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Why There Are No Black Dominicans: How Anti-Haitian Sentiment in the Era of Trujillo and the Deeply Rooted Black History of the Island of Hispaniola Affects How Dominicans Racially Identify in New York Today

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Abstract

Within the island of Hispaniola are two countries: the Dominican Republic and Haiti. In 1808 the island was split into two distinct areas and today remains segregated geographically and culturally. Haiti is often associated with poverty, corrupt governments, and blackness, while the Dominican Republic is associated with tropical vacations, baseball, and the Caribbean. By considering the role of socio-political, historical, and ethno-cultural factors in Dominicans' racial self-identification, this study examines why some Dominicans may not identify as "Black" despite the history of the African slave trade across the island. Using a snowball sampling method to identify study participants, I interviewed Dominican individuals about their racial self-identification and the cultural factors that influenced them. The view of race will be recognized as both a construct and as a significant factor in one's identity. My research provides insights into how Dominicans in New York identify ethnically, racially, and culturally. Dominicans have a complicated relationship with race, partially due to the thirty-year reign of General Rafael Trujillo, whose promotion of a racial ideology associates blackness with Haitians rather than Dominicans, the historical colonization of the island, post-coloniality, and migration.

Dominicans have a notoriously complicated relationship with blackness, when referred to as Black (in the United States) some Dominicans are quick to retort back phrases such as "I'm not Black, I'm Dominican!". The Dominican racial identity and its relationship with the country of Haiti cannot be explained by the simplicity of the United States racial binary of Black or white. However, Dominicans have historically migrated to states such as New York, New Jersey, and Florida and continue to straddle racial imaginaries spanning from Latin America and the Caribbean to the receiving country.

KEYWORDS: Sociology, Spanish, Race, Identity, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Anti-black, Racism, Caribbean, Latin America, Immigration, New York, Hair, Latino, Hispanic, Indio, Latina, Latino, Afro-Latino, Afro-Latina, Latin American Studies, Ethnicity, Dominican Racial Identity

Literature Review

Within the field of Latin American and Caribbean studies the history of the island of Hispaniola is arguably one of the most perplexing. Within the island is Haiti, which is historically known for being the first nation to abolish slavery while also declaring itself the first free Black nation (García-Peña, 2016). The Dominican Republic withstood colonizing forces from Spain and the French. The colonization led to the death of many indigenous *Taino* people and later enslaved African (Peguero, 2004). It is important to emphasize the points of contention within the Dominican racial imaginary, these points are less so disagreements about what happened during these times but more so about why these events happened. The history of Haiti and the Dominican Republic is often represented in a dichotomous point of view which at times is dictated by the speaker's nationalistic biases.

The theme of race and racial identity is central to my thesis and therefore my research. Much of the literature I found examined the Dominican nationalistic point of view and how it shapes the Dominican narrative of the island of Hispaniola particularly under the reign of Trujillo (García-Peña, Paulino, Ricourt, 2016 Torres-Saillant, 1998). As research shows the militarization of the Haitian Dominican border was a direct result of Trujillo and his anti-Haitian politics (García-Peña, Paulino, 2016). Trujillo's misrepresentations of Haitians has been lodged deep into the history of the Dominican Republic, so much so that new narratives such as The

Galindo Virgins¹, which was crafted to represent anti-Haitian and anti-Black ideologies (García-Peña, 2016). Ricourt's work describes the more explicit anti-Haitian offenses, such as the Parsley Massacre also known as *La Masacre or Operación Perejil*. The author describes one man's account of the massacre, "Edwige Danticat, also Haitian, recounts that the 'groups of Haitians were killed in the night because they could not manage to trill their 'r' and utter a throaty 'j' to ask for parsley, to say 'perejil'" (Ricourt, 2016, p. 36). There is no denying the Parsley Massacre, but there are different points of view. Although many scholars still refer to said event as a massacre, those influenced by a Trujillo narrative will refer to this event as a civilian land dispute initiated by Haitians along the Dominican side of the border (García-Peña, 2016). Author Torres-Saillant analyzes how the anti-Haitian narrative enforced an anti-Black narrative that is taken on by some Dominicans today, "Black Dominicans do not see blackness as the central component of their identity but tend to privilege their nationality instead, which implies participation in a culture, a language community, and the sharing of a lived experience" (1998).

