supporting projects with large and diverse audiences that help promote greater understanding among different cultures. It aims to enrich society's cultural resources on the national and regional level and to contribute to the vitality and quality of life. Contributions are made to organizations to provide opportunities to bring cultural experiences to wider audiences. More information on the MetLife Foundation can be found on www.MetLife.org.

SILVIA: Es sobre John. A él no le gustan mis habichuelas. Dice que no le gusta la comida puertorriqueña. Yo no me puedo casar con un hombre que no le guste el arroz y las habichuelas.

VIEQUES - SYNOPSIS

In April 1999, Vieques became well known to the world outside Puerto Rico because a Marine Corps jet on a training run dropped two bombs that missed the target and killed a civilian guard on the island. In the 18 months that followed, environmentalists and the Puerto Rican people staged numerous protests that were well-covered by the international media. However, these military exercises were nothing new; they have been conducted on schedule since the 1950s.

Setting: Author Jorge González sets his play *Vieques* precisely around that time. The sharp comedy-drama does not delve into the political aspects of the island's recent history. Instead, he takes us back some fifty years to when American sailors were newcomers to Vieques, just setting up a base there. González focuses on a Vieques family and follows them through their dreams, disappointments and struggles for a better future. The play is about real life situations, more fact than fiction; very much about the author's own family. Laughter aside, it makes the audience think. The family struggles with change and drastic cultural, economic, social and political upheaval.

Characters: A typically Hispanic extended family, headed by **Julio**, a middle-aged political realist concerned mostly about the future of his young daughter Silvia; **Lola**, Julio's wife, 45 years old, fantasy-prone and distrustful; **Silvia**, Julio and Lola's daughter, a very proper and reserved young woman who falls in love with a sailor from North Carolina, and desperately wants to marry him; forty-seven year old **Marta**, Lola's sister, a deeply religious woman who trusts everything to the will of God; Marta's son **Miguel**, a 32-year-old "mama's boy" who is a virtual drunk; **Roberto**, Julio's 25-year-old son by a previous marriage, a juvenile delinquent; **Iván**, Julio and Lola's nephew, a young man with "strange" ideas, who is always debating some issue, and is therefore

regarded as a Marxist; finally, 19-year-old **Josefina**, Silvia's best friend, who falls for Iván and ends up pregnant.

The play is divided in two acts, with six scenes in each act. In Act I, Scene 1 it is Saturday afternoon. The family is sitting, as usual, in the balcony of their house. The whole town is celebrating, people are out on the streets, and there isn't one American sailor out there. Julio warns Miguel about the ills of alcohol, telling him that Lola has hidden the rum in the kitchen to use only for special occasions. Silvia warns her father not to trust in her half-brother Miguel. She tells him that Miguel is a crook. Julio asks Miguel to help him gather the tamarinds already scattered on the ground in order to make juice with them, and asks him to fix a couple of leaks on the roof. He remarks clearly that all that work must be done without benefit of rum.

Scene 2 takes place in Marta's house. Lola and Marta stand right next to a basket full of avocados, talking. Lola is unhappy about having so many avocados in one sweep, for according to her, that is a sign of hurricanes. She decides to throw the avocados out the window. Marta could care less about hurricanes or avocados. Her life is so miserable right now, that nothing else matters. Lola's son, Miguel, walks in. He is completely drunk. Miguel has come to tell his mother that Julio has found him a job.

Scene 3 transpires once again in the balcony, over at Julio's house. Iván is very upset because two American sailors have come around the house asking for Silvia. If any of those "gringos" harms his cousin Silvia in any way, he says, he will kill them. Julio asks Ivan about the meetings at the University that Ivan has been attending. People suspect those meetings to be communist gatherings, which will mean trouble. Ivan is completely against the American presence in Vieques. Julio tries to explain to him that Americans are not so bad, but at the same time asks his wife Lola if she knows anything about the American sailor who is coming around to see Silvia. Lola dismisses the matter as unimportant. Julio insists that Lola should speak with Silvia about it to find out what's going on. In the meantime, Julio also tells Lola that his other son, Robertico, will be spending a few days with the family.

Scene 4 finds Silvia and her best friend Josefina talking by the dock. Silvia tells her friend that she is in love, and that she is worried that no one will marry her because she doesn't know how to cook. She asks Josefina to teach her. Silvia tries to talk Josefina into moving with her to the mainland (to Puerto Rico). In Vieques, she says, boys and girls are like brothers and sisters. But Josefina has somber news for Silvia: she is pregnant, and Iván is the father of her child.

In Scene 5 we find Miguel, Iván and Roberto drinking in the town square. Roberto mentions that everyone in town is itching, due to all the fumigating the Americans are doing. Miguel loves the smell of the liquid. Iván argues that the best way to protect against mosquitoes is to use mosquito nets, a better method than all the chemical contamination. The "gringos" at the Base are responsible for all the itching. Miguel informs Roberto that there is baseball game coming up between the American sailors from the Base and the guys in town. Roberto, in turn, gives Miguel some shocking news: he has taken part in a bank robbery in San Juan.

Scene 6 -the last scene in Act One-, takes place in the family balcony. It's nighttime. From the distance, Julio sees the American sailor that is courting Silvia, and points him out to Lola. The subject of French fries comes up: Julio cannot stand the smell of French fries, a staple in the American sailors' diet. He cannot understand how the "gringos" can eat them. Lola, on the other hand, find them delicious. They are better tasting, she says. Miguel hates them as well, for no reason other than "it is *gringo* sailor food". Robertico could care less; as long as he is hungry, he will eat anything... and, "by the way, Lola, please take this briefcase and keep it for me" stands in as his good-bye. (That's the brief case where all the stolen money is stashed away! He tells Lola nothing about this, of course.) Iván gives Silvia a letter for Josefina. He tells Silvia he is leaving Vieques. Silvia slaps him in the face for refusing to take responsibility for his child.

Act II, Scene I takes place in Marta's house. Miguel (her son) is looking for his sneakers in order to play baseball with the American sailors. Marta wants to go to the hospital, because she is feeling sick. Miguel begs her not to get sick today, the day of the baseball game, especially now that Robertico has bought the baseball uniforms.

Scene 2 takes place in front of the family balcony. Lola is putting eardrops in Silvia's ear. Silvia tells her father that she is not going to the ballgame. She doesn't care who wins. Josefina rushes in, all black and blue from the beating she got from her father, Don Carlos. Miguel and Roberto come in dressed as baseball players. Miguel reveals that Silvia's "gringo boyfriend" is going to pitch for the Americans. Roberto then confesses that everyone should leave Vieques. You have to kill me first, says Miguel. It is Julio's house, and Julio proceeds to remind the folks that he owes his house and his job at the Post Office to the Americans. He asks that no one speak badly about Americans in his house.

Josefina and Silvia are talking in the family living room as Scene 3 starts. Silvia asks Josefina to stay for dinner so she can taste the beans she made with Josefina's recipe (and cooking lessons). Silvia reveals to Josefina that John, her American boyfriend, doesn't like beans or Puerto Rican music. Silvia is so disenchanted she doubts she will ever marry this guy. Lola rushes in with the news that the locals are beating the Americans at baseball. She takes the opportunity to ask Silvia about the progress of her relationship with John. Suddenly, news is heard that there is a riot in the town square.

In Scene 4, Roberto, Julio and Lola are sitting at the table eating Silvia's beans. Roberto remarks that as soon as women start to cook, they get married. Julio is upset because Silvia is still out in the street, instead of home. He goes out to check on Miguel, who was beaten during the riot with the American baseball players. Lola takes advantage of being alone with Robertico to throw him out of the house with his stolen money.

In Scene 5 we find Miguel lying down in bed, unconscious. Julio stands right next to the bed, and apologizes to Miguel -who is out like a light, and not listening- for not being able to stop the fight. He is sorry that he has felt no need to oust the Americans, sure as he is that the Americans will leave when they are good and ready, when they don't need Vieques any more. "We did nothing (to stop the fight) because we are all cowards," says Julio. Robertico returns and explains to Julio that the "gringos" started the fight because they are sore losers. He gives

Julio a glass of rum. They start drinking. Julio tells Robertico how happy he feels that he turned out unexpectedly well. "Never thought you would be a banker," he tells Robertico. Robertico tries to bring up the subject of the bank robbery, but drinking takes preference.

