AYYEE BABY!

BY JO’KIA GREELY
Excitement nervousness and nausea
It stirs.
My stomach was a boiling pot of gumbo.
The palm trees welcomed me.
Leaves waving slowly as I stepped onto the bus.

The streets winded like a snake
for what felt like an eternity.
Mi casa awaited for me,
Ready to challenge me
Mock me and inevitably
Show me the time of my life.

“Ayyee Baby” bellowed from
The lungs of my host mother.
Her arms beckoned me violently.
My face laid firmly on her soft bosom.

Their mouths, they move, swiftly.
Unfathomable sounds encompass me.
But the savory aroma lifts me to the kitchen.
My host parents’ arms flail towards the table.
That I understand.

It frustrated me, saddened me, and angered me.
I’m expressive, I’m talkative, and I’m vocal.
But everything seems to fall off my tongue
Splatting on the floor.
“Ayyee Baby” shrieks host mother
Rubbing my stomach, asking of hunger.
Softly laying my head on her shoulder.
Am I sleepy?
Pointing to the bottle of water.
Am I thirsty?
Her arms reaching towards the skies.
Am I tired?

I laugh at the language barrier.
I never thought of being a foreigner.
Struggling to communicate.
I was always understood.

But I was swaddled in comfort
“Ayyee Baby”
I would hear once it left her lips.
Her quest of charades,
Speaking through her body.
Was more understandable
Than any English I ever heard.

This new found language.
This language of love.
This language of care.
This language of hope.
It was universal.

So as I hear her final
“Ayyee baby!”
I smiled back.
Adios, mi mamá

Jo’Kia Greely is a Senior studying Biomedical Engineering who studied in the Dominican Republic Summer 2018.