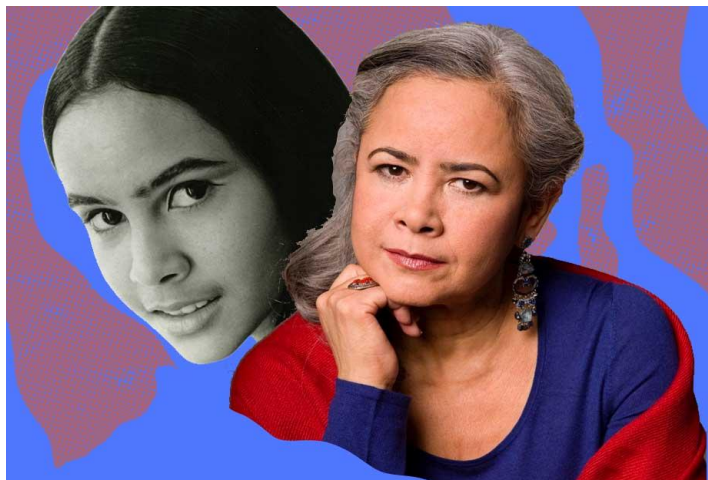


Esmeralda Santiago: Life and Work

By: Karibay Angeles, Tanvi Patel, Geovanny Japa, Munkasir Mir



Sources:
Image by TPR.org

Early Life

- ❖ Esmeralda Santiago was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico on May 17, 1948.
- ❖ In 1961, she came to the United States at the age of 13 years old and initially faced discrimination and economic instability as an migrant.
- ❖ She was the eldest child among her 11 siblings. She had to support her mother and siblings.
- ❖ She attended ***New York City's Performing Arts High School***, where she studied drama and dance. She experienced stereotyping and discrimination based on skin color, culture and even language (speaking in Spanish).
- ❖ She graduated from ***Harvard University*** in 1976 after eight years of part-time at community colleges.
- ❖ Her writing career evolved from the work as a producer & writer of documentary and educational films.



Sources:

Text & Image
Esmeraldasantiago.com

Cultural Importance

❖ What does Esmeralda Santiago embody ?

- She embodies the struggle of many Puerto Ricans who have migrated to the United States. Esmeralda Santiago along with her family migrated in the 1961 seeking better economic stability.
- With her stories, she educates readers about the political history between the United States and Puerto Rico, revealing the tension between island-born Puerto Ricans and Nuyoricans in New York.
- She represents the voice of Latinx women through her stories empowering women and allowing them to find comfort in their journeys and experiences as members of the Latinx community.

❖ Esmeralda Santiago's Dream as a Young Woman

- To be fulfilled as a individual but most importantly as a woman. She achieved this by discovering her identity, and ultimately finding her calling through being a proud Latinx female writer.



Sources:

Text & Image
Esmeraldasantiago.com

Cultural Importance

❖ Speaks Out Against Stereotypes of the Latinx Community in her Books

- She wrote many books about her early childhood and experiences as a Latinx, voicing her struggle.
 - *When I was Puerto Rican*
 - *América's Dream.*
- Her characters point out stereotypes in the Latinx community often ignored by the public.
 - She has devoted her life to aiding victims of domestic abuse, including assisting with the establishment of a Youth Service Center and a battered women's shelter in Massachusetts



Sources:

Text & Image
[Conservancy.umn.edu](https://conservancy.umn.edu)
[En.Elmensajerorochester.com](https://en.elmensajerorochester.com)

Continued...

❖ She Stands Up for What She Believed In

- She is involved in her community. Esmeralda Santiago is an active volunteer as a spokesperson on behalf of public libraries.
- She is a founder of a shelter for battered women and their children in Massachusetts.
- She serves on ***The Boards of Organizations*** devoted to the arts and to literature, and speaks about the need to encourage and support the artistic development of young people.
 - As a cultural ambassador for the ***State Department***, she has traveled widely. She is a regular guest commentator on ***NPR's "All Things Considered," "Morning Edition," "Latino USA,"*** and ***"The Takeaway"***. Her essays and opinion pieces have been widely published.



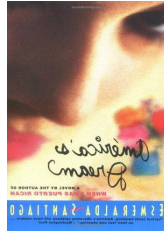
Sources:

Text & Image
Conservancy.umn.edu
News.harvard.edu

Famous Publications

When I was Puerto Rican

Received recognition for voice “full of passion and authority” by *Washington Post Book World*.



1996

Almost a Woman

A memoir of hers which received numerous “Best of the year” mentions.

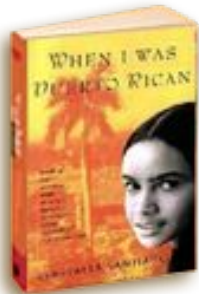


2004

A Doll for Navidades

A book illustrated for children.

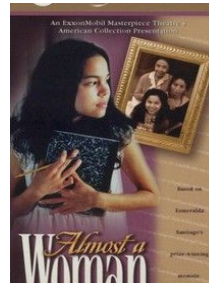
1994



América's Dream

A woman that will never forget her past even after she came to the United States looking for the American dream.

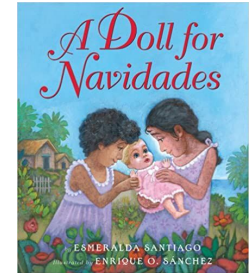
1999



The Turkish Lover

A comprehensive, offensive seven-year relationship in Santiago's third memoir.