Scene 6, the last scene in the play, finds Josefina, Silvia and Lola sitting in the living room. Lola asks her daughter and her pregnant friend to join her in a drink, and points out to Silvia that John, the sailor, is never going to develop a taste for rice and beans. Suddenly, Iván comes in, and tells Josefina that pregnant women should not be drinking. He has spoken to Don Carlos, Josefina's father, and has permission to marry her. Silvia and Josefina grab Ivan and beat him up. Julio and Roberto enter from the bedroom, and try to stop the fight. Marta comes into the living room with a basket full of avocados, and faints. Josefina grabs a bag full of stones, and breaks it on Iván's head. Iván falls unconscious to the floor, right next to Marta. Lola tells Julio about the money his son Robertico has stolen; but it's too late: Miguel has run off with the briefcase. Silvia returns to the room and announces her decision to marry John and move to North Carolina. Julio and Lola are the only ones left in the living room, and they drink until they drop.

THE END.

MIGUEL: Vieja, por favor. Después de un día completo de trabajo, lo menos que puedes pedir es un palo de ron. La gente necesita divertirse. De eso es que se trata la vida. Y mientras más uno trabaja, más ron uno necesita para estar feliz.

JORGE GONZALEZ

Jorge González was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico in 1973. He began his studies in dramatic arts at the University of Puerto Rico, where he received several awards for his dramatic and poetic works.

While at the University of Puerto Rico his plays *ICME*, *Conioplík* and *Aquí estamos otra vez* were taken to the scene. The last one was presented at the Theater Festival of the Ateneo Puertorriqueño and was published at the *Contornos* magazine.

In 1996 he co-founded the theater company *El Timbre*. Two years later he received a scholarship from the National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts to continue his studies. He then moved to New York City to continue studies in Columbia University where he obtained a Masters degree in Fine Arts with a major in drama under the direction of Eduardo Machado. Besides from his talent in dramatic writing, González has directed and performed in several plays. In 1999 he was awarded with the Edward and Sally Van Lier Directing Fellowship through Repertorio Español and produced his own play *Lo Que Sabemos Aburrido*. His most recent play *Vieques*, won the MetLife Nuestras Voces Playwriting Competition.

VIEQUES - SCENES

Scene - During this scene, the family is gathered in the balcony debating about Ivan's activities, and his vision of the Marines now stationed at the Naval Base.

JULIO: ¿Qué diantre fue eso?! Esta gente se cree que puede hacer lo que le dé la gana. Ninguno de ellos me va a hacer esto aquí en mi propia casa. *(IVÁN entra con su café)*

IVÁN: ¿Quién era ése?

JULIO: Uno de esos Marineros gringos y que preguntando por Silvia.

IVÁN: Yo vi a ese mismo muchacho hablando con Silvia los otros días aquí mismo en este balcón.

JULIO: Habla español bastante bien.

IVÁN: No importa.

JULIO: Parece un buen tipo.

IVÁN: Esos gringos lo único que quieren es hacerles el daño a nuestras mujeres.

JULIO: No va a pasar nada.

IVÁN: Mire Don Julio, yo le digo a usted que si uno de esos tipos le hace algo a mi prima, le juro que lo mato.

JULIO: Silvia es una buena muchacha.

IVÁN: Ya lo sé. Por eso es que se lo digo. *(LOLA entra al balcón desde la casa)*

LOLA: Ivansito. ¿Quiéres quedarte pa' comer aquí?

IVÁN: No gracias. Tengo una reunión ahora a las cuatro.

JULIO: ¿Todavía estás yendo a las reuniones esas comunistas? Te van a fichar y vas a terminar en la cárcel.

IVÁN: Esas reuniones no son de comunistas. Y a mí nadie me va a meter a la cárcel porque yo no he hecho na malo.

JULIO: Ya tú verás. Mira que te lo advertí.

IVÁN: No se preocupe, Don Julio, que yo me sé cuidar de lo más bien.

JULIO: Más vale. Oye Lola, ¿tú sabes algo del Marino ese amigo de Silvia?

LOLA: Yo creo que escuché algo pero no es la gran cosa.

JULIO: ¿Por qué no me dijiste nada?

LOLA: ¿Qué sabía yo? Pensé que no era importante.

IVÁN: Esos gringos van a terminar con la mitad de esta isla y nuestras mujeres.

LOLA: A mí no me importa. Se pueden quedar con toda la isla si quieren.

IVÁN: Fíjese bien, Doña Lola. ¿Cuánto tiempo llevan ya en la isla?

JULIO: Por favor Iván, ya no empieces con el discursito ese de nuevo.

IVÁN: Llevan ya más de diez años y no han cambiado ná todavía. Ellos le quitaron la casa aquí a medio mundo.

JULIO: Por favor Iván, no seas acomplejado. Ya tú verás como las cosas van a cambiar.

IVÁN: ¿Pa' cuando? ¿Pa'l año dos mil? *(Pausa)* Ya está bueno de pedir limosna.

JULIO: Tus discursitos universitarios no van a cambiar mi idea. Los gringos no son tan malos como la gente cree.

IVÁN: Yo diría todo lo contrario. *(Pausa)*. Gracias por el café, Doña Lola.

LOLA: No te preocupes, mi'jo.
IVÁN: Lo veo después, Don Julio.
JULIO: Cuídate, mi'jo, y ten cuidao con esos amigos tuyos de la universidad. Te están metiendo ideas zánegas en la cabeza.

Scene – Miguel, Iván and Roberto are in the town square. They are drinking rum, and discussing Miguel's allergic reaction to the chemicals with which the Americans are fumigating to get rid of the mosquitoes.

ROBERTO: Quizás toda esa picazón viene de estar corriéndole detrás al “truck” ese que fumiga. Eso no está bien.
MIGUEL: Tal vez tú tengas razón.
IVÁN: Es que tiene que ser eso lo que te tiene así de jodío.
MIGUEL: ¿Y qué tú quieres que yo haga? Cada vez que veo al maldito “truck” ese venir, tengo que salir corriendo detrás de él. Me gusta esa pendejá. Me encanta el olor de la cosa esa que tiran al aire. Huele como a “strawberries”.
IVÁN: ¿Y dónde diantre has visto tú “strawberries”?
MIGUEL: Todavía no he visto ninguna pero estoy seguro de cómo huelen.
ROBERTO: ¿Ah sí?
MIGUEL: Sí, es como el “truck” exterminador.
IVÁN: Esos hijos de su madre. No tiene que estar tirándonos esas cosas a nosotros. Se creen que somos basura. Que pongan mosquiteros en sus camas como todos los demás. Aquí en este país se duerme con mosquiteros en las camas, no es para estar tratando de matar a los mosquitos con sabe Dios qué.

Scene – It's nighttime. The family is sitting in the balcony debating about the traditional “rice and beans” diet, and the new item that the Marines have brought on the scene: the “French fry”. Roberto and Miguel come in, drunk.

JULIO: Ese olor me va a volver loco. Todas las noches es el mismo olor ese maldito a papas fritas.
LOLA: Julio, tú sabes bien que eso es lo único que le gusta a los gringos.
JULIO: Papas fritas, no puedo creerlo. ¿A quién se le habrá ocurrido la brutalidad de freir las papas?
LOLA: Las papas fritas saben más ricas.
JULIO: Las papas no. Con las papas no es lo mismo.
LOLA: ¿Y por qué?
JULIO: Qué se yó. Las papas son otra cosa. Las papas no son pa'' estarlas friendo.
LOLA: Ya yo ni sé que hacer contigo.
JULIO: Dime una cosa.
LOLA: ¿Sí?
JULIO: ¿Quedan papas ahí en la cocina?
LOLA: Quedan dos o tres papas, sí.

JULIO: Muy bién. Esta noche vamos a hacer papas fritas de comida. Vamos a recibir a Robertico con comida gringa.
LOLA: Yo pensé que no te gustaban.
JULIO: No importa si me gustan o no. Tenemos que empezar a acostumbrarnos.

(ROBERTO y MIGUEL entran desde la calle)

ROBERTO: Viejo. Doña Lola.
JULIO: Robertico Dios mío, ven acá, déjame verte.
ROBERTO: Traté de venir antes a la casa, pero Miguel no me dejó.
LOLA: Están borrachos los dos, no puedo creerlo.
JULIO: Lola por favor, esa no es la forma de recibir al muchacho.
LOLA: *(A MIGUEL.)* Todo esto es tu culpa.
MIGUEL: Pero si nada de esto fue idea mía. No fui yo el que dijo que paráramos a darnos un palo.
LOLA: No puedo creerlo.
JULIO: Lola, por favor...
LOLA: Yo no voy a ponerme a cocinar pa' estos dos borrachones.
MIGUEL: Mierda, yo no quiero papas fritas.
LOLA: Es que no pensaba hacerte ninguna.
MIGUEL: Gracias a Dios.
LOLA: ¿Viste? Ni siquiera le gustan las papas fritas.
JULIO: Yo no estaba esperando que les gustaran.
MIGUEL: Eso es comida de marinos gringos.
JULIO: Esa va a ser la comida de tus hijos.

