

# Growing Through Pain:

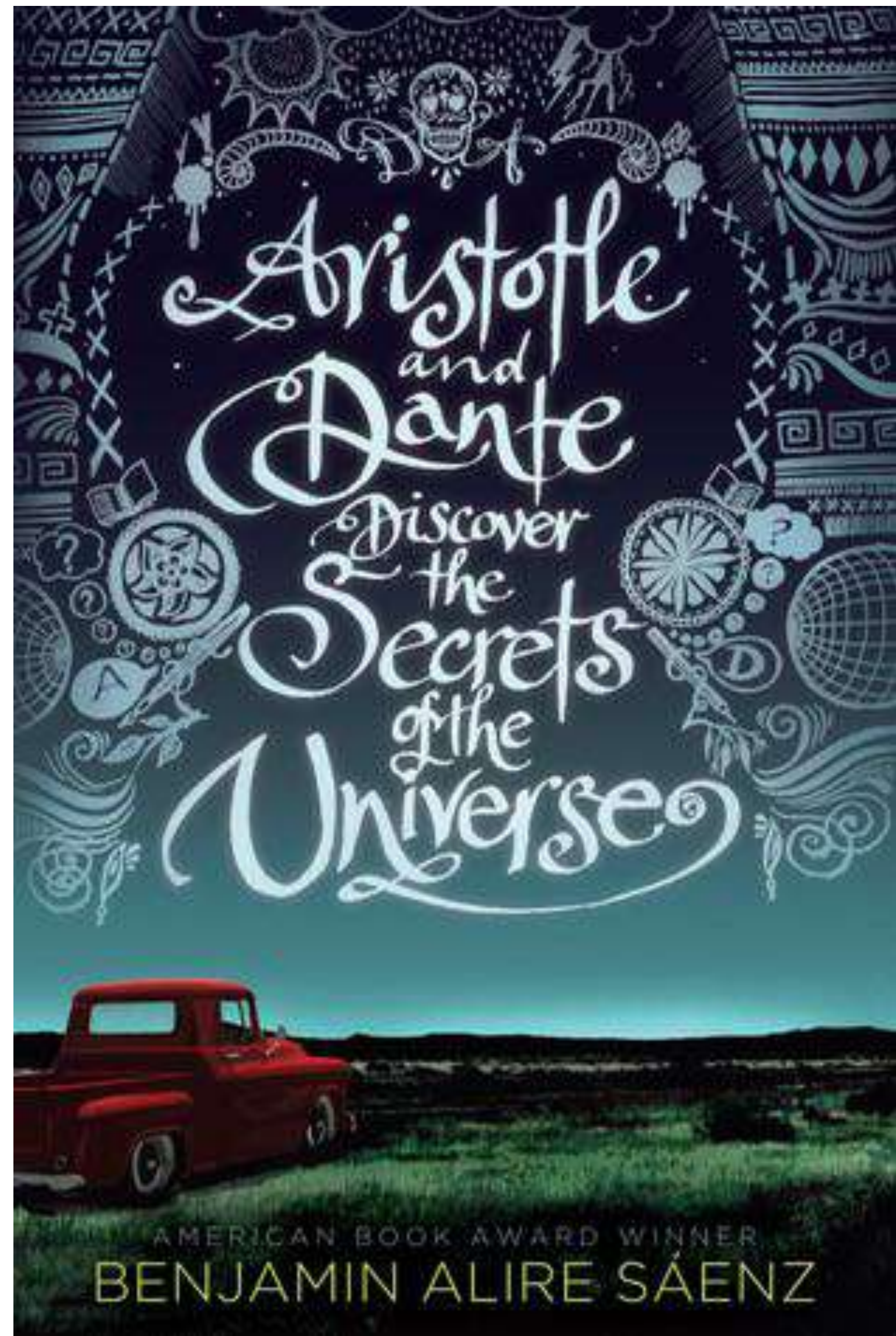
The Significance of Ethnic and Sexual Identity in  
*Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*

