

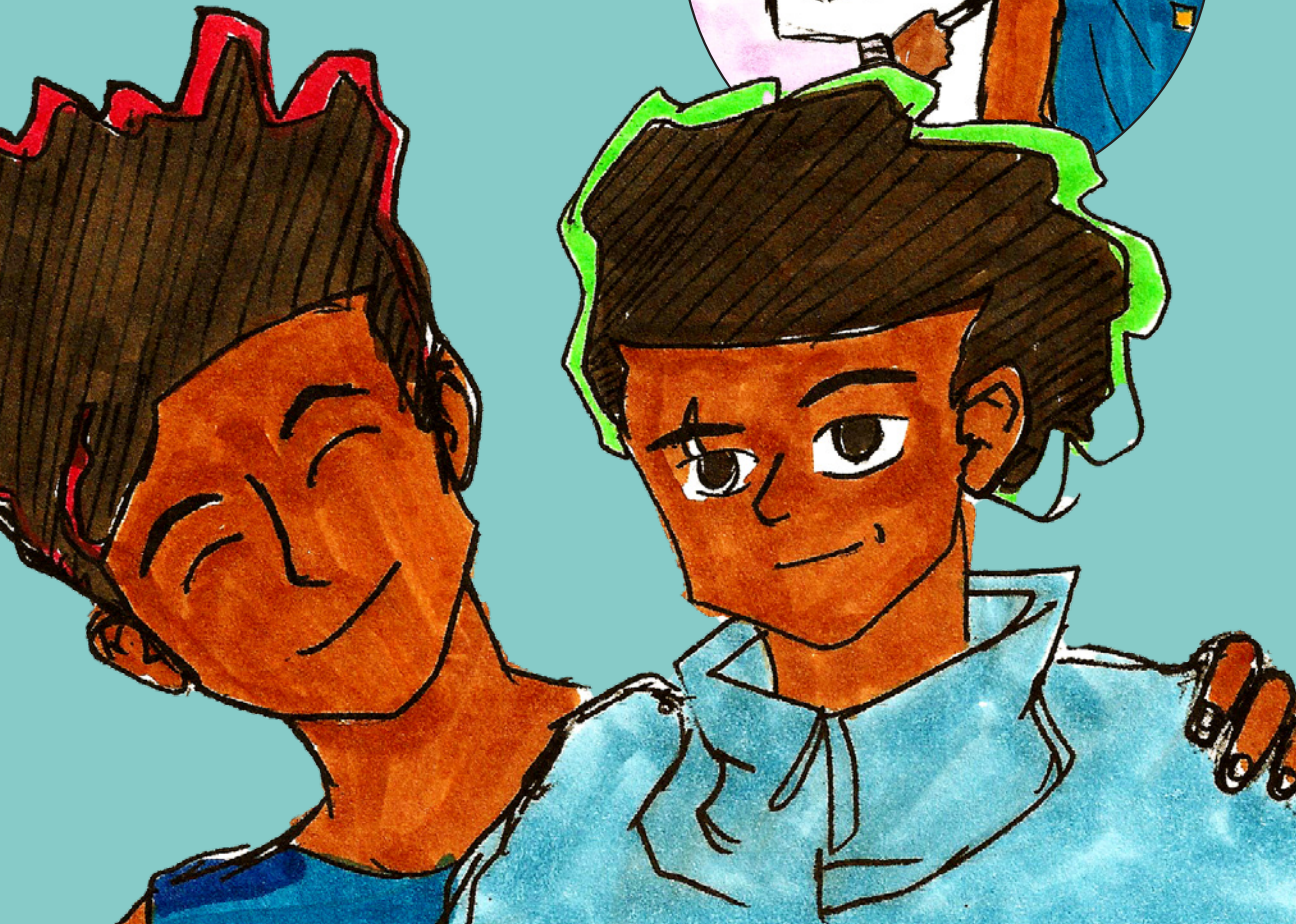


COMICS

#25

MIGHTY WRITERS

THE VACCINE TRIAL
ESCAPADES



About This Book:

This comic book was written and produced by Mighty Writers' teen students as part of a joint project with the Philadelphia Department of Public Health to increase vaccine confidence among underserved Philadelphia youth by increasing access to vaccine education and resources.

This story is entirely fictional and not based on any real virus, vaccine or serum.

About Mighty Writers:

Mighty Writers teaches kids of all ages to think clearly and write with clarity through free educational programs that improve academic performance, address racial and cultural inequities, and build social-emotional skills. Mighty Writers supports communities by distributing free food, books and other essential resources at 11 centers in Greater Philadelphia, New Jersey and Texas.