Scene - Miguel, Julio and Roberto are talking about the upcoming "friendship" baseball games scheduled between Viequenses and the Marines, and about what will come of Vieques now that the Americans have become a permanent presence.

MIGUEL: Pero no estamos hablando de cualquier marino, estamos hablando del novio de Silvia.
JULIO: ¡Silvia no tiene ningún novio marino!
MIGUEL: Por favor, Don Julio, entienda que esto es todo en defensa propia. Usted sabe muy bien que ellos son más grandes que nosotros. Si no llevamos este saco, la cosa no sería justa.
JULIO: ¡Dame aca el saco este! Esto se queda aquí. Lo que están tratando de hacer está bien mal. Estos juegos son para mejorar las relaciones entre los americanos y los puertorriqueños.
MIGUEL: ¡Yo no quiero mejorar ninguna relación con esos tipos!
JULIO: A mí no me importa lo que tú pienses. Este saco se queda aquí porque yo lo digo.
MIGUEL: Lo siento Don Julio.
ROBERTO: Te lo dije que no iba a ser una buena idea.
JULIO: Si se quiere ganar este juego tienen que hacerlo limpio. Y si pierden el juego, tienen que aprenderlo a perder como hombres.

MIGUEL: Yo voy a tratar de hacerlo así, pero le juro Don Julio que si alguno de esos marinos me toca durante el juego, yo regreso aquí a buscar el saco y voy les parto las caras a todos. Yo no estoy relajando. Ya me cansé de abusos. Ninguno de ellos va a volver a poner un deo encima de mí.

JULIO: Nada va a pasar.

MIGUEL: No soy yo el que toma esas decisiones.

JULIO: Escúchame bien. Yo estoy de tu lado, pero esto no se va a resolver tan fácilmente. Tenemos que empezar a acostumbrarnos a la presencia de ellos entre nosotros. No importa si te gusta o no, esa es la que hay. No hay nada que se pueda hacer, mi'jo. Ellos siempre van a ser más grandes que nosotros.

ROBERTO: Yo creo que deberíamos irnos todos de aquí y dejarles la isla a ellos.

MIGUEL: ¡Qué mamey! Yo no pienso irme de Vieques. Van a tener que matarme primero. Nosotros estamos aquí desde mucho antes de ellos.

JULIO: A ellos no le importa.

ROBERTO: Yo estoy hablando en serio. Yo tengo amigos por allá por San Juan que tienen dinero y que nos pueden ayudar a conseguir una casa.

JULIO: Yo tengo todo lo mío aquí.

MIGUEL: Usted tenía todo lo suyo acá pero ya los gringos le han robado la mitad de la isla.

JULIO: Si vuelves a hablar de ellos así te mato.

***ROBERTO:** Tó el mundo me dice la misma mierda una y otra vez. A mí no me importa si como o no por allá. Parece que ustedes no han querido entender que ya a mí no me gusta Vieques.*

THE ISLAND OF VIEQUES: A BRIEF HISTORY

Called "La Isla Nena" (the child island) or "Isabel Segunda" (Isabel II), Vieques was founded in 1843 by Francisco Saínez. It's about 21 miles long and 5 miles across at its widest point (55 square miles or 33,000 square acres). It was annexed to Puerto Rico in 1854. Vieques derives its name from the native *Taino* word for "a small island." The population totals 8,062 people.

Vieques is located between Puerto Rico and St. Thomas (U.S. Virgin Islands) and it is separated from the southeast coast of Puerto Rico by approximately 8 miles of sea. If you take the ferry from nearby Fajardo, the actual distance is 18 miles. Numerous other small cays (islets) lie offshore of Vieques.

Beauty and history merge here as in other Caribbean islands. Arawak natives once lived here; the island was an infamous heaven for pirates during the 17th century. Various European powers fought for control of Vieques. The Punta Mulas Lighthouse, also known as Morropó, was built in 1893. This old lighthouse still protects the port; it boasts a reflector imported from Paris in 1895 whose beam of light is so powerful, it can be seen from as far away as 16 miles.

The island is also the home of phosphorescent Mosquito Bay. This rare and remarkable phenomenon is caused by millions of luminescent dinoflagellates lighting up when movement or motion disturbs them. The dinoflagellates –a tiny form of marine life-, have characteristics of both plants and animals. They are infinitesimally small, ranging in size from 5 to 2,000 micrometers.

Fort Isabel II holds the distinction of being the last fort built by the Spaniards in the New World. As other forts in the Spanish colonies (take, for instance, El Principe in La Habana) Isabel II later served as a prison. Today, after its careful restoration in 1991 by the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, the fort serves as the island's main museum. It houses the Vieques Museum of Art and History, and the Vieques Historic Archives. The island produces sugar cane (its principal crop), coconuts, grains, sweet potatoes, avocados, bananas, and papayas.

In 1898, the United States occupied Cuba and Puerto Rico as a result of their victory over Spain in the Spanish American War. Cuba gained independence –and U.S. military intervention ended – in 1902. Not so for Puerto Rico. The island remained a U.S. territory. In 1940 American citizenship was extended to all natives of Puerto Rico, and in 1952 the U.S. Congress proclaimed the nation a Commonwealth, an idea proposed by the late Luis Muñoz Marín, the four-times governor of Puerto Rico.

Since 1941, coinciding with the beginnings of World War II, the United States military took over about 65% (27,000 of the island's 32,000 acres) of Vieques to install a naval base. Since then, the area has been under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Navy. The U.S. military uses this land as a training area, for target practice with live ammunition, and war games.

Two naval bases were established on the island: Camp Garcia and the Naval Ammunition Facility. The latter, on the western end of the island, serves as a storage area for ammunition; Camp Garcia, located on the eastern end of the island, is the site used by the U.S. Navy for bombing exercises and amphibious maneuvers. As a result, Vieques has inherited a legacy of toxic pollution. In May of 1999, the U.S. Navy admitted that it had tested radioactive depleted uranium shells in the island. Many locals blame the high cancer rate (26 percent over Puerto Rico's average) on the Navy's pollution.

As geography and as society, Vieques experienced serious changes when the U.S. Navy settled on the island. (This is precisely the theme of Jorge González's play). Conflict between residents and soldiers continue and have increased recently; considerable numbers of Viequesenses participate in protests against U.S. occupation. Tensions between residents and the military peaked in 1979 during a demonstration by the Vieques Fisherman's Association, whose livelihood was directly affected by bombing and water maneuvers on the eastern end of the island. Amidst the conflict, Governor Carlos Romero Barcelo filed a petition in Federal Court against the Navy's use of Vieques. This resulted in a Memorandum of Understanding, also known as the Fortin Accord, which pledged the Navy's commitment to promote economic development on Vieques in exchange for use of the territory.

In 1983, the U.S. government's economic development program (VEDCO) was launched. It began with an effort to attract large defense contractors to establish business ventures in

Vieques. This effort didn't last long before it proving a fiasco. Today, Vieques is still an economically depressed area and the *Viequenses* are still at odds with the U.S. Navy. Presently, the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on National Security has agreed to consider the approval of a bill introduced by Romero Barcelo, now Puerto Rico's Resident Commissioner in Congress.

Titled the Vieques Land Transfer Act of 1995, the bill -HR 2159- requires the Secretary of the United States Navy to return 8,000 acres of land to the municipality of Vieques. Although the bill does stipulate that the land will be returned to the United States if Puerto Rico and the people of Vieques do not use it for public purposes, no mechanism, process, or deadline has been established in the legislation to facilitate the transfer of ownership from the U.S. Navy to Vieques' municipal government.

The issues around Vieques would have remained low-key had the accidental killing of a civilian during bombing exercises in 2001 not occurred. But that accident triggered the most recent protests, and the cries of the *Viequenses* have shaken the halls of Congress, the Pentagon, and the White House. On June 14, 2001 President Bush ordered the U.S. Navy to stop the bombing exercises in Vieques by May 2003. No more discussions have transpired on the subject, although peaceful demonstrations continue to take place near the Naval Base to show opposition to U.S. permanence in Vieques.

IVÁN: Esos gringos van a terminar con la mitad de esta isla y nuestras mujeres.