¹ In 1860 one of the most active Dominican intellectuals of the 19th century, Félix María Del Monte, used the story for a "historical legend" in verse titled *The Virgins of Galindo, or The invasion of the Haitians in the Spanish part of the island of Santo Domingo, February 9, 1822*. Del Monte's text starts as an epic poem, with an account of colonial splendor, and ends with the misery of Haitian rule. Andrés Andújar, a widower who is approaching old age, lives with his three daughters and a deaf-mute slave and her son in a remote mountainous area upstream from Santo Domingo. It is time of the ephemeral independence and the subsequent invasion of the Haitians. A young man approaches Andújar and asks for his oldest daughter's hand. When she learns that her suitor, fearing the eminent arrival of the Haitians, is about to leave for Spain, she decides that she cannot leave her old father behind. A little while later, the father is away from the house, and it is getting dark. Suddenly the family dog's barking is heard in the distance. Strange sounds abound. Then three Haitians appear. They announced that they have killed the father and proceed to beat and kill the girls. Then they rape the dead bodies, cut off their lamps, and throw them into a well. If you days later the crime is discovered by a hunter, a Frenchman who had settled in Santo Domingo after escaping the massacres of the Haitian Revolution, who by chance notices the smell of rotting bodies (Fischer, *Modernity disavowed Haiti and the cultures of slavery in the age of revolution*, 2004).

The literature from each author mentioned provides equal parts answers and questions. I have chosen to examine post-Trujillo literature that critiques archaic yet pervasive narratives of race in the Dominican Republic.

Methodology

My research was conducted through qualitative interviews and participants were gathered by snowball sampling. These interviews were audio recorded, followed a guided script of eight questions, transcribed, and coded. Primarily I introduce general background questions, the Dominican identity, and lastly integrate the complexity of the Dominican racial identity. My participants consisted of five interviewees, two males and three females. Each participant identified as Dominican and identified other Dominicans in their family. These interviews ranged from 20-30 minutes where an eight question script helped create a semi-structured discussion. Four out of five interviews were conducted via phone call and one was conducted in person, but all were recorded for data comparison. Interviews were intended to be done face to face however due to the COVID-19 pandemic the search for participants was facilitated by social media and interviews were recorded by phone call. All participants were given the option to accept or decline in participating in a recorded audio interview, all participants agreed to be recorded. They were informed that the interviews would only be shared between my collaborating professor and myself. The identities of the participants are confidential but not anonymous as the questions ask individuals to disclose self-identifying information. Each interview audio recording was deleted after being transcribed.

My interview questions consisted of topics concerning one's personal lived experience relating to race, racial identity, the racial identity of their family, and influential cultural symbols in their lives. Some cultural symbols that were coded in interviews included food and dance specific to Dominican culture. Other themes that were coded included family and racial identity. Codes for racial identity included references to hair, skin color, body shape, and Dominican pride. Family as theme was constantly described as a connection to ground one's own Dominican identity. The coding for theme of family slightly differs from my two previous themes as it involves Rafael Trujillo who ruled the Dominican Republic from 1930-1961 (Paulino, 2016). My questions did not specifically refer to the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo, but each participant was questioned about any dialogue they had heard from their own family surrounding Trujillo.

Findings

When asked the majority of Dominicans in my study did not racially identify differently from their family. Race is a complex field in which to interpret results, as race is a social construct, it is inherently flawed or contradictory yet is so ingrained into our identities. Therefore, race cannot be dismissed when analyzing the identity of any group. Participants described their racial identity and used words such as Hispanic, Latino, Latina, Afro-Latina, Latinx, African American, and Black. Participants commonly saw their racial identity falling into more than one group, but each participant did identify as ethnically as Dominican. What was unique was that even though some participants had lived in the United States their whole life

they were still able to pinpoint differences in point of view between the view of race in the United States and Dominican Republic:

There's a clash in DR, there's one race: Dominican; cause you were born in the Dominican Republic and there race is nationality that's kind of how I take it and I think when you come here it's hard when someone is thrusting upon you 'Yeah but that's not your race that's your ethnicity' and then you're not exactly sure what that means (Giselle, 2020).

Within the Dominican Republic nationality takes priority over race and inversely in the United States one's race or skin tone is prioritized before one's nationality. In the United States the prevalence of determining one's race allows Dominican individuals to identify in how they are perceived outwardly while also creating an area for the individual to recognize their familial Dominican ethnicity. This idea is not meant to defend or emphasize the idea where race is prioritized race over ethnicity or vice versa. My next finding describes the experience of coming from a family with a variety of skin tones.

Participants noted that there was not one look or feature that identified someone as Dominican, they instead focused on the idea of being mixed and pride in their Dominican identity. The emphasis put on having a mixed identity includes people who consider themselves to be of one or more racially identity. This thought is contrary to the archaic U.S. one drop rule where any amount of African inheritance or "Black blood" dictated that one was not white and therefore a person of color. What further complicates the reality of race for Dominicans is that one's own family many not even fall into the same skin tone due to marriage or blood relations

as Giselle states, “I do have biracial parents but my sister came out in the in-between and I came out like visibly on the darker side or brown side [. . .]” (2020). Giselle is aware that the gradient of skin tones in her own family has allowed members to have different experiences concerning race. Mariela also came from a visibly mixed family and observed the negative experiences of her father:

“A lot of times there's a lot of reactions like when I show someone a picture of my father they're like ‘Oh your father is Black, but you don't look Black’. I just say like ‘Yea because I'm mixed’ and it sucks sometimes because I'll get very upset at people using the N word [to refer to my father]” (2020).