2005

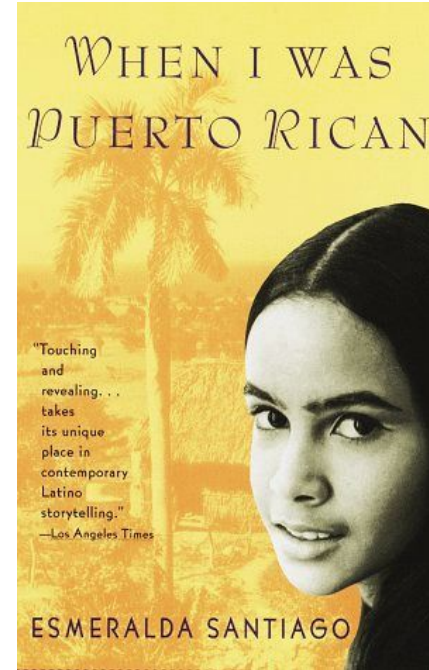


Sources:

Text & Image
Esmeraldasantiago.com

When I Was Puerto Rican

- ❖ The memoir starts with a six-year-old Esmeralda Santiago living with her parents in Puerto Rico. Her family was struggling to survive and were living in poverty. [1]
- ❖ She was also dealing with infidelity in her parent's marriage. Her father continually leaving forced her mother to take the responsibility. [1]
- ❖ Her mother begins working at a factory, but she continually has to listen to society's taunts. This puts a lot of responsibility on Negi as she has to take care of her siblings. [2]
- ❖ Her family then moves to New York, where she faces different obstacles. She expected the Americans to treat her like an outsider, but she realizes that Puerto Ricans born in America don't like to mingle with her. [1]

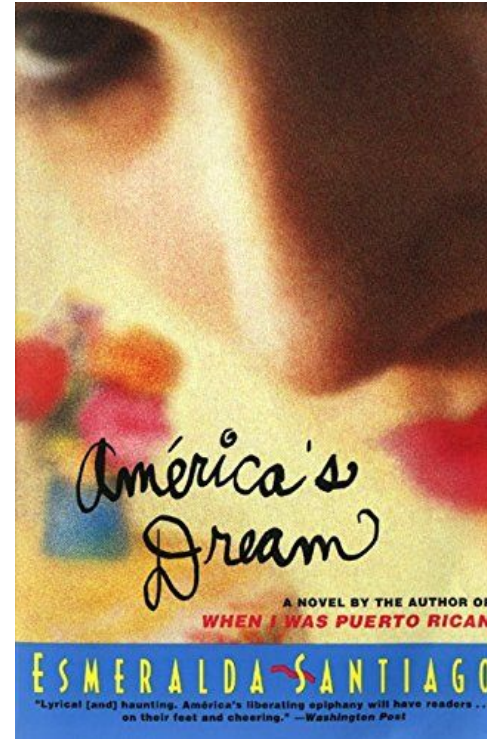


Sources:

Text & Image
Esmeraldasantiago.com
Supersummary.com [1]
Coursehero.com [2]

América's Dream

- ❖ In this novel, América Gonzalez, lived in Puerto Rico with her alcoholic mother and her teenage daughter, Rosalinda. She worked as a housekeeper at a hotel. The father of her daughter, Correa, was abusive to her. The relationship América had with her family members was toxic.
- ❖ She was offered a job in New York to work as a nanny. She took this opportunity to escape from her family. As a result, América accepts the offer and decides not to tell anyone.
- ❖ After some time, América tried to bring Rosalinda to the United States. However, Correa tries to bring her back to Puerto Rico.
- ❖ Throughout the novel, América frees herself from Correa as she chooses to live life on her accord.



Sources:

Text & Image

[Repeatingislands.com](https://repeatingislands.com)

[Images-na.ssl-images-amazon.com](https://images-na.ssl-images-amazon.com)

Main Themes

- ❖ **Family:** Throughout the novel, the theme is that América has a broken family. América relationship with her mom, her daughter and her partner is very complex and complicated. As readers, we don't get to witness the sense of attachment and love that normal families have. Each character in this novel has certain attributes which contribute to the broken family.
- ❖ **Freedom:** América was offered a job in New York. The move to New York gave her the liberty to leave Puerto Rico and be herself in New York. In New York, there was nothing holding her back because she didn't have to worry about anyone but herself. As a result, she was freed from all her worries back in Puerto Rico and found freedom in New York.
- ❖ **American Dream:** The move from Puerto Rico to New York was America's chance to live the American Dream. She took this opportunity to go live her own life in New York. Even though Puerto Rico is where she was from, she didn't feel comfortable there because of how she was treated. As a result, she came to the United States to live a better life. As a result, the migration to the United States led to another chapter in her life and opened doors for many opportunities.

Source:

Text
Goodreads.com

Esmeralda Santiago Interview



Source:
[Kwls.org](https://www.kwls.org)

Inspiration To The Latinx Community

- ❖ The retelling of her memories like ***When I was Puerto Rican***. She has inspired women to search for their identity and the overall Latinx readers. Assimilation into American culture is a challenge for this community. This is followed by anxiety over abandoning their cultural and linguistic practices. Santiago's work is part of the autobiographical narrative movement for the Latinx Community.
- ❖ She also opposes discrimination. She has first-hand experience with many forms of discrimination herself. Instead of backing down, she stood up for herself against the racist injustices. She encourages the Latinx community to stand up for themselves and acknowledge the differences that make us who we are.
 - She is true to herself and through her characters shows how respect and love for roots.
- ❖ She inspires us all, regardless of our generation. Assisting us in pursuing our goals, telling our stories, and preserving our traditions. Her accomplishments are a model of achievement achieved by personal honesty, uniqueness, and ideals. Her readers are encouraged to be brave about who they are and to use it to their benefit.



Sources:
Image
Nytimes.com

Thank You!

