

“El negro trás de la oreja”: The Contemporary Portrayal of Blacks in  
Mainstream Media and Popular Music in the Dominican Republic

by

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## ABSTRACT

This master's thesis examines negative stereotypes of blackness in mainstream media in the Dominican Republic, and analyzes the manner in which racial identity has been reinforced and contested. Discourse analysis is utilized to analyze the language and rhetoric of editorials from *Listin Diario*. The rationale for this study is to assess how Dominicans have learned about blackness through the depictions in media and popular music, and therefore draw conclusions as to how Dominicans view their own racial identity. Considerable attention will be paid to the years between 2010-2013, using the Haitian earthquake disaster of 2010 and Verdict TC 0168-13 of the Dominican Constitutional Tribunal of 2013 as major historical events to frame the study.

To these assumptions, this inquiry addresses the following questions: How have Haitians been portrayed in the mainstream newspaper of *Listin Diario* between the period of 2010-2013? How do the pedagogies in media and popular music educate Dominicans about portrayals of blackness during this period? What are the historiographical roots of these portrayals, particularly regarding the dynamics of race and citizenship? I will demonstrate that the prevailing depictions of Haitians adhere to a historically oriented construction of Dominican identity, known as "Dominicanidad" or "Dominicanness," and that these depictions largely omit African heritage as a contributor to national identity.

## DEDICATION

First, and foremost, I dedicate this work to the Creator. Thank you for having imbued me with the ability and curiosity to be able to ask any of these questions. Second, I dedicate this work — and all of the love which I have poured into it — to the memory of Angela Victoria Henriquez de Castro: *Mi querida Abuelita Mami*, “*Bendición ‘buelita!*” Next, and to whom I owe life itself, I dedicate this work to my Mother and Father, Angela and Rafael Mora; and to my siblings Denise and Sergio; my *Titi Mami*, Mayra Henriquez; my *Tio Luis*, Luis Chavez; my *Titi Lalo*, Milagros Henriquez; and the scores of remaining family members — through which I’ve learned absolutely everything that I know about being *Dominicano*. Lastly, I dedicate this work to Meshia Begin who, throughout all the tumult that my life has been over the last two years I not only would have been incapable of finishing, I simply would not have been able to make sense of my world.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Prologue: Abuelita's Story**

This project is only made possible because I know that it exists. Having been raised in the United States, mine is a story situated in the movement of peoples of African descent, stories of diaspora. Both the Diaspora of the Dominican Republic and the African Diaspora have left an indelible imprint on my epistemology. Everything that I know about blackness stems from this and thus, it is from here that I begin my analysis.

I remember a great many things about my *Abuelita Mami*, from childhood to adulthood many wonderful — and at times odd — memories survived. Having passed almost a year ago, I reflect on her often. Mostly because I miss her, but also because the research regarding this thesis has been about stories both she and my family lived: vividly. This journey has, at best, attempted to reconnect with the past.

I recall sitting with my grandmother as a child lying in her arms as she lulled me to sleep. There is absolutely nothing extraordinary about that, we shared an amazingly close connection from as far back as I can recall. However, it was not until I reached full adulthood that I reflected and realized just how traumatic an episode that was — for both her and I. My grandmother would rock me to sleep as she swabbed my nose, repeatedly, over and over and over again. This was ritual for us. What I had not recognized, and most certainly could not at that age, was the aim, the objective, of her performing this ritual. She would reveal to me, much later and in a joking manner, that she was “thinning” my nose to make what was already beautiful, all the more.

This means nothing, a seemingly mundane yet peculiar gesture between an adult and a child, yet *that* act — swabbing my nose repeatedly — did indeed mean something. It meant that, aside the hue of my skin, my grandmother felt compelled to “correct” the most phenotypically obvious characteristic of my African identity. This idea of “correcting” blackness stemmed from somewhere, deeply buried in my grandmother’s psyche. When ethno-linguist Sheridan Wigginton stated that Dominicans “[had] long contracted their perspective of ethnicity, race, and culture based upon negative attitudes toward the neighboring Haitian population” (Wigginton 2005), she was addressing how blackness had become synonymous with Haitian and how that equation was fundamentally rooted in negative projections of the Haitian. *That* is precisely the confusion in which much of the history of the Dominican Republic has survived; especially so for the tellers of its history, the teachers, the narrators, the historians.

There is a saying on the island: *Todos tenemos “El negro trás de la oreja,”* (We all have black behind the ear); this phrase was first popularized by Dominican poet Juan Antonio Alix in his poetry (Davis 1982, 27). James J. Davis, linguist and authority on blackness in Dominican literature, argues that Alix’s poem was “...one of the first Dominican poems in which there [was] an overtly expressed concern about the treatment of Blacks” (Davis 1982, 27). This poem was written in 1883, only 39 years into the sovereign history of the Dominican Republic. Considering that the recently born nation had garnered its independence from the Republic of Haiti, a nation of former African slaves, Alix’s concerns about blackness are astonishing given the racial attitude towards the Haitian presence in the eastern territory of the island (Moya Pons 2010).

The irony of my grandmother's story is that she spoke openly about her African heritage, she embraced it fully. *Sin embargo, aunque sabía bien que era negra* (However, even though she knew well that she was black), what did blackness mean to her? Moreover, *where* and *how* did she learn to give meaning to it? That question led me to think that the idea of blackness in the Dominican imaginary might best be metaphorically defined as a *haunting*.

This haunting, as I see it, is a repetitive episodic event tugging at the imagination of the national identity. In other words, the idea of blackness is one that is almost always present, yet in many cases it is cast aside or completely ignored. I saw the effects of this in my own family and began to wonder what that process does to Dominicans and how they view themselves regarding race. Credit for the idea of hauntings — in this particular fashion — should rest with sociologist Avery Gordon. For the descriptive purposes of race in the Dominican Republic, I found the framing of the term extremely appropriate, demonstrating the persistence of the Dominican's attempted erasure of their African past and the potentially corrosive consequences of doing so. Hauntings, in common parlance, are not interpreted as *good* things, thus, the racial hauntings of the Dominican Republic are traumatizing.

In Gordon's book, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, she provided a robust metaphor for identifying and addressing repeated instances where violence, erasure, and omission were employed to deny the presence of narratives, of stories — much like my Abuelita's. In her introduction Gordon asserted that:

the term *haunting* [is used] to describe those singular yet repetitive instances when home becomes unfamiliar, when your bearings on the world lose direction, when the over-and-done-with comes alive, when what's been in your blind spot

comes into view. Haunting raises specters, and it alters the experience of being in time, the way we separate the past, the present, and the future (Gordon 2008, xvi).

The haunting is an awareness-raising event meant to motivate us into action. In the case of the Dominican Republic, there has been a very long history of hauntings regarding the learning of race. This thesis engages in the questions that condition and animate these stories.

### **Thesis Composition**

Recent depictions of Haitians in Dominican newspaper media have reinforced negative stereotypes about blackness and furthered the existing denial of African contributions to the formation of Dominican national identity. These depictions have emphasized a pedagogical suppression of blackness in the Dominican Republic by perpetuating negative ideas that limit a full understanding of both racial and national identity.

This thesis focuses on the negative rhetoric of editorials in *Listin Diario* between the years of 2010-2013. The newspaper source, currently the oldest in circulation, will be treated as a site of public pedagogy for the purposes of this discursive intervention into the larger Dominican theoretical discourse on race. Print media, in general, was selected as a significant pedagogical site because of the high literacy rate in the Dominican Republic. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics, the adult literacy rate in the Dominican

Republic in 2011 was 90.1%, while the youth literacy rate was 97.0%.<sup>1</sup> In relation to the negative rhetoric identified in the editorials, this thesis also explores and critiques the repetitive nature in which blackness is depicted negatively in the Dominican imaginary.

Given the assumptions about these portrayals, this thesis considers if notions of blackness have been erased in plain sight and thus submits the following set of research questions: First, how have Haitians been portrayed in the mainstream newspaper of *Listin Diario* between the period of 2010-2013? Second, how do the pedagogies in media and popular music educate Dominicans about portrayals of blackness during this period? Third, and last, what are the historiographical roots of these portrayals, particularly regarding the dynamics of race and citizenship?

The prevailing discourse suggests that Dominican history has focused — primarily — on the cultural contributions of European and indigenous heritages and have played a significant role in determining the common assumptions of Dominican national identity. The terms “Dominicanidad” and “Dominicanness” (interchangeable terms) are used to name the cultural constructs that best racially, socially, and culturally define who Dominicans view themselves to be in the world. However, this view omits the contributions of African heritage to the national narrative and thus begs the exploration of *why, where, and how* this occurs?

As a methodological technique, discourse analysis has been utilized to organize a clearer understanding of the negative depictions of Haitians present in the Dominican newspaper. By identifying common themes found in the rhetoric of the editorials, codes

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<sup>1</sup> In this UNESCO report the adult literacy value used reflects the combined male and female population over the age of 15, while the youth literacy rate reflects the combined male and female population between the ages of 15-24.

were constructed that suggest the overall negative depiction of Haitians. In the Dominican imaginary, Haitian is synonymous with black and so the terms shall often be used interchangeably throughout the analysis. Moreover, this methodology specifically explores the pedagogical function which negative rhetoric has served in teaching Dominicans about blackness.

Equally important, the examination of the Dominican historiographical discourse reveals a “narrative of victimization,” a conceptual framework that operates complicity in allowing the Dominican national memory to forgo accountability by denying an African heritage. Although the denial has been repetitive throughout the history of the nation, the suppression of African contributions to Dominicanidad should not be read as successful erasure; but instead as an erasure in plain sight.

This thesis is, in part, theoretically organized around the idea of repetitive suppressions of blackness, metaphorical hauntings as suggested above. The tension between Haitians and Dominicans has a complicated history grounded in notions of race, identity, and purity as framed by the Dominican ideology of Dominicanidad. The composition of this thesis is organized as follows: Chapter Two addresses existing literature on Dominican history and the complexity of racial identity in the nation, as such, this chapter presents Dominican historiography as situated in a “narrative of victimization,” whereby accountability for repetitive negative depictions of Haitians have been justified in the national narrative. Chapter Three addresses the methodology used for the thesis: How it was collected, why the sources were selected, and why discourse analysis. Chapter Four discusses the findings of the analysis and is divided into subunits dealing with emerging themes found in the editorials. Chapter Five concludes with

possibilities for future work and the challenge of redefining Dominicanidad as a discourse of racial inclusivity in the Dominican Republic.

## CHAPTER 2

### DOMINICANIDAD, A PROBLEMATIC IDENTITY: LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Situating and Contextualizing Haiti

A significant amount of scholarship regarding the racial history of the Haitian people has been limited to cursory frameworks. Often, academic analyses have implicitly treated Haitians as a racially monolithic people — failing to grasp the complexity of historical socio-racial formations in the nation. As curators of Dominican racial history, this problematic limits the capacity for scholarship regarding the theoretical discourses of race in the Dominican Republic. In other words, without best understanding and contextualizing the complexity of race in Haiti, it becomes exponentially difficult to understand the context in which race operates in the Dominican Republic — a nation whose own socio-racial formation is heavily influenced by its relationship to Haiti.

Considered the most important comprehensive history of the nation by contemporary scholars, Dominican historian Frank Moya Pons in his book *The Dominican Republic: A National History*, suggests the significance of the Haitian mulatto population that emerged during its colonial period in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Moya Pons 2010). As the French Revolution played a significant role in the Haitian Revolution — both theoretically and philosophically —, it should be noted how significant those ideas were for the understanding of race in the Haitian construct, especially for the free mulatto (and landowning elite) in the early political consciousness of the republic. These same mulattos, who saw themselves disdainfully different from white land owners, would eventually play a significant role in the dissolution of Haitian rule in the eastern territory of Hispaniola — logic primarily founded on seeing themselves as culturally different

from both the black populations of Haiti and the inhabitants of the eastern end of Hispaniola. In the future, this mulatto class would also aid in the effort for Dominican independence from Haitian unification in 1844 — largely because of their belief in profound differences between the two cultures (Moya Pons 2010).

Broadening the historical *situatedness* of Haiti means expanding the understanding of Haiti's own racial complexity. However, understanding how the notions of race in Haiti influenced the eastern territories of Hispaniola on successive attempts at Haitian unification are essential to our analysis.

Toussaint L'Ouverture's attempt to unify the island of Hispaniola in 1801 is significant to note because it is the precedent by which the Haitian unification of 1822-1844 (by Jean Pierre Boyer, Haitian President) is partially established (Moya Pons 2010). The rationale for Haitian occupation of the eastern territory (Spanish colony) was primarily militaristic; such was the case on both attempts to unify. The new republic feared France's return; the former colony of Saint Domingue was a valued commodity to the French imperial war effort. Because of these two interests, the colony of Santo Domingo was essentially trapped between the former colony of Saint Domingue and France. As Moya Pons explains,

More than the hostility of the whites and mulattos, the real threat facing Toussaint came from the government of France, specifically from Napoleon Bonaparte. France needed the resources of its colonies. However, French control over Saint-Domingue would be impossible unless the blacks were subdued. Therefore, the French felt it was necessary to restore slavery and depose Toussaint. When Toussaint heard of Napoleon's plans in late 1800, he decided to protect his eastern flank by occupying the Spanish colony, which had not yet been delivered to France (Moya Pons 2010, 97).