Class Roles and Titles:

Eric Perez (Senior): Story Writer #1

Ricardo Chama-Jeronimo (Junior): Story Writer #2

Nazai Watson-Johnson (Junior): Illustrator #1 and character designer

Mauricio Castro (Freshman): Illustrator #2 and character designer

Anna Clyman (Freshman): Researcher #1

Danyelle Morris (Junior): Researcher #2

Dulce Morales (Junior): Researcher #3

Diego Rosas Cruz (Senior): Editor #1, biography creator

Jhovanni Juarez (Freshman): Editor #2, biography creator

Nalleli Flores (Freshman): Editor #3

Daniela Morales: Supervisor/translator

Jorge Reyes: Assistant supervisor/translator

Miguel Zeballos: Illustrator and educator

Brian Cooper: Science educator

Shout-outs to real-life superheroes:

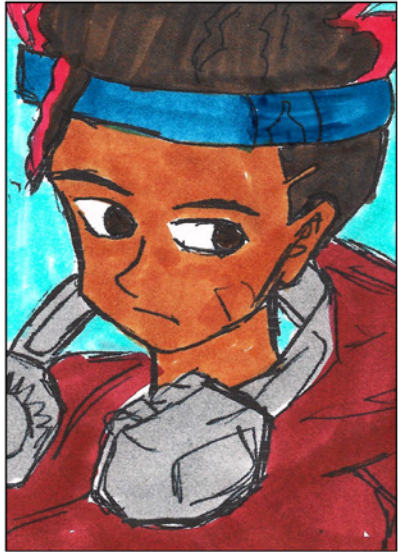
Illustrator Miguel Zeballos—and his mother Maria Isabel, whose “ponte las pilas” conversations got him through this project and life in general.

The Mighty Writers team who worked on this project:

Maureen Boland, Brian Cooper, Naomi Levecchia, Rachel Loeper, Daniela Morales (aka Miss Dani), Claudia Peregrina, Jorge Reyes, Sukripa Shah, Liz Spikol, Shari Young and designer Kelly Lasserre.

And of course, the students whose voices and creativity are planted throughout this comic.

CHARACTERS



DEREK MORENO (16)

Derek is from North Philadelphia and goes to Benjamin Franklin High School. He is a member of the boys basketball team at his school. He is interested in science and works with his friend Frida tinkering in a science lab. He is best friends with his cousin, James.



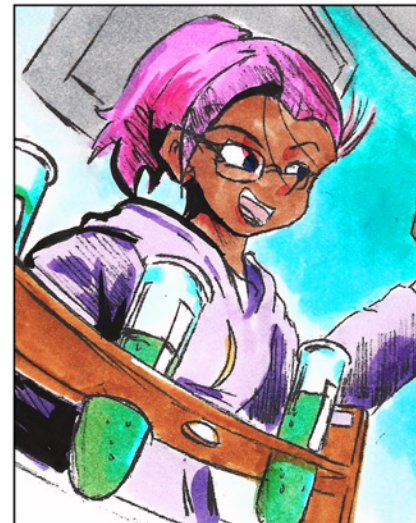
ABRIL MORENO (32)

Abril is Derek's mother and James' aunt. She grew up in Mexico City. She graduated from Community College before moving to South Philadelphia. She is diabetic but manages to be active. She volunteered for a trial vaccine test to help her community. Before the virus outbreak, she was a cool Soccer Tia (Aunt). She always takes her nephew and son to games.



JAMES MORENO (15)

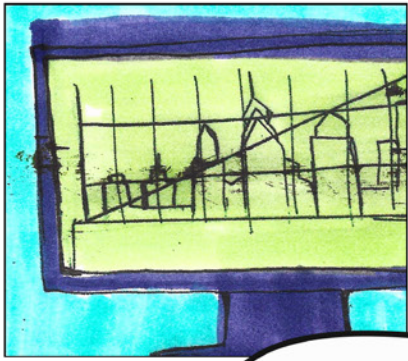
James grew up down the block from Derek in North Philly and goes to Strawberry Mansion High School. He plays soccer and he is being scouted to play professionally.



FRIDA D'ALESSANDRA (17)

Frida grew up in Old City and is a graduating senior at Palumbo High School. She's been accepted to Penn for Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies. She scored 1450 on the SAT and 30 on the ACT, and is in five AP classes.

She's also the founder of the chem/bio program, VP of the LGBTQIA+ Club and co-captain of the track team. She volunteers with Miss Dani at Mighty Writers.



It's getting out of control. I hope we can get a vaccine for this soon.



We are so close, the trials are already up and running, it's all on you to make sure these lab reports are getting entered correctly.

Sí ya lo sé...I've just been feeling anxious. My aunt is still sick after her bad reaction to the vaccine.

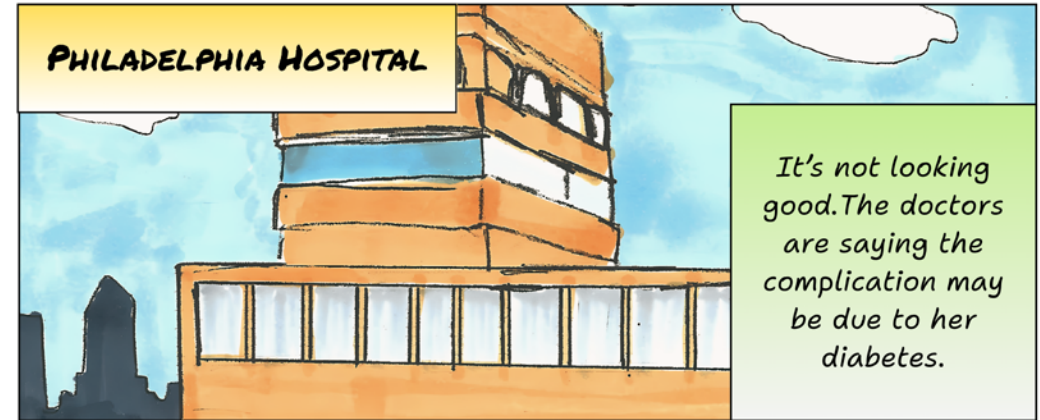


Hola primo, what's up?... Oh no! I'm on my way!



