

Written by: Amberleigh Quiles, 10th Grade

Contact Information: Yasmin Tirado at 203-570-3740 or yqtirado@gmail.com

Trumbull High School: 72 Strobel Rd, Trumbull, CT 06611

How Far a Butterfly Can Travel

A woman is breathless, lying hopelessly in the backseat of a car atop her sister's lifeless, bloody body. The pain is practically insurmountable as it surges up her leg, coursing through her body, pulsating. Immense heat drips down from the top of her head and she can hear the wind unforgivingly pounding against the side of the ruptured cab. She cranes her neck slightly, mustering the remaining energy she obtains to do so, in an attempt to look out of the window, which is now ingrained in the palms of her worn hand through shattered glass pieces. She is able to get a slight glimpse of the outside, however, all she sees is grey rock. Until she spots something else, something which radiates hues of reds and oranges, a vast contrast to the absolute *grey* that surrounds it. *Una Mariposa*, she smiles softly to herself. The butterfly performs a flamboyant dance for her, as it floats enchantingly, yet with ascendancy, as well. It then flies up, perhaps to the top of the cliff on which their cab was thrown off. She knows it's over, *her* fight. However, *the* fight is not.

"Ay, mariposa, dales fuerza..." she speaks, barely a whisper, barely anything other than a mere thought.

That butterfly flutters up, up, up, and passes by the smug guards, with bloody batons in tow, consistent droplets of red beating on the earth, a deafeningly quiet warning. It flies past the last remaining sister out of four, Dedé Mirabal, when she realizes her sisters aren't coming home after all, tears streaming despairingly down her face. It rushes past the office of the dictator who had plagued the country with ornate facades, yet flutters softly by the meeting place of the June 14th movement, where the members (under the code name *las mariposas*) who had been brought together by the now deceased siblings scream silently, holding in what had been growing harder to contain. Their mouths acted as barricades for unsaid words and bridled wails, perhaps up until that exact moment. It flutters all across the agonized and barren Dominican Republic, across the closets of young girls, filled to the brim with newly untouched skirts, the ones that used to sway in the squally wind and line the streets, filling them with vibrancy. It even travels across seas, which are filled with the tears of Dede, that only grow more valiant, more salty, and more *angry* as days pass. It flutters so far, that, years later, it comes across a young girl in America, who sits at her desk after a vigorous school day, staring blankly at a page recalling the journey of The Mirabal Sisters. A solemn and seldom tear beats down onto the page. The young girl then looks up at the butterfly and feels as though it is almost looking at her, almost willing her to take the stands she never had the confidence to take. The fight is not over, not yet, and perhaps not ever.

She gets up from her seat and opens the door, where the savory whiff of fresh *pernil* and *arroz* suffocates her, while her *abuelita* calls her over for dinner. She opens the fridge door where she picks up a *Jarrito* bottle, which lies right next to a pint of *Coca-Cola*. Where leftover pizza lies directly beside the *sofrito*, newly made and ready to be used, her household a mix of Latin heritage and American tradition. She seats herself, beside her mother, where she seemingly cannot stop thinking about those sisters.

And she won't. Not for a long time, at least. At every dance, she will think of the ball Minerva Mirabal was forced to attend, which at length resulted in her demise, if not for her merely rejecting an advance. Every time she writes, she will think of the utter creativity Patricia Mirabal marshaled in her attempt to communicate with her sisters during their imprisonment. When she graduates law school with a shimmering degree in her hand, she will reminisce on how Minerva was one of the first women to graduate from law school in the Dominican Republic, yet was restricted from practicing due to her audacity to stand. She holds her degree almost like how the guards bore the batons used to beat the sisters, one of whom, Maria Teresa was only 25 years old, someone who barely had the chance to live. These women engulf her thoughts, and every time she has a mere thought of taking a stance or making a change, she is reminded of her beloved sisters, the ones who were practically the reason a dictator was ultimately defeated, the ones who stood, the ones who pushed her, day in and day out, to take that stance, to get that degree, to start that organization, and to perhaps even overthrow that dictator.

And on the 14th of every June that girl, along with every other Latina, stand, porque las mariposas les dieron la fuerza y la confianza para hacer precisamente eso.