Prior to arriving in Camasca, Honduras, I was anxious. I wasn’t sure how to feel about being the only Black woman in a town that does not have any people who look like me or in a group with two other Duke students whom I had met only 2 months prior to our departure. On top of that, I am an introvert. I typically do not engage in conversation with others I do not know unless I have to. As such, it was difficult for me to become close with the other two students, initially.

As Duke students, we decided that our first two weeks of being in Honduras would be meant to grow accustomed to the area as well as learn about the town, its customs, and its people. Those two weeks were very difficult for me as it was my first time being outside of the United States, alone. In addition to that, the language I had grown up speaking was useless, and I was not fluent in the language everyone else in the town effortlessly spoke. Despite having two other Duke students with me, I felt alone. I felt out of place. I wanted to enjoy every moment and opportunity that came my way; however, I did not feel like myself for a while.

In our first full week of being in Camasca, we began teaching English at the local school -- La Urbana. I taught 5th, 6th, and 7th graders. Luckily, it was not my first time being in front of a classroom teaching; however, it was my first time teaching to a group of students who only knew Spanish. Needless to say, I struggled. I started with the English alphabet and numbers. From there, we transitioned to greetings, colors, animals, days of the week, and months of the
year. As the weeks progressed, the content of my classes advanced to simple sentences and the differentiation between tenses -- present vs. present progressive.

By the time week 3 came around, I began feeling more comfortable. My Spanish was improving; my English classes were going well as I had finally learned all of my students’ names; us Duke students began making friends in the town, and we finally began our research projects. My research explored the perceptions of body image in young adolescent girls and older women. One of my two research questions was, “Where do they receive messages about body image and what society deems a woman should look like?” Honduras is a developing country. As such, it is not as United States where people have consistent access to technology and mainstream media. Additionally, I wanted to determine how these perceptions of body image affected the levels of self-esteem in these young girls and women. We began by frequenting the local health center, “El Centro de Salud” to administer our surveys to people who fit in our age ranges. From there, we visited the local high school and the surrounding villages for participants.

Towards the end of our time in Honduras, I began to reflect a lot more about my experience. From hiking up to the cell towers in the town to eating Iguana Soup for dinner, I can definitely say that those two months were the best two months of my life. I met so many beautiful people with different backgrounds and stories to share -- many who considered migrating to the United States for better opportunities for themselves and their families, and others who lived in the United States for a period of time but were deported back to Honduras. Hearing these stories ultimately made me grateful for the life I have, a life that others dream to live.

Spending the last summer of my undergraduate career in Camasca, Honduras was the best decision I could have ever made. I am truly grateful for non-profit organization, Shoulder-to-Shoulder, Project H.E.A.L. as well as the donors who funded my expenses to and from Honduras. I could not have asked for anything more. I am also grateful for my host family in Camasca for welcoming me with open arms and being patient with me because I know my Spanish is not the best. Thank you all for making the best two months of my life possible.