James, I got here as fast as I could! ¿Cómo está Tia Abril?

PHILADELPHIA HOSPITAL



It's not looking good. The doctors are saying the complication may be due to her diabetes.



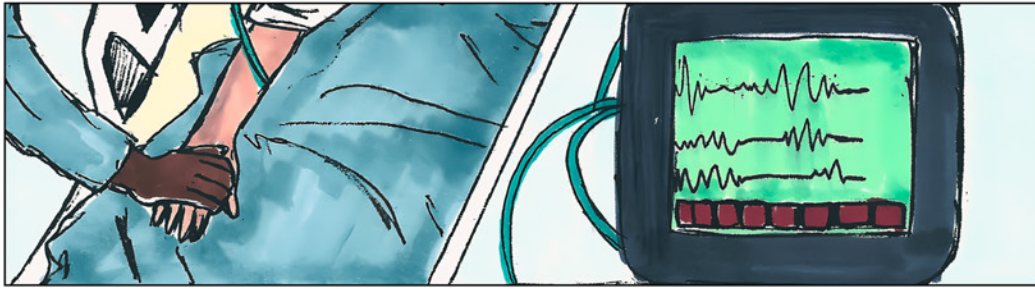
You would feel scared, too, if this was your mom...



Mijos, todo estará bien — just keep the faith and remember I love you.



Don't worry, tía, we're here for you and we love you too.

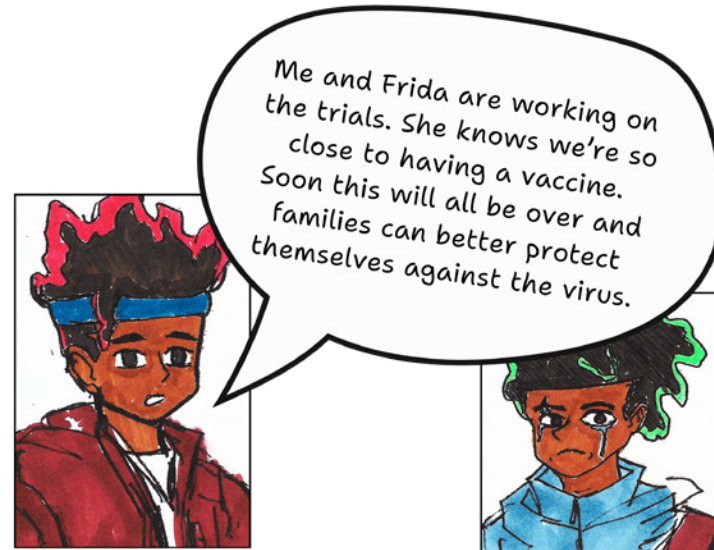


She is having severe complications, we will be keeping our eye on her.



I can't let anyone else go through this. This is the worst feeling ever. I could lose her.

*Serious vaccine side effects are rare and most people only experience mild temporary reactions like fever or sore arm.

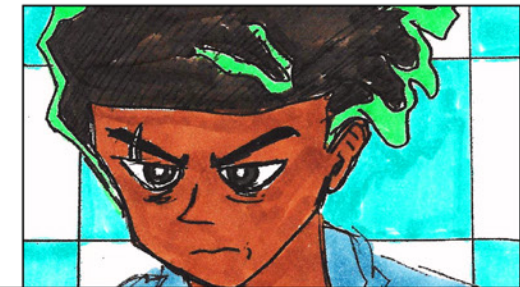


Me and Frida are working on the trials. She knows we're so close to having a vaccine. Soon this will all be over and families can better protect themselves against the virus.



I can't let my primo go through with this. What if he causes more pain? I have so much anger. I can't let them continue putting others in danger. I have to stop them.

2 WEEKS LATER



I'm glad Derek gave me his pass to get into the lab. I told him I forgot my headphones but it was a lie. I just needed to stop this at once. Time doesn't feel real. I feel so lost without my mom.



The anger that runs through me is like nothing I've ever felt before.



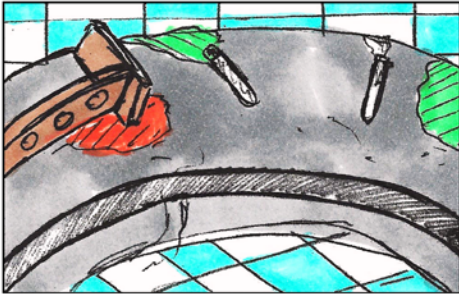
This must be the secret project Frida was working on.



Something out of this world? Could this be the next step of their project?



Who could've done this? There are only a few people with access!



...I gave my key card to James. He said he forgot his headphones. I don't know what I was thinking. I didn't think he could do this. He's been so distant, I didn't want to upset him. No sé lo que estaba pensando.