VIEQUES – THE CRITICS CORNER

“El entorno de la vida familiar centra la acción, pero ni esa familia ni sus amistades pueden sustraerse a la alteración que implica una presencia militar en los alrededores y la consecuente deformación del medio, a causa de actividades sociales y comerciales adaptadas a las costumbres y preferencias de esos singulares residentes, que llenan el espacio físico y espiritual de esa isla. *Vieques* vibra principalmente al compás de una corriente subterránea de contextos que condicionan los parlamentos sin ideologizarlos. La atmósfera dramática conforma el desarrollo del tema paulatinamente, con diálogos sin excesivas alusiones directas a los hechos políticos que la envuelven de principio a fin”.

Tiempos del Mundo. Alberto Batista. 18 - 24 de Mayo del 2000

“*Vieques* es una comedia irónica que trata sobre la vida y las dificultades que enfrentaron para sobrevivir los habitantes de la Isla Nena, hacia la década del cincuenta, cuando la ocupación militar de la Marina (norteamericana) comenzaba a tener un impacto en sus vidas. Es la historia de una familia puertorriqueña común y corriente, con sentimientos de amor, valentía y desilusión”.

El Nuevo Día. Sección de Teatro. Nancy PiñeroVega. 6 de octubre de 2000

“*Vieques* presents a large family that lives on the island 10 years after the Navy settled there. And it is at that particular moment when the Navy’s presence is making its mark among the small island’s population”.

The San Juan Star. Portfolio. October 18, 2000

“*Vieques*, the play, is not about what you might think it would be. No warships tearing up the turf with target practice. No civilian protesters against the Navy being forcibly removed from the little island just east of Puerto Rico. No noble poor islanders being dispossessed by a brutal superpower”.

The New York Times. D.J.R. Bruckner. February 22, 2001

“*Vieques* does not delve into the political aspect of the island, but focuses on a family who lives there in the 1950s. Amid a tumultuous climate, the family learns to deal with their own chaotic lives. The comedy-drama follows them through their dreams, disappointments and quest for a better future”.

Playbill On Line. October 18, 2000

JOSEFINA: Yo no quería hacerlo pero tenía miedo de que me dejara. Era la primera vez que él quería estar conmigo. Después de tantos años. Quizás porque estaba borracho.

VIEQUES: STUDY QUESTIONS

*Note: Many of these study questions are based on the *Vieques* synopsis and scenes provided herein. Some questions will be clearer and seem more relevant after the students have seen the production. The last two questions require the students to do additional reading and conduct a group project. These are optional.*

1. Julio asks Iván the reasons why he attends meetings at the University. Why does Julio ask him not to go any more?
2. Why doesn't Iván want his cousin Silvia to speak with the sailors from the U.S. Naval Base? Why does he reject the American presence in Vieques? What are his arguments?
3. Don Julio doesn't want Silvia's to have a relationship with any Marine. However, he has a different opinion about them than the rest of the family. Is he being fatalistic, or does he feel that their presence is of some benefit to the community?

4. "...*Esos hijos de madre. No tienen que estar tirándonos esas cosas a nosotros. Se creen que somos basura*". Iván complains to Miguel and Roberto. If the fumigation campaign that the Marines are carrying out is to everyone's benefit, why is Iván so upset about it?
5. Why is the baseball game between the "*gringo marines*" and the young men of Vieques so important to the latter? Why does Silvia refuse to go to the game?
6. "*Papas fritas, no puedo creerlo, ¿a quién se le habrá ocurrido la brutalidad de freir las papas?*" Does Don Julio feel that the newly introduced foods the Marines eat –like French fries–, is a negative influence on the local folks?
7. "... *Me voy a quedar en casa de Carlos, en San Juan*". What is Iván running away from, and how do his fears finally find a solution? Is Iván a *machista*? Take stock of all the male characters, and the female characters. Who is strongest, the men or the women? Why?
8. What does Lola mean when she says to her husband: "*Julio, quiero enseñarte el demonio en persona*" ("I want to show you the devil incarnate")?
9. If you were a native of Vieques, how would you feel about the U.S. Naval presence in the small island? What are the pros and cons of the U.S. military presence there? What are the different issues (environmental, political, health-related, labor-related, cultural, social) that make up the Vieques Question?
10. **Class Project** (Optional): For years, Puerto Ricans (including the people of Vieques) have voted on the political status of Puerto Rico. The choices are three: statehood, independence, and *status quo*, i.e., Commonwealth. The latter repeatedly receives the majority of the vote, (although in 1998, statehood received 50.3% of the vote), followed closely in second place by statehood, and independence a minimal third. Organize into three groups, each representing a different option; simulate a referendum campaign pertinent to the issues that affect the people of Vieques, especially U.S. military presence there..

***MARTA:** Yo creo que me estoy muriendo. Puedo sentirlo. La gente puede sentir cuando se está muriendo. Todo el mundo sabe eso.*

WOUNDED BUFFALO / BUFALO HERIDO by Jorge Celaya: Synopsis

***Búfalo (a Don):** ¿Sabes por qué me gusta leer? Porque cuando agarro un libro, ya sé que lo que leo ahí es una historia inventada de principio a fin... Yo siempre soy el lector, no un personaje más. Puedo cerrar el libro a la hora que yo quiera y no volverlo a abrir si no me da la gana. En la vida real, por el contrario, te ves envuelto, sin querer, en historias que no te corresponden, y nada es predecible.*

Setting. The play takes place in Buffalo's rundown one-room apartment. The room turns into a boxing ring for certain scenes.

Characters. **Buffalo**, a former boxing welterweight champ hoping for a comeback, simultaneously struggling with his inner self in trying to do the right thing. He is about 35 years old. **Don**, a seedy character that arranges boxing matches, coordinates off-ring betting, and rigs the outcome of fights. **Apache**, a younger fighter who is Buffalo's contender. He is a happy-go-lucky fellow from the Latino *barrio*.

The play opens with a flashback to a previous fight: Apache is down on the mat. Buffalo, his often time opponent on the ring, has hit him hard. Don, the master of off-ring betting, and Buffalo's quasi agent, is counting to ten like a referee, hoping for a knock out. Buffalo is speechless.

The ring becomes Buffalo's run down efficiency apartment. A four-time welterweight boxing champ who seems to have run out of luck, Buffalo is torn between his dignity and desire to be honest on the one hand, and his urge for a chance at one more fight to recover his title and his position. Buffalo is shadow boxing, but falls down to the floor exhausted, his back to the audience.

There is a knock on the door. It is Don, who comes to talk business with Buffalo. Theirs is a conflictive relationship. Old scores surface immediately between Buffalo and Don, who has entered the room as if to a cockroach's nest. Don is not only a gambler, but he also "fixes" the outcome of matches. He has underworld connections. He asks for a chair, but all there is to "sit" on is a hammock. Don brings it down from the ceiling, and sits.

We learn that some time ago, Buffalo not only failed to come through on one such arranged fight – he should have killed Apache, his opponent-, but in fact, he got knocked out instead! Although he was never paid –after all, he had not lived up to his commitment-, the Mexican mafia has been after him, or so he suspects. Even Don has been after him. He has practically been in hiding for a long time. Whatever trust there is between Buffalo and Don, it is slim and circumstantial.

Don comes back repeatedly to haunt Buffalo, and to remind him constantly that he has become a bum, a forgotten nobody. The once champion is now a loser, he insists again and again in an attempt to ignite Buffalo's pride and self-esteem. In spite of their disagreements, Buffalo wants Don to arrange another fight for him. In the process of their bickering we learn that Buffalo's wife left him in the aftermath of that defeat years earlier, and that she took their daughter with

her. Buffalo hears his daughter's voice complimenting a doll he had bought her. He is tormented by memories.

Buffalo is truly heartbroken. As author Celaya says, this play is about the inner struggle between a decent man and his conscience, about dignity and good triumphing over deceit and corruption. Don tells Buffalo he can't blame anyone but himself for the fate of his family, and for his own miserable existence. "You didn't have the guts to go through with our arrangement," Don tells Buffalo. The little money Buffalo had left, his manager stole from him. Don tells him "If I were you, I would find the bastard and kill him."

In the course of the exchange between Buffalo and Don, we also get a hint that Don's airs of grandeur and wealth are a front. In reality, Don, too, is broke! Don needs Buffalo just as much, for he wants to wipe his slate clean with the *mafiosos*, and make some money. Don, who once upon a time was a fighter himself, belittles Buffalo left and right: he criticizes his apartment, his choice of liquor, his food, his clothes, his choice of books –he thinks Aristotle and Bukovsky are too intellectual for a dumb fighter- he puts down everything about Buffalo.

