

Discussion Artifact 1 - Media

<https://www.tiktok.com/@chappellroan/video/7404955808980667690?lang=en>

Discussion Artifact 2 - Literature

Volar By Judith Ortiz Cofer

At twelve I was an avid consumer of comic books — Supergirl being my favorite. I spent my allowance of a quarter a day on two twelve-cent comic books or a double issue for twenty-five. I had a stack of Legion of Super Heroes and Supergirl comic books in my bedroom closet that was as tall as I. I had a recurring dream in those days: that I had long blond hair and could fly. In my dream I climbed the stairs to the top of our apartment building as myself, but as I went up each flight, changes would be taking place. Step by step I would fill out: my legs would grow long, my arms harden into steel, and my hair would magically go straight and turn a golden color. Of course I would add the bonus of breasts, but not too large; Supergirl had to be aerodynamic. Sleek and hard as a supersonic missile. Once on the roof, my parents safely asleep in their beds, I would get on tip-toe, arms outstretched in the position for flight and jump out my fifty-story-high window into the black lake of the sky. From up there, over the rooftops, I could see everything, even beyond the few blocks of our barrio; with my X-ray vision I could look inside the homes of people who interested me. Once I saw our landlord, whom I knew my parents feared, sitting in a treasure-room dressed in an ermine coat and a large gold crown. He sat on the floor counting his dollar bills. I played a trick on him. Going up to his building's chimney, I blew a little puff of my super-breath into his fireplace, scattering his stacks of money so that he had to start counting all over again. I could more or less program my Supergirl dreams in those days by focusing on the object of my current obsession. This way I “saw” into the private lives of my neighbors, my teachers, and in the last days of my childish fantasy and the beginning of adolescence, into the secret room of the boys I liked. In the mornings I'd wake up in my tiny bedroom with the incongruous — at least in our tiny apartment — white “princess” furniture my mother had chosen for me, and find myself back in my body: my tight curls still clinging to my head, skinny arms and legs and flat chest unchanged.

In the kitchen my mother and father would be talking softly over a café con leche. She would come “wake me” exactly forty-five minutes after they had gotten up. It was their time together at the beginning of each day and even at an early age I could feel their disappointment if I interrupted them by getting up too early. So I would stay in my bed recalling my dreams of flight, perhaps planning my next flight. In the kitchen they would be discussing events in the barrio. Actually, he would be carrying that part of the conversation; when it was her turn to speak she would, more often than not, try shifting the topic toward her desire to see her familia on the Island: How about a vacation in Puerto Rico together this year, Querido? We could rent a car, go to the beach. We could... And he would answer patiently, gently, Mi amor, do you know how much it would cost for the all of us to fly there? It is not possible for me to take the time off... Mi vida, please understand... And I knew that soon she would rise from the table. Not abruptly. She would light a cigarette and look out the kitchen window. The view was of a dismal alley that was littered with refuse thrown from windows. The space was too narrow for anyone larger than a skinny child to enter safely, so it was never cleaned. My mother would check the time on the clock over her sink, the one with a prayer for patience and grace written in Spanish. A birthday gift. She would see that it was time to wake me. She'd sigh deeply and say the same thing the view from her kitchen window always inspired her to say: Ay, si yo pudiera volar.

Discussion Artifact 3 - Current Events

IKEA will pay 6 million euros to East German prisoners forced to build their furniture in landmark move

By [Sophie Tanno](#), CNN

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CNN - Furniture giant IKEA has agreed to pay 6 million euros (\$6.5 million) towards a government fund compensating victims of forced labor under [Germany's communist dictatorship](#), in a move campaigners hope will pressure other companies to follow.

Political as well as criminal prisoners in Germany during the Cold War era were forced to build flatpack furniture for [IKEA](#). The revelations came to light in Swedish and German media reports more than a decade ago, prompting the company to commission an independent investigation.

Prisoners were producing furniture for IKEA, a global giant in the home furnishings industry, as recently as the 1970s and 1980s, the investigation conducted by auditors Ernst & Young found. IKEA representatives at the time were likely aware that political prisoners were being used to supplement labor, the report found.

The former East Germany was [occupied by the Soviet Union](#) from 1949 until 1990, which installed a rigid communist state known as the German Democratic Republic, or GDR. Tens of thousands of its prisoners were forced into factory work, making it a key location for cheap labor that many Western companies are understood to have benefitted from.

Many of the GDR's political prisoners would have been incarcerated for the simple "crime" of opposing the one-party communist state. Opposition to the state was stamped out by East Germany's feared Stasi secret police, which [spied on almost every aspect](#) of people's daily lives.

In a statement this week, IKEA Germany announced it would voluntarily put 6 million euros towards the new government fund established to provide compensation to victims of the East German dictatorship.

After decades of campaigning by victim groups, Germany's ruling coalition government proposed in 2021 to set up the hardship fund. The German parliament will vote on its establishment in the coming weeks, although this step is seen as a mere formality.

The IKEA statement adds that the payment is the result of years-long conversations between the company's German branch and the Union of Victims' Associations of Communist Dictatorship (UOGK) — an organization that describes itself as working to ensure those wrongly convicted in communist Germany receive justice in today's constitutional state.

In a statement provided to CNN, Walter Kadner, CEO and Chief Sustainability Officer at IKEA Germany, said: "We deeply regret that products for IKEA were also produced by political prisoners in the GDR. Since it became known, IKEA has consistently worked to clarify the situation.

"We have given our word to those affected that we will participate in providing support. We therefore welcome the implementation of the hardship fund and are pleased to be able to keep our promise."

IKEA's landmark payment is the first of its kind. The move has been welcomed by organizations that advocate for victims.

Dieter Dombrowski, the chairman of UOGK, described the development as “groundbreaking.”

“After it became known that the company was involved in forced prison labor, IKEA accepted our invitation to talk. Together we have taken the path of enlightenment and IKEA has met those affected on an equal footing.”

“We hope that other companies will follow IKEA’s example,” Dombrowski added.

According to UOGK, IKEA is one of many companies that benefitted from forced prison labor in communist Germany. Former UOGK chairman Rainer Wagner warned in 2012 that IKEA is “just the tip of the iceberg” as he called for companies to compensate former prisoners who still bear the psychological scars of incarceration and forced labor.

Evelyn Zupke, special representative for GDR victims in the German parliament, said: “IKEA’s pledge to support the hardship fund is an expression of a responsible approach to dealing with dark chapters in the company’s own history.

“We can’t undo what prisoners had to suffer in the GDR’s prisons, but we can treat them with respect today and support them.”

Final Round -

For the final round of Discussion students will be given a problem to solve and a packet of information about the problem. Use your hour to explore the information together, brainstorm ideas, and develop a solution your group finds potentially viable.