As L'Ouverture's necessity for unification was predicated on the fear of France's return, Boyer's concerns establish the pretext by which the unification of 1822 takes place. Moya Pons notes,

The Haitian government, too, became anxious when it received news about a forthcoming French invasion. These reports were alarming since the French had already made two attempts to regain Haiti in 1814 and 1816. Anxiety increased in 1820 when Haitian President Jean Pierre Boyer was informed that French ships had arrived in Martinique for the sole purpose of invading the Spanish colony and using it as a base for the reconquest of Haiti ... Therefore, the Haitians were suspicious that the Spanish government would give official support to French attempts to recover its lost colony (Moya Pons 2010, 119).

Boyer, like his predecessors, saw a defensive and militaristic advantage in unifying the island of Hispaniola.

It is duly significant to contextualize this Haitian rationale regarding the eastern territory. Much of Dominican history fails to interpret this perspective on the 22-year unification of the island. The aim in this discussion is not to simplify nor romanticize Haitian perspectives on unification. On the contrary, the greater objective is to incorporate this complexity into the broader Dominican history. Failure to do so, for the most part, has meant an exacerbation of differences along cultural lines that have in turn limited the possibility of a more inclusive and holistic historical account.

Michele Wucker, former American journalist and contemporary public scholar, articulated what moving beyond the Dominico-Haitian cultural divide might look like in her manuscript, *Why the Cocks Fight: Dominicans, Haitians, and the Struggle for Hispaniola*. Wucker suggests that, although there are distinct cultural differences between the two nations, culture is not the prominent differentiator. Far too often cultural differences are used to rationalize the relationship on both ends of the island—

throughout the spectrum of positive to negative. As her experiences during her research process revealed, Wucker situated the Dominico-Haitian relationship within the broader context of the perspective of the United States:

The more time I spent on Hispaniola, the less I believed that the cultural differences were the root of the problem. They were only the mask. The people of both countries are proud of their pumpkin soup. Their music—merengue in Santo Domingo and *konpa* in Haiti—sounds very similar; both styles of music are based on European contredanse infused with a five-beat African rhythm. The main difference between them is the way they are enjoyed: Dominicans dance with a slight hitch while Haitians move symmetrically. The histories of their relationships with the United States were eerily parallel (Wucker 1999, viii).

Wucker demonstrates that the discourse for understanding the Dominico-Haitian relationship should best be understood by the relationship both nations have to the American sphere of influence. It should be argued that both nations — along this axis — share more in common than not. While this thesis will not, necessarily, delve into that complicated relationship, it is important to note it.

### **Denial of an African Heritage**

Dominican historiography, by and large, has overlooked the perspective and rationale of Haitians regarding the unification of Hispaniola. As a result, there have been limitations to the discourse regarding the cultural ramifications the 22-year period of unification has had on the eastern territory — the value of understanding the “other-side-of-the-story” has gone largely missed. Although Dominican scholars have framed much of the literature regarding the period of unification and its impact on emerging Dominican society, failure to understand *why* Haitians felt compelled to unify the island has diminished the possibility of exploring more robust ways of interpreting that past. It

is out of this context, in part, that the Dominican historical cannon has relied heavily on investments of denial regarding the nation's African heritage.

As the discussion for Haitian unification has been largely omitted from the Dominican historical narrative, so too has a comprehensive reading of the Haitian Revolution and any relevance of it symbolically, culturally, or politically to the Dominican people been dismissed. Puerto Rican historian Pedro Luis San Miguel, who in his manuscript *Imagined Island: History, Identity, and Utopia in Hispaniola*, situates the relevance of the Haitian Revolution with regard to Dominican racial ideology:

These stances assumed by García bring us to the problem of the multiple evocations that the Haitian Revolution, its leaders, and its effects on Santo Domingo inspired in him - particularly in view of the fact that the Haitian presence called into question some of the great myths upon which the identity of the dominant sectors of colonial society had been erected. Above all, the revolution was an offense against the dominant notions of relations between the "races" - notions based on the premise of a "natural order" in which whites commanded and blacks obeyed. The Haitian Revolution represented an "upside-down world" in which those who were *supposed* to obey - because they were black, slaves, and African - had taken over the world, disrupting the order of those who were *supposed* to command, direct, and govern because they were white (or so, at least, many claimed to be) and European (San Miguel 2006, 22).

San Miguel's assertions highlight the ideological fear of the Haitian Revolution felt by the Spanish colonists of Santo Domingo, and by extension the prevailing fears in the contemporary Dominican intelligentsia. The idea evolved into a rhetoric that suggested that the presence of African ancestry, in Dominican society, represented the slowing of progress, the rejection of civilization and thus a rationale for denying any vestiges of African identity in the Dominican imaginary.

San Miguel further asserted "The very racial composition of the country was seen as a factor limiting material progress and the advancement of "civilization" - civilization,

naturally, of European origin” (San Miguel 2006, 23). This implies an *anti-*developmental ideology, a recurring theme throughout much of the literature regarding blackness in the Dominican Republic.

In the spaces in which Dominican national identity have been discussed, there have been systematic efforts to present the racial composition of the nation as *other-than-black*. Dominicanidad, as an identity, is built on the heavy embrace of Hispanic and indigenous ancestry and by default a denial of African contributions. As Dominican sociologist Ginetta E.B. Candelario suggests regarding the national racial discourse, “...the national body has been defined as not-black, even as black ancestry has been grudgingly acknowledged. In the place of blackness, official identity discourses and displays have held that Dominicans are racially Indian and culturally Hispanic (Candelario 2007, 2).” Because of this, denials of African heritage have historically translated to real material gains for sectors of the Dominican population.

As Candelario notes, “Dominican whiteness was an explicitly achieved (and achievable) status with connotations of social, political, and economic privilege, and blackness signaled foreignness, socioeconomic subordination, and inferiority” (Candelario 2007, 5). This “foreignness” Candelario refers to is the manner by which Haitians have been depicted negatively throughout Dominican history. Dominicanidad has, to a large degree, also been built on notions of anti-Haitianism. In other words, these ideas are as much about what Dominican *isn't* — Haitian, black — as they are equally about what Dominican *is* — non-black, Hispanic. This investment in African denial has translated to real material value in Dominican society: improvement of social status, better employment opportunities, and relative mobility (Torres-Saillant 1998).

In addition, comparative literature scholar Silvio Torres-Saillant — leading authority on discourses of anti-blackness in the Dominican Republic — articulates the consequences of erased histories, particularly focusing on the difficulty Dominicans have had with constructs like Dominicanidad. Torres-Saillant states that, “One could argue that for Dominicans of African descent, history had conspired against their development of a racial consciousness that would inform their building of alliances along ethnic lines. At the same time, their deracialized consciousness precluded the development of a discourse of black affirmation that would serve to counterbalance intellectual negrophobia” (Torres-Saillant 1998, 136).

Furthering the notion of progress upon which Dominicanidad is constructed, Torres-Saillant added that, “Caucasians were the owners of the wisdom and ability necessary for civilization and progress” (Torres-Saillant 1998, 138). The idea of blackness being a detriment to Dominican progress is a recurring theme throughout much of the literature on race, again, indicative of the incentive of material gains through denial.

Urban geographer David Howard, author of *Coloring the Nation: Race and Ethnicity in the Dominican Republic*, complicates our understandings regarding the scholarly discourse on Dominican race and its larger connection to an African Diaspora. Arguing that the denial of African heritage has been so pervasive in the Dominican Republic that it has limited broader discussions about race outside the island that may be of significant value. Howard states:

The scholars who currently have risen to intellectual stardom by speaking about race and blackness, with the advent of cultural studies and post-colonial theory, do not exhibit any knowledge of the Dominican Republic, a country whose

intercourse with blackness and African roots would seem incontestably to qualify it as an ideal candidate for induction into the watery corridors of the ‘transcultural, international formation’ that Paul Gilroy has called ‘the Black Atlantic’ (Howard 2001, vii).

However, although Howard raises a valid point about the epistemic inclusivity of the Dominican Republic in post-colonial theory and cultural studies more broadly, we should caution full adherence to this particular view. The questions surrounding identity and race — the same questions asked in the post-colonial discourses of scholars such as Franz Fanon and Aimé Césaire — do account for the uniqueness of the Dominican narrative.

The Dominican Republic is not an exception, regarding it as such suggests more about those who have written the historical narrative — and intentionally omitted an African presence — than those who would presumably read it. In addition, in the cases where the Dominican Republic has not been directly discussed for its place in the larger African Diaspora, that is equally telling of the narrators of Dominican history. The literature suggests that Dominican historiography has gone to great lengths to distance itself from such connections. Howard does provide the potential possibilities of contextualizing Dominican blackness within a broader context of an African Diaspora.

Regarding contemporary literature, Howard states,

The recent literature on blackness in the Americas has dealt with the Dominican case, then, in either of two ways: omission or trivialization. This might seem a strange lot indeed for a people whose land I have elsewhere had reason to call ‘the cradle of blackness in the Americas’. Hispaniola received the first blacks ever to arrive in the Western Hemisphere (Howard 2001, viii).

Howard’s articulation of the Dominican Republic as the “cradle of blackness” problematizes Dominicanidad and the relationship Dominicans have with Haiti. In other

words, Haiti cannot be a nation of former slaves and clearly proclaim itself black, while the Dominican Republic is the “cradle” upon which the New World slave trade was birthed and deny its blackness. The two ideals contradict.

### **The Haitian “Other”**

In order to strengthen the ideas of Dominicanidad, the Haitian has been situated as the stark contrast upon which Dominican identity has been created. As this thesis draws on the imagery of Juan Antonio Alix’s poem *El Negro Tras de la Oreja*, Ginetta Candelario best articulates the impact Dominicanidad had on some of his other poetry. Although Alix did openly contest negrophobia, he was still nonetheless a byproduct of Dominicanidad. Her analysis:

Haitians are textually depicted in gross caricature as embodying evil and uncivilized hypermasculinity: savage, animalistic, sexually violent, and devilish. Dominicans are implicitly contrasted to the “big-mouthed Kaffirs” as respectable fathers and mothers, virginal daughters, Hispanic, Catholic, and white. Written just a few months after “Black behind the Ears,” this decima contains all the ideological markings of official Dominicanidad: Negrophobia, white supremacy, and anti-Haitianism (Candelario 2007, 3).

The analysis of the rhetoric in this poem is a lucid articulation of the frame in which Dominicanidad depicts the Haitian as Other, as a constant referent to Dominican identity. As with most interactions in the Dominico-Haitian relationship, the Haitian is depicted negatively so that the Dominican can be projected positively.

Therefore, it must be argued that Dominicanidad is built largely on anti-Haitian ideas. Candelario, regarding Dominican scholars Frank Moya Pons, Juan Bosch, and Silvio Torres-Saillant, provides their articulations of the conditions in which racial

formations emerged in the Dominican Republic and thus the formations of Dominicanidad:

They argue that a series of regionally anomalous events in the political-economic history of Santo Domingo account for this distinctive socio-racial formation. Chief among those anomalies are (1) the relatively short duration and limited importance of plantation slavery; (2) the massive depopulations caused by white emigration; (3) the impoverishment of the remaining Spanish and Creole colonials during the “Devastations”; and (4) the concomitantly heavy reliance on blacks and mulattos in the armed forces and religious infrastructure (Candelario 2007, 3).

When discussing her interactions with Dominicans from the middle and upper classes, Michele Wucker recalled having experienced a flippant and disdainful attitude towards Haitians.

My landlady’s reaction was not unlike that of the middle- and upper-class Dominicans whom I told of my interest in Haiti. “I was just speaking to some people from the United Nations who said Haiti would be better off if someone dropped a bomb on it. And they’re right,” said the publisher of a newspaper in Santo Domingo (Wucker 1999, vii).

The disdainful attitude towards Haitians is atmospherically present in the Dominican imaginary. In other words, how Dominicans view themselves in relation to blackness and Haitians, specifically, manifests itself in all the subtleties of life, so that a simple exchange such as Wuckers’ becomes incessantly racialized. The depiction of Haitians is saturated with these ideas, as evident from the encounters Wucker reports to have experienced.

Silvio Torres-Saillant locates the relationship that these ideas of the Haitian Other hold to the uniquely essentialist notions of American racial ideology:

Dominican identity consists not only of how Dominicans see themselves but also of how they are seen by the powerful nations with which the Dominican Republic has been linked in a relationship of political and economic dependence. It is not inconceivable, for instance, that the texture of negrophobic and anti-Haitian nationalist discourse sponsored by official spokespersons in the Dominican state

drew significantly on North American sources dating back to the first years of the republic (Torres-Saillant 1998, 129).

As briefly mentioned above, the Dominican Republic drew on the ideas of white supremacy in part from the racial atmosphere of the United States. Much of the treatment of the Haitian stems from a desire to align the Dominican Republic (ideologically, politically) with the United States.

### **Dominico-Haitian Relationship**

It is historically convenient for Dominicans to deny African heritage because it helps “untangle” the connection to a shared history with Haiti. The Dominico-Haitian relationship is mitigated through a perspective of denial and erasure and, as discussed above, is the frame upon which Dominicanidad is primarily constructed. However, for as much as the relationship is mired in the shared history of Hispaniola, there are distinct characteristics that make the discourses on race relations between the two nations extremely complicated to discuss.

Moya Pons would argue that by “...the fourth decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was evident that two different nations coexisted, one beside the other, with their differences based not only on dissimilar economic systems but also on racial, cultural, and legal dissimilarities” (Moya Pons 2010, 139). It is clear that two societies had emerged, however, how the relationship has evolved has been characteristically one-sided regarding the depiction of Haitians: in short, have repeatedly been depicted as the negative “Other” from the Dominican perspective.

Also important to note, the 22-year period between 1822-1844 is contextualized and historicized differently in both nations. From the Haitian perspective, it is viewed as a unification; however, from the Dominican perspective, all of the literature refers to the period as an occupation. The very notion of separation in 1844 suggests "...a clear expression of the views of the eastern population who considered themselves completely different from the Haitians, especially regarding language, race, religion, and domestic customs that, despite official regulations and pressures, had remained unchanged under Haitian domination" (Moya Pons 2010, 151).

However, not all of the Dominico-Haitian relationship ascribes to a negative dynamic. As journalist Michele Wucker noted in her research of impoverished Dominican communities (densely populated by Haitian migrants), different paradigms do exist in certain pockets of society. Wucker noted,

I spent most of my time in the ghettos and cane fields, where Haitians and Dominicans live and work together closely. These people switched back and forth between Haitian Kreyol and Spanish. They teased each other about their differences but were hardly the bitter enemies the Dominican government depicted. Many people volunteered that they had cousins, aunts, grand parents in the other country. People dealt with racial and cultural boundaries in subtle ways that often contradicted the official picture (Wucker 1999, ix).

As Wucker demonstrates, the Dominico-Haitian relationship appears differently from the national narrative under impoverished conditions.

To contextualize the demographic of the Dominican Republic and the scope of the problematic, Moya Pons provides needed clarity: "Blacks and mulattos make up nearly 90 percent of the contemporary Dominican population. Yet, no other country in the hemisphere exhibits greater indeterminacy regarding the population's sense of racial identity" (Torres-Saillant 1998, 126). That the Dominican Republic is comprised of so

many peoples of African descent makes it all the more complicated to establish tense relationships with the Haitians, without at some fundamental level creating contradictions within the Dominican society et large.

### **Narrative of Victimization**

Pedro Luis San Miguel's contributions to the understanding of Dominican historiography in relation to power and the Dominican historical narrative, writ large, are unsurpassed. Here power is used as the ability to define the terms upon which history is recorded. According to San Miguel, history can be articulated as a series of "privileged moments," he states that "The poetics of history transforms narrated "facts" in to "privileged moments whose appearance defines the series." And if they are allowed this defying role, it is because they validate the interpretation of narration into which they are inserted" (San Miguel 2006, 4). The broad literature of Dominican history adheres to this schema. In many ways, the historiographical record of the Dominican Republic is one that has adhered to a "narrative of victimization."

In all the systematic efforts to reinterpret Haiti; deny African ancestry; create the Haitian as Other; and define the continued relationship between Haitians and Dominicans tensely, the Dominican Republic has often portrayed itself the *victim* in these circumstances. Victimization, as a rationale, has empowered the narration of history along the terms of Dominican self-interests, with little accountability to the consequences of denials of blackness. In this frame, the victim has full agency and autonomy to narrate *their* story of harm. Moreover, this has afforded Dominican historians the ability to decide the terms upon which they have *chosen* to heal from their harm.

A broad reading of the literature on Dominican history demonstrates how historiography has been utilized as the primary site for the narrative of victimization. As San Miguel suggests:

The historiographies of the Dominican Republic and Haiti have been crucial to the construction of notions of identity. Likewise, they have been problematic spaces in the intersection between writing and power. For these reasons I have concentrated my efforts on studying the historiography of Hispaniola, albeit with a decided emphasis on that of the Dominican Republic ... If histories can be cataloged as “persuasive fictions,” then fictional works might be called “false chronicles,” since they offer powerful interpretations regarding a society’s dilemmas (San Miguel 2006, 5).

The identities of Haitians and Dominicans (in contradistinction to one-another), which are again central to the ideological construction of Dominicanidad, are predicated on the historiographies that San Miguel suggests.

San Miguel further asserts *how* historiographies have the ability to frame “imagined communities”:

A “history” is a totem: the historiographer attempts to take disparate and conflicting fragments and bring them together around that totem in order to construct an “imagined community,” to “invent a tradition.” One of historiography’s mechanisms of authority is to canonize works and authors, with the “goal of imposing a consensus, a cohesion.” This cohesion implies closing off certain spaces, ask if the “authorized (and authoritarian) voices” had said all that needed to be said. These voices set the subject’s limits, determine factual content, and provide all possible interpretations - that is, all interpretations legitimized and permitted by the canon (San Miguel 2006, 33).

In the case of the Dominican Republic, the frames upon which communities are built are limited by the parameters established by Dominicanidad. In other words, the historical narrative struggles to see beyond the point in which the Haitian is *more* than the Other, further complicating attempts at histories that include the perspective of Haitians.

San Miguel asserts that Dominican historiography has defined the conditions in which the relationship between Dominicans and Haitians are experienced; however, his articulations of a “paradise lost” best represent the context by which victimization has been utilized to propagate these narratives:

Losing a paradise may be a tragedy. It will always be a tragedy for those in positions of authority, whose reputed ‘heirs’ will lament the absence of that safe, enclosed space over which they held dominion — or at least exercised usufruct. In their “memoirs” (their historiography), they will tell us of those intruders who undermined their inheritance or who seduced the weak in order to sow dissension and internal disaffection. They will write of their evil “brothers” and “cousins” — such narratives often employ the rhetoric of kinship — who squandered the family’s patrimony. (San Miguel 2006, 33-34)

Because Dominican history has primarily focused on its Hispanic and indigenous inheritances, the African presence constitutes the proverbial loss San Miguel describes. This revisits the notion of anti-development mentioned above.

Throughout much of the literature regarding Dominican history, the sentiments of anti-Haitianism have become synonymous with victimization. Because Haitians have been repeatedly depicted negatively, victimization is often used as the rationale for *why* these views persist in Dominican society. Torres-Saillant describes the context in which Dominicans view themselves victim to Haitian occupation,

Dominicans have not succumbed, since the death of Trujillo, to state-sponsored inducements against Haitian immigrants in the country. However, they have not escaped the mental scars inflicted by generations of official vilification of Haitians. Anti-Haitianism, fueled by the current vulnerability of impoverished Haitian immigrants in the Dominican Republic, persists as a viable political instrument for conservatives” (Torres-Saillant 1998, 139).

Although Torres-Saillant’s comments were written in 1998, it should be noted that the current of anti-Haitianism that existed then has manifested in the measures the Dominican state has taken against Haitian migrants since. The “mental scars” he

mentions must be read as traces of the narrative of victimization, they are the rationale that justifies the negative treatment of Haitians that still persists.

Haitian anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot, in his book *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, best articulates the difficulty (and limitations) associated with constructions of histories. Meaning is given to history in ways that articulate how communities define themselves. Trouillot asserts that,

Human beings participate in history both as actors and as narrators. The inherent ambivalence of the word 'history' in many modern languages, including English, suggests this dual participation. In vernacular use, history means both the facts of the matter and a narrative of those facts, both 'what happened' and 'that which is said to have happened.' The first meaning places the emphasis on the sociohistorical process, the second on our knowledge of that process or on a story about that process. (Trouillot 1995, 2)

In the case of the Dominican Republic, the historical narrative defines itself over and against the Haitian people and thus frames the entire relationship of meanings given to them. The narrative of victimization is made possible as one of these meanings created from this historical understanding.

## CHAPTER 3

### PEDAGOGY AND MEDIA: CONCEPTUAL DISCUSSION AND METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGY

#### Public Pedagogy

This thesis is concerned with the interstices of race in the Dominican Republic as they regard the pedagogical functions of print media. A closer analysis of editorials of the Dominican newspaper *Listin Diario*, ranging from 2010 to 2013, will be the focal point of interpretation. This thesis, then, seeks to demonstrate how Dominicans have portrayed Haitians in print media between these years, how Dominicans have learned about blackness and race as a consequence of these portrayals, and ultimately how the roots of these portrayals are framed in a pervasive historical context that broadens the contemporary understandings of blackness in the Dominican Republic.

The aim, as critical theorist of media culture Douglas Kellner suggests, is to establish a fuller understanding of the relationship “media literacy” has to how Dominicans construct meanings regarding racial identity in particular. How epistemologies and ontologies are constructed around the depictions, narratives, and ideas that are projected through media are fundamental to understanding blackness in the Dominican context. Kellner asserts that,

“Media literacy” involves knowledge of how media work, how they construct meanings, how they serve as a form of cultural pedagogy, and how they function in everyday life . . . Media literacy thus empowers people to use media intelligently, to discriminate and evaluate media content, to critically dissect media forms, and to investigate media effects and uses (Kellner 1998, 108).

Adhering to Kellner’s statements regarding media literacy, it is also the aim of this thesis to identify and illustrate how media perpetuates ideas that, over time, become

part of the Dominican imaginary regarding blackness and Haitians. Also of importance to the analysis, is the identification of this pedagogical practice and how close analytical interpretation can serve as an intervention regarding the larger national identity framed by the ideology of Dominicanidad. In other words, print media will be treated as a significant pedagogical site because of the high literacy rate in the nation and the resulting analysis will seek to draw connections between the readership and what they have learned about the images of Haitians and blackness.

In addition, this analysis is in direct conversation with the scholarly work of Teun Adrianus van Dijk. His emphasis on the fields of textual linguistics and the critical discourse analysis of media frames how this analysis seeks to illustrate the pedagogical function of routine exposures to text. In his essay, "Opinions and Ideologies in Editorials," van Dijk briefly discusses the evolution of the discourse regarding the study of editorials:

Many phenomena of everyday life tend to be ignored by scholars. Thus, historically, among many types of discourse, everyday conversations were studied systematically much later than less mundane genres such as poetry, drama and novels. The same was true for such pervasive everyday texts as news reports in the media which began to be studied systematically and from a discourse analytical point of view during the last decade (van Dijk 1995).

In addition, van Dijk specifically addresses the pedagogical impact of editorials by stating that, "Editorials are no exception. Each day we find them, usually at the same page and at the same location, in our daily newspapers. For those people who read them, they help to make up their mind about the events of the world, even if often by critical opposition against them" (van Dijk 1995). This thesis seeks to utilize discourse analysis

regarding the editorials of *Listin Diario* with the aim of drawing any relevant connections to the critical discourse van Dijk has posited.

Equally important are Kellner's statements regarding the significant value of having a *critical* media literacy. He states that, "A critical media literacy is necessary because media culture strongly influences our view of the world; it imparts knowledge of geography, technology, the environment, political and social events, how the economy works, and related topics in our society and the world at large" (Kellner 1998, 108). It is important to first identify that epistemologies are actively constructed through these pedagogical sites and then, as critical pedagogue Paulo Freire suggests, to be critical of them moving forward — as praxis, in a process of identifying, reflecting, and transforming these constructed meanings (Freire 1970).

How media is defined as pedagogical sites are further validated by Kellner's explanations of how "the media" is often portrayed as a monolithic entity. He states that,

Sometimes "the media" are lumped into one homogeneous category, but it is important to discern that there are many media of communication and forms of cultural pedagogy, ranging from print media such as books, newspapers, and magazines to film, radio, television, popular music, photography, advertising, and many other multimedia cultural forms, including video games, computer culture, CD-ROMs, and the like (Kellner 1998, 109).

However, while the rationale to utilize print media for this analysis rests primarily with the high literacy rate of the Dominican Republic, it should be noted that there are other important theoretical discourses that factor into how race is learned in the broader Dominican imaginary. Critical discussions regarding history, the nation-state, migration, borderlands, race, citizenship, xenophobia, colonialism and imperialism (to name but a few) all impact the nature of this study. While it is not the assumption that these

contributions to racial identity formation are either static or linear, it is acknowledged that they all exist concurrently in the greater Dominico-Haitian relationship and that any study that seeks to fully contextualize the complexity of the discourse on race in the Dominican Republic should equally acknowledge so.

As an example, Leovigildo Pérez Saba's master's thesis, *Dominant Racial and Cultural Ideologies in Dominican Elementary Education*, illustrates how elementary school textbooks reinforce the same ideologies this analysis seeks to demonstrate in the editorials of *Listin Diario*. Saba's thesis is an example of the phenomenon that addresses how notions of blackness are learned through racial pedagogy. The statement, "... racial and cultural ideologies are embedded in the depictions of Dominican identity that are found in the textbooks" (Saba 2009, 12) is representative of the condition that this analysis seeks to interpret as the pedagogical function of print media in the Dominican Republic. In addition, it strengthens the likelihood of connecting the depictions of Haitians and blackness to the larger discussion about race in the nation. If Dominicans are learning to hate Haitians and blackness from elementary school on, it is highly likely that this will be apparent in the editorials themselves. However, for the purposes of this analysis, the role of print media as a pedagogical institution that reproduces — and at times challenges — the larger hegemonic ideas regarding race will be given priority.

Theorist and fellow pedagogue Henry Giroux echoes Douglas Kellner's sentiments regarding the importance of critically engaging pedagogical sites — most especially sites of media representation. Giroux more overtly discusses the cultural politics — and the ramifications involved — as he states that, "Matters of historical contingency, context, and social transformation are both primary considerations in

fashioning any viable form of cultural politics and crucial to developing a language of critique and possibility that is as self-critical as it is socially responsible.”(Giroux 2003, 5). This thesis seeks to demonstrate how interrogating the depictions of Haitians in these Dominican pedagogical sites, might develop a language of critique that may help better situate the understandings of the Dominico-Haitian relationship and the ideological construct of Dominicanidad that informs it. In other words, the thesis aims to serve as a greater intervention by naming the processes that assist in locating and tracing the repetitive nature of negative depictions of Haitians and how they fit into a larger history of race relations and African denial in relation to Dominican identity.

### ***Listin Diario***

*Listin Diario* is the oldest Dominican newspaper in circulation, having first printed on August 1, 1889, this thesis considers this media site as both historically and pedagogically significant. Having an established publication history dating back more than 100 years, the assumption is that the newspaper is an adequate representation of mainstream media in the nation and a likely site for articulations that express the ideologies of Dominicanidad.

As Saba mentions in his thesis, “Teresita Martínez-Vergne (1998) ... points to a significant rise in the discourse of discrimination, particularly in newspapers, which commented on the silent invasion of ‘blacks’ into the Dominican Republic. These attacks were directed most notably at Haitians, who are perceived as primitive and culturally inferior — the antithesis of progress and modernization” (Saba 2009, 26), this quote

illustrates preexisting racial attitudes towards Haitians and blackness in newspaper media.

This thesis looks at 45 editorials over a 4-year time span. A Boolean search of the digital archive of *Listin Diario* using the terms: *Negro, Haiti, and Haitiano* was utilized to amass the editorials. Of the 45 editorials, those that appeared to most overtly address the themes of Haitians and blacks in the respective titles were selected. Commencing in 2010 and concluding in 2013, historical developments involving the Republic of Haiti and the Dominican Republic were utilized to frame the focus of analysis. On January 12, 2010, a devastating earthquake in Port-au-Prince, Haiti significantly damaged the national infrastructure of the nation. This thesis begins its analysis with the editorials that depict the Dominico-Haitian relationship and the Dominican response to the natural disaster. Then, on September 23, 2013, the Dominican Constitutional Tribunal rendered verdict TC 0168, a highly controversial verdict that disproportionately affected Haitian migrants and Dominicans of Haitian descent by denying them rights to Dominican national citizenship. A more detailed account of both the earthquake and the verdict will be presented in the following chapter.

As established, the thesis interrogates the rhetoric utilized to depict images of Haitians throughout these major historical events and seeks to engage the pedagogical functions that the rhetoric of the newspaper has on the greater Dominican public. When possible, the thesis looks to identify the relationship that this bracketed period has to the larger ideological construct of Dominicanidad, national identity, and the historically repetitive treatment of the Haitian as Other. To that end, the following analysis will proceed in chronological order, commencing with 2010 and concluding with 2013, with

brief historical prologues that orient significant political, cultural, and social developments regarding Haitians within each subgroup (year) of analysis.

## CHAPTER 4

### REPETITIVE IMAGERY: FINDINGS IN EDITORIALS

#### Repetitive Racial Constructs

Through discourse analysis, this thesis seeks to identify the common themes that emerge from the rhetoric of the editorials of *Listin Diario* in order to illustrate the relationship between rhetoric and its' pedagogical function with regards to teaching and reinforcing ideas of blackness to the general Dominican population. The analysis assumes the ideology of Dominicanidad as the widely accepted construct from which Dominican identity is commonly viewed and therefore holds the contention that the manner in which Haitians are depicted in the media is a reflection of the repetitive practices of omissions of African heritage mentioned in Chapter 2. It is the assertion of the inquiry that the preponderance of the material will seek to depict Haitians in negative ways; thus, this analysis is an attempt to identify these negative depictions clearly and postulate the ramifications they have regarding the learning of race. To that end, the interpretation of the editorials seeks to illustrate how the ideas and images of blackness in the Dominican Republic speak directly to the desired racial composition of Dominicanidad. Racial composition is here used to illustrate the perspective that Dominicans, in short, are not black and in the places where blackness is questioned, they are not *those kinds* of blacks — a negative designation reserved almost explicitly for Haitians because of the tenuous histories of both nations. In fact, because of the commonly shared beliefs in the Dominican Republic that Haitians are treated as one monolithically black people (an issue visited earlier in this thesis), the effort to distance themselves from blackness —

both historically and contemporarily — has become synonymous with distancing Dominican society from Haitians, blackness and, by extension, themselves.

In order to understand the social contexts in which the rhetoric of the editorials evolves, brief historical prologues at the beginning of each yearly subsection will be provided in order to more fully understand the relationship the analysis and interpretation has to the larger concept of Dominicanidad and the pedagogy that is employed through the depictions of Haitians in the editorials themselves.

### **2010: Haitian Earthquake**

Tuesday afternoon January 12, 2010, an earthquake registering 7.0 in magnitude on the Richter scale leveled most of Port-au-Prince, Haiti and extremely debilitated infrastructure nationwide. Much of which still, in 2014, has not fully recuperated. The ground literally opened up and swallowed a city whole and with it further entrenched a nation already embattled with economic calamity. Hospitals, communications systems, and transportation apparatuses (land, sea, and air), were completely paralyzed as a consequence of the earthquake. This chaos invariably resulted in a massive epidemiological crisis, as a massive cholera outbreak ensued due to months of unsanitary living conditions and crippled health care services.

The Dominican Republic was first to respond to the destruction brought forth by the earthquake. In what can be argued as one of the most gracious acts of international support, the Dominican Republic became a significant coordinating area for disaster relief in the immediate months post-disaster.

One might imagine the plight of Haitians as they dealt with these circumstances, their lives violently disrupted by the horrors of this epic collapse. What would follow would be a steady stream of Haitians seeking refuge in the Dominican Republic, estimates projecting several thousand in the months following the earthquake (*New York Daily News* 2010). As that population began to sediment in Dominican society, increased reports of Human Rights violations began to surface leading, inevitably, to investigations by the United Nations regarding poor living conditions of Haitians in the Dominican Republic.<sup>2</sup>

Towards the end of 2010, the Dominican government, concerned about the increasing outbreak of cholera in Haiti, responded to the fear of a spreading epidemic in the Dominican Republic. For decades, Haitians had migrated to the nation, primarily to work in the sugar cane and banana plantations of the Dominican Republic (*Haiti Innovation: Choice, Partnership, Community* 2009). However, as public concerns over the amassing Haitian presence grew, measures to contain the border and limit Haitian entry into the country intensified with policy enacting constitutional changes, restricting citizenship access to children born to migrants declared “in transit” by the Dominican government. The rationale for the Dominican government was to limit the incentives for the Haitian population and therefore stymie immigration.

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that the living conditions of Haitians in the Dominican Republic, historically speaking, have mostly been poor. Many Haitians have congregated in small “shanty-town barracks” known as *bateyes*; located on or near sugar cane plantations (Moya Pons 2010). I found it extremely significant that such mention of Human Rights violations were central to these editorials given this long-standing history of Haitian poverty in the country. In short, these reports (post-earthquake) were more a matter of size and scope and not an intention to suggest that violations began in this period.

On the whole, it is important to understand the significant value historical context bears on racial identity in the Dominican Republic. The Haitian earthquake, and all of the events of the following analysis, has been chosen to demonstrate the racial dimensions in which Dominicans view Haitians. The disaster is not only greatly compounded, then, by the magnitude of destruction of Haiti but also by the racial tensions which Haitians experience in the Dominican Republic as a consequence of ideologies like Dominicanidad. The analysis will be viewed in relation to the pre-existing ideas of race in the Dominican Republic and to illustrate how Dominicans continuously learn about race and blackness.

### **2010: Editorial Analysis and Interpretation**

The data set for 2010 is comprised of 7 editorials in total. The themes that emerge are largely framed as a response to the Haitian earthquake and the movement of Haitians into the Dominican Republic that resulted shortly after. It is important to note, however, that *this* movement of Haitian migrants into the Dominican Republic is uniquely different than those prior. Historically, the majority of Haitians have entered the Dominican Republic primarily for labor reasons and have been doing so since the early 1920s (Moya Pons, 2010). The overwhelming majority of Haitians that arrive in 2010 are seeking humanitarian aid and subsistence, not solely labor.

As a result, the predominant themes that emerge from the rhetoric of the editorials in 2010 are as follows: (1) Commonly shared tragedy for Hispaniola; (2) Dominican responsibility regarding Haitians;” (3) International criticism regarding Human Right’s

violations; and (4) Haitians living in unsanitary conditions more prone — and thus responsible — for the cholera epidemic and its spread to the Dominican Republic.

An analysis of the editorial titles themselves reveals a meta-narrative of the Dominico-Haitian relationship within the context of the period of analysis. Furthermore, it is the assumption that this relationship also exists within a logic of Dominicanidad. In other words, the titles illustrate a rising tension in the existing complicated relationship between the two nations of Haiti and the Dominican Republic; as the presence of Haitians grew in the nation, so too did the language of the titles (and the overall rhetoric) of the editorials become more aggressive.

### *Shared Tragedy*

The editorial written on January 14, 2010, is the first to address the earthquake and also the first to make any mention of Haiti for the year. Titled “*La tragedia es también nuestra,*” (The tragedy is also ours) the rhetoric of a commonly shared tragedy for Hispaniola emerges, fostering images of shared efforts at rebuilding devastated Haiti. However, in addition to the rhetoric stating a commonly shared tragedy, the editorial’s language shifts, quickly, to pronouncements regarding the Dominican Republic having arrived *first* in relief. This particular notion of arriving first, a point that will resurface in the following years, will be used as political currency in efforts by the Dominican government to address the international community. However, these are points that will be addressed in more detail further down the thesis. Nonetheless, this particular editorial spends considerable time mentioning the idea and situating all of the discussions regarding aid as being rendered by the Dominican Republic first.

The context in which this editorial specifically presents the idea of “first-to-arrive” illustrates a racialized logic that persists in Dominican attitudes towards Haitians. It reinforces the beliefs of the Dominican imaginary that providing aid to the Haitian community is something that Dominicans are capable of doing because of their racial superiority. In fact, as will be evidenced through further analysis, Dominicans will castigate the Haitian government for not having been in a position to provide infrastructure and aid for its citizenry.

The following statement further reifies the above stated sentiment, “El país ha sido el primero en responder a la desesperada situación de Haití tras el terremoto” (The nation has been the first to respond to the desperate Haitian situation after the earthquake) (*Listin Diario* 2010), stating openly that the Dominican Republic had arrived first. This statement, alone, seems to be a mere statement of fact. However, when the notion is repeated throughout the editorial, as evidenced in this statement: “... toda la sociedad dominicana ha quedado unida en el proposito de asistir a los desdichados vecinos haitianos...” (All of Dominican society has remained united in the cause/purpose of assisting the unfortunate Haitian neighbors) (*Listin Diario* 2010), again, these comments illustrate an attempt to depict Dominicans as: First, being first to render aid and second, being in a privileged position to be able to do so. These hold a direct relationship to the greater construct of Dominicanidad because the rationale for omitting blackness (in this case portraying Haitians negatively even in disaster) is tied to the idea of progress. In other words, the notion of superiority affords the Dominican to believe that they *should* offer assistance to Haitians out of a paternalistic and benevolent attitude, not necessarily out of neighborly compassion.

The following quote illustrates the idea that help, when offered by the Dominican Republic, should not go unnoticed by the Haitian community: “...adicional al que ya hemos hecho pero nadie nos reconoce...” (Additional to the help we’ve already given but no one recognizes us for it) (*Listin Diario* 2010). To suggest that aid has been offered before *and* gone unnoticed provides the Dominican government a moral “high-ground” from which to castigate the Haitian government and its peoples — both of which will occur in the years to follow and demonstrated in policy decisions.

*Dominican Responsibility, Haitian Accountability*

The rhetoric of the editorials, then, begin to address perceptions of accountability, responsibility, and the obligation to provide aid to the Haitian community. Made evident by the editorial “Nuestra grave responsabilidad,” (Our grave responsibility) printed on January 15, 2010, the language of responsibility has — embedded in it — a degree of moral maturity; in contrast, it also suggests an indictment of ineptitude regarding the Haitian government. As mentioned above, there is an effort apparent in the rhetoric to continuously return to the images of responsibility and superiority, which both feed into the ideas that support Dominicanidad.

The quote, “Es esta una grave responsabilidad para el Gobierno y para todo el pueblo que tiene que asumirla porque los haitianos, lamentablemente, no disponen ni de estructuras ni de un gobierno habilitado y funcional para hacerse cargo de esta inmensa tarea...” (This is a serious responsibility for the Government and to all the people who have to assume it because Haitians, unfortunately, have neither structural nor a functional government nor are they enabled to undertake this huge task ...) (*Listin Diario* 2010).

The language clearly states that the Dominican government must accept the responsibility of aiding Haiti because they lack the capacity to do so. This statement, alone, presents an accurate portrayal of the infrastructural reality of Haiti at the time of the earthquake.

However, when contextualized in a broader frame of historical relations between the two peoples, it illustrates a repetitive judgment on the capacity of the Haitian people — one that illustrates the ineptitude of the Haitian.

While on one hand the rhetoric in this previous editorial illustrates the need for Dominican responsibility regarding Haitians, the editorial, “Es hora de construir,” (It is the time to rebuild) addresses the issue of rebuilding by urging the Haitian government to consider the well being of its victims and directly calling Haitian responsibility and ability into question. The statement, “Sin olvidar a las víctimas de esta terrible tragedia, es hora de que el pueblo haitiano mire hacia delante y con la ayuda de la comunidad internacional inicie el camino de la reconstrucción nacional, *esta vez* sobre cimientos fuertes que permitan a esta castigada nación sentar las bases para alcanzar un mejor futuro” (Without forgetting the victims of this terrible tragedy, it is time that the Haitian people look forward and with the help of the international community start the path of national reconstruction, this time on a strong foundation that will enable this troubled nation lay the groundwork for a better future)(*Listin Diario* 2010).<sup>3</sup>

This passage must be read as an indictment on the Haitian government for not having established a solid foundation to sustain the debilitating blow of the earthquake in the first place. Its language implies partial blame for the Haitian inability to provide for its population on a weakened infrastructure. It also fails to provide any context as to why

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<sup>3</sup> Emphasis added.

or how the infrastructure of Haiti was weakened in the first place, leaving little to no room for a probing of that discussion. In addition, the language presupposes that Haiti can only rebuild with the assistance of international aid, another indictment by Dominican society on Haitian capacity. This editorial positions Haiti as a castigated nation; however, it equally fails to acknowledge the possibility that a natural disaster could also have had similar repercussions in the Dominican Republic regarding its own infrastructure. This rhetoric fits the greater schema of how Dominicans have historically viewed Haitians as backwards and uncivilized.

#### *International Response to Criticism*

As the rhetoric about Haitians begins to intensify, so too does the manner in which the Dominican media begins to respond to international critics regarding the treatment of Haitians in the nation. In direct response to concerns raised by the United Nations, the editorial “¿Y cómo vivían allá?” (And how did they live there?) written June 9, 2010, questions the degree to which the international community understood the context in which Haitians lived in the Dominican Republic. The claim by the U.N., according to the editorial, was that “...la ONU dice que la mayoría de los haitianos que están aquí viven en peores condiciones que el 20 por ciento de los más pobres dominicanos” (...The UN says that the majority of Haitians who are here live in worse conditions than 20 percent of the poorest Dominicans) (*Listin Diario* 2010). The response by the editorial, in short, amounts to a direct contestation of that report. Stating that although extremely poor, Haitians were, by-and-large, better off in Dominican poverty than in Haitian poverty.

Habría que establecer en qué condiciones reales se encontraban tales inmigrantes cuando vivían en Haití, para que el sugerente análisis de la ONU no termine cargándole a República Dominicana la culpa de su pobreza y de lo que se confiera “exclusión” de haitianos de los espacios productivos, de empleo y de salud y vivienda que existen en nuestro país (You would have to establish what actual conditions these immigrants were in when they lived in Haiti, so that the suggestive analysis of the UN does not end by charging to Dominican Republic the blame for their poverty and what confers "exclusion" as granted to Haitians in the productive spaces of, employment, health and housing which exist in our country) (*Listin Diario* 2010).

Stating that Dominicans should not have been held responsible for the impoverished conditions in which Haitians found themselves, Dominicans further claimed that Haitians had not been excluded from participating in “productive spaces of employment and healthcare,” — a statement which presupposes that those are presumably abundant for all living within the Dominican Republic, including Dominicans themselves. Missing in all of these editorials is the perspective of the Haitian migrant or refugee and this omission perpetuates stereotypes of Haitian inferiority by further adhering to preexisting ideas of Dominicanidad.

### *Cholera Epidemic and Public Fear*

By December of 2010, the rhetoric of the editorials articulates a growing concern regarding the prolonged presence of Haitian refugees in the nation. This is an evolution framed by the context of solidarity which began in January with the language of shared relief efforts, then passed through discussions of responsibility and accountability, and then shifted towards the Dominican government’s denial of United Nation’s claims of responsibility regarding human right’s violations. Open challenges to constitutional definitions of citizenship; stresses on the Dominican infrastructure, most especially health

care; and an alarming rise in reported cholera cases will all emerge in 2011 in response to the issues and rhetoric of 2010.

The editorial “Más razones para preocuparse,” (More reasons to worry) written December 21, 2012, explicitly illustrates the public fear regarding the growing cholera outbreak in Haiti. The editorial states, “El estado de alerta en el país debe mantenerse aún con mayor firmeza en la medida en que surgen más condiciones y riesgos para que la epidemia del cólera pudiera propagarse, como ha acontecido en el vecino Haití” (The state-of-alert in the country must be maintained even more firmly given the extent that more increasing conditions and risks to the cholera epidemic could spread arise, as has happened in neighboring Haiti) (*Listin Diario* 2010). These statements, when read through the history of tense relations in Dominico-Haitian history, illustrate the racialized fear and danger regarding Haitians. These ideas have been firmly rooted in the Dominican national consciousness stemming back to the period of occupation, 1822-1844 (Moya Pons 2010) and continue to propagate themselves as the rationale regarding the negative treatment and distancing of Haitians.

What these editorials reinforced in 2010 were made possible by the atmospheric racial tensions that existed in the Dominican Republic because of ideas of racial superiority and erasures of blackness. However, the discussions that emerged about the growing refugee presence in the country would lead, inevitably, to overt xenophobic rhetoric in the year to come — images that would continue to negatively impact how race is learned in the nation.

## 2011: The Cholera Epidemic

As the tensions and xenophobia regarding Haitians living in the Dominican Republic continued to increase in 2011, developments in public and state reactions to the growing Haitian presence are reflected in the editorials. The Dominican government begins a broad sweeping campaign of mass deportations of Haitians. As consequence, human right's groups begin accusations of racial profiling in response to the deportations.<sup>4</sup> However, when contextualized historically, these deportations fit into the broader discourse surrounding the “Haitian dilemma” in the nation. It is the contention of this analysis that the Haitian dilemma be understood as the complicated relationship by which Haitians have been, on the one hand, a significant labor force in the Dominican Republic; while on the other hand, have endured a tenuous racial existence within the Dominico-Haitian relationship. In other words, the dilemma — for Dominican society — has been the balance on how best to allow for an unskilled<sup>5</sup> Haitian labor force to exist while not fully granting social participation in the broader Dominican social, political, and economic sphere.

In 1937, Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina (Dictator of the Dominican Republic between 1930-1961) addressed the Haitian dilemma by ordering the military to massacre Haitians in the Northwest border regions of the nation. Some 20,000 Haitians were

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<sup>4</sup> I should note that the increase in racial profiling to which I am referring is that which noticeably became a part of the public discourse after the earthquake of 2010, most notably in the editorials of *Listin Diario*. Racial profiling has long been a part of the Haitian experience in the Dominican Republic. I wish, here, only to highlight the significance of this moment following the sustainable effort the Dominican Republic made regarding aid to the nation of Haiti and the mass deportations that followed the year after.

<sup>5</sup> I am here primarily referring to menial labor, domestic work, sugar cane and banana plantation work.

massacred as racial and cultural profiling were used as tools by the Trujillo regime to identify who was Haitian and who was Dominican (Moya Pons 2010, Torres-Saillant 1998). This legacy persists in the Dominican imaginary and filters to contemporary perceptions of Haitians. These views, which are further reinforced by notions of Dominicanidad, illustrate how Dominicans address the mass presence of Haitians in the nation in the contemporary setting and are thus present in the analysis of these editorials.

In addition, these mass deportations were greatly rationalized by the sweltering public fear of a cholera outbreak within the Haitian refugee community. By May of 2011, when the Dominican Ministry of Health began reporting more than 1,000 cases of cholera in the Dominican Republic, public fear and blame of Haitians quickly escalated. The surrounding discourse around the outbreak was heavily racialized and conflated as an immigrant threat, due in large part to the negative perception and fear of the Haitian black body (Molina 2006), so readily apparent in the ideologies of Dominicanidad.

### **2011: Editorial Analysis and Interpretation**

The data set for 2011 is comprised of 9 editorials in total. The themes that emerge are shaped by a public response to the large Haitian refugee presence in the Dominican Republic and further intensified by the developing cholera outbreak. As mentioned, these editorials are written in a racially charged atmosphere where ideas of racial “other-ization” and fear of Haitians feed into a broader historical context that reifies Dominicanidad and continuously perpetuates negative stereotypes of blackness.

Within this context, 2011 will focus on the following primary themes as they emerged in the editorials. They are as follows: (1) Continued allegations of Human

Right's violations; (2) Public safety; (3) Criminalization of Haitians in the nation; and (4) Haitians in the labor force.

### *Continual Human Right's Violations*

The editorial "Ahorita nos dan la pela," (Sooner or later they'll give us the spanking) written on January 8, 2011, revisits the responses to allegations of human right's violations from the previous year and reasserts a language of denial and a continued lack of accountability regarding Haitians in the nation. The editorial states, "Este pronunciamiento de Amnistía Internacional va a crear la sensación, en el mundo, de que estamos echando inmisericordemente a los haitianos al infierno, lo que sería una insensata distorsión de la realidad misma en perjuicio de nuestro país" (Amnesty International's statement is going to create the sensation [perception], in the world, that we are mercilessly throwing Haitians to hell, which would be a senseless distortion of reality itself to the detriment and judgment of our country) (*Listin Diario* 2011) This language situates the Dominican government as a targeted nation by Amnesty International and states that their views may have negative consequences on perspectives of the Dominican Republic in the broader international community.

As the editorial itself suggests, the charges by Amnesty International specifically dealt with racial profiling and mass deportations. However, it is the estimation of this analysis that these claims, regardless of the denial apparent in the editorials, are hardly contestable. This is further strengthened by the political climate that resulted in constitutional challenges to citizenship and birthright mentioned in the analysis of 2010. In other words, these editorials suggest a lack of accountability regarding the living

conditions and overall treatment of Haitians — notions of which are heavily engrained in the Dominican imaginary and rationalized through the atmospheric fear of Haitians and blackness. Furthermore, it fails to address and contextualize the living conditions in which Haitians and Haitian refugees live in the Dominican Republic.

In addition, the language in the editorial further states the degrees to which the Dominican Republic has gone to provide assistance to their Haitian neighbor. The following quote illustrates the dominant view of the editorial in stating that:

En verdad, más de lo que se ha hecho por Haití no puede exigírsele a República Dominicana. En estos días, centenares de haitianos han huido a su país o se han mudado a otras zonas del nuestro para escapar a las amenazas de agresión por parte de vecinos inconformes. Pero millares han entrado ilegalmente, mientras nos hemos hecho de la vista gorda sólo para no aparecer como crueles e inhumanos tras el terremoto. (In truth, more than what has [already] been done for Haiti cannot be required of the Dominican Republic. These days, hundreds of Haitians have fled their country or have moved to other areas of ours to escape the threat of aggression by unhappy neighbors. But thousands have entered illegally, while we have turned a blind eye [simply] to not appear as cruel and inhuman after the earthquake) (*Listin Diario* 2011).

Here the editorial begins to assert an undertone language of utilizing the aid rendered as both a rationale for denying accountability regarding human rights violations and using this language as political capital with regard to outward perceptions in the international community.

*Public Safety*

Focusing on the increasing cholera epidemic in the Dominican Republic, the coverage ultimately crescendoed in the overt criminalization of Haitians.<sup>6</sup> The editorial “Una voz de alerta” (A voice of alert), written January 13, 2011, illustrates the rising awareness and use of Haitian xenophobic sentiments fomenting in the Dominican public.

The following quote,

Se está incubando, en esa actitud, lo que pudiera considerarse como un sentimiento de xenofobia antihaitiana que puede traer serias e imprevisibles consecuencias si la sociedad, alarmada y alertada por esto, no reacciona a tiempo (It is incubating, in attitude, what could be considered as a feeling of anti-Haitian xenophobia that can have serious and unpredictable consequences if society, alarmed and alerted by this, does not react in time) (*Listin Diario* 2011).

Although this editorial illustrates the rise of xenophobic attitudes in the Dominican Republic, it stops short of contextualizing how these xenophobic attitudes are connected to the larger discourse on Dominicanidad. It is not the expectation of the analysis to require a historicized account in an editorial; however, the omission of the Haitian perspective fails to educate the greater public on the intent of the rhetoric in this editorial. In other words, if this editorial is a cautionary message, without providing a broader context detached from stereotypes, it fails to break away from the common assumptions of the Haitian community. At best, as will be demonstrated below, this editorial provides a context in which Haitians were present in the nation prior to the earthquake. However, the language is problematic because it reifies the preexisting negative stereotypes about Haitians.

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<sup>6</sup> Again, I am here referring to the criminalization of Haitians in direct reference to these editorials. It is my personal contention that Haitians have been criminalized for a far greater period than what the editorial analysis denotes.

The editorial states, “Hasta hace pocos años, los haitianos tenían aquí una presencia discreta, no se metían en líos y parecían constituir una comunidad muy consagrada al trabajo” (Until recently, Haitians had a discrete presence here, they did not get into trouble and seemed to be a community very dedicated work)(*Listin Diario* 2011). Although the editorial does provide some background knowledge on the Haitian community in the Dominican Republic, it does so by ascribing to racist ideas of Haitians as workers, mainly. The images provided depict the Haitian as a quiet, hard working member of Dominican society. However, the depiction is further amplified in contradistinction to the growing Haitian refugee community which, given the language of the editorials, is to be feared and consequently criminalized.

### *Criminalization*

The above mentioned editorial, “Una voz de alerta” (A voice of alert), also thematically carries into the rhetoric of criminalization. As the above mentioned section on public safety expressed concerns about the context in which these editorials illustrated the evolution of the Haitian community — having depicted the Haitian community as hard working and law abiding, the following statement illustrates the depiction of the emerging criminal element: “De un tiempo acá las cosas han cambiado. Ahora, según la Policía, aparecen más haitianos involucrados en actos de violencia, en homicidios, atracos o reyertas entre ellos mismos o con dominicanos” (For some time here things have changed. Now, according to police, most Haitians involved in acts of violence appear in homicides, robberies or fights among themselves or with Dominicans) (*Listin Diario* 2011). This language reifies the existing dichotomy between Haitians and

Dominicans. By criminalizing the community, Haitians only exist in the Dominican imaginary as: hard workers, refugees fleeing from a weakened nation, or criminals — all notions feeding into a larger framing of blackness and Haitians as backwards and uncivilized. These images and stereotypes give license to the ideas of Dominicanidad.

However, as the rhetoric of criminalization increases, so too does the public response increase by demonstrating threats of violence against the Haitian community. The editorial “¿Brigadas armadas?” (Armed brigades?), written January 27, 2011, speaks directly to the bands of Dominican citizens who have organized themselves into armed vigilante brigades patrolling the border with Haiti. The editorial speaks of Northwestern border towns taking to arms because of the pronounced cultural differences between them and Haitians. The quote,

La primera señal la dieron las juntas de vecinos de esa provincia y de otras ciudades al emitir ultimatus a los haitianos ilegales para que salgan de sus barrios, acusados de practicar costumbres de vida que no compatibilizan con las suyas y, además, de ser potenciales agentes de contagio del cólera. (The first sign was given by the neighborhood associations of the province and other cities to issue ultimatums to illegal Haitians to leave their neighborhoods, accused of practicing habits and different lifestyles incompatible with theirs and that would also be potential contagion agents of cholera) (*Listin Diario* 2011).

The confluence of Haitians as being both criminalized and unhealthy are collapsed, thus revealing the phenomenological connection between these discourses and illustrating the continued isolation and other-izing of the Haitian body in the Dominican imaginary. Wherever Haitians are in Dominican society, they are consistently *read* as unapproachable for the varying reasons illustrated in these editorials — unhealthy, criminal, manipulative, and so on.

The editorial “El control de los ilegales por la frontera” (The control of the illegals by the border), written May 25, 2011, contributes to the discourse of policing criminal Haitian bodies in the Dominican Republic and especially so along the geopolitical border. The Dominican government announces a campaign to better monitor the border, as illustrated by the following quote, “El gobierno anuncia que, dentro de dos semanas, estará funcionando un sistema que le permitirá saber qué extranjeros entran o salen del país por algunos de los puntos fronterizos” (The government announced that within two weeks, it will be running a system that will allow them to know which foreigners enter or leave the country from some of the border points) (*Listin Diario* 2011). Although these previous editorials specifically deal with the geopolitical border, all of these editorials have addressed the notion of policing the Haitian presence in the Dominican Republic. The racial tensions in the Dominico-Haitian relationship make it difficult for Haitians to navigate society without fear of reproach, xenophobia, and violence to the extent that these Haitians have limited mobility. What makes these editorials significant is the addition of policing the geopolitical border; however, it is the contention of this analysis to state that Haitians are policed in a far greater sense.

### *Haitian Labor*

The editorial ““Guachimanes”<sup>7</sup> haitianos” (Haitian watchmen), written July 8, 2011, addresses the confluence of Haitian labor, undocumented resident status, and the mistrust (read criminalization) of Haitians in certain industries. As these editorials have

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<sup>7</sup> The term “guachiman” (pronounced “watchy man”) is a colloquial, and often pejorative, term derived from vernacular slang which mimics the English term “watch man;” otherwise interpreted as a security man.

illustrated multiple ways in which Haitians have been depicted and policed, the Dominican imaginary has constructed an otherwise *acceptable* Haitian which is trusted, hard working, and capable of specific labor — the direct antithesis of the persona depicted in these editorials. However, as the following quote illustrates, stepping outside of that construct leads to problematic views about the Haitian's ability to be trusted:

Lo inexplicable es que se hayan contratado a personas sobre las cuales se desconoce su auténtica identidad, sus antecedentes, o sus reales capacidades psicológicas y profesionales para darles una escopeta o cualquier otro tipo de arma y confiarles el cuidado de inmuebles u otras propiedades privadas. (The inexplicable is that they have hired people whom they cannot verify their true identity, their background, or their real psychological and professional skills in order to then give them a shotgun or any other weapon and entrust the care of privately owned properties) (*Listin Diario* 2011).

Part of the idea of Dominicanidad is that it serves the greater function of separating the working classes from the privileged. In this sense, then, Dominicanidad operates as an internal filtering system for the designations of classes in Dominican society. However, what these examples in these editorials illustrate are that the group of people in the Dominican Republic that are most prone to being placed into the lowest socio-economic strata are Haitians. That strata further strengthens the negative stereotypes of blackness and Haitians and pedagogically perpetuates the cycle of learning about this group of people.

## **2012: Rebuilding the International Dominican Image**

Although the beginning of 2012 is marked by a continued discussion of migrant labor, as the year progresses the Dominican Presidential election monopolizes the majority of media coverage. In this context, the election period is partially filled by the

rhetoric of rebuilding the international image of the Dominican Republic. One of the most significant agenda items in this process of rebuilding deals with particular regard to the treatment of Haitians in the nation and the allegations of human right's groups levied against them, familiar tropes present in the previous analyses.

However, while on the one hand the Dominican government is focused on the transition of political power; on the other hand it is facing issues of political corruption and voting fraud.

### **2012: Editorial Analysis and Interpretation**

The data set for 2012 is comprised of 3 editorials in total, making it the smallest subset of data from 2010-2013. The themes that emerge relate to the political climate of the Presidential election and seek to depict a renewed relationship with Haiti and a more human treatment of Haitians in the Dominican Republic. However, it is the contention of this thesis that the motives of the Dominican government be challenged and critiqued within the broader historical context of the Dominico-Haitian relationship, where relations with the neighboring country have been either tenuous or minimal. In a year where labor, immigration, continued refugee aid, and international relations are central to the political platform of the election, it is conceivable that the perpetuation of positive Haitian relations carries a more politicized dynamic than previous years in large part as campaign rhetoric. As a result, the analysis of 2012 will focus on the following themes: (1) Rebuilding positive international image and (2) The Dominico-Haitian relationship at a positive moment.

### *Efforts to Rebuild*

The editorial “Una gran donación para Haití” (A grand donation for Haiti), written January 11, 2012, concentrates on the theme of continued disaster relief for the Haitian community. Specifically centered around the two-year commemoration of the earthquake, the editorial states, “Desde que el terremoto destruyó Puerto Príncipe hará mañana dos años, la República Dominicana no se ha apartado ni un minuto del auxilio, la asistencia y la cooperación ilimitada a su vecino, para rescatarlo de sus honduras” (Since the earthquake destroyed Port-au-Prince two years ago tomorrow morning, the Dominican Republic has not departed for even a minute from relief, assistance and unlimited cooperation to its neighbor, to rescue them from their difficulty) (*Listin Diario* 2012). The language, here, illustrates a return to a narrative articulated earlier in the analysis of 2010, which relied heavily on the rhetoric of the Dominican Republic arriving first to assist with the efforts of humanitarian aid. However, while the language in 2010 was about the Dominican Republic being first-responders, the language of 2012 revisits the idea by asserting the consistency in which it has rendered aid over the two-year period. Interestingly enough, the language used and the ideas suggested serve dual purposes. On the one hand, the Dominican government can be viewed as a consistent supporter of the Haitian people and their needs in rebuilding. However, on the other hand, the idea of consistent assistance feeds the greater ideology of racial superiority and Dominicanidad by flaming the paternalistic narrative of prolonged help. In other words, this editorial addresses both the cumulative impact of aid rendered over the two-year period and uses the history of aid as political cache in the larger international community;

while simultaneously adhering to a paradigm of racial dominance on behalf of the Dominican people.

Also, the editorial positions the Dominican government as an exemplar nation with regards to its assistance. The following quote states, “En la medida en que los dominicanos asistieron a los haitianos en sus horas terribles, entonces y hasta hoy, en ese grado enaltecen el valor de la ayuda humanitaria, como un ejemplo para todas las naciones del mundo” (To the extent that Dominicans assisted Haitians in their terrible hours, from then until today, to that degree extol the value of humanitarian aid, as an example to all nations of the world) (*Listin Diario* 2012). The idea of help, again, furthers the degree to which the Dominican Republic has tried to escape allegations of human right’s violations.

#### *Dominico-Haitian Relationship, Renewed*

The editorial “Haití y RD, en su mejor momento” (Haiti and the Dominican Republic, in their best moment), uses the trope of cooperation to strengthen the narrative of rebuilding the international image. The following quote illustrates how the editorial frames the Dominico-Haitian relationship as one of “non-friction” stated as, “La cooperación se ha intensificado desde la tragedia del 12 de enero del 2010, alcanzando niveles nunca antes vistas. No hay campos de fricción, ni tampoco frialdad” (Cooperation has intensified since the tragedy of January 12, 2010, reaching levels never seen before. No fields of friction, nor coldness [exist]) (*Listin Diario* 2012). As mentioned above, the discourse regarding the political and socio-cultural relationships between Haiti and the Dominican Republic have been framed by tenuous factors from the beginning of the two

republics. That this editorial states that this relationship is at an all-time high breaks from history. It is exceedingly important, then, to frame this discussion within the political environment in which it was written and consider the broader political impacts on the Dominican government. This thesis holds the contention that Haitians were not viewed differently than at any other period in the history of the interactions of both nations.

### **2013: Dominican Citizenship Challenged**

On September, 23, 2013, the Dominican Constitutional Tribunal rendered verdict TC 0168-13, which addressed the case of Juliana Deguis Pierre and the denial of her right to a Dominican birth certificate. Ms. Deguis Pierre was born in the town of Yamasa, Monte Plata (a town located in the Southeastern region of Hispaniola not far from the capital city of Santo, Domingo) to a Haitian father and a Haitian mother who had emigrated and settled in the Dominican Republic long before Ms. Deguis Pierre was born in 1984 (*Le Nouvelliste* 2013).

In 2008 she had been denied her acquisition of a national identification card (otherwise known as a *cédula*) because her birth certificate was called into question on account of having been black and having had a creole surname. As Ms. Deguis Pierre appealed this denial, her case was inevitably heard by the Constitutional Tribunal, which invariably upheld the initial denial. As a result, the Constitutional Tribunal retroactively applied the findings of Ms. Deguis Pierre's case to other persons — who fit her similar

profile — in the national birth registry dating back to 1929.<sup>8</sup> The verdict, then, impacted approximately 200,000 Haitian migrants and Dominicans of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic.

To date, the case of Ms. Deguis Pierre has become a symbol for the struggle for Dominican citizenship and the fight against the mistreatment of Haitians in the Dominican Republic. This specific moment in the historical Dominico-Haitian relationship is central to the discourses of racial superiority, denials of blackness in the Dominican Republic, and the greater perpetuation of the ideological constructs of Dominicanidad because the international community openly questions the xenophobic logic of the verdict and thus forces the Dominican Republic to clarify its position.

### **2013: Editorial Analysis and Interpretation**

The data set for 2013 is comprised of 26 editorials in total, making it the largest subset of data from 2010-2013. Coming directly after a Dominican Presidential election, the themes that emerge in 2013 deal with the Haitian presence in the Dominican Republic more explicitly and aggressively than the previous 3 years. This final analysis illustrates how the burgeoning xenophobic pressures against the Haitian community in the nation comes to an explosive halt with the verdict of the Constitutional Tribunal.

The ideas of national identity, citizenship, and Dominicanidad are all present in the rhetoric of the editorials. As a consequence, the analysis focuses on the following

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<sup>8</sup> Most of the literature covering the verdict does not clearly clarify the significance of 1929. However, it is my assertion that the year is used to predate the Trujillo dictatorship which began in 1930.

major themes: (1) Undocumented Haitians; (2) Discrimination against Haitians denied; and (3) the Justification for treatment of Haitians.

### *Undocumented Haitians*

The editorial “Inadmisible presión de los haitianos” (Inadmissible pressure from the Haitians), written January 10 2013, addresses the intensified pressure growing over the public’s concerns of the undocumented Haitian population. The quote, “Ha cobrado un matiz preocupante el conflicto generado por la inadmissible pretensión de indocumentados haitianos de entrar al país sin cumplir los requisitos del visado oficial dominicano” (A degree of concern shades the conflict generated by the inadmissible pretension of undocumented Haitians entering the country without complying with the Dominican official visa) (*Listin Diario 2013*) illustrates how the concerns regarding the Haitian presence in the nation is being addressed along the rhetoric of legal citizenship. This language is significant because it is also framed in the larger context of continued allegations of human right’s abuses, many of them dealing with the treatment of undocumented Haitians.

The editorial also states that, “Como es obvio, al amparo de la ley nacional, las autoridades no permiten el paso de eso miles de haitianos, y no pueden hacerlo, pura y simplemente, porque de lo contrario relajarían uno de los fundamentos del Estado soberano y de las normas vigentes en el ordenamiento internacional” (Obviously, under national law, the authorities did not allow the passage of those thousands of Haitians, and can not, quite simply, because otherwise it would relax one of the foundations of the sovereign state and the rules in the international order) (*Listin Diario 2013*). The

language of the editorial illustrates the attempt by the Dominican government to shift the responsibility for the undocumented Haitian population onto those Haitians, by requiring them to adhere to legal procedures of entry. Moreover, it equally shifts the degree of accountability by the Dominican government by equating this dynamic as synonymous with the rights of the Sovereign State. In other words, the Dominican Republic, as a sovereign nation, is merely exercising its legal right to police its border.

In the editorial “La ley por encima de todo” (The law above all), further illustrates the language used by the editorial to shift accountability regarding immigration issues towards Haitians. The following quote describes the issues several Haitian workers experienced in returning back to the Dominican Republic and the difficulties experienced, “De haberse acogido al plan de Migración, cuya preparación tiene ya varios meses, los trabajadores haitianos no hubieran tenido ningún problema para ingresar al país y estarían desarrollando ahora sus actividades normalmente” (Had Haitians followed the plans of immigration, whose preparation has been under way for a few months, the Haitian workers would not have had any problems entering the country and would now return to developing their activities normally) (*Listin Diario* 2013). This shift, then, further reifies the idea that Haitians are incapable of following the requisite steps for legal admittance into the Dominican Republic. This rhetoric echoes the preexisting ideas of Haitians as: first, backwards and uncivilized; and second, as a criminal population that does not follow the legal practices of Dominican society. These ideas give license to the further negative treatment of the Haitian population.

The following editorial, “Que no nos metan esas presiones” (Do not put those pressures on us) written January 21, 2013, explicitly addresses the burdens the Haitian

immigrant population has placed on the Dominican health care infrastructure. The following quote, “Los haitianos, esten o no indocumentados, reciben atenciones gratuitas de salud en los hospitales y clínicas del país, un privilegio que no tienen los mismos dominicanos” (Haitians, whether documented or undocumented, receive free health benefits of hospitals and clinics in the country, a privilege that not even Dominicans have) (*Listin Diario* 2013), illustrates the clear demarcation between “us and them” present in the language of the editorial. The persistent attempt at drawing clear distinctions between the Haitian population and the Dominican population continue to aggregate, this particular case in the discourse regarding health care. Also, it is contextually important to note that while in 2010 the Dominican government was asserting itself as an exemplar of humanitarian aid for the Haitian community and again visited in 2012, in this editorial it takes the position that Haitians have become abusive of the system. These depictions further the wedge of difference in the Dominico-Haitian relationship.

Furthermore, the editorial states that the relationship of aid is not equally reciprocated by the Haitian government regarding its own citizenry. The editorial posits that the great incentive for Haitian women (in particular) to illegally enter the Dominican Republic and birth their children is the receipt of Dominican citizenship and the benefits afforded by such. However, the editorial also states that these Haitian women would not receive equal medical treatment in Haiti and that they do not contribute to Dominican social security: “Con los haitianos, en cambio, no pasa lo mismo. De Haití traen a parturientas y estas dan a luz sin pagar un centavo. No se les niega la asistencia, ni se les exige carne de la seguridad social. Es una atención humanitaria, porque aquí sabemos que

Haití no dispone de la infraestructura adecuada y amplia para dar esos servicios” (With Haitians, however, this is not so. From Haiti these women are brought in labor to give birth without paying a penny. They are not denied assistance nor do they contribute to [Dominican] social security. It is a humanitarian attention, because here we know that Haiti does not have adequate and comprehensive infrastructure to provide these services) (*Listin Diario* 2013).

The language used to depict the Haitian population in the Dominican republic is heavily infused with the rhetoric illustrated by the above-mentioned editorials. It is the contention of this analysis, that these ideas fall in compliance with the broader historical relationship of the two nations; that these depictions are exceedingly negative in nature; and that they help further reify the idea of *us-versus-them*, an idea necessary for the ideology of Dominicanidad to maintain its integrity.

### *Discrimination Denied*

The editorial “¿Discriminados?” (Discriminated?), written October 10, 2013, is the first to mention the verdict directly. Because of the immediate international criticism of the ruling, the language of this editorial addresses the central claims of discrimination levied against the Dominican Republic. It states that, “En el debate suscitado por la sentencia del Tribunal Constitucional sobre la nacionalidad, los opositores argumentan que este fallo viene a acentuar el estado de ‘discriminación’ que supuestamente se ejerce contra los haitianos que se encuentran en el país” (In the debate engendered by the Constitutional Court on nationality, opponents argue that this ruling is to accentuate the status of 'discrimination' allegedly perpetrated against Haitians who are in our country)

(*Listin Diario* 2013). This language is consistent with previous attempts by the Dominican government to shift accountability regarding the negative treatment of Haitians. However, by outright denying the existence of discrimination this language feeds into the greater discourse on the other-ization of the Haitian. Due to the prevailing view of Haitians, and the commonly shared belief of the backwardness of Haitians, the acts of discrimination are often filtered through the rhetoric of national identity. In other words, the Dominican Republic has seldom viewed discriminatory acts against Haitians as much more than nationalism and the sovereign right of the nation to secure its borders from foreigners.

The editorial also says that, “Si de veras la ‘discriminación’ fuera tan generalizada, ¿como se explica que el 65.5 por ciento de los 458 mil 233 haitianos registrados en la Primera Encuesta Nacional de Inmigrantes haya podido insertarse en la sociedad con trabajos remunerados en la agricultura (35.7%), en la construcción (25.9%), en el comercio (16.5%) y en otros servicios (10.4%)?”(If indeed the "discrimination" was so widespread, how is it that 65.5 percent of 458,000,233 Haitians registered in the First National Immigrant Survey have been inserted into society with gainful employment in agriculture (35.7%), work in construction (25.9%), trade (16.5%) and other services (10.4%)?) (*Listin Diario* 2013), openly challenging the validity of discrimination by utilizing survey data to strengthen the claim to Haitian equity in the work force. This analysis contends that these numbers skew the greater picture regarding the Haitian experience in the Dominican Republic. For the hundreds of thousands registered with this data bank, how many of them can claim full and equitable access to all parts of Dominican society? Furthermore, how many of these Haitians have been affected by the

verdict of the Constitutional Tribunal? Although these numbers tote a degree of inclusion into Dominican society (or at least the labor force), the broader historical context of the Dominico-Haitian relationship suggests that Haitians have limited access to the rights of Dominican society.

The editorial “El ‘entorno hostil’ contra los inmigrantes ilegales” (The “hostile environment” against the illegal immigrants), written October 29, 2013, uses language that compares the Dominican Republic’s immigration laws to the harsh laws of both the United Kingdom and the United States and attempts to distance the rhetoric of the nation as nuanced and different from the other two. The following quote illustrates the perceived difference in the Dominican approach toward immigration, “Aquí, en cambio, el Tribunal Constitucional adopta una histórica y relevante sentencia para robustecer las premisas de la nacionalidad, y en lugar de endurecer los requisitos, ha ordenado la apertura de un proceso para ‘regularizer’ a los ‘sin papeles,’ no importa si son haitianos o de otra nacionalidad” (Here, however, the Constitutional Court adopts a historical and significant judgment for strengthening the premises of nationality, and instead tightens the requirements, ordering the opening of a process to ‘regularize’ the ‘without papers’ no matter if they are Haitian or of another nationality) (*Listin Diario* 2013). Nonetheless, the Dominican government fails to acknowledge the impact the verdict has had on hundreds of thousands of Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent. Moreover, this rhetoric supports the continued effort to both suppress the overt discrimination of Haitians in Dominican society and to delegitimize continued claims of human right’s violations by the international community.

### *Continued Negative Treatment*

The editorial “¿Y adónde fue a parar la solidaridad?” (And where did the solidarity end?), written November 19, 2013, directly challenges the international community — especially CARICOM<sup>9</sup> — and asserts that these nations should focus on the treatment of Haitians in their respective territories. The following quote illustrates the language of the editorial and the attempt to switch the discussion away from the Dominican government and recenter elsewhere:

Más de una semana llevan las protestas callejeras diarias, pero el Presidente y su Primer Ministro parecen estar más ocupados en meter cuñas dentro del Caricom para castigar a República Dominicana porque su Tribunal Constitucional, en uso de sus potestades, emitió una sentencia que ratifica las reglas para adquirir la ciudadanía dominicana, que en atender las quejas de un pueblo hambreado y desesperanzado. (More than a week of daily street protests, the President and the Prime Minister seem more concerned with scoring wedges within CARICOM that punish the Dominican Republic because the Constitutional Tribunal, in exercise of its powers, issued a judgment affirming the rules to acquire Dominican citizenship, which address the grievances of a people starved and hopeless) (*Listin Diario* 2013).

Furthermore, this editorials attempts at changing the context to how Haitians live in other nations does very little in addressing the continued violations levied against the nation regarding the conditions in which Haitians live in the Dominican Republic. The following quote states, Pradójicamente, desde allí han promovido una campaña para decir que es República Dominicana la que intenta pisotear los derechos humanos de los haitianos que viven aquí ilegalmente, mientras que los derechos de los que viven en su propio territorio les importa un comino. (Paradoxically speaking, from there they have

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<sup>9</sup> The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is an international bloc of organizations; comprised of 15 Caribbean nation-states aligned economically. In November of 2013 CARICOM decided to suspend considerations for the Dominican Republic’s full admittance based on the controversial ruling of the Constitutional Tribunal. As it stands, the Dominican Republic is not a full member.

initiated a campaign to say that the Dominican Republic is trying to trample on human rights of Haitians living here illegally, while the could care less about rights of those living in their own territory) (*Listin Diario* 2013). This language asserts a logic of Dominican exceptionalism in that it serves the function of shifting accountability for the treatment of Haitians in the nation away from the historically tenuous context of the two peoples.

### **Summary**

What this collection of editorials has illustrated has been a consistency in the negative depiction of Haitians in Dominican society. These newspaper editorials played an educational role as they shaped ideologies, values, attitudes and opinions among readers. Of the 45 total editorials, based on their titles and content the overwhelming majority of them were negative; 30 of the 45 editorials fell into the explicitly negative category, while only 5 editorials used language that would be categorized as neutral, leaving only 10 editorials that depicted Haitians and blackness in a mostly positive manner. Consequently, 2013 (the year of the Constitutional Tribunal) saw the densest concentration of negative depictions in the editorials while 2012 (the Dominican Presidential election) saw the lowest concentration (zero to be exact). The year 2010 saw the highest concentration of mostly positive language regarding Haitians and as indicated above, all of these fluctuations are directly correlated to the social, political, and cultural events as described in the analysis.

Although the data was specifically analyzed and interpreted in ways that illustrated the emerging themes of each year, only those editorials that most directly

illustrated these themes were expressly quoted. Nonetheless, the majority of the language utilized to discuss Haitians in the editorials, did so in ways that related to the larger meta-history shared between the two nations, as evidenced earlier in the literature review of Chapter 2.

To that end, there emerged a relationship between these depictions and the ideological constructs of Dominicanidad. As this frame is primarily concerned with the Dominican national identity that is predicated on the European and indigenous heritages, the other-ization and negative portrayal of the Haitian evidenced by the editorials feeds directly into the greater aim of solidifying the Hispanic identity and erasing the black one. This is the relationship that the depictions in these editorials have to the pedagogy of race in the Dominican Republic. It is the contention of this thesis that these ideas about Haitians reflected the broader complicated Dominico-Haitian relationship and aimed to further perpetuate negative stereotypes about blackness. In addition, what went completely absent from the language and rhetoric used in the editorials was any mention (comparatively or relationally) of the immigrant experiences of Dominicans and in particular the immigrant experience of Dominicans in the United States. Had that self-awareness been present in the rhetoric of *Listin Diario* — indeed in the greater Dominican imaginary — then it might have greatly influenced the language used to depict the immigrant experience of Haitians in the Dominican Republic. These silences further condition the possibility for the persistence of negative stereotypes regarding Haitians.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **"THE WORST THING YOU CAN CALL A DOMINICAN IS HAITIAN":**

#### **CONCLUSIONS, REDEFINITIONS, AND FURTHER STUDY**

##### **Summary**

In summation, this thesis has focused on the specific period of time in between the Haitian earthquake of 2010 and the verdict of the Dominican Constitutional Tribunal of 2013. However, given the expansive history between the two nations, this brief 3-year period could not have addressed the full complexity of the Dominico-Haitian relationship. Nonetheless, the thesis sought to capture the essence of the larger relationship and its repetitive nature. At the center of the analysis regarding the Constitutional Tribunal was the discussion of the process of naturalization and citizenship rights in the Dominican Republic. Implied in the rhetoric and language of the editorials was the discussion about how Haitians become Dominicans — or rather how they have been barred access from becoming Dominican. As the naturalization protocol stands, there are essentially two different pathways for becoming a citizen.

The first pathway requires a legalized birth certificate to initiate the process whereby the resident must go through several federal offices in order to secure a valid document. This process involves visiting the following offices: First, “La Oficina de la Procuraduría,” then the “Secretaria de Estado de Relaciones Exteriores de Legalizaciones,” next “La Junta Central Electoral,” and last the “Departamento de Jurídica.” This is a lengthy process that involves processing fees along the way. Ultimately once the birth certificate has been officially recognized the resident must then proceed by acquiring a federally sanctioned identification card (cédula). This is the

second pathway, however without a valid birth certificate a resident must first go through the process mentioned above.

Because of the many bureaucracies involved, the process can take a considerable period of time – sometimes lasting several months to a year. This is the same process Ms. Juliana Deguis Pierre attempted to undergo and was met with resistance in the “legalization” of her birth certificate, which should have been recognized as valid on account of her having been born on Dominican soil.

As a whole, the analysis of the editorials examined the rhetoric of *Listin Diario* and the emergence of themes which were consistent, often repetitive, and apparent. The following are most indicative of the dominant themes: the idea of Haitians as criminal and as unhealthy black bodies, carriers of infectious diseases; the racially superior views of Dominicans offering prolonged aid to the rebuilding of Haiti; the notion that Haitians take advantage of Dominican generosity; the idea of an ongoing manipulation by Haitians of Dominican health care; the notion that Haitians are backwards and radically different in culture; the continued denial of discriminatory practices towards Haitians and the lack of accountability on behalf of the Dominican government regarding the treatment of Haitians. All of these negative portrayals contributed to the manner in which Haitians were depicted in the editorials over this period of analysis and all of them were repetitive.

### **Black Erasures and Muted Histories**

This thesis has illustrated how the repetition of negative imagery, and the ideas that result from them, perpetuates stereotypes that *produce* the attitudes Dominicans have about and towards Haitians. Without ever taking the Haitian perspective into account, as

voluminous and complex as that is, the language and rhetoric of the print media of *Listin Diario* has on the one hand taught Dominicans about Haitians and on the other hand reinforced ideas about what Dominicans are in contradistinction. As has been mentioned throughout the thesis, the resulting dissonance that emerges from this pedagogical practice of teaching and reinforcing feeds directly into the larger ideological framework of Dominicanidad.

The project of Dominicanidad is one of complete erasure. In fact, it is a continuation of the larger project of Western Civilization as political scientist Cedric Robinson, author of *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, challenges us to think about. If we consider Robinson's viewpoint on the emergence of the Black Radical Tradition:

The Black Radical Tradition was an accretion, over generations, of collective intelligence gathered from struggle. In the daily encounters and petty resistances to domination, slaves had acquired a sense of the calculus of oppression as well as its overt organization and instrumentation. These experiences lent themselves to a means of preparation for more epic resistance movements. The first organized revolts in the slave castles of Africa, and on board slave ships, were generally communal in the terms of their Old World kinships (Bambara, Ganga, Yoruba, etc.). These rebellions sought return to African homelands and a repair of the discontinuity produced by enslavement and transportation. Later, in the colonial settlements, when conditions were favorable, revolts often took the form of marronage, a concession to the relocation of slavery and to the new, syncretic cultural identities emergent from the social cauldron of slave organization (Robinson 2000, xxx-xxxii).

The focus shifts to the notion of "discontinuity" that was produced by these forced movements and denied freedoms of African peoples (both Old World and New) lending itself, as Robinson would contend, to the potentially new and invigorated way of readdressing Dominicanidad as a discontinuity of sorts.

There have been negative consequences of erased histories in the duplicitous narratives of the Americas, much like the ideological function of Dominicanidad; the intentional denial, erasure, and omission of African contributions to history (at large) have been present throughout all of the African diaspora — in this sense making the Dominican Republic the rule and not the exception. Nowhere has there been a full embrace of the African past except, of course, for the history of Haiti.

Haiti is one of the most significant narratives in human history. Its story of insurrection honors it with the distinction of being the only successful slave revolt in human history. Within the greater African diaspora Haiti is considered a great source of inspiration. It is the single greatest physical manifestation of freedom from slavery — an entirely free black nation, won at the hands of former slaves. So, in many senses Haiti is metaphorically symbolic of hope. However, in the “cradle of blackness,” how Silvio Torres-Saillant refers to the island of Hispaniola, how does the Dominican psychologically account for the symbolism of Haiti? Can they?

First, and foremost, the Dominican Republic would have to situate itself culturally within the context of the African diaspora. However, the majority of the literature regarding the topic suggests that the nation sees itself situated in a Hispanic context (the roots of ideological Dominicanidad) and not an African one. For the Dominican Republic to begin to address its relationship to the African diaspora it would have to explore what it means to be a non-white nation (which the Dominican Republic clearly is) and share the same geographical space with the only group of people that have ever triumphed over enslavement. The historical trend of Dominican historiography suggests that this may be too daunting and problematic an undertaking. In other words, the investment that

Dominicanidad has in distancing itself from African heritage is more than likely rooted in the fear of embracing the massive responsibility of challenging the dominance of hegemonic historical narratives of Western Civilization, which in themselves are anti-black. However, to the credit of popular music, there have been attempts to address the redefinition of Dominicanidad — specifically so by the music of popular artist Juan Luis Guerra.

### *Juan Luis Guerra and Inclusivity*

One such place that might broaden the understanding of race in the Dominican Republic is popular music. The merengue music of Juan Luis Guerra, widely considered the most popular musician in the Dominican Republic, suggests that ideas and images of Haitians and the African ancestral presence in Dominican culture have also been visited repeatedly — here too has there been a repetitive image learned over time, depictions that offer alternative ideas on Haitians and blackness in the Dominican Republic.

Classical composer and music scholar Raymond Torres-Santos, in his essay "Juan Luis Guerra and the Merengue: Toward a New Dominican National Identity," best articulates the cultural appeal that the artist has amassed in the Dominican Republic. Torres-Santos states of Guerra that, "In a relatively short span of time, he has managed to ... open up a sincere dialogue on issues of race, immigration, class division and social conflict ... include marginalized Dominican ethnic groups and traditions in his discourse...." (Torres-Santos 2013, 1). Juan Luis Guerra's international popularity easily makes him the most iconic Dominican musical artist and, therefore, a likely site of future study for the pedagogy of race in Dominican society because of his large audience.

Juan Luis Guerra's music challenges the dominant construct of Dominicanidad by positing the alternative embrace of an African heritage as an equal and important contributor to Dominican national identity. The music of Juan Luis Guerra, in part, accomplishes this. As Torres-Santos stated with regard to the music and lyrics of Guerra:

Through them, he challenges Dominicans, but also other Latin Americans, on pressing social issues. He particularly challenges conservative Dominicans' attitudes towards race, which have been basically Eurocentric. In this manner, he continues the dialogue about African influence and Hispanic influence in the Dominican heritage; bringing into focus an Afrophobic tendency observed in most Dominican conservative social sectors since the times of Trujillo (Torres-Santos 2013, 10).

That Guerra pushes the discussion on social issues is an important point from which to further this study because it offers a potentially wider audience. In fact, a redefinition of Dominicanidad is what is necessary. As Torres-Santos states,

Guerra celebrates the truly Caribbean nature of Dominicanness, versus the view of it as solely Hispanic, in his song, *Guavaberry*. In this song he 'speaks of the regional customs of *cocolos*, the Dominicans of Anglophone Caribbean descent who live in and around the city of San Pedro de Macoris in the East. With their dark skin, non-Hispanic roots, and working class roles, *cocolos* had remained on the margins of Dominicanness for quite a long time since their arrival in the country in the nineteenth century. The song's bilingual text acknowledges the *cocolos*' Anglophone background' (Austerlitz 110) (Torres-Santos 2013, 11-12).

Guerra has made attempts at challenging Dominicanidad through his music.

Furthering this claim, Torres-Santos says the following of his merengue music, "Guerra's sincere social commentaries and celebrations of Dominican culture in all of its heterogeneity address issues at the core of Dominican life in the twenty-first century. His contribution to the history of *merengue* is indeed an artistic milestone, helping Dominicans embrace their past and appreciate who they are" (Torres-Santos 2013, 15).

In short, comparative literature scholar Silvio Torres-Saillant posits the necessary steps at reclaiming Robinson's Black Radical Tradition:

Blackness, then, continues to be relegated to the realm of the foreign in the land that originated blackness in the Americas. The need to launch efforts aimed at dismantling racism cannot be denied, but these efforts should go beyond mere denunciation. Black Dominicans need to acquire the accoutrements that will enable them to resist its spell. I would argue that the African-descended majority of Dominicans will benefit greatly from a model that allows them to perceive their ancestors as the real protagonists of the epic of the Dominican experience (Torres-Saillant 1998, 140).

If the redefining of Dominicanidad is to occur, then the possibilities of making the invisible visible must equally occur. This is made possible by addressing the negative repetitive depictions of blackness and Haitians in the Dominican imaginary.

### **Conclusions and Further Recommendations**

This thesis, then, draws the following conclusions. The readership of *Listin Diario* has been influenced by the varied and continual negative depictions of Haitians. To that end, it is the contention that this has played a significant role in the pedagogical dimensions of how ideas of race have been learned. The images have all been intentionally created and have had a negative impact on the Dominico-Haitian relationship, both historically and contemporaneously. Dominicans continue to view themselves as differently as possible with regard to the racial composition of Haitians. This is a very tenuous relationship with an even more complicated history.

Although this thesis sought to analyze a specific contemporary moment, it was framed by a very large history. Future study will have to address the historical context in ways that incorporate multiple perspectives on Dominican national identity and that trace

their historical narratives with the inclusion of Dominican African heritage. This was the attempt at utilizing hauntings and repetitions.

On a practical scale, the average Dominican will have to break from the common assumptions about Haitians and about blackness and begin to situate their respective racial identity in a more Pan-Africanist spectrum. The Dominican Republic will have to situate itself somewhere along the broad spectrum of the experiences of blackness and then redress its own racial identity through this redefined perspective.

To this end, the Dominican Diaspora in the United States will play a significant role in the future discourses around race on the island. The Dominican population in America has experienced race and racism in ways far more salient than the socio-historical context of the Dominican Republic would allow. These experiences have oriented the Dominican-American towards race in ways that are perhaps hidden or muted by the discourse of Dominicanidad.

### *Further Recommendations*

This thesis attempted to undertake a topic that has a very broad history. While the circumstances that led to the highly controversial verdict of the Constitutional Tribunal are very important to investigate, the field is still left wide open with a great deal of potential regarding further study. In the future, the study of race in the Dominican Republic should be anchored in the African diaspora and the relationship that Dominican history has to it (or the denial of it). Historian and comparative literature scholar Brent Hayes Edwards, in his book *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism*, provides a provocative way in which the study of race

might look in the Dominican Republic, all the while maintaining its own unique and complex understandings of identity. Edwards states,

If a discourse of diaspora articulates difference, then one must consider the status of that difference—not just linguistic difference but, more broadly, the trace or the residue, perhaps, of what resists or escapes translation. Whenever the African diaspora is articulated (just as when black transnational projects are deferred, aborted, or declined), these social forces leave subtle but indelible effects. Such an unevenness or differentiation marks a constitutive *décalage* in the very weave of the culture, one that cannot be either dismissed or pulled out (Edwards 2003, 13).

Edwards use of diaspora and difference offers a reconceptualization of the African diaspora and affords the opportunity for meaningful exploration along those lines. It would be interesting to see how the Dominican diaspora in the United States, through the conceptual framework of Edwards, defines itself racially within the Dominican Republic and how the ideology of Dominicanidad interacts with that diaspora.

Also, it would be important to further explore the universal and particular features that this analysis illustrated with regards to migrants and citizenship rights. What is the relationship that exists between universal experiences of migrants coming from lower socio-economic based economies to higher ones? In other words, how can the study of the universal narrative of migrants going from poor-to-rich nations lead to relational or comparative studies with the Dominico-Haitian dynamic? What would a study of that nature uncover regarding racial tensions and how race is learned or discussed in the Dominican Republic?

What would a larger study of print media in the Dominican Republic reveal about how race is learned? This particular study only analyzed one newspaper and only editorials. What if the study was expanded to incorporate a more robust set of newspaper

media and included opinion columns in addition to editorials? Would there be a more balanced depiction of blackness and Haitians or would similar tropes about blackness persist?

In closing, it is the firm belief that the Dominican Republic — the “cradle of blackness,” as Silvio Torres-Saillant has called it — has an obligation to its citizenry and to the greater African Diaspora to identify how pedagogy operates to reinforce negative images of blackness. These images not only harm the Haitian population but also significantly limit the potential of the Dominican people in the effort to claim their full humanity and embrace their erased African ancestry. Any study that advances the critical discourse in this direction is needed.

### **Epilogue: Repetitions, Hauntings, and Abuelita**

This thesis has come to the notion of repetitions, the apparitions of hauntings introduced in the Introduction, as a way to talk about the unseen yet present discourses about race in the Dominican Republic. As sociologist Avery Gordon reminds us:

Haunting describes how that which appears to be not there is often a seething presence, acting on and often meddling with taken-for-granted realities, the ghost is just the sign, or the empirical evidence if you like, that tells you a haunting is taking place. The ghost is not simply a dead or a missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life. The ghost or the apparition is one form by which something lost, or barely visible, or seemingly not there to our supposedly well-trained eyes, makes itself known or apparent to us, in its own way, of course (Gordon 2008, 8).

The learning of race and the treatment of blackness, and by extension Haitians, have all amounted to these hauntings Gordon speaks of. Without fully addressing the

unseen nature of this process, the ideological framework of Dominicanidad cannot be fully redefined.

When I started this exploration, I was in deep reflection about the passing of my Abuelita — I still am. Although, as I mentioned in the Introduction, the issue of blackness was never confusing for my Grandmother (nor for my parents or siblings) so by extension it was never confusing for me either. However, this thesis did help me better understand the heavy investment Dominicans have in denying their blackness. By all accounts, the worst thing you can call a Dominican is Haitian. Had my Abuelita lived, I would be very curious about what she would think of my findings; and what she would have let slide. How would she have wanted me to navigate my life in the United States as a black male, given that the traces of Dominicanidad were in me because of my strong connection to the island?

My grandmother was certainly a byproduct of a country that went to great lengths to deny its African heritage — I would argue that she lived that reality in hyperbole during the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo. Yet, she always demanded I maintain my dignity and my integrity — the story many young black boys and girls are told growing up, “be proud of who you are and where you come from.” Of course, in the United States to be proud of my heritage means to be proud of my Dominicaness, just as it equally means being proud of my blackness. In a place where the saliency of race has been felt so perversely and engrained so deeply in the very fabric of society, embracing my blackness is the act that protects me most. It is equally the most radical stance I can take. It blankets me in a history of positive affirmation, in a history of radical resistance and of dignity — despite the immeasurable odds black people have endured. There are, I can affirm, as

many Dominicans that choose a different path. Many either “become” black or Hispanic upon arriving in the United States — much of this a function of Dominicanidad and economic hardships in America (its never been quite lucrative to be Black in America). These choices both carry severe consequences yet only one, in my opinion, offers salvation.

I stand clear in mine.

Moving forward, I pray that my experiences in the Dominican diaspora allow me an opportunity to engage in the important work of deconstructing and redefining the ideological grip that Dominicanidad has on the homeland of my forebears.

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