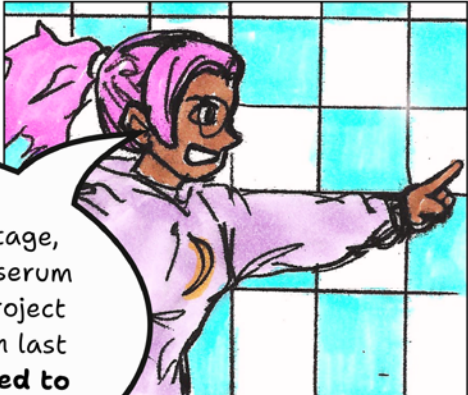
The power. I can finally stop this madness and make sure no one else goes through the pain I feel.



It was him. Your key was the last one entered.

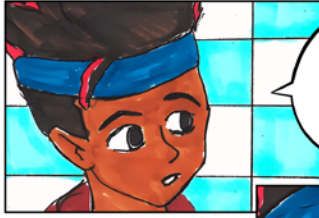
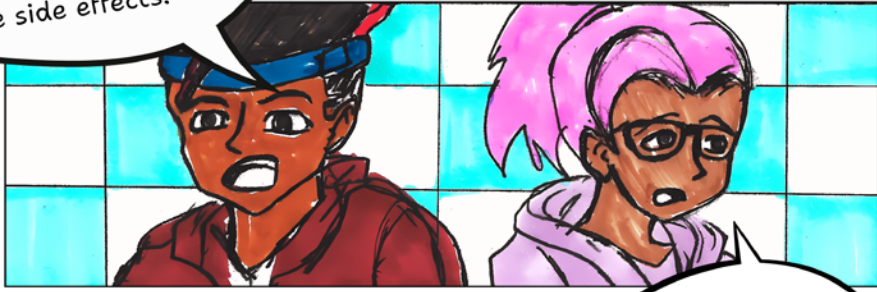


Oh no, primo... what have you done?



Looking at the footage, James got into the serum freezer, from the project we were working on last year. He was exposed to Super-23x.

WHAT?! That was never meant to be taken by humans. We still don't know the side effects.

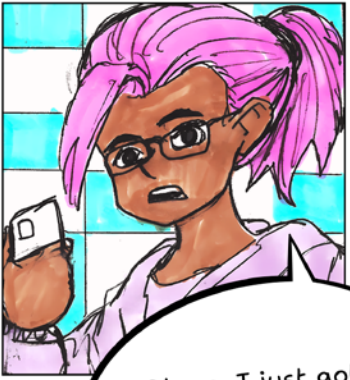


I... what?

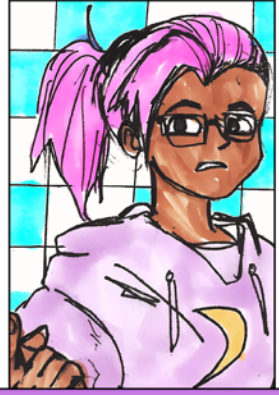
He wasn't looking for the serum. He was trying to destroy the vaccine trial data.



He said he wanted to stop it from getting worse. I thought he wanted to learn about how fast a virus can spread.

