Major League Baseball’s (MLB) 2012 Opening Day roster included 243 foreign-born baseball players. Of these players, 95 of them were from the Dominican Republic. And while popular belief would sum this number up to ‘natural talent’ or ‘national pride,’ this percentage of Dominican-born players is actually a reflection of the MLB’s academy system. Currently, all 30 MLB clubs have academies in either the Dominican Republic or Venezuela, where they dorm, feed, and train hundreds and thousands of teenaged Dominican boys in hopes of creating high-profile baseball players. Baseball greats like David Ortiz and Vladimir Guerrero. However, for every Ortiz or Guerrero there are hundreds and hundreds of boys left behind. In fact, according to MLB.com, the rule of thumb is that for every 100 players in one given academy, only four or five of them make it to a 40-man roster in the Major Leagues.

This statistic begs the question, “What happens?” What happens to the men that get left behind? They’re taken out of school to play baseball at an early age. How do they make a living? Although they are the exception to the rule, we usually only hear about the rags-to-riches narratives. What about the majority? What about their stories? What would they say? Where would they say it? And, more importantly, who would listen?

Four Bases, Three Strikes and Dream serves as a dramatized exploration of these questions. Based off of peripheral characters in the 2008 film Sugar and the 2008 independent documentary, Road to the Big Leagues, this one-woman performance, written and performed by Maya Y. Dennis ’13, provides these marginalized voices a platform (via her interpretation), breaks down the theatrical ‘fourth-wall,’ and forces audience members to listen. Four Bases, Three Strikes and a Dream travels to and from a vendors’ market in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic and a coach’s office and a woman’s laundry room in Texas to share some of the dreams and realities in the world of professional baseball. The play opens with a former pelotero (baseball player) selling phone chargers to the audience in la capital. He stops to tell audience members about his life as a baseball player. The vendor shares stories of excitement, sadness, and contentment while the voices of Coach Parker, a minor league coach, and Peggy Sue, a host mother, share their opinions about the former player’s dream deferred.