by Benjamin Alire Sáenz

By: Nora Kadiatou Diarrassouba

# Introduction

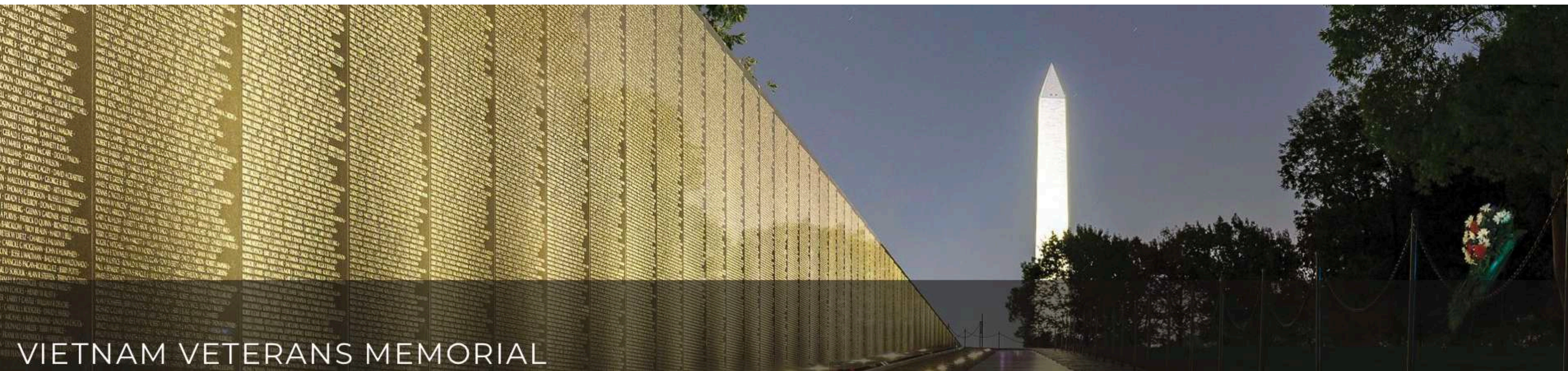
„And why it was that some guys had tears  
in them and some had no tears at all?  
Different boys lived by different rules  
(Sáenz, 55).“



# External Stereotypes and Cultural Identity

## Toxic masculinity in the 1980's

“But I had learned to hide what I felt. No, that's not true. There was no learning involved. I had been born knowing how to hide what I felt (Sáenz, 242).”