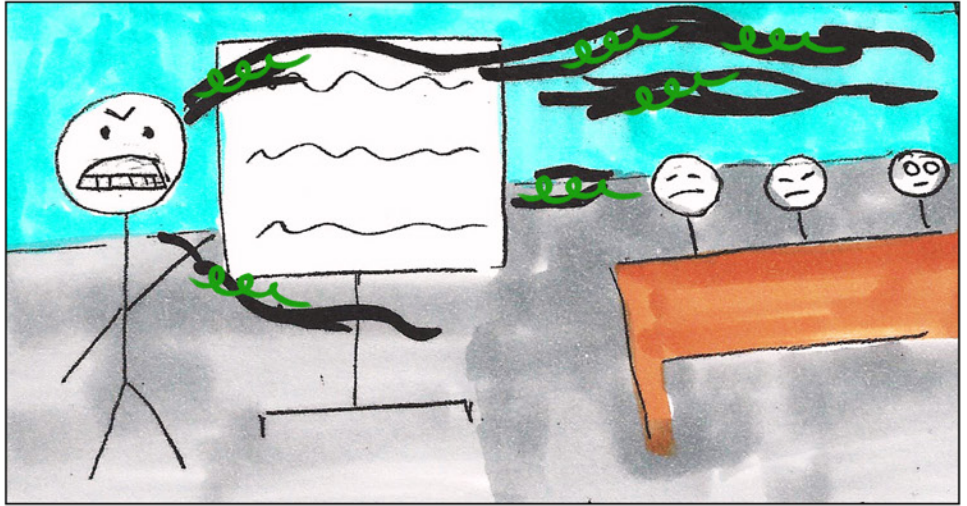
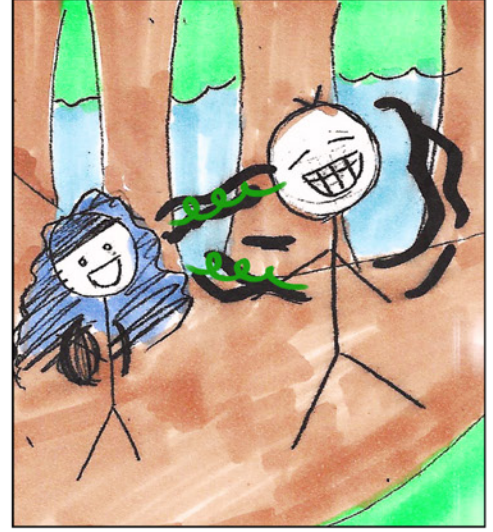
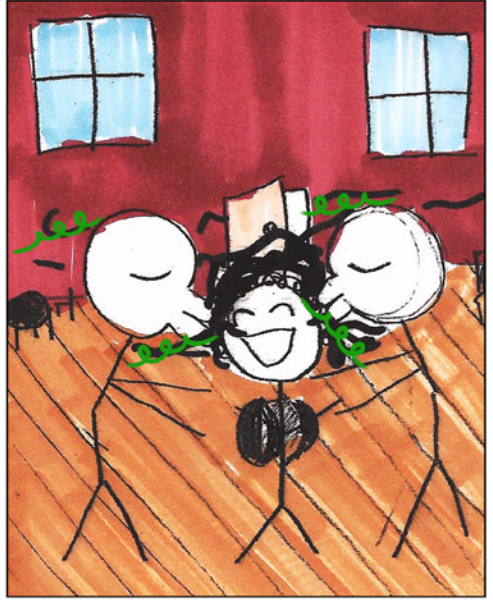
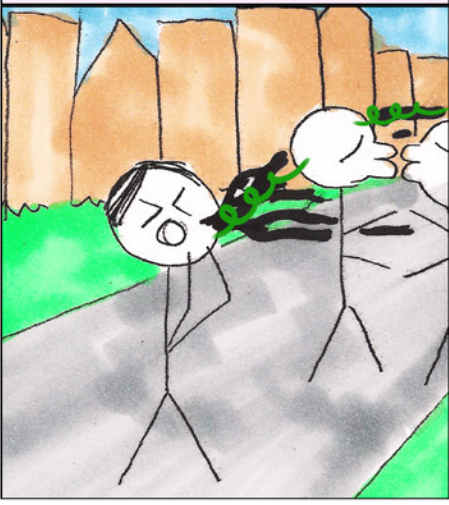


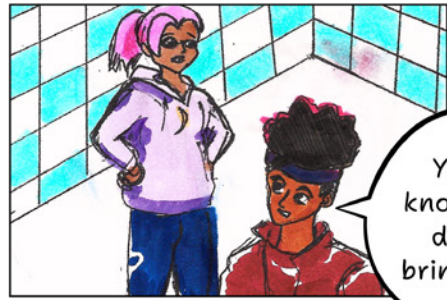
Oh no, I just got a ping from the Health Department. **There's another surge.**



As you know, the spread is airborne.

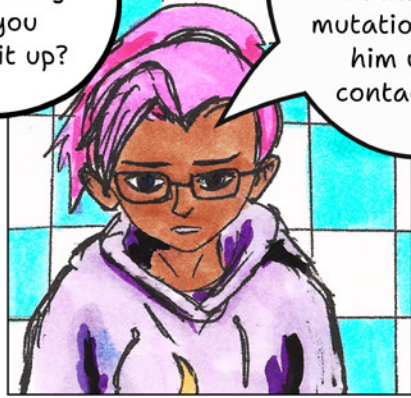
WITHIN A DAY...





Yeah, I know! Why do you bring it up?

The serum he took must've mixed in with some of the virus samples we had. That means his mutation made him ultra contagious.



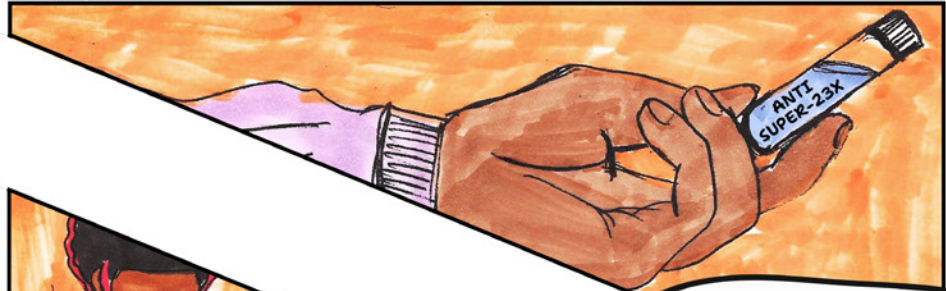
I feel like this is my fault. How can I fix this?

We will have to get back to the lab. We need to essentially reverse the effects of that serum with one we can make.

