

"Welcome home." These two words were shared with me by a beautiful Garifuna woman in San Ignacio. She is what I will probably look like in 25 years...smooth dark skin, an aura of wisdom (I have to pray about this one), and long locks down to her waist (my hair is growing, slowly but surely). It was my first day in Creole language training and this woman, a university professor and my language trainer said these wonderful words to me. I exhaled a breath of tension that I had been holding onto for months when I decided to make this change in my life.

In some ways I can see myself calling Belize home. After a week of being here, I have had moments where things have felt strangely familiar...the melodious accent of the Caribbean people, the ease in the use of patois (called Creole in Belize and also my first language as a Guyanese American), the embrace I have felt from my extended host family (during my first day at my new host family's home I met countless aunts, uncles, cousins, neighbors...), the countdown to Carnival that begins as soon as Christmas season is over (Yeah! Carnival!), and so much more. I feel blessed to have grown up in a Caribbean village in Brooklyn, NY and to have had a family who instilled a love for the Caribbean into the first generation Americans. As I think about this, ease my mind, and exhale another breath, I can see this becoming my community, my home.

Here is an amazing quote that I am holding onto while I am here:

"We are all longing to go home to some place we have never been- a place half remembered, half envisioned. We can only catch glimpses from time to time. Community. Somewhere there are people to whom we can speak with passion without having the words catch in our throats. Somewhere a circle of hands will open to receive us, eyes will light up when we enter, voices will celebrate with us whenever we come into our own power. Community means strength that joins our strength to do the work that needs to be done. Arms to hold us when we falter. A circle of healing. A circle of friends. Someplace where we can be free." Starhawk, *Dreaming in the Dark*