Buffalo, in turn, tries to defend himself from Don's verbal attacks, insisting it is wrong the way boxers have been stereotyped as ignorant punching bags. He pries into Don's life to reveal stories that are so far-fetched, they are surreal: how Don's mother gave birth to him watching a fight in a boxing hall, and died at childbirth; how his brother hung himself; he brags about his sumptuous house, his dogs and white carpets. It is hardly believable, and Buffalo has his doubts.

As far as Don is concerned, the stage is set for the recovery match: Buffalo will have to fight an opponent and this time, literally beat him to death. As this is happening, we get flashbacks to the fight between Buffalo and Apache. By now we realize that the initial flashback where Apache is down and Buffalo wins the match, is really an illusion. It should have turned out that way, but it did not. We learn that Don had inside information from a sports physician that confirmed that Apache had a brain tumor, and that the slightest blow to the head would finish him. That was the deal back then: Buffalo had to knock down Apache, to the kill.

But Buffalo had real problems with the proposition. According to Don, Apache knew nothing about his condition. We see how, in conscience, Buffalo could not bring himself to taking advantage of Apache's ignorance. He insists to Don that he won't commit such treachery, that he will fight a clean fight. Don puts it plain to him: he will kill Apache with a blow to the head, for the match must go on as scheduled. The bets are on for this fight. In order to edge him on, Don tells Buffalo that his wife has been sleeping with Apache. Buffalo does not believe it.

Buffalo runs into Apache and warns him: "I will not hit you in the head." "I've never felt better, Buffalo," answers Apache. Buffalo warns him that this will not be his last fight. Apache tells him it will be his last fight, for he is confident he will win the crown and be able to retire. "Don't accept this match: I am going to have to kill you." Apache, who is always jovial and joking around, doesn't take the threat seriously, on the contrary. He worries about Buffalo's pessimism. Buffalo asks Apache what he would want his family to know if he were to die unexpectedly. "That I loved them... that I did it all for them."

The first act ends with Don and Buffalo arguing. Buffalo knows Don is armed, and questions him as to why he has been staying the nights with him. “Are you going to kill me, or are you afraid I will commit suicide?”

Act II starts out almost identically. This time around, the flashback reflects the way things were: it is Apache who knocks Buffalo to the mat. Don does the countdown. Apache has knocked Buffalo down, to win the match. We realize this was the outcome of the fight that Buffalo “didn’t have the guts” to win, the fight that cost him his ruin, and almost put Don out of business.

“Get up, you piece of shit!” Don picks up the argument about the lost match and harps on his cowardice. We are surprised to find out that Buffalo’s defeat had nothing to do with guts: Buffalo tells Don that Apache really hit him so hard, he knocked him out. “I lied to you just now. I would have killed him, had Apache not knocked me out first.”

Buffalo suspects the *mafia* is “out there” just waiting for him to leave his apartment, to kill him. But he is also afraid that Don has been sent by them to kill him inside the apartment. Surely enough, Don pulls out his gun, and points it at Buffalo’s forehead. “How does it feel to touch bottom?” Don asks Buffalo. Buffalo proceeds to tell him the story of Chimuelo, once the owner of a paper factory who fell into ruin, and ended up selling his own excrement in the streets of Mexico City, and becoming rich again. Don cannot believe it!

Buffalo utilizes this story to tell Don how even at rock bottom, a man can pull himself up the clean, honest way, without lying or cheating. (Apparently, Chimuelo sold his dried up excrement in little plastic boxes, telling people that it was just that: excrement!). “Selling your own shit doesn’t sound like “clean” to me!” rebuffs Don.

Things turn serious again when Don puts the gun into Buffalo’s mouth, but then tells him that the gun doesn’t work. Don is not going to kill him. Suddenly, someone slips a note under the front door. Buffalo tells a very suspicious and distrustful Don that it is a love note from his wife. Don doesn’t believe him. They argue. Don accuses Buffalo of having other deals on the side. “Tell me who your contact is, or this time I will kill you!” Buffalo denies any betrayal. “It’s only a blank piece of paper, which means I should go home. It means my family loves me.” Don tells him to go.

But then Don starts to reminisce about his dream house. He goes back to the lost fight, to his embarrassment with the racketeers. He verbalizes his public embarrassment. Buffalo tries to take all the blame. “I lied to you before. It’s not that I didn’t want to kill Apache. It’s that he beat me fair and square. He was stronger. The doctor’s report about his brain injury must have been a lie. He fought harder and took more punches than ever!”

Don starts rope jumping, and Buffalo goes to the hot dish to prepare some food. Don isn’t hungry. He reminisces about when he was a boxer. He philosophizes about money, about what women want –his not-so-kind opinion of women surfaces again-, and about the differences

between himself and Buffalo. "You couldn't kill Apache, I had to do it." Buffalo does not believe it. Don describes how he shot Apache in the face, and the blood splattered all over.

Buffalo is shocked and angry. Takes the gun from Don and makes him undress down to his shorts. They talk, and Buffalo expresses his distrust for Don, who keeps telling him he should go home. "Are you pushing me out there 'cause someone is waiting there to kill me?" He still wants Don to arrange for the re-match. A scene follows where Don is talking to some people to arrange a fight for Buffalo.

Don returns to Buffalo's apartment with the gun. The match is set. Don threatens Buffalo about winning this fight, or else. But Buffalo has decided he is not fighting any more, and Don finds him packing his suitcase. "Who is your new contact?" asks Don angrily. "An old rival I have finally confronted: me!" Buffalo has made the final decision to leave. He doesn't even care if there are mobsters waiting for him out there. Don asks if he can stay a bit longer in the room, for he wants to be alone for a while. Buffalo tosses the room keys, and then gives him the gun. He is about to leave, when Don tells him he lied about Apache. "Your wife never cheated on you. I told you that to pressure you." As he is about to leave, Don shoots him.

As he lies there dying, he asks Don to take his wife and daughter to an amusement park. "I promised I would do it. Now, you do it for me... and treat them to ice cream." Don gets up, looks around and rejoices at the apartment. He talks to Buffalo's corpse while laughing, to tell him that he actually couldn't set up a match. THE END

JORGE CELAYA BIO

Jorge Celaya was born in Altar Son, Mexico on November 5th 1960. He holds a degree in Dramatic Arts from the National School of Theatre in Mexico City. He is an actor, playwright and director and has performed in over twenty plays and several soap operas.

Jorge has also written twelve plays, directed six, and has received national and international awards for both playwriting and directing. "Lobo," "Voces," "El Niño y la Virgen y Cercados," are some of the works that have been staged consistently in Mexico City as well as other states.

Currently, he is a member of "Sistema Nacional de Creadores de Conaculta" in Mexico. He received this honor in form of a three year grant for his work on three plays titled "Venado Viejo...Venado Joven" which deal with the indigenous communities of the country (specifically the Yaqui tribe in the state of Sonora).

His most recent award has been from the Repertorio Español and Metlife Foundation "Nuestras Voces" playwriting competition for his play "Búfalo Herido."

Don (a Búfalo): *¡Tu decisión no pudo ser más acertada, mi querido amigo “Búfalo”. ¡No había tal pelea! ¡No te pude arreglar ninguna pinche pelea! ¡Pero lo intenté! ¡Te juro que lo intenté más que nunca! ¡Lo intenté por ti! No... no fue por ti. Fue por mí. ¡Sólo quise salvar mi orgullo! ¿Qué haríamos sin el orgullo?*

BUFALO HERIDO SCENES

Scene Don has come to see Buffalo in his apartment, and comments sarcastically about how dingy it is. Don asks about Buffalo’s wife and child. Buffalo jumps defensively.

BÚFALO.- ¡No me estés jodiendo, “Don”! ¡No me jodas! ¡Oíste? ¡Hice lo que creía que debía hacer y no me arrepiento! *(Búfalo sigue brincando)*

DON. *(Burlón)* ¡Cierto! ¡Cierto! ¡Maldita sea! ¡Bravo! ¡Hiciste lo justo! ¡Por eso estás jodido! ¡Mira dónde vives! ¡Mira tu pinche parrilita eléctrica! ¿Qué comes diario? ¡Eh? ¿Huevos con jamón? ¿jamón con huevos? ¿Sopa de letras? ¡Qué buena dieta llevas!

(Don descuelga la hamaca del techo con la escoba, y se mece en ella). Y aquí, en tu hamaquita debes descansar a toda madre, bien cómodo... ¡Uta madre, hasta reumas debes de tener ya! ¿Y de cariño? ¿Cómo andas de cariño? ¿Cómo andas de cariño, eh? ¡Dejaste a tu mujer! ¡Un día llegué a tu casa y la encontré en la vieja tina de baño, con un espejo roto entre sus manos mirándose las venas y tu hija queriéndoselo quitar! ¡Dejó de intentarlo cuando vió que a tu hija le salía sangre de las manos! ¡Pero realmente se quería matar! ¿Para qué? ¡Si tú la dejaste muerta, cabrón! ¡muerta en vida! ¡Esa mujer te amaba! ¡Realmente te amaba!