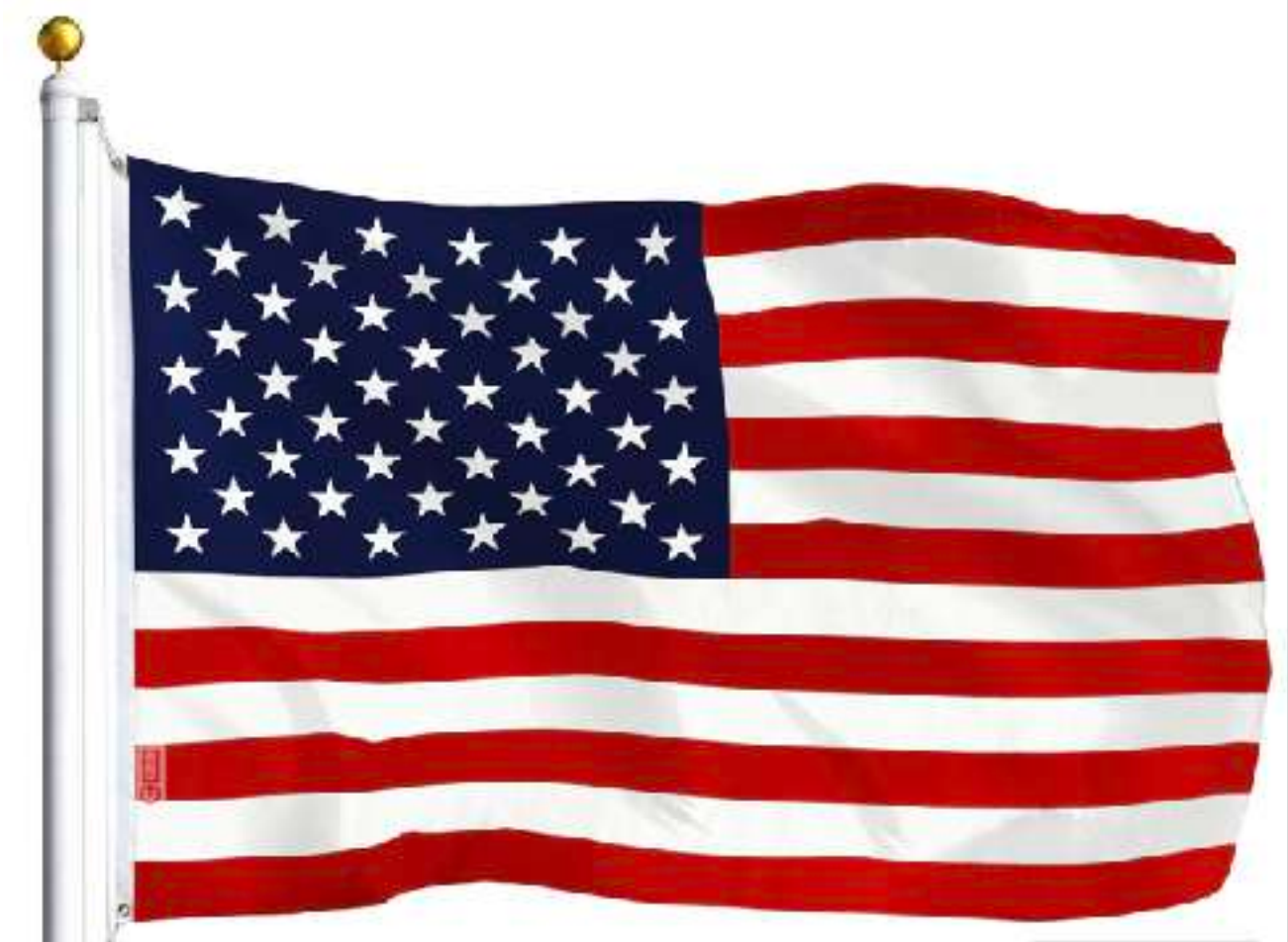


VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL

External Stereotypes and Cultural Identity

# Latino Identity and Cultural Stereotypes

“You’re a real Mexican, Ari.’ That made me laugh. ,So are you, you jerk.’ ,Nah, I’ll never be a real Mexican.’ Why did it matter so much to him? But it mattered to me too (Sáenz, 245).”



External Stereotypes and Cultural Identity

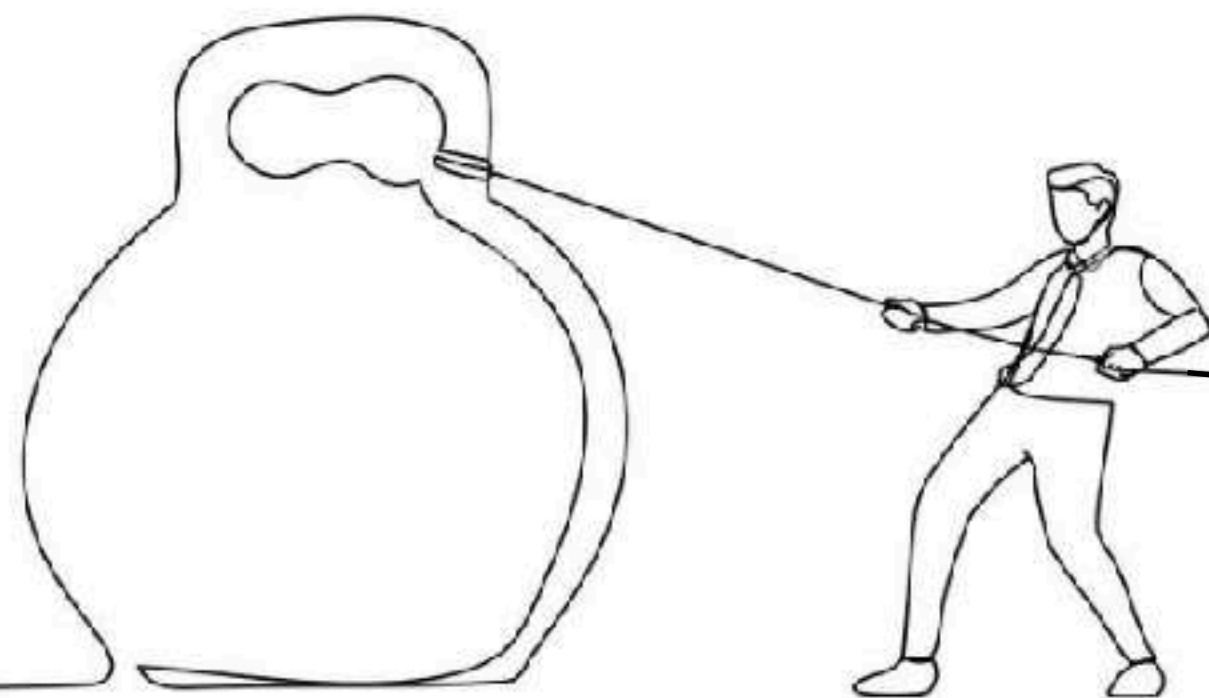
# Latino Identity and Cultural Stereotypes

„So now I was the only son.

And I felt the weight of a son in a Mexican family.

Even though I didn't want it.

But it was the way it was (Sáenz 92).“



# Internal Struggles and LGBTQIA+ Experience

## Internalized Homophobia

“I wanted to tell them that he had changed my life and that I could never be the same, not ever. And that somehow it felt like it was Dante who had saved my life not the other way around.  
(Sáenz, 308).”