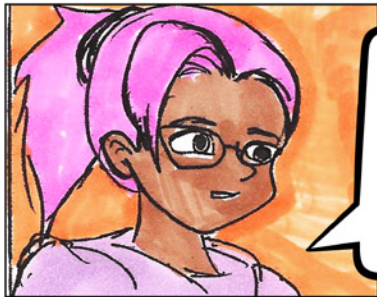
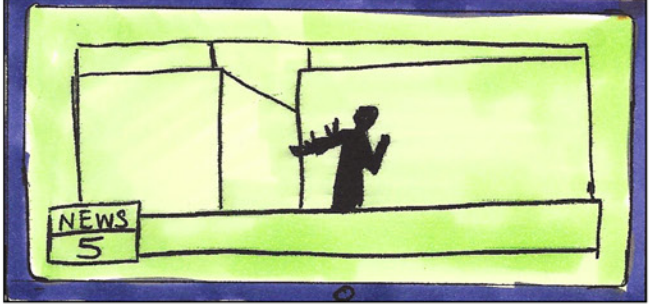


Is that... is that possible?

It has to be!

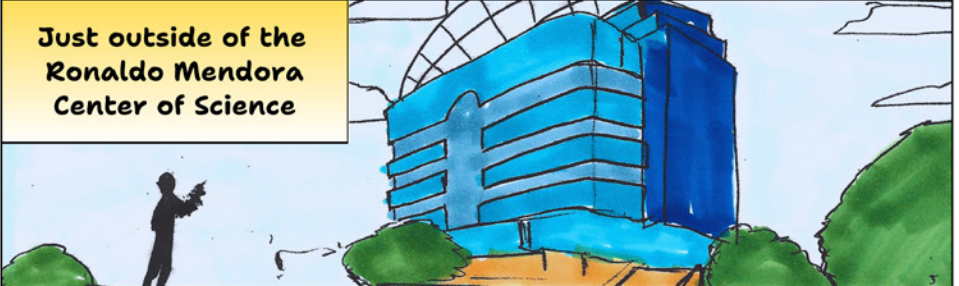


I know we have some final reports to assess before we get approval to get this vaccine out there. If James comes through, I'll handle it!



I hope this holds. The news is reporting a mysterious figure around the city. I think you should be good.

Just outside of the Ronaldo Mendora Center of Science



Our security system is alerting us. Do you think James is going to listen?

I don't know. I know my primo is in there somewhere.

I am working on the antidote for him. When he's come to his senses, I can administer it to both of you.

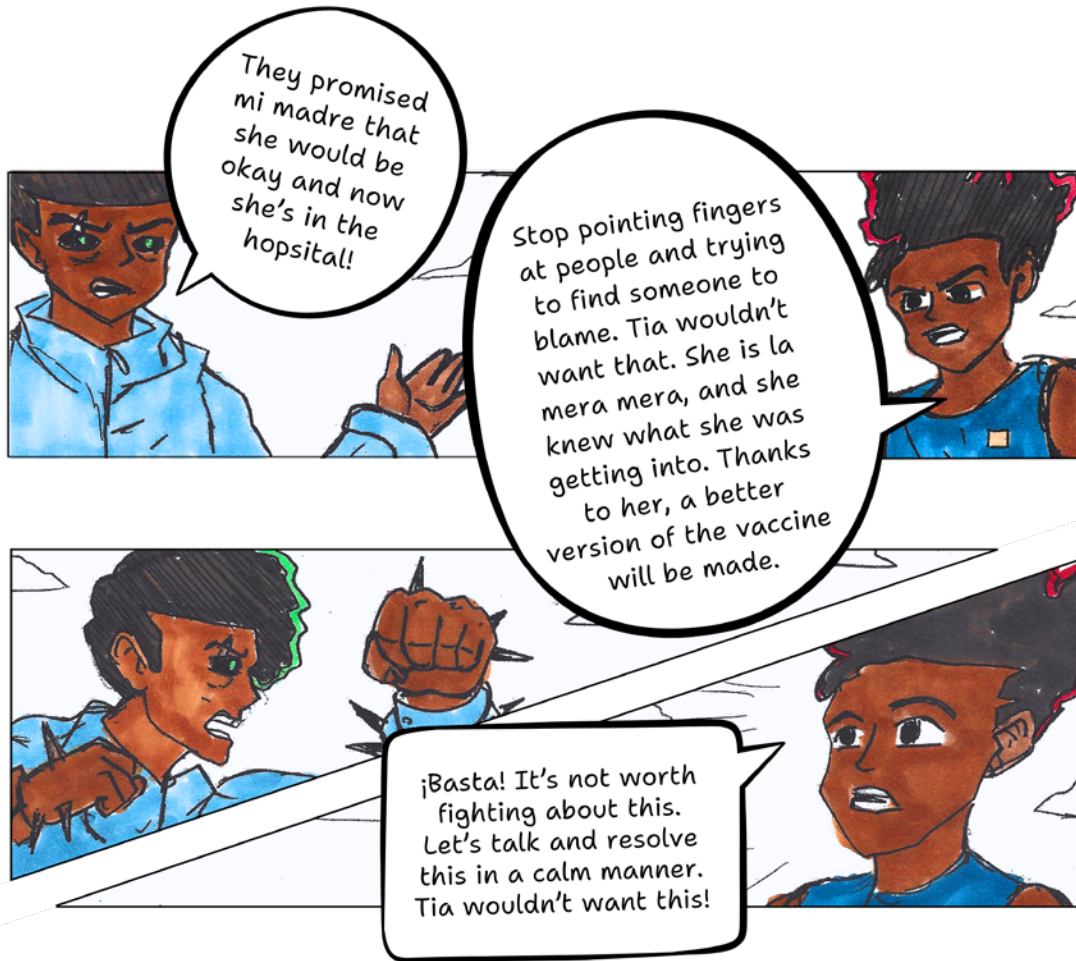
Okay, I'll buy you some time!