(Búfalo deja de brincar la cuerda y la azota sobre el piso. Hacen una tregua. Búfalo se pone de pie y pasea un poco por el cuarto. Se detiene para ejercitar el tobillo)

BÚFALO: ¿Cómo están?

DON: Bien. No pasó nada más

BÚFALO: “Don” ¡A ellas no se acerquen!

DON: No. Yo me encargo de ellas. No te preocupes. *(Pausa)*

BÚFALO *(Desconfiado)* ¿Qué quieres decir?

DON: ¿Con qué?

BUFALO: Con eso de “yo me encargo de ellas”.

DON: *(Sonríe)* Cálmate Búfalo. Estás muy nervioso. Quiero decir que a ellas no les pasará nada. ¿No me tienes confianza, eh? ¿Quién traicionó a quién? ¿Y todo por qué? *(Sacástico. Husmea alrededor mientras habla)* ¡Todo por ser tan justo! ¡Tan honesto! ¿Cómo pensabas realizar todos tus sueños eh? ¡Esa gran casa en el campo! ¿Cómo querías vestir a tu mujer de pieles? *(Don saca de atrás de la base de la parrilla una botella de aguardiente barato. Se ríe)*

¡Querías una lujosa cantina con acabados en oro y marfil! ¡Mira dónde terminó! ¡Los sueños se compran! ¡Se compran! ¡Si hubieras sabido manejar las reglas del juego! ¡Sacrificar un poquito de tu mal entendida dignidad, otra cosa sería!.

Scene *(Don has told Buffalo the terms of the match. He must deliver a severe blow to Apache's head, and knock him dead. But Buffalo cannot deal with the thought of doing that, and he confronts Don.)*

BÚFALO: Es que, mira, Don. Al final de cuentas yo soy el que me voy a arriesgar arriba del ring, para que ustedes se queden con la mayoría de la lana.

DON: Bueno... ¿Y cuál es el pedo? Vas a ganar dinero y vas a seguir manteniendo tu corona. No hay ningún problema, Búfalo. ¡Recuerda que fuiste tú el que me pediste que te metiera en esto!

BÚFALO: ¿Pero por qué así, carajo?

DON: Mira muchacho, no te me apendejes. Si ya le entraste al “bisnes” ahora aguántate. Con nosotros triplicarás lo que te va a pagar tu promotor. ¡Aquí el verdadero negocio son las apuestas! Necesitas el dinero. *(Don se va a retirar.)* ¡Aaah! Te voy a dar un consejo. Escúchame bien. *(Don trata a Búfalo con actitud paternal.)* Cuando tengas lo suficiente, busca a ese condenado administrador que te dejó en la quiebra y le das un balazo en el culo. Lo dejas que se desangre. *(Mientras se va.)* ¡Es lo que yo haría! ¡Un cabrón que deja en la pobreza a una familia, no merece vivir!

BÚFALO. Don, no sé si lo pueda hacer.

DON: ¿Lo de tu administrador?

BÚFALO: No. Lo de Apache.

DON: *(Don se acerca y le hable serenamente)* Mi hermano, por favor. ¡Ya no te preocupes! ¡Te necesitamos sin stress y bien relajado para esa pelea! ¡No te preocupes! Solo entrena y duerme bien.

(Búfalo se toma con las dos manos la cabeza y se hace ovillo, empieza a escucharse el bramido del público que crece gradualmente a la vuelta que da Búfalo sin soltarse la cabeza. Don y Apache se enfrentan en actitud retadora, antes de desaparecer. Transición de iluminación. Ahora Búfalo está en la habitación, muy angustiado. Entra Don.)

DON: ¿Qué te sucede? Búfalo ¿Qué te sucede?

(Búfalo va hacia el baño y sale tomándose una pastilla. Se tranquiliza poco a poco.)

BÚFALO: A veces creo que me duele la cabeza, no por los chingadazos que he recibido, sino por los que he dado.

DON: No son los chingadazos. Es la culpa.

BÚFALO ¿La culpa?

DON: Sí. Te culpas de todo, te culpas hasta de lo que pudiera suceder. Así no se puede vivir feliz. Yo creo que es más terrible sentirse culpable por las cosas que no hiciste que por las que hiciste. No te pelees contra tu lado malo, acéptalo. No vivas con tanto miedo. Por eso estás aquí con una hamaca colgando de las paredes y una parrilla calentándote el trasero.

SCENE *Don has come to give Buffalo the final word. The fight must go on, and he must kill Apache in the ring. Buffalo tries to reason with him one more time.*

DON: Está estorbando.

BÚFALO: Don, yo... sugiero, que esto se resuelva de otra forma.

DON: Mira Búfalo, ahorita olvídate de nuestra amistad. No te hablé para preguntarte, ni para que me “sugieras” cómo resolver los problemas. Sólo te hablé para darte la fecha.

BÚFALO: ¿Cómo?

DON: Lo vas a matar. Le vas a golpear su dañado cerebro hasta matarlo. Como quedamos. No hay cambio de planes.

BÚFALO: ¿Cómo?

DON: En la próxima pelea tu vas con él.

BÚFALO: No... no podría matarlo.

DON: Conocemos el diagnóstico del doctor. Dice que... *(Se interrumpe.)* ¿Qué? ¿Mucha pieza para ti?

BÚFALO: No, el Apache es muy derecho.

DON: Por eso... por derecho... eso aquí no funciona.

BÚFALO: Le debo mucho.

DON: Así no le deberás a nadie.

BÚFALO: Nada más a ustedes.

DON: Con este favor nos deberás menos.

BÚFALO: ¿Por qué no le preparan un accidente o algo así?

DON: Eso si sería demasiado obvio, ya la prensa sabe de su desacuerdo conmigo. Así que es mejor que quede ahí en el ring.

BÚFALO: ¿Si me niego?

Scene Buffalo is packing his suitcase. He has decided to face the world. No more fights for him. Don doesn't take it very well. He is incensed.

DON: *(Desconcertado.)* ¿Y eso?

BÚFALO: Me voy.

DON: *(Incrédulo.)* ¿Estás bromeando? ¡Ya te conseguí la pelea buena! ¿Es lo que querías, no? ¡Pues ya está! *(Pausa incómoda.)* ¿Qué pasa? ¿Con quién negociaste? ¡Dime con quién negociaste, cabrón! ¡Negociaste con alguien! ¡Ya lo sabía! ¿Negociaste con alguien?

BÚFALO: Sí.

DON: *(DESOLADO)* ¡Lo sabía! ¡Me partí la madre para conseguirte ésta pelea! ¡Y me sales con ésta pendejada! ¡Lo sabía! ¡Algo dentro de mi, me decía que no confiara en ti!

BÚFALO: Negocié conmigo mismo.

DON: ¿Eh?

BÚFALO: Todo este tiempo estuve negociando conmigo mismo.

DON: ¿De qué hablas?

BÚFALO: Hablo de que la pelea que tenía que sostener desde hace tiempo, la enfrenté aquí, durante el tiempo que estuve encerrado en este cuarto. ¿Mi rival?... yo mismo. Mi rival era yo mismo.

DON: ¿Qué tienes? ¿Qué te pasa? No te entiendo.

BÚFALO: Estoy bien. Mejor que nunca.

DON: ¡Es tu oportunidad! ¡Puedes tener todo lo que querías!

BÚFALO: ¡Lo que quiero ya lo tengo! ¡Me recuperaré a mí mismo! ¡Regreso a casa! *(Búfalo va hacia la maleta, la cierra y se dirige a la puerta. La abre. Va a salir.)*

DON: Afuera tienes una deuda, Búfalo. ¿Quién te dice que no te están esperando?

BÚFALO: Me enfrentaré a lo que sea, Don. ¡A lo que sea! ¡Me levanté de la lona y nada me volverá a tumbar. (*Búfalo va a salir.*)

DON: Búfalo (*Señala a los cinturones.*) ¡Se te olvidan los cinturones!

BÚFALO: (*Irónico.*) No, Don. ¡Glorias pasadas no caben en mi equipaje!

El Apache (a Búfalo): ¿Sabes qué, brother? Lo que más deseo después de cada pelea es llegar a mi "cantón". Dormir a mis "morritos" mientras les cuento un cuento y escucharlos cuando me dicen, "Hasta mañana, papá". Luego sentarme "acá", ¿no?, en el sillón reclinable de la sala y hacerle el amor a mi mujer, mientras en un rincón, la "pinchi" televisión habla sola...como loca... ¡Qué loco! ¿No, loco?

