



(Aric F. 2012)



(Aric's Dominican Host Family)

Aric is currently a senior at Illinois State University and plans to graduate in May of 2012. He is majoring in Spanish with a double minor in Latin American and Latino/a Studies and Sociology. Aric chose the LALS minor because while in high school he “started to develop a passion for Hispanic/Latino cultures.” Learning about Latinos and people in Latin America opened his eyes to things he never imagined. The LALS minor at ISU “broadened my views and knowledge of people and societies in not only in Latin America, but globally.” Over the past few years Aric has been involved with outreach programs and activities volunteering with local Latino community groups. Assisting and advocating for the Latino community is something Aric “will always feel passionate about.” After the completion of his studies, Aric hopes to someday live and work in both the United States and the Dominican Republic.

During the Fall semester of 2011, Aric traveled to the Dominican Republic to study Spanish. He is especially fond of studying local linguistic phrases. For example, he has a repertoire he likes to use and you might hear him say: ¡Qué lo qué!¹—He defines this as a commonly used greeting in the Dominican Republic. Studying abroad and experiencing life in the Dominican Republic was “a life-changing experience” that exceeded Aric’s “expectations and imagination.” As a university student in a new culture that seemed like a completely different world, Aric “learned about the way people think and interact with one another by comparing the society in the Dominican Republic to that of the United States.” He enjoyed

¹¡Qué lo qué!—translates to American English as “Hey, what’s up?!”

²bachata and merengue—two types of beautiful Latin music that were born in the Dominican Republic and have spread their influential ways of storytelling, portraying life and dancing across many countries of today’s world

³mestizos—historically speaking, mestizos are known as people whose racial/ethnic mixture consists of European and indigenous descent, while mulattos are known as people whose racial/ethnic mixture consists of European and African descent—Dominican Republic is a melting pot!

⁴¡No fuimo!—the Dominican Spanish accent at many times does not aspirate the letter s, changing “¡Nos fuimos!”, meaning “We left!”, to “¡No fuimo!”—it translates as “Let’s go!”, “Bye!” and/or “Check ya later!”

“meeting people from different parts of the world while learning differences between Hispanics/Latinos outside of the United States and those born and living within.”

The Dominican Republic for Aric was “the most beautiful place” he had ever traveled. “From the beaches, to the *bachata* and *merengue*², the food, the kind people, and the beautiful island weather, I fell in love with living in a Spanish-speaking world where I fit in perfectly”, said Aric. He now has a second **home** in the world—“I can return to the Dominican Republic any day I choose and will have a place to stay with people who are now my Dominican family and friends.” One of the most interesting parts of the Dominican Republic was “the racial makeup, consisting mainly of **mestizos** and **mulattos**³, then Black/African, White/European and other ancestries.” Other than traveling around the country, one of Aric’s best experiences was “teaching English at a primary school and learning about kids from underprivileged backgrounds in a developing country.”

In closing, Aric’s study-abroad experiences in the Dominican Republic was an incredibly important event of his college career. The country’s culture is “part of my heart and helps form who I am today.” Aric stated that in “both the United States and the Dominican Republic I am sometimes mistaken for being someone from the island or of Dominican decent.” Aric’s experience abroad taught him to “appreciate and embrace other cultures while pursuing a contribution to social justice.”

If you would like to read more about Aric’s adventures in the Dominican Republic, check out his blog at santiaguero2011.tumblr.com **¡No fuimo!**⁴

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