# Internal Struggles and LGBTQIA+ Experience

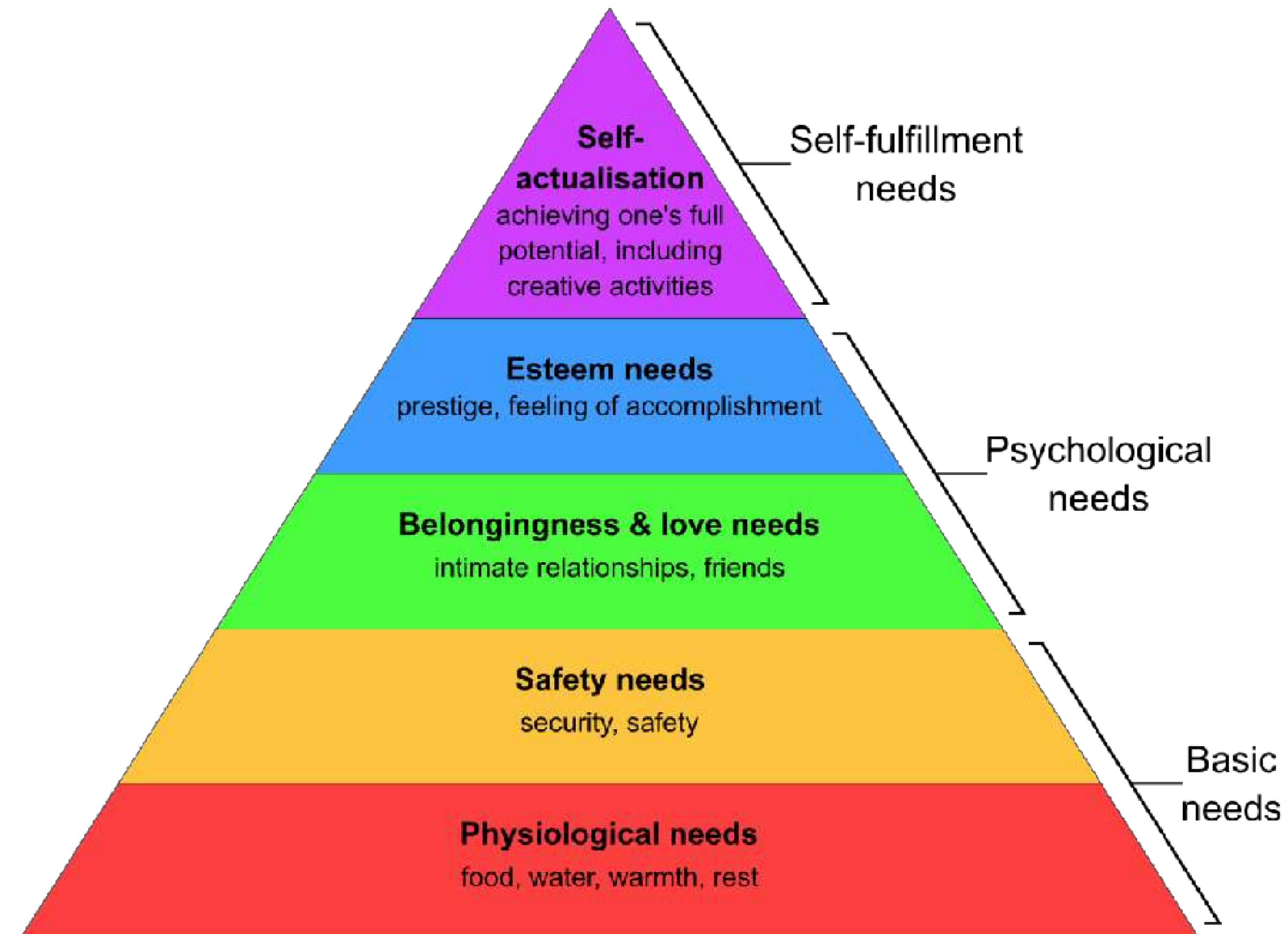
## Fear of Rejection

„I think you love him more than you can bear.’ ,Dad? Dad, no. No. I can’t. I can’t. Why are you saying these things (Sáenz 348)!“