Scene *It appears that Buffalo and Don have arrived at an understanding. Buffalo is holding Don's gun during this scene. It seems that Don will let Buffalo go his way. Buffalo returns the gun to Don.)*

BÚFALO: Bueno, pues vámonos por ahí, ¿no? Tengo que entregar las llaves del cuarto. (*Don se dirige a la puerta. Van a salir. Don se detiene...*)

DON: Búfalo, ¿cómo lo supiste?

BÚFALO: ¿Qué?

DON: Que vivo en un viejo hotel lleno de ratas.. que no hay tales galgos... Ni tal mansión... que... (*Búfalo sonríe y le da una palmada en la espalda.*)

BÚFALO: Hablas mucho cuando duermes. Yo creo que las cosas que uno grita dormido, la mayoría de las veces son cosas que nos hacen daño. Cosas que desearíamos decir, simplemente decir, cuando estamos despiertos. Pero no nos atrevemos. Nos sabemos vulnerables... Y no nos perdonamos. ¡Fíjate que lo que menos nos perdonamos es sabernos humanos! (*Sarcástico.*) ¡Cómo si fuera un maldito castigo! ¿Nos vamos?

DON: Me voy a quedar un rato. Quiero estar un momento a solas. ¿Tú sabes, no?

BÚFALO: Entiendo. (*Búfalo le avienta las llaves. Don las agarra al aire.*) Ahí se las entregas a la portera cuando salgas. (*Búfalo va a cerrar la puerta.*)

DON: Amigo... Te mentí.. Tu mujer nunca te engañó con "El Apache". Te lo dije para presionarte.

BÚFALO: No te preocupes. Nunca te lo creí. Dime... dime que sólo fanfarroneabas con lo de Apache. Quiero escucharte decir que es mentira que lo mataste. (*Pausa.*)

DON: No. Eso es cierto. Tan cierto como que no tengo mansión con alfombra blanca. Sí, lo maté. Lo maté así como te lo conté. Lo felicité por su triunfo, lo abracé, lo besé en la mejilla y le empujé dos tiros por la cabeza..... Así nomás. ¡Fácil! ¡Tenía buena sangre, ¿eh?! ¡Tardé unos días para poder quitármela totalmente del rostro! (*Búfalo ríe entre dientes, como si hubiera escuchado una broma.*)

BÚFALO: No te lo creo.

DON: (*Un tanto desconcertado.*) Realmente me tiene sin cuidado si me lo crees o no. El hecho es que "El Apache" está tieso.

BÚFALO: Don, las mansiones con alfombra blanca, no van contigo. ¡Un día, Don! ¡Un día... vas a tener esa casa que has soñado! No la que has tenido, esa no te tocaba, sino la que has querido tener siempre... la de ladrillo. ¡Y seguro que está llena de algo butno, de algo maravilloso!....

(*Búfalo le entrega el arma a Don. Don no sabe cómo detener a Búfalo.*) Estoy bien, amigo. ¡Dicen que lo que no te mata, te hace más fuerte! (*Don le apunta a Búfalo con el arma.....*)

BOXING

(The story of how, since the dawn of civilization, men have been knocking their brains out for fun.)

Boxing is defined as an athletic contest between two persons, each of whom uses the fists to try to knock the other unconscious or to inflict enough punishment to cause the opponent either to quit or to be judged beaten. The primary aim of each participant is to strike blows to the head and torso of the opponent to knock him down and render him incapable of rising to a standing position and defending himself. The fighter must get up before the count of ten (in approximately 10 seconds). That's how it is today, and we've come a long way, baby from what it was way back when!

Fighting with fists was a sport about 6,000 years ago in what is now known as Ethiopia. From there, it spread to ancient Egypt and eventually throughout the Mediterranean. Ancient Crete also had a boxing-like sport, which probably developed independently, about 1,500 B.C. Although the sport wasn't added to the ancient Olympic program until 688 BC, some sort of boxing had become pretty well established among the Greeks before that time. In one form of Greek boxing, the two combatants simply sat on stones facing and pounded away at one another until one of them was knocked out. Boxing in the Olympics wasn't quite that brutal, but there were no breaks in the action. Fighters wore leather thongs, originally to protect their hands and wrists. As time passed, harder leather was used, turning the thongs into weapons. (And you thought thongs were merely underwear!)

The "glory that was Rome" wasn't so glorious in this department. Romans added iron or brass studs, creating the *cestus*, which could be a deadly weapon. Then they went even farther, developing a cruel, spur-like instrument of bronze, called the *myrmex* (literally meaning "limb piercer".) Boxing in the Roman Empire was not so much a sport as a bloody amusement for spectators, much like you saw in the film *Gladiator*. Slaves were pitted against one another in a fight to the death. The *myrmex* was finally abolished and boxing itself was banned by Rome about 30 B.C. The Romans did make one small contribution to the sport: they invented the ring, originally just a marked circle. (Romans loved fancy scenarios; just look at a picture of the Coliseum. Now, there's a ring!!)

With the spread of Christianity, the sport disappeared from Europe completely. It resurfaced in England in the late 17th century. A London newspaper referred to a bout in 1681, and the Royal Theatre in London was the site of regularly scheduled matches by 1698. The sport at that time was actually a mixture of wrestling and boxing. Although hitting with fists was emphasized, a boxer could grab and throw his opponent, then jump on him and hit him while he was down. (Hey, I think I've seen that on cable TV!)

In the 18th century, boxing was revived in London in the form of bare-knuckle prizefights in which the contestants fought for money and the spectators made wagers on the outcome. The first boxer to be recognized as a heavyweight champion was James Figg, in 1719. In 1743 a later champion, John Broughton, formulated a set of rules standardizing some practices and eliminating others, such as hitting opponents when they are down or seizing opponents by the hair. The new rules prohibited bare-fisted fighting, wrestling, hugging, hitting opponents while they are helpless, and fighting to the finish. Under the Queensberry rules, matches were divided into 3-minute rounds with 1-minute intervals of rest between them.

Now, for some local history: while fighting of various kinds was common on the American frontier, boxing was not. The first two American boxers, both Afro-American, made their names in England: Bill Richmond of Staten Island, and Tom Molineaux of Virginia. In a number of matches against British soldiers, Richmond was unbeaten and went to England in 1777. Known as the "Black Terror," Richmond knocked out his first English opponent in just 25 seconds. (Now, if the revolutionary war had been fought on the boxing ring, it would have been a piece of cake). Richmond continued fighting occasionally until he was 52 and he never lost again. Molineaux (or Molyneaux) was a slave on a Virginia plantation who may have won his freedom because of his fighting skill. He went to England in 1809 and won two bouts before losing to a contender by the name of Cribb in 1810. In a savage rematch a year later, Molineaux suffered a broken jaw in the 10th round and was knocked out in the 11th. Richmond and Molineaux were little noted in their native country, however. (Remember this for Black History Month).

America's first genuine championship fight took place May 30, 1880 in West Virginia. Joe Goss, widely considered the English champion, faced challenger Paddy Ryan, a native of Ireland. They fought for nearly an hour and a half before Ryan knocked out Goss in the 87th round. The last bare-knuckle heavyweight champion was the American John L. Sullivan, who fought and won the last sanctioned bare-knuckle fight in 1889, against Jake Kilrain. Fighting with gloves under the Queensberry rules, the popular Sullivan lost the world heavyweight boxing championship to James J. Corbett in New Orleans, Louisiana, on September 7, 1892. The Queensberry rules have remained the code governing the conduct of professional boxing.

The art of boxing is to hit and not get hit. In the 19th century, boxing was called "the gentleman's sport" or "the manly art of self-defense". The words conjure images of well heeled, Victorian-era white men with rolled-up sleeves, exchanging bare-fisted punches in a field, corralled by spectators barking approval at well-placed hits. At stake were male pride and maybe a few teeth. At the beginning of the 19th century, The United States was central to the world's boxing scene. Waves of Irish, Jewish, and Italian immigrants (and Afro-American fighters) continually replenished the pool of boxers. Immigrant fighters were often tough and poor, lured by the promise of starting a new life in the U.S. The boxing ring was the symbolic setting for the pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps tale. (This is true not only in the U.S. In every Latin American country that sports the sport, it is poor men, and often black or native, that climb up on the ring in the hope of success and fortune).