Primo, I don't want to fight you!

Derek, I need to stop all of this. This is bigger than you and me.

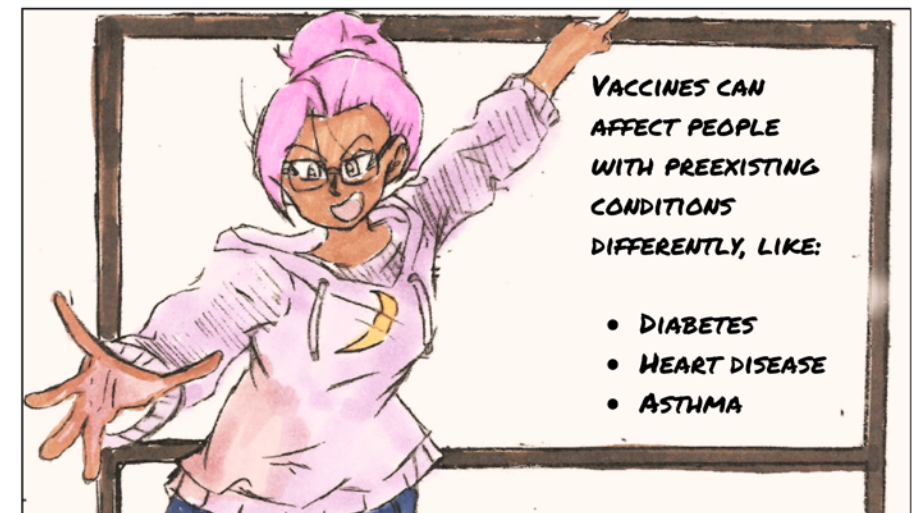
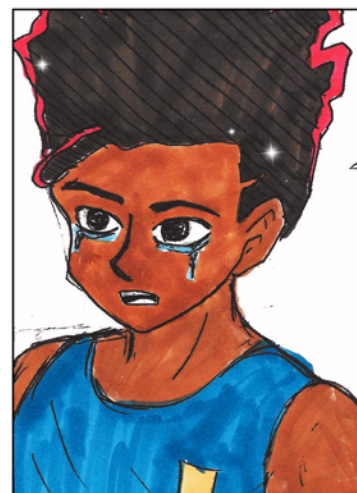
You wanna keep fighting over and over again? Okay, fine, but tell me: **Why are you doing this?**

You're really asking that question? You're like everyone else. With those vaccines, you'll kill people!



I know it's difficult, primo. I am sorry I wasn't there when you needed me the most.

I've been so busy in the lab helping Frida.



FLASHBACK



¡Muy bien trabajo muchachos, you did so well! As a treat, we're going to eat some of your favorite sandwiches.



Gracias tia, it's so good!



Sí, gracias Mamá. Why aren't you eating?

Tengo que cuidarme un poco, amor. I have something called diabetes. Nothing to worry about, but I need to be careful and use my medicine.



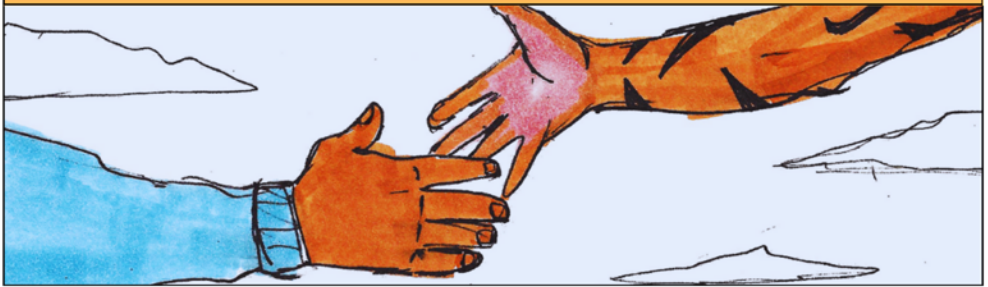
I love her, and I'll do anything for her.

You have to remember! You know she wants to help millions of people, so now you do the same. Do you know the information that was given to her in advance? She knew what could have happened, and she still took her chances.



