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Familiar Agent

For my fabric, I chose the South Bronx and decided to focus mainly on the 161st area. Ever since my family and I moved to the United States, I've become very familiar with the area and had some sort of interaction with it whenever I made a commute to any part of New York City. While I live in the North Bronx, being just a fifteen minute ride away from the South Bronx has given me enough experience to pick myself as the familiar agent in my fabric. I also feel as if I have a very similar background to the population there. The problems I decided to represent through my three major conditions of the fabric are also present in the North Bronx, as well as many other marginalized communities.

When I first arrived in New York City in 2008, I remember my family members pointing out the old Yankee Stadium from the Major Deegan Expressway. They wanted us to see it up close so we drove around it to see the banners of the players and memorabilia. The buildings adjacent to it were all Yankee themed-- sports bars and merchandise stores that were painted with giant portraits of players to show their support even when those businesses were closed. Right across the street of the stadium was a construction site for what is known today as the current Yankee Stadium. As someone who had never seen a building to this scale, it was very fascinating and also intimidating to look at.

That same year, I was able to enjoy my first train ride ever, sitting on the benches excitedly looking at the city around me. I was able to get up and kneel on the seat to get a view of the construction site from the train as well as the old stadium at the 161st street 4 train station before the train went underground. Once the new Yankee Stadium was finished in 2009, you could enjoy the view into the stadium for a small, three seconds interval before the train arrived at the station.

I didn't have much interaction with this area again until my high school years and had to take the same train every week day. At around 8 am, I would take the train with some of my friends to get to

our school in Harlem. Since I only lived a few stops away from the start of the train's journey going from the Bronx into Manhattan, I was usually lucky enough to get a seat before the train became packed. People would get off mostly at the 161st, 149th st, or 125 st stations since they offered transfers to a variety of different train lines. I would get off at 125st train station, and transfer to the 6 train to get off at 103rd st and walk to my school.

On the way home at 3:30 pm, all the other high school students around us would also get released around the same time so the train became very full and very loud. Taking the 6 train to get back 125th street wasn't usually a problem, but trying to get on the 4 train was. Not just because of the students and people getting off from work, but also because of any baseball fans going to or leaving the Yankee games. Most at home weekday games start at around 7 pm and people are advised to arrive three hours before the first pitch. Most weekend games, and on occasion some weekday games, games start at around 1 pm and end at around 4 pm. With series usually lasting 3-4 games, this means that during baseball season getting to and from home was always a struggle no matter the day ". The Yankees play today" was a warning we were tired of hearing.

Since about "37 percent of Yankee fans take the subway to games, about 15,400 per game" and "after factoring in Metro-North commuter rail, buses, and even ferries, the percentage who take transit rises to about 45 percent," seeing people wearing pinstripes is a notorious thing for everyday New York City commuters. But once we were able to get on the train and the train stopped at 161st street, it was definitely a relief to see more than half the people leave the train. It also became an inside joke that after this stop going north bound, there's never any white people left on the train.

I've been inside Yankee Stadium a couple of times, the most recent being during June of 2018. My two friends (who I also took the train to school with everyday) and I got the cheapest seats we could find for \$17. When we got to the stadium, we had to wait in a twenty minute line that stretched for about a block to get into gate 4. Once inside, I was intimidated once again, not only because I was wearing a bright red Washington Nationals jersey, but because of the scale of the building. The roof is about 100 ft tall with giant windows and skylights to let sunlight in. The circulation of the building made it easy to follow the signs to get to our bench however, the seats were all close together and I felt like I could trip down a flight of steps any minute. Looking at the

higher level seats made me feel uneasy since the railings didn't seem to be too protective. I did end up enjoying the overall atmosphere of the game though, even if it didn't feel like baseball wasn't the main focus but rather how you interacted with the people around you.

In the area, we would also go to a movie theater about five minutes away from the station. There is also the Bronx Terminal Market, a shopping mall, a few streets down which I would accompany my mom to on the weekends. And before it was turned into a Chase Bank, my friends and I would eat at a local family diner.

Now that I'm in college, I see small changes at a time that form a bigger picture. Like the diner I just mentioned being torn down. Or new locations for chain stores being built- including the new Target store under construction on my block. And although I haven't seen it in person, the new residential complex on 135th street called "The Arches." This 25 story apartment complex features two shiny towers that infamously stand out with the rest of the area. It has also been promoted as affordable housing even though a studio apartment starts at \$2,150, one bedroom at \$2,500 and a two bedroom is almost \$3,000. Current residents of the Bronx like my dad can barely afford to pay less than half of that amount for a two bedroom in other areas of the Bronx. It's even more ironic that a few blocks away from these new buildings are actual affordable housing complexes commonly known as the projects.

More places like "The Arches" are being developed and trying to change the negative connotations the Bronx, specifically the South Bronx has and while that sounds promising, it's very damaging to the communities there. I can visually see this change everytime I go back home. With the three months I'm gone at a time, a small family owned business gets removed and immediately replaced.