In the United States, professional boxing has been subject to increasing control by state boxing commissions since 1920. Other countries subsequently passed similar regulatory legislation and

set up control boards, as did other U.S. states and cities. The official state codes include specifications for ring construction, a minimum weight for padded gloves; a maximum number of; specifications for the conduct of referees and judges; definitions and penalties for fouls; and systems of scoring points to decide winners of contests that do not end in knockouts. The state codes also define grounds on which a bout may be stopped to prevent serious injury to contestants who have not been knocked out, but who can no longer defend themselves.

Although there are 17 recognized weight divisions, a majority of the professional boxers compete in only eight of those classes. These classes are, with maximum weight: flyweight, 112 lb; bantamweight, 118 lb; featherweight, 126 lb; lightweight, 135 lb; welterweight, 147 lb; middleweight, 160 lb; light heavyweight, 175 lb; and heavyweight, 195 lb and over.

One of boxing's best-known American fighters, Jack Dempsey, did much to popularize the sport. Nicknamed the "Manassas Mauler" for his hometown in Colorado and his aggressive fighting style, Dempsey became heavyweight champion in 1919. In 1921 he defended his title against the French fighter Georges Carpentier, in what was the first fight with a million-dollar gate. Dempsey held the title until Gene Tunney defeated him in 1926. After losing a controversial rematch with Tunney in 1927, Dempsey retired from boxing.

Joe Louis held the heavyweight championship longer than any other fighter -from 1937 to 1949- and successfully defended his title 25 times. After winning a gold medal at the 1952 Olympic Games, Floyd Patterson won the heavyweight title in 1956; he became the first heavyweight champion to regain his title in a victorious 1960 rematch with the Swedish fighter Ingemar Johansson. In 1962 Sonny Liston, who was one of the most feared heavyweight boxers of all time, defeated Patterson. Liston subsequently lost the title in 1964 to perhaps the greatest and most popular boxer in history, Muhammad Ali. Possessing strength, speed, and ring savvy, Ali revitalized the heavyweight division and gained widespread international popularity with his charismatic personality. (Have you seen his daughter inside the ring? Man, the talent is hereditary!)

In 1986 Mike Tyson became the youngest heavyweight champion of all time, winning the World Boxing Council (WBC) title at 20 years of age. By 1987 Tyson had unified the heavyweight crown, capturing the World Boxing Association (WBA) and International Boxing Federation (IBF) titles. He dominated the heavyweight division during the late 1980s, earning 37 victories.

Renowned boxers in other weight divisions include American welterweight and middleweight champion Sugar Ray Robinson; Panamanian boxer Roberto "Mano de Piedra" Duran (son-te-hand), a wonderland of atavistic mayhem who held world titles in the lightweight, welterweight, junior middleweight, and middleweight divisions; American boxer Sugar Ray Leonard won world championships in five different weight divisions; Mexican boxer Julio Cesar Chávez, the "Lion of Culiacan", won world titles in the super featherweight, lightweight, and junior welterweight divisions and became a national hero in Mexico; and Mexican fighter Oscar de la Hoya, "the wonder boy".

Latin American has produced countless world-class fighters. México, Puerto Rico, Panamá, and Cuba have shared boxing glory on par with the U.S. Boxing is to Mexicans like soccer is to Brazilians and Argentinians, as strong a reality as is religion. Mexico has produced boxing champions second only to the United States; and Puerto Rico, with 36 world champs, out of a total population of only 3.5 million people, is the number one country in the entire planet when it comes to producing champions.

A slate of Latin American boxers in the lighter weight classes includes names such as Cuban “Kid Chocolate”, world champion of the 1920’s, and undoubtedly the best Latin American boxer of all times. East Los Angeles has a fight reputation that rivals Philadelphia’s and surpasses any other city. From Mexican Joe Rivers to Francisco “Panchito” Bojado, fighters emanating from the East L.A. area have been making their way to the top since the 1900s.

Legendary Mexican fighters include José “Toluco” López; Ratón Macías; Ricardo “Pajarito” Moreno; Raimundo “Battling” Torres; José Becerra (as popular in México as Chavez was at his peak); “Kid Azteca”, and “Kid Anahuac”. Cuban fighters also had their heyday: Benny Paret; Urtiminio Ramos; José “Mantequilla” Nápoles; Luis Manuel Martínez; and “Kid Gavilán”, a marvel of speed, guts, and showmanship. Among the greats we must also mention Carlos Ortiz, the perfect fighting machine, a lighter weight Joe Louis; Alexis Argüello, the elegant matador, the impeccable gentleman warrior; Salvador Sánchez, whose great career was like a Shakespearean *barrio* tragedy; and Felix “Tito” Trinidad, a first-class fighter from Puerto Rico.

QUESTIONS

1. Don reproaches Buffalo constantly. He tells him, “*No supiste jugar la baraja. Sabías lo que tenías que hacer, pero hiciste lo contrario. Te ganó la... honestidad. Ese ha sido tu problema, tu mayor contrincante.*” Discuss the compatibility of individual honesty and competitiveness. Are there other sports where betting creates a spurious environment?

2. “*Mira, muchacho. Escucha un consejo. Para un boxeador no es bueno leer. Y menos a Aristóteles.*” Don tells Buffalo that fighters are meatheads, irrational by nature, good only as punching bags. To Don, there is only one smart fighter in all of boxing: Mohammed Ali. Discuss the various stereotypes about athletes, both male and female (things like being represented as dumb, rough, smart, ill-tempered, masculine [when it comes to women athletes], etc.) How do such stereotypes arise? Is stereotyping sexist, racist, elitist? Are today’s athletes breaking some of those stereotypes?

3. Buffalo tells Don that he (Don) needs him, which is the reason why Don is hanging around the apartment. Don tells Buffalo he (Buffalo) will have no comeback unless he arranges it. Does Buffalo really need Don, or is he entrapped in a relationship with Don because of their shared past? In what ways –financially, psychologically- does Don need Buffalo?

4. Don’s description of women is not very kind: as far as he is concerned, they are only after a man’s money. How does such a perception shape a man’s behavior toward the opposite sex? What do you think Buffalo’s wife is like?

5. How many fantastic tales –call them lies if you will- does Don tell Buffalo? Is Don a pathological liar? Is he trying to impress Buffalo?
6. The story of the paper products magnate that loses everything and rebuilds his fortune selling his own excrement: Put yourself in that man’s position. What would you do in order to re-build your life? What personal skills or things could you market that would enable you to survive and rebuild? If the magnate had been a woman, what would her story be like?
7. Why would Buffalo stay in that run-down single room, when he could have moved to another city after he lost the fight to Apache? Was it his family? Was it fear of the *mafia*? Was it a desire to reclaim his title?
8. What are Buffalo’s virtues? Discuss the occasions when his good heart wins, and where he upholds his dignity. Does Don have any virtues, or is he a ruthless mobster?

Búfalo herido and Vieques: *Suggested Readings and Resources*

Don (a Búfalo): Cuando te vi caer... cuando vi que no te levantabas, no lo podía creer. ¡Estabas cavando mi propia tumba! ¡Yo hablé con todos por ti! ¡Yo te ayudé en esto! ¡Les dije que estabas preparado! ¿Sabes lo que eso significa entre todos nosotros? ¡Significa que si tú fallas, yo fallo!

BUFALO HERIDO AND VIEQUES; **SUGGESTED READINGS AND RESOURCES**

Fleischer, Nat, et al, [*An Illustrated History of Boxing*](#) - Paperback, 1997; an update of a classic by boxing's foremost journalist/historian

Gorn, Elliott J., [*The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prize Fighting in America*](#) - Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1989; an excellent and engaging history of the bare-knuckle era

Mullan, Harry, and P. Arnold, [*The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Boxing: The Definitive Illustrated Guide to World Boxing*](#) - Book Sales, 1996; a lot of information packed into a small area.

Resources on the Web

[About.com Boxing](#) - Current news and features, with an excellent library of links to other resources.

[Boxing On The Web](#) - Bios and stats on past and present boxers, listings of current champions.

[Cox's Corner](#) - Boxing historian Monte Cox picks the top fights and fighters of each decade

[Cyber Boxing Zone](#) - Excellent historical resource includes championship histories, with bios and records for most champions and contenders

[USA Boxing](#) - Official site has complete lists of amateur champions, national and Olympic teams, and Olympic records

Vieques Development Strategy: www.arch.Columbia.edu/UTAP/HTML/Projects/Vieques

The official site of the U.S. Navy in Vieques:
www.navyvieques.navy.mil/

Enchanted Island Project:
www.enchanted-isle.com/enchanted/Vieques.hotmail

Alianza de Mujeres Viequenses (Vieques Women's Alliance)
www.fire.or.cr/elabsept.hotmail