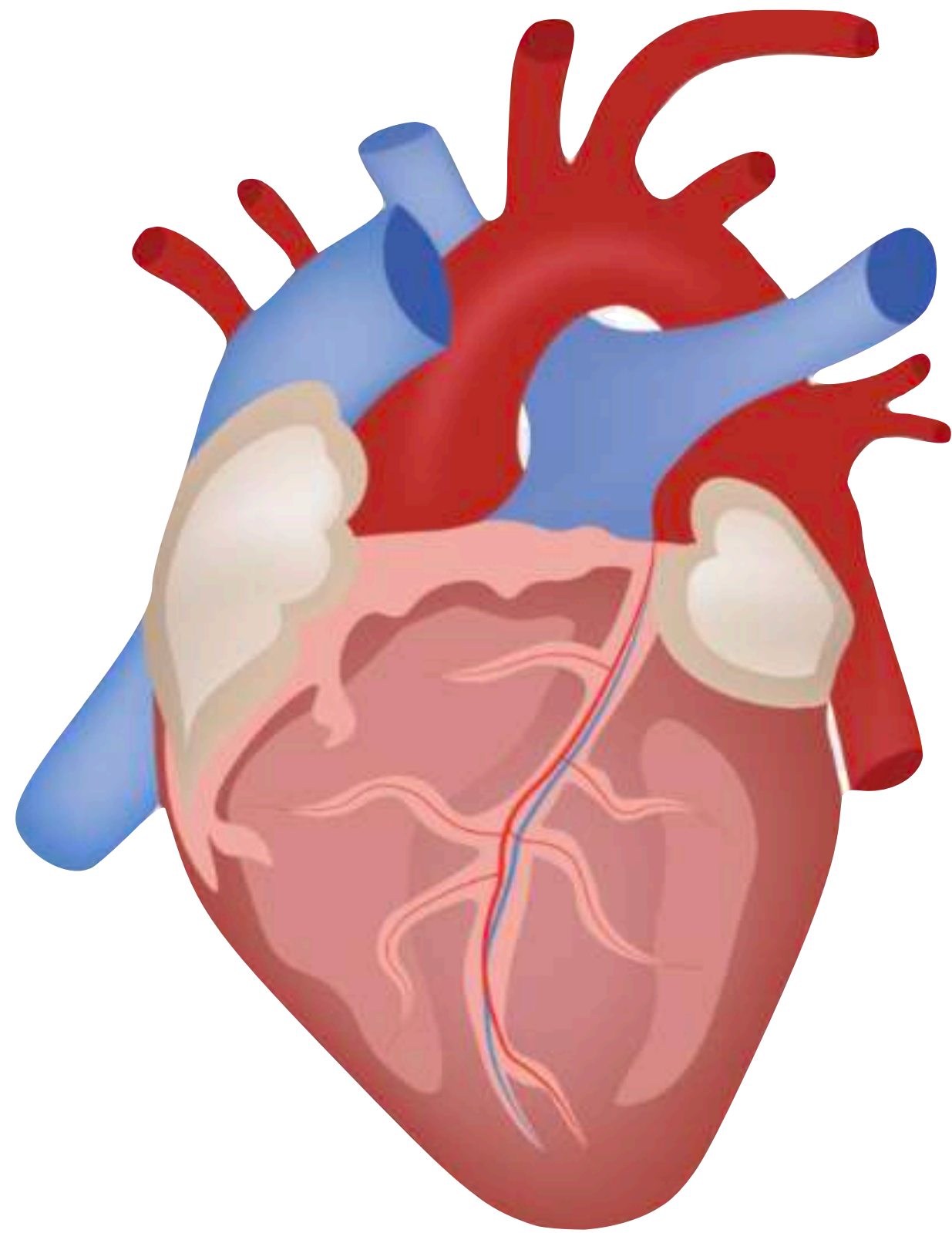


# Internal Struggles and LGBTQIA+ Experience

## Slow self actualization



# Internal Struggles and LGBTQIA+ Experience



## Dante as a Foil to Ari

„Ari, the real problem isn't just that Dante's in love with you. The real problem —for you, anyway— is that you're in love with him (Sáenz, 349).”

# Personal Development & Moral Compass

## Growth through his relationship with Dante

„Forgive you? For what, Dante? What is there to forgive (Sáenz, 117)?“



„On the inside I was more like Dante. That really scared me (Sáenz, 199).“

# Personal Development & Moral Compass

**Realizing the importance of vulnerability and authenticity**

**“How could I have ever been ashamed of loving  
Dante Quintana (Sáenz, 358)?”**

# Reflection and Conclusion

How would the novel differ if the protagonist were a white heterosexual teenage boy?

**„I bet you could sometimes find all of the  
mysteries of the universe in someone’s hand  
(Sáenz 140).“**

**Benjamin Alire Sáenz**

**Thank you!**

## Works Cited

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