

## To the Things that Raised Me

By Seyla Velez '25

To the *parcha* drinks and *tamarindo* candies  
To those creamy corner-store coconut popsicles  
Dripping down the sides of my toddler-swollen smile

To the mumbled bass booms of reggaeton  
Strutting, heavy-footed, down our streets  
To the Puerto Rican window hanging flags  
And surround sound belly laughs

To the thick thighs that helped me dribble my first soccer ball  
And long, brown hair flaunting its wealth  
To those rosaries on the shelf  
Confessions and repentance even to oneself

To the 4th of July parties that never failed us  
And to the shots of Aguardiente that failed them  
To the heapings of *sopa* that opened every last pore  
and to the seemingly thousands of cousins

To the respect shown with cheek kisses and a hug  
And a hello to everyone...  
I mean e v e r y o n e in the room

To all the constant shouting but the good kind  
To all the times I had to grab my jacket before leaving  
And tragic consequences to wet hair  
To the ones prevented by Vicks VapoRub

To every shade of skin I see,  
even the ones with scars and tattooed lip tint  
To the colombian jeans that somehow hold every curve  
and to the dark knees and armpits we adore  
*Pa' los viejos* who keep the stories coming  
*Y los vallenatos* that when the accordion begins, It  
just hits different

To the things that raised me.