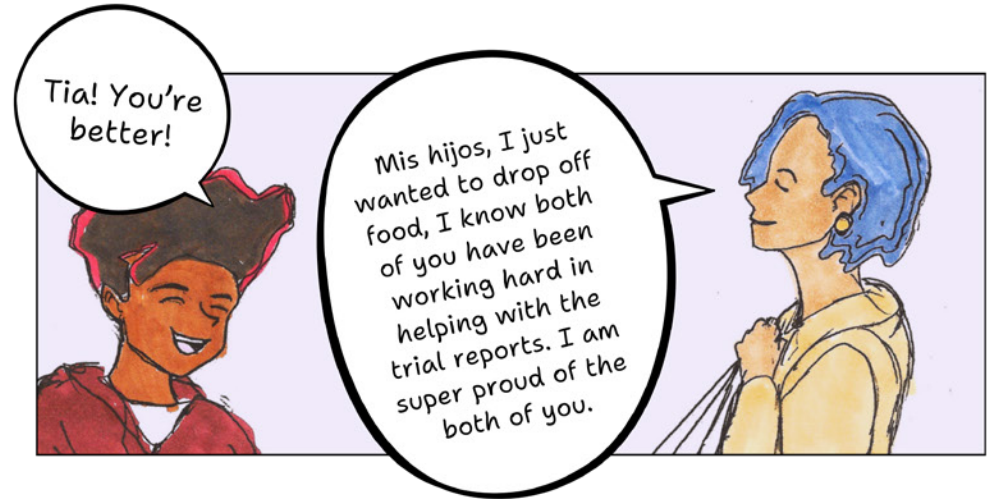
She never told me much, only that it would be okay.

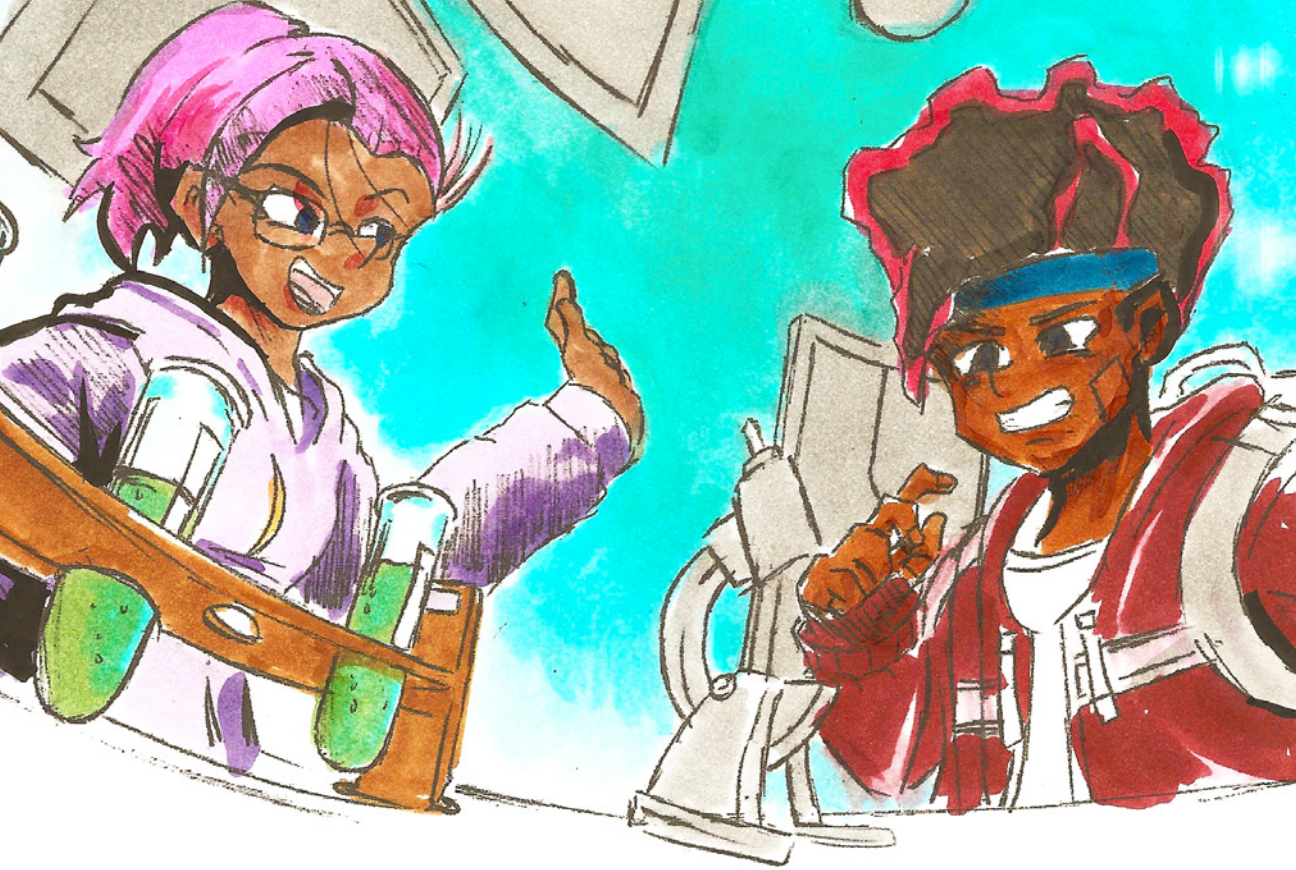
Come with me, and we can make the change that she wants to see.





1 WEEK LATER





We invite you to visit our Philadelphia locations:

Lo invitamos a visitar nuestras ubicaciones en Filadelfia:

MW El Futuro: 1025 S. 9th St., 215-602-0236

MW Germantown: 12 E. Church Lane, 267-239-0899

MW North: 2300 Master St., 610-263-5379

MW West: 3520 Fairmount Ave., 215-387-1066

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**MIGHTY
WRITERS**



Department of Public Health

Immunization Program

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA