

Dominican Attitudes Toward Haitian Immigrants Following the 2010 Earthquake and Before the 2013 Sentencing

by

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Abstract

The 2010 earthquake that struck Haiti propelled an increase of the migratory flow from Haiti to the Dominican Republic. As a result, a conservative backlash throughout a variety of Dominican media ensued from ultranationalist politicians and intellectuals—elite men—expressing nativist anti-Haitian nationalist ideas. This work centers on a survey conducted on 75 Dominicans in 2010-2012 in the Dominican Republic to determine the extent to which they aligned their attitudes with those of the ultranationalist elite. Results show that although Dominican respondents embrace Dominican ultranationalist ideas they also reject them, disrupting the overall presumption that Dominicans are strictly anti-Haitian.

Keywords: anti-Haitianism, antihaitianismo, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Dominican ultranationalism, Dominican, Haitian

The Dominican Republic and Haiti are two Caribbean countries that share the same island, Hispaniola. By virtue of their geographical proximity, among other factors, both countries' historical and present interrelationship is riddled with friction. Predominating scholarship pinpoints the friction on the Dominican rejection of Haitian migration into the Dominican Republic, both at the governmental and the mass level. As of present, both the Dominican Republic and the United States are experiencing an ultranationalist conservative wave of nativist policies that has much of its citizenry split between those abhorred and others in full support.

This article addresses the extent to which Dominican ultranationalists' hardcore anti-Haitian ideological posture resonates with everyday Dominicans in light of the earthquake's effects, from 2010-2012. Emanating from a larger body of work this article shows the responses from a survey conducted on a sample of 75 Dominicans embracing and rejecting Dominican ultranationalists' anti-Haitian attitudes (Guilamo, 144). Ernesto Sagás defines anti-Haitianism as a combination of "a legacy of racist Spanish colonial mentality, nineteenth-century racial theories, and twentieth-century neoracism into a web of anti-Haitian attitudes, racial stereotypes, and historical distortions" (Sagas, ix). It is the aim of this article to bring balance to the highly skewed scholarly discourse surrounding Dominican attitudes towards Haitian immigrants by highlighting the results of a survey conducted a few months after the earthquake within the timespan of 2010-2012. The article's ultimate objective is not to deny or dismiss the existence and persistence of anti-Haitianism in Dominican society, but to present a more nuanced picture of Dominicans' attitudes towards Haitian immigrants.

The 10 January of 2010 earthquake destroyed Haiti's capital of Port-au-Prince, killing thousands of Haitians. Many Haitians, in turn, sought refuge in the Dominican side of the island, further increasing the Haitian migratory presence already there. The increase of Haitians catapulted a backlash from conservative Dominican voices at the governmental level. Immediately after the 2010 earthquake the Dominican government created a new constitution that drastically altered the Dominican Republic's long-standing immigration laws. Frances Robles in *The Miami Herald* reports, "In January 2010, two weeks after the quake, a new constitution took effect, denying citizenship to the children of illegal immigrants." The 'new' immigration laws strove to curtail the influx of Haitian immigrants. Stephanie Hanes in *USA Today* reports, "The National Assembly said the change would ensure that a rush of impoverished Haitians fleeing the quake would not claim permanent residence in the Dominican Republic."

In September of 2013, however, the Dominican government changed its legal tune and instead retroactively applied its law. The results of my survey that preceded the 2013 law partially opposes it, for many Dominicans reported that people of Haitian ancestry born on Dominican soil should be granted Dominican citizenship. Garcia-Peña explains that

the ruling 168-13 [is] better known as La Sentencia (The Judgement). Approved by the Dominican Constitutional Court on September 23, 2013, La Sentencia dictates that all persons born to 'illegal immigrants' or 'persons in transit' since 1929 will not be entitled to Dominican citizenship, and thus targets those of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic with deportation. (76)

The Dominican government's law, in effect, left "tens of thousands of people...stateless, as neither country on the island of Hispaniola acknowledges them as citizens." Many Dominicans in addition to international news sites, from within and without of the Dominican Republic, protested the law.

Historical Backdrop of Dominican-Haitian Relations

Unlike most other Caribbean and Latin American countries, the Dominican Republic celebrates its independence not from a European colonial power, but its neighbor country, Haiti. The independence movement in question emerged in response to a Haitian occupation that lasted from 1822-1844. Dominicans' disapproval of the economic policies imposed by the Haitian leaders of the occupation, among other factors, led to their secession from Haiti. One of the Haitian occupation's primary purposes was to ensure that no colonial power dominated the island again and thereby reinstate slavery. From 1844-1856 the newly formed nation battled the Haitian army. Haitian forces feared some Dominicans' plan on calling European colonial slaveholding countries to recolonize the island and destroy Haiti's nascent freedom from slavery. Some scholars contend that, as a result, the Dominican Republic was in effect founded on the basis of anti-Haitian sentiment.

Yet, it was only in the twentieth century that one Dominican government carried out the most violent anti-Haitian act of all of Dominican history, propelling anti-Haitianism to become part of the State's ideology. In 1937 a Dominican dictator of Haitian ancestry named Rafael Molina y Trujillo conducted a genocidal attack against Haitian immigrants residing in the Dominican-Haitian borderlands. The genocide, highly influenced by Hitler's nationalist agenda that equated whiteness with power, served to "Dominican-ize" the borderlands by seeking to import whites from Europe. To further bring the nation into the image he longed for, Trujillo deliberately hired Dominican intellectuals to create an anti-Haitian historical narrative that justified his regime's legitimacy. Trujillo created a narrative that presented him to the Dominican people as a political savior and defender of Dominican whiteness that necessitated Haitian genocide. The invented nationalist narrative sought to define Haitians as Dominicans' racial *Other*. The imagined *other* embodied Blackness, Africa, Vodou, and in essence backwardness while the Dominican Republic embodied the contrary, whiteness, Spanish heritage, Catholicism, modernity, and progress. The most befitting term to best describe Trujillo's brand of nationalism is Lauren Derby's (1994) "racialized nationalism" (496). The narrative trickled into the legal structure of Dominican society in the form of laws that legally punished anyone demonstrating cultural inclinations towards any activity resembling African or Haitian culture. Such punishments ranged from incarceration to even deportation, instilling fear in Dominicans from associating with Haitians.

Eventually the narrative spread into Dominican classrooms in the form of history textbooks socializing the Dominican masses into adopting a Eurocentric national identity that automatically envisions the Haitian nation as Afrocentric, inferior, and menacing. To this day, the Trujillo dictatorship's legacy persists and is blamed for Dominicans' dissociation or dislocation from their African heritage. Trujillo's henchmen went on to maintain power in the Dominican Republic and continued to push Trujillo's nationalist narrative. Within the context of the aforementioned history, dislocation theory, essential to Afrocentric theory, emerges and describes people of African descent distanced from a Black identity.

Theoretical Lens

Ama Mazama uses the term dislocation to describe people of African descent who reject their Blackness (220). She contends that a person of the African diaspora that suffers from dislocation identifies with European culture to the extent that they embrace racist colonial ways of interpreting their reality, themselves, and others. When a person utilizes a racist European colonial lens to interpret their own reality, they automatically view all that comprises African culture as pathological and behave in a self-hating manner; such views must be corrected by re-centering the Black person(s) in question. Yet, Silvio Torres-Saillant argues that although Dominicans may not necessarily self-identify as Black, their cultural practices, customs, and mannerisms indeed reflect their African heritage. For the Dominican elite are the ones to blame for impinging the Dominican people from openly asserting their Blackness. Because of the elite's control of the Dominican educational system Dominicans are socialized to value the historical colonial standpoint. Torres-Saillant writes:

The intellectual elites that have monopolized the conceptualization of Dominicanness are the ideological descendants of the Spaniards and white creoles who directed the colonial system in Santo Domingo. When they imagine Dominican history and the Dominican people only the experience of their [colonial] ancestors come to mind, the experience of all others, meaning the majority of the population, receiving only tangential, if any, treatment. (38)

Intellectual alignment with the colonial legacy is inter-generationally transmitted through socialization processes in the public-school system which the elite control. Sheridan Wigginton studied Dominican public-school textbooks and found that through them Dominican children are socialized to marry lighter-skinned people in order to "advance" in society. The textbooks were saturated with messages that portray Blackness as the less desirable social status where *blancamiento*, meaning whitening, is promoted instead (191). *Blancamiento* refers to the notion of intergenerational "whitening" through inter-marriage and procreation with lighter-skinned people.

New Wave of Ultrationalism

Through the 1980s and 1990s, the Dominican Republic witnessed a new conservative Dominican ultranationalist intelligentsia emerge that included former political participants of the Trujillo era. Although some of the contenders changed, the philosophy and ultimate goal remained the same. No longer were the ultranationalists citing biological differences to justify Dominican anti-Haitianism. The new strategy adapted to present times uses cultural arguments based on incompatible differences to warrant Dominican nativism while simultaneously infusing old arguments onto the new ultranationalist discourse.

Ultrationalists Joaquin Balaguer, Carlos Cornielle, and Luis Julian Perez were all former Trujillo employees and politicians. Federico Gratereaux, journalist, and Manuel Nuñez, professor, both make up the younger generation of anti-Haitian inspired nationalists who continue to ensure that anti-Haitian nationalist sentiment remains entrenched in Dominican society. Although the former three are now deceased the latter two in addition to many others continue the ultranationalist tradition, with their rhetoric most visible in their writings, public statements, social media posts, and through their influence on legislature and policies. Most of the ultranationalists hold on to the same arguments and constantly attempt to rehash them in different form, applying them to new situations as they emerge and insuring that anti-Haitianism remains alive and credible. Their influence in the Dominican Republic reflects Van Dijk's explanation of how symbolic elites through their public discourse about immigration influence everyday people. According to Van Dijk:

Journalist, writers, professors, and other symbolic elites thus have a primary role in setting the agenda, and hence have considerable influence in defining the terms and the margins of consent and dissent for public debate, in formulating the problems people speak and think about, and especially in controlling the changing systems of norms and values by which ethnic events are evaluated. (47)

With the advantage of swaying Dominican public opinion through their access to Dominican media these nationalists encourage Dominicans to embrace anti-Haitianism by speaking of Haitians and their culture as a social illness plaguing the Dominican Republic. The elite disparage and stigmatize Haitians due to Haitians' Vodou religious affiliation, African heritage, and Haitian Creole that differentiates them from Dominicans. Ultrationalists argue that Haitian immigrants threaten Dominicans' and their Christian, Hispanic, and Spanish (white) heritage and racial features. Emphasizing these differences incite Dominicans to take on a defensive posture against the "peaceful invaders," a war-like term Dominican ultrationalists specifically preserve for Haitian immigrants.

Some of the common themes that emerge throughout the writings of all five writers consist of the following: Haitians' cultural contagion of Dominican culture, Haitians' cultural, racial inferiority, the political merging of the island by foreign imperialist forces, Haitians posing an economic border for the Dominican economy, and anti-Dominican forces aiming to destroy the country from within and without (Guilamo, 40). As various scholars indicate, Dominican ultranationalists are inclined to present Dominican culture as diametrically opposed to Haitian culture, thus making the latter threatening.

The very essence of the ultranationalist writers' arguments is fear of demographically and culturally "losing" the Dominican Republic to Haiti and Haitians as was the case in 1822. As a result of this imagined loss, a racist discourse emerges with Dominican intellectuals expressing dislocation from Blackness, even as all of them openly acknowledge Dominicans' own Blackness. As previously cited, Torres-Saillant argues that these writers side with colonial ideologies and impose these values onto the Dominican masses. This discourse portrays Haitians and Haitian culture as defective and contagious to where if left unchecked would influence Dominicans in their adoption of it, thus eliminating Dominican culture. All writers express at one point or another their preference for the deportation of all Haitians from the Dominican Republic. The writers agree that the steady Haitian migration into the Dominican Republic will, as Nuñez puts it, "erase" the border and thus turn the Dominican Republic into Haiti (197). Haitian migration will supposedly lead to the political merging of both countries, with Haitians controlling the entire island at Dominicans' expense, eventually "reducing" the Dominican Republic to Haiti's "inferior" cultural and economic poverty level. These Dominicans fear that the Haitian government holds ulterior political motives of reverting the island back to 1822 under the Haitian government's dominion. We witness the reemergence of the fear of the island merging in the 1990s with the presidential campaign of a Dominican-born man of Haitian ancestry, Jose Francisco Peña Gomez. Peña Gomez was a child of Haitian parents killed in the 1937 Haitian massacre that attempted to run for presidency against Balaguer, the apologist and orchestrator of the slaughter. The latter used the media to scare Dominicans from voting for Peña Gomez. Peña Gomez lost the election as a result of a defamation scheme that involved many people of the upper echelons of Dominican society even though 70% of the voters initially voted for Peña Gomez. Dominican media often repeated Dominican nationalist rhetoric to portray Gomez as an inauthentic Dominican, discouraging potential voters from voting for him.

Previous Surveys

Many Dominican national surveys reflect Dominicans' attitudes towards Haitian immigration. Bernardo Vega researched national surveys conducted during the 1980s and 1990s on "everyday" Dominicans' attitudes towards Haitian immigrants. In 1982 "55% of Dominicans said that Haitians should be returned to their countries" (Vega, 36). A decade later, a follow-up national survey evinced an increase from "51% to 74%" reflecting respondents' belief that Haitians should be repatriated to Haiti.

Gabriela Hoberman presents us with her interpretation of the survey conducted by Demometrica Barometer in 2005. She reports that in the Dominican Republic, “almost 80 % of the population considers that the Haitian immigration represents a damaging event for the Dominican Republic” (189). In this same survey Dominicans expressed that they see Haitians as a threat to Dominican society, from their occupation of Dominican jobs, importing illnesses, and increasing crime. Hoberman’s conclusion on surveys investigating Dominicans’ views on the Haitian presence in the Dominican Republic indicates that the majority of the Dominican population opposes “granting work permits for undocumented Haitian immigrants” and “citizenship rights to children born to Haitian parents” (Hoberman, 200); her own focus groups concluded that the ideas espoused by the Trujillo regime resonated with Dominicans.

Morgan and Espinal conducted a national survey, published in 2010, that investigates Dominicans’ perceptions of Haitian immigrants. They note a slight increase from 2006 to 2010 of Dominicans that believe that “the children of Haitians born in the Dominican Republic should be Dominican citizens” (235). This number increased from “43.3” to “48.3” out of a total of 100 points. This survey also highlighted that more Dominicans than in previous times agree that “the Dominican government should grant work contracts to undocumented Haitians.” The survey also shows that “60%” of the sample “believes that Haitians perform the work that Dominicans have no interest in performing” while the average respondent believes “that the government should not offer public services to the immigrants” (Morgan and Espinal, 238). In comparing Vegas and Hoberman’s analysis of national surveys to Morgan and Espinal’s, the latter presents the Dominican people as more tolerant of their Haitian neighbors. It remains unknown to me as to what exactly has caused Dominicans’ attitudes to be less anti-Haitian. Some thinkers have suggested that Dominicans’ experiences as immigrants have increased their empathy and sympathy towards Haitians in the Dominican Republic.

Method

This study is heavily influenced by Ernesto Sagás’ (1993) dissertation where he created a series of open-ended questions reflecting anti-Haitian sentiment. Sagás interviewed Dominican intellectuals on their perceptions on the Haitian migratory presence in the Dominican Republic. I, in turn, transformed Sagás’ questions into close-ended questions to reflect the aforementioned ultranationalists’ main themes and added questions to address the earthquake’s impact on Haitian migration.

Procedure

During the summers of 2010-2012 I conducted a survey on approximately 75 Dominicans in the cities of Santo Domingo, the country's capital, and Cotui, a nearby town. I approached Dominicans in local parks, libraries, churches, shopping plazas, and on local residential sidewalks. I also surveyed respondents that other respondents recommended to me. I conducted focus groups of those I surveyed by meeting with groups of 3-4 respondents.

Results

I will first address the items that revealed responses most aligned with anti-Haitianism. Afterwards, I will discuss responses that strayed from anti-Haitian nationalism, responses disrupting the predominating presumption that Dominicans' attitudes towards Haitian immigrants are strictly hardline anti-Haitian. I then follow up by addressing items that received equal responses on anti-Haitian terms by highlighting how the portion that opposed anti-Haitian attitudes evidence that some Dominicans, in fact, reject anti-Haitianism. The next section relates the focus groups to the survey items and their resonance with elite discourse.

As previously mentioned, some journalistic sources confirmed that the Haitian migratory presence skyrocketed immediately after the earthquake. Therefore, it is unsurprising to find that the overwhelming number of Dominican respondents, 92%, agreed that "there are too many Haitians in the country." The majority of respondents, 74%, claimed that Haitian immigration into the Dominican Republic is uncontrolled. Most respondents sided with ultranationalist claims, 54%, when proclaiming that Haitians pose a safety threat to the country. When respondents reported on the nature of their contact with Haitians, 12 respondents claimed zero contact with Haitians in any manner in addition to no respondent claiming any Haitians as boyfriends. Respondents claimed not having a Haitian spouse as second lowest, followed by family member and girlfriend, reflecting the possibility that romantic involvement with Haitians is low on Dominicans' priority list.

Respondents were asked if they would marry a Haitian. A slight majority, 53%, responded "no" while 46% reported "yes." Dominicans who expressed disdain towards marrying Haitians did so along the ideological lines of citing stereotypes to justify their answers. Comments such as "those people" indicate that there is an "us" versus a "them" phenomenon at play. Cultural implications that denote Dominicans' perception that Dominican culture is the more superior and preferable culture are embedded within many of their statements. Some respondents explicitly stated that they are racist and simply do not like Haitians without going into great detail. Many respondents failed to clarify the various characteristics of Haitian culture that make it undesirable. One Dominican alleged that he "only want[s] Dominican culture" without defining what constitutes Dominican culture.

In fact, he did not want to prolong the conversation any further out of discomfort. Two Dominicans in particular burst into a flurry of uncontrollable laughter when asked if they would marry a Haitian. One of the respondents said, “Could you imagine? *Me?* With an *haitiano?*” Such statement shows that the person could not fathom taking the question seriously—and “*Me?*” shows how she views herself as superior—since it automatically warranted a “no” response amidst a flurry of laughs. The implications underlying a Dominican marrying a Haitian is that the Dominican is formally embracing African heritage, poverty, and the other stigmas that ultranationalists attach to Haiti and Haitians. In essence, marrying a Haitian means straying away from Dominicanness, an imagined cultural and biological whiteness, thus a betrayal to the Dominican nation.

Dominicans’ refusal to marry Haitians stems from their absorption of the ultranationalist’s fear of both countries politically merging. The ultranationalist’s fear or nationalist paranoia suggests that the Dominican Republic’s merging with or “marrying” Haiti would result in taking on a country that they consider an economic burden with an inferior culture due to its African heritage. In other words, marrying a Haitian for the everyday Dominican would mean to “marry down.” The Dominican respondents who expressed disdain for marrying a Haitian reflect nationalist paranoia on a personal level. Dominicans’ refusal to marry a Haitian based on preconceived racist notions is an attempt to preserve *dominicanidad*. Ultranationalists define *dominicanidad* as essentially cultural and biological Dominican whiteness.

As initially mentioned, most scholarship emphasizes Dominicans’ anti-Haitian attitudes. Yet, the ways in which Dominicans stray from ultranationalist narratives are rarely emphasized. In contrast to the aforementioned Dominican anti-Haitian elite, and the everyday people’s anti-Haitian responses, only 30% of respondents expressed fears that there are foreign superpowers plotting to merge both the Dominican Republic and Haiti into one country, meaning that the remaining 70% do not buy into the big narrative the conservative intelligentsia has attempted to impose on the Dominican masses. Fifty-four per cent of respondents reported that Haitians are not trying to take over the country with 68% agreeing that Haitians should not be forcibly deported back to Haiti. The significance underlying the percentage is that Dominicans, unlike the ultranationalists that proclaimed the 1937 Haitian massacre justifiable, refuse to support any similar actions. Even more surprising, 66% respondents affirmed that those born in the Dominican Republic should be granted citizenship! This posture contradicts the Dominican government that during the time this study was conducted was violating its own constitutional laws by making it difficult for Dominicans of Haitian ancestry to obtain the appropriate documentation necessary to prove their citizenship.

Fifty-six per cent respondents agree that Haitians in the Dominican Republic contribute significantly to the Dominican economy while the majority at an astonishing 87% believe that American culture has greater influence on Dominican culture than Haitian. One can interpret this to suggest that Dominicans are not attracted to Haitian culture and in fact prefer the American or do not fear Haitian culture and therefore do not see it as threatening the country. While only a minority of respondents at 14% stated that they believe Haitian Kreyol negatively affects Dominican society, the majority stated the contrary. In fact, it is now more common to find Dominican business signs and ads printed in the English language. In spite of the negative impression of Haitians the elite has imposed on the Dominican masses, 46% of respondents admitted that they would marry a Haitian person.

The sample was almost evenly split when respondents were asked about the Haitian presence posing a cultural and racial threat. For instance, Dominicans almost equally agreed and disagreed when asked as to whether they viewed Haitian immigrants posing a cultural threat to Dominican culture, with 47% agreeing and 45% disagreeing. Similarly, 46% equally agreed and disagreed that Haitian immigrants pose a racial threat to Dominicans. What is most salient about the latter statement is that Joaquin Balaguer rejected Haitian immigration on account of Haitians Blackening the country. Dominicans actually agreeing that Haitians pose no racial threat can either mean that Dominicans and Haitians are not mixing, in miscegenation terms, and therefore the respondents do not find the Haitian presence troubling in that sense or they are not bothered by the sight of dark-skinned people in the Dominican Republic. Yet, split halfway at 46% are Dominicans that agree that Haitians have benefitted the Dominican Republic.

In sum, Dominicans are actually stating that Haitians do not pose a racial, cultural, and economic threat, even though those that disagreed had a slight numerical advantage. Although anti-Haitianism is the core of Dominican nationalism at its extreme, there are still Dominicans that do not buy into the xenophobia. Perhaps further investigating why some Dominicans do not buy into it can provide insight as to how to further increase these sentiments in the country at large.

Anecdotes on Experiential Observations

While in the Dominican Republic, I encountered a group of Dominican chauffeurs that informed me of their support for conservative nationalist political parties. These men cited Vinicio “Vincho” Castillo’s political party, the Fuerza Nacional Progresista, for taking a hardline stance against Haitian migration. Castillo is an elderly politician that worked for Trujillo during the dictatorship. It was the chauffeurs’ way of demonstrating that they are up to date with immigration issues affecting the Dominican Republic, so they seek conservative outlets as sources of information. When I approached them their first words were, “We are just waiting for the government to give us the ‘go’.” I asked them, “What do you mean, the ‘go’?” They nonchalantly replied,

We go along the ideological lines of Vincho Castillo. We do not have a problem killing every Haitian man, woman, and child. We just want them out. We are only waiting for the government to give us the word! We want them out.

These Dominicans expressed that there are too many Haitians in the Dominican Republic. So, their solution to Haitian immigration is to send out a violent message—death. Although they did not know me, they expressed no qualms in telling me that they wished to murder Haitians. In fact, without my even beginning the survey, they automatically and speedily articulated all of the questions that reflect the concept of nationalist paranoia (i.e., fear of the political merging of the island, the uncontrolled influx of Haitian immigrants, the Haitian threat to Dominican safety, etc). Their deliberate and immediate explanation of how they interpret the Haitian migratory presence as a problem reinforced how my survey encapsulates the issues that revolve around Haitian immigration in the Dominican Republic.

Ultrationalists must ensure that Dominicans see Haitians as their *other*, for if Dominicans fail to do so then they may grow to perceive Haitians as possible marriage partners. For the ultrationalists, Dominican and Haitian intermarriages are a threat to the cohesion of the Dominican nation. Balaguer alleges that Dominicans' comfort levels with Haitians would increase to the extent they will eventually grow to embrace Haitians' cultural customs (i.e., cultural contagion), which ultrationalists interpret as antithetical to preserving *dominicanidad* (45). Matthijis Kalmijn makes a similar statement, but within the US context, that nevertheless applies here:

Intermarriage has long been considered a core indicator of the integration of ethnic and racial minorities in society. The most important reason for this is that when members of ethnic and racial groups marry with other groups, this is a sign that these groups accept each other as equals. Intermarriage is also considered important, however, for its potential consequences. Intermarriage may reduce group identities and prejudice in future generations because the children of mixed marriages are less likely to identify themselves with a single group.... Finally, high rates of intermarriage make it more difficult to define who is belonging to an ethnic or racial group and this by itself could also weaken the salience of ethnic and racial boundaries in society. In short, ethnic and racial intermarriages are not only considered a reflection of integration in society, they may also contribute to integration. (271)

When I asked the aforementioned cohort of chauffeurs if they would marry a Haitian, the men burst into laughter and one of the men went on to joke about Haitians and their smell. He told a “joke” in story form that made his friends laugh. In his story a Haitian woman, supposedly, aggressively pursued a Dominican man for sex.

She approached the man and stood before him with her legs open. She pointed at her vagina and told the Dominican man, “I have the strength of 7 horses within me, [and] I cannot contain myself so sleep with me.” The Dominican man replied to the Haitian woman, “Well, it smells like one of the horses died inside of you.” The Dominican men burst into laughter, as one of the men clapped as he laughed. Such a story shows Dominicans celebrating their Dominicanness at the expense of Haitians, particularly the Black Haitian woman. This story also alludes to stereotypes that depict the Black Haitian woman as sexually aggressive, in pursuit of Dominican men and with strong body odor—a characteristic Dominicans particularly reserve for Haitians. In this joke her sexual appetite is animalized, thus her body smelling “like a dead horse”. Through the telling of this “joke” or *chiste* we see how Dominicans celebrate the symbolic dehumanization of Haitians. By suggesting that a Haitian woman stinks also serves as a warning for Dominican men to distance themselves from Haitian women. Such a story echoes ultranationalists’ belief, especially Balaguer, regarding Blacks’ naturally over-sexed bodies deriving from their Blackness. This “storyteller” provides insight as to how Dominicans utilize anti-Haitianism to entertain friends, while simultaneously functioning to solidify their bond as Dominicans that differentiate them from their historically ordained *other*, Haitians.

I additionally encountered Dominicans that would consider marrying Haitians, but only under certain circumstances or conditions. Many Dominicans expressed willingness to marry Haitians, but only if the Haitian person is financially well established. As one of the aforementioned chauffeurs stated, “I will not marry a Haitian for love, but for lunch and she must be a white doctor.” Gerald Murray, in a 2010 report he submitted to the Pan American Development Foundation titled “Dominican-Haitian Racial and Ethnic Perceptions” makes a clarifying point, stating,

The rule to ‘improve the race’ by strategic attention to the skin or hair of one’s potential mate is a fragile rule, a mere social guideline, that is frequently violated. Most violations are driven by economic calculations. The imperative to *mejorar la cuenta bancaria*—to improve one’s bank account—is much stronger than the imperative to improve the *raza*. (17)

For a Dominican to consider marrying a Haitian under the condition that the Haitian person provides financial security indicates that marrying down—racially—is irrelevant once the appropriate finances are present; money “whitens”. Access to financial resources provides Dominicans with a better quality of life even if with a Haitian spouse. As Sagás states, “To illustrate this stereotype, a Dominican woman who marries a Haitian man is commonly seen as lowering her standards and fouling herself by sleeping with a Haitian (unless she happens to marry a wealthy, upper-class Haitian, of course)” (“Black but Not Haitian...” 334). The bigger question to ponder is if Haitians hold potential Dominican mates to the same standard.

Sheridan Wigginton examined elementary school “social science textbooks” in the Dominican public schools (191). Wigginton argues that the texts set out to convey certain messages to socialize Dominican children’s perceptions on the appropriate roles people of certain “races” are to take in their society. The textbooks in question are saturated with messages that: portray “blackness” as the “less desirable social status” whereas the concept of “blancamiento” is promoted instead. *Blancamiento* refers to the notion of intergenerational “whitening” through inter-marriage and procreation with lighter-skinned folk (Wigginton, 191).

In other words, Dominicans are socialized since childhood to buy into the notion that upward social mobility in Dominican society requires culturally and biologically moving towards whiteness. According to Wigginton, “the ultimate goal is to obliterate blackness by intermarrying with lighter folk; for each generation should strive to create fairer complexioned future generations through careful mate selection” (204). Such notions reflect Balaguer’s arguments that suggest that Haitians Blacken the country and therefore disrupt the nation, clear evidence of his philosophy at work. Wigginton’s research shows that, similar to Balaguer’s ideas, the textbooks strive to indoctrinate Dominicans into believing that “African physical traits ... no longer be a visible component of Dominican national identity and ethnicity” (204).

The significance underlying Wigginton’s study is that Dominicans are discouraged through institutional socialization from marrying darker-skinned people. Intergenerational whitening or *blancamiento* is the norm encouraged from the State, making the socialization process a top-down phenomenon. Murray, however, wrote an article titled “Dominican-Haitian Racial and Ethnic Perceptions and Sentiments” where he de-emphasizes racism’s influence on Dominicans’ perceptions of Haitians. In a section titled “Improving the race” Murray says the following:

In terms of choosing a spouse, however, there is a collective preference among Dominicans to *mejorar la raza* (“to improve the race”) by marrying someone of lighter skin color, or at least not to damage the race by marrying someone of darker skin color. The academic accusation that this universally stated ideal indicates universal racism among Dominicans is ridiculous, since there could be no “improvement of the race” unless half of the race was willing to violate the norm by marrying someone of darker complexion. (17)

In addition, I met a group of older Dominican men and women over the age of 55 that made it clear to me that “*las haitianas* make better lovers than the *dominicanas*”. One of the women stated that Haitian women “have been trained since birth to work their vaginal muscles. I do not know what it [the exercises] is called, but Dominican men like that. Dominican men sleep with them, but they marry us.” One of the men chimed in and said, “It’s true. I too have slept with *par de haitianas*. They do make better lovers.” These interviewees expressed that Dominican men mainly find Haitian women as only worthy of sex, but not marriage.

As the conversation progressed, one of the women informed me of the high levels of Haitian prostitution in the city. This woman wanted to show me the back end of her neighborhood where Haitians lived in a building. A Haitian man rents an apartment and provides his Haitian compatriots sleeping spaces for a nominal fee. According to the Dominican woman, the Haitian female sex-workers are in cahoots with the renter and offer sexual services to the men renting sleeping spaces. The Haitian women supposedly receive bi-monthly payments from the renter for their services.

The topic of prostitution emerged without my raising it. Their depiction of Haitian women as better lovers due to their ability to work their vaginal muscles reduces them (Haitian women) to simply a sexual outlet of release for Dominican men. Such reduction, in effect, shuns Haitian women’s humanity. Ernesto Sagas in an article titled “Black—but not Haitian: Color, Class, and Ethnicity in the Dominican Republic” elucidates the two incidents I just described above. He argues that the ways in which Dominicans view Haitians are in essence gendered. Haitian men and women, alike, are stereotypically maligned in the Dominican Republic on account of their sexuality.

Haitian women are objectified as sexually promiscuous, prolific, unfaithful, unclean, and as practitioners of witchcraft. Moreover, unlike Dominican women, who are oftentimes visualized as gentle and docile (and even as somewhat ‘innocent’), Haitian women are seen as assertive, aggressive ‘pros’ who are in the Dominican Republic with the sole purpose of making money... [, and] a Dominican woman who marries a Haitian man is commonly seen as lowering her standards and fouling herself by sleeping with a Haitian (unless she happens to marry a wealthy, upper-class Haitian, of course). These views reinforce stereotypes about the supremacy of Dominican women over Haitians as wives and mothers and serve as additional reasons to ‘justify’ mistreating and violating the human rights of the latter. Gender thus becomes another tool in the hands of the majority to discriminate against the country’s largest minority. (334)

While traveling throughout Santo Domingo I entered a Haitian neighborhood to interview Haitians. While walking through a neighborhood called El Mercado Modelo many Haitians continually informed me that many Dominican women traveled to Haiti to engage in massive prostitution. Despite the fact that I never brought up any topic related to prostitution, Haitians always brought up this topic when the survey question on marriage emerged. In fact, one Haitian man told me that Dominicans need to marry Dominicans and Haitians should only marry Haitians. Similar to the Haitians I met in the Dominican *barrio*, he too rubbed on his arm to emphasize skin tone differences as for reasons for which Dominicans and Haitians should not marry. He went on to inform me that Dominicans object to the Haitian presence in the Dominican Republic without taking into account that there are many Dominicans in Haiti, because whenever “you go to Haiti, you see Dominican prostitutes everywhere.”

On the other end, while in Santo Domingo I met some Dominicans that sympathized with Haitian immigrants because they too were either immigrants or are related to Dominicans living in other countries. Their sympathy directly challenges the ultranationalists’ *antihaitianismo*. One Dominican man told me, “We treat them bad here, and I understand why they come here. And when we, us immigrants, go over there [the US] we get treated badly too. We can’t mistreat Haitians, because you know they are human.” I found that some Dominicans often made that claim, “because they are human,” seemingly indicative of their awareness of the social hierarchy in their country that leaves Haitian immigrants to dangle from the bottom rung of the social ladder. In the Dominican Republic, these Dominicans know that Haitians are people, but of a certain type—a lower class people, almost less than human.

One of the Dominican men, a member of the chauffeur group described earlier, diverted from his group by stating how he sympathizes with Haitians and that race is unimportant for him. He told me that he does not care about race because “in the end, we are all the same for Haitians are a docile people, and they come here to work, and if I were Haitian, I too would come here to work as well.” The driver continued, “You see, the people here who make all of the money are the politicians (as he pointed at his bosses’ Mercedes Benz). I really do not care about race. Haitians do not bother me.” He pulled two *cedulas* from his pocket and continued on,

I just came from the [*cedula* office] and got these two cards for two little Haitian kids that live in my neighborhood. I got it for them so that the police would stop harassing them. I also employ a little Haitian girl to help my wife around the house. I tell her to feel comfortable when in my house, to not be afraid to grab the remote control and turn the TV on. She is afraid sometimes. I can take you to where I am from. There is nothing but Haitians there. They work hard. I employ them because I know that they will work for cheap pay. I do not have a problem with those people.

His defense of Haitians from Dominican authorities shows the extent to which this one Dominican man is willing to challenge the law and allow Haitians to reside in the Dominican Republic. To point blame towards Dominican politicians, the elite, as the ones with all the power and wealth shows his awareness of the Dominican Republic's social inequality. His actions and quick determination to provide evidence further demonstrates that not all Dominicans embrace ultranationalism.

Some Dominicans demonstrated that they do not object to marrying Haitians. One woman stated, "*El amor no tiene frontera.*" Such response signifies that the woman consciously acknowledges that the border and its political and symbolic implications will not pose a barrier for her. When I visited a Haitian *barrio*, a Dominican man told me that he believes Haitian women are more loyal to Dominican men in romantic relationships than Dominican women. He went on to say that for him "Haitians are no different than an *Americano*." Interestingly, he compared Haitians to Americans thus detracting any notion of Haitians representing a historical enemy as the ultranationalists constantly remind Dominicans. Both, Dominican woman and man, see Haitians as potential mates demonstrating that the Dominican ultranationalism espoused by the elite has failed to permeate all of Dominican society. In fact, these Dominicans expressed no fear in being stigmatized as anti-Dominican, a rhetorical move the elite uses to challenge Dominicans that challenge anti-Haitianism.

The few Dominicans that expressed no qualms about marrying Haitians believe that "we are all humans" and that love "has no borders." They expressed no denigrating stereotypes about Haitians and instead alluded to the "larger" picture of humanity. Their need to emphasize "humanity" suggests that they know that in the Dominican Republic Haitians are generally perceived differently and yet they resist in spite of anti-Haitianism's prevalence.

I met a Dominican man self-identified as a Rastafarian. When I questioned him about his Rastafarian background, he immediately recited Marcus Garvey's rhetoric of racial separation and informed me that although he embraces Garvey he 'loves' all 'races'. Therefore, he holds no qualms about marrying a Haitian because he does not "base his Dominican nationalism off of *antihaitianismo*." He also informed me of a week-long music tour he held in Haiti. While in Haiti, he said that many Haitians threatened to kill Dominican visitors because of the ways in which their Haitian brethren experienced mistreatment in the Dominican Republic. He went on to say that "they suffer for their brethren's suffering." This man subsequently mentioned that he believes Haitians do not want to be in the Dominican Republic but in their own country instead, preferring to live "amongst their own" for Haitians only and only turning to the Dominican Republic out of economic necessity. His views, drawing from his Rastafari background and allegiance to Garvey, directly challenge the Dominican elite's nativist narrative.

Contradictory Dominican Consciousness

When interviewing some Dominicans, I noticed that some of their arguments were essentially contradictory. Some Dominicans' arguments contradicted their actions. While in the Dominican Republic I met a former mayor of a local province who told me that although he frequents Haitian women for sexual purposes, he nonetheless wants nothing to do with Haitians, otherwise. In fact, during his tenure as a mayor he led a 'movement' alongside local Dominicans where they would seek-and-destroy local Haitians' homes. It was the former mayor's way of ensuring that Haitians picked up and left the area. When I asked him why he would do this, he replied that the reason for destroying their homes is because "Haitians would defecate in plastic bags and launch them over the roofs of their shacks. Besides, they made the neighborhoods look ugly." He finished the interview by stating the following: "apparently, I will have to gather the men again and begin to tear more houses down because I am seeing them rebuild *por alli*." This politician's actions are contradictory because on the one hand, he sleeps with Haitian women, and on the other, he destroys Haitians' homes. Soliciting Haitian female sex workers further encourages Haitian immigration. This observation brings me to my next section where other Dominicans' discourse fails to correlate with their actions in how they interpret and react to Haitian immigration.

I encountered a number of Dominicans who contradicted themselves. There were various instances where Dominicans expressed particular unfavorable beliefs about Haitians, but yet behaved differently. I refer to Dominicans' inconsistencies between thought and action as *contradictory consciousness* similar to cognitive dissonance. For example, I met one Dominican woman that drove me to a popular area of Santo Domingo. While driving me to this popular destination, she expressed that she is a member of a liberal Dominican political party known for opposing other well-known anti-Haitian political parties. I noticed that she casually referred to the Haitian migratory phenomenon as a "pacific invasion", a very common term among Dominican ultranationalists. In addition, this woman told me that she fears that the Haitian presence in the Dominican Republic will eventually lead to the collapse of the border, with Haitians "spilling" into the Dominican side. She further informed me that she believes the border should remain permanently closed to Haitians. Yet, while riding in the car with her, we witness Haitian teenage boys running from Dominican immigration officials. We do not know the reason for their fleeing; however, she points to them and informs me that she feels sorry for them. She speeds up the road, pulls over, and yells to one of the Haitian boys to jump in the back of the pick-up truck. She even told the young fellow to lie down so that the immigration authorities would not spot him. She helped this stranger, this Haitian boy, this alleged "pacific invader" escape despite the fact that she speaks of the Haitian presence in the Dominican Republic as an 'invasion' capable of blurring the border. She nonetheless helped this Haitian stranger escape the immigration authorities out of pity. Her actions contradicted her beliefs of Haitian immigration.

Healey explains that prejudice consists of two aspects, the cognitive and affective, which although not always aligned, oftentimes do correlate (25). The former consists of one's thoughts and the latter, one's emotions. His definition states, "Prejudice is the tendency of an individual to think about other groups in negative ways, to attach negative emotions to those groups, and to prejudice individuals on the basis of their group memberships." A prejudiced person "thinks about other groups in terms of stereotypes" and/or "experiences negative emotional responses to other groups". Dominicans' contradictory consciousness emerges because cognitive and affective prejudice

are also distinct and separate aspects of prejudice and can vary independently. One person may think entirely in stereotypes but feel no particular negative emotional response to any group. Another person may feel a very strong aversion toward a group but be unable to articulate a clear or detailed stereotype of that group. (Healey, 25)

One of the encounters that personally stood out the most to me consisted of one Dominican man of Haitian ancestry that refused to self-identify as Haitian, and, instead, he described his parents as "the real Haitians." I found him in *El Conde*, a popular tourist area of the Dominican Republic. According to this man, "Haitians have to remodel the race, so they should mix with the Dominicans." He pointed at a group of incoming Haitians and said, "Look at them. They are *atrasados*" adding that he opposed Haitian immigration because "there are too many of them and they work for cheaper pay. I cannot paint houses for \$300 pesos because another Haitian would do it for \$100." From speaking to this young man, I was left under the impression that perhaps the younger generation of Dominicans of Haitian ancestry residing in the Dominican Republic would become more distanced from the new incoming Haitians. This young man referred to his parents as the 'real Haitians' and pointed to Haitians nearby as 'backward'. His solution to their backwardness is to 'mix in' with Dominicans. His testimony exemplifies how strongly anti-Haitianism prevails throughout Dominican society. For anti-Haitianism is the true social ailment plaguing the Dominican Republic, even infecting those of Haitian descent.

Concomitantly, he contradicts Manuel Núñez that argues that Haitians can never become Dominican because they are too attached to their Haitian culture. This Dominican of Haitian ancestry that claims to oppose Haitian immigration regards Dominican culture as the superior culture. His solution is for Haitians to integrate into Dominican society, a contradiction. "Mixing" would require that Haitians migrate to the Dominican Republic and assimilate into Dominican society that in turn would lead Haitians to lose their Haitian culture and embrace *antihaitianismo*. What we see here is a cultural contagion in reverse wherein the dominant Dominican society transfers its anti-Haitian bias onto Haitian immigrants' children. The interviewee wants to "catch" Dominicanness because Haitian culture and ancestry supposedly does not lead to "progress."

Conclusion

Dominican anti-Haitianism holds European culture, particularly European colonial thought, as the standard by which to measure Haitian culture. As is well known throughout Dominican-Haitian studies, the holy trinity of Dominican anti-Haitian prejudice is based on differentiating both peoples on account of: religion (Christianity vs. Vodou), culture (Hispanic heritage vs. African heritage), and language (Spanish vs. Haitian Creole).

In this paper I illustrated the extent to which Dominicans simultaneously reject and embrace the Dominican ultranationalists' philosophy—it is embraced and yet simultaneously rejected by a small segment of the Dominican population. The “marrying-down complex,” synonymous with the conservative elite's nationalist paranoia, is an aspect of their philosophy that Dominicans embrace and also reject. The intermediate aspect between the ultranationalists' anti-Haitian philosophy and resistance against it are Dominicans' contradictory consciousness where they may profess anti-Haitian ideals and behave in contradictory ways that defeat the purpose of anti-Haitianism. Lastly, I found that some Dominicans too reject anti-Haitianism by claiming to see Haitians as people worthy of marrying and defending before the authorities and by opposing forced deportation and recognizing Haitians as Dominicans if born in the Dominican Republic. In the end, this demonstrates other ignored aspects in the majority of the literature that addresses Dominican-Haitian relations, especially the notions “contradictory consciousness” and resistance against anti-Haitianism as part of the basis for Dominicanness. Although the survey was conducted months before the shattering sentencing that stripped thousands of Dominicans of Haitian ancestry from either retaining their Dominican citizenship or attaining it, many Dominican respondents disagreed with notions of forced repatriation and believed that persons born on Dominican soil should automatically be assumed Dominican, directly opposing the conservative legislature of 2013.

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