Being of a family that visibly varies in skin pigmentation causes Mariela to take into context her father's lived experienced as being perceived as Black and her own reality of not feeling that her skin color is dark enough for her to claim an Afro-Latina identity. Although not all participants shared the same level of racial consciousness, they were all aware that the Dominican identity easily varied in appearance.

Pride in one's culture and nationality were mentioned by each participant and explicitly tied to Dominicanness. Participants were also aware that they were commonly confused for other nationalities, as one participant explains “. . .most people I've met are like ‘You're the least Dominican Dominican I've ever met’” (Ricardo, 2020). Even though some Dominicans find themselves correcting other's assumptions about their race they have no problem letting others know how they identify, Marisol states:

I would say that we [Dominicans] definitely make it known that we are Dominican and if people think otherwise we just let them know ‘Hey we’re Dominican’ because sometimes like I said before they’ll think we’re African American or we’re white (2020).

Pride in one’s identity is central whether one “looks Dominican or not”. Pride is also familial; Dominicans take comfort in the types of food and music that they share within their family. Food was mentioned in each interview as connection to each person’s Dominican identity. Food was also known to transgress borders as a Dominican dish could be made in Queens or Westchester and still remind someone of the Dominican Republic. These dishes were often cooked by family members who had at one time lived in the Dominican Republic and later moved to the United States.

Participants reflected on negative connotations associated blackness and/or Haitians that they had recognized in their own families, not all of these were connected to the reign of Trujillo. The Dominican Republic has been viewed as a nation of color since the very beginning, although its closest neighbor, Haiti, is the only one described as a proud Black nation. The case for the Dominican Republic differs as it is a country whose policies have historically othered Haitians who signify blackness. Discussions of race and blackness surround Dominicans whether they reside in the U.S. or the Dominican Republic. When Dominicans immigrate to the United States, they are characterized by race instead of nationality:

The second that they get to the US they face a whole different wavelength of discrimination and racialization that they weren't expecting and now they have to claim this sense of blackness that's put on to them even though they may not feel that it's right (Mariela, 2020).

To understand this common mis-categorization, we must understand the connotation of blackness within the Dominican identity. I will primarily note that anti-Black rhetoric does not represent all Dominicans. However, for the study of racial identity comments that can be considered anti-Black more realistically represent what some Dominican have been socialized to believe, these sentiments most often came from participants' parents or relatives. One participant reflects on his mother's point of view, ". . . in the past like my mom has said things like- like 'All Black people have like really aggressive hair' and 'it's really big'" (Ricardo, 2020). Hair is a factor of Dominican racial identity that is only second to race. Hair that is described as kinky, curly, or coarse is associated with blackness and by association is viewed negatively, Mariela comments "So there's a big emphasis on hair and if it is kinky or not or if it should be straightened or not, because kinky hair is not desirable" (2020). In the Dominican Republic nationality trumps skin color, but after hair is the most significant identifier.

Hair as a racialized topic can signify much more than one's individual style. Hair has the ability to be edited, it can be straightened, colored, cut, and styled. Skin color and other features associated with blackness cannot be altered as easily (Candelario, 2000). In Candelario's work on Dominican beauty shops she analyzes them as centers of cultural production and identity (2000). Hair is not only producing, but also mediating areas of identity that are juxtaposed within the Dominican racial imaginary. The discourse within Dominican beauty shops focused heavily on the dichotomy of *pelo malo* (bad hair) and *pelo bueno* (good hair) (Candelario, 2000). *Pelo malo* is considered undesirable and in need of treatment to tame the coarse kinks or curls, while *pelo bueno* remains the ideal with its soft, flowing, and wavy texture (Candelario, 2000). If there is any curl or wave in *pelo bueno* it must be very loose or subtle as to not cross the line between

pelo bueno and *pelo malo* (Candelario, 2000). The main goal for Dominican women going to the salon is edit their hair's appearance in some way. Hair that may naturally exists as *pelo malo* can be straightened and reinforce the idea of racially identifying as *indio* or Hispanic as opposed to Black or African (Candelario, 2000). As stated in the work of Howard, the identity of *indio* is almost paradoxical to the deeply rooted Black history of the Dominican Republic (2001). The ideas of looking "*indio* or Hispanic" were associated with preferred beauty ideals (Candelario, 2000).

A common practice in most salons is that clients choose their next hairstyle by flipping through a style book. Although the salon studied was a Dominican owned salon with Dominican clients the store used ten style books with white models and three books with Black models (Candelario, 2000). The salon owner explained that the Dominican clients were not interested in hairstyles of Black women and that they preferred Hispanic styles (Candelario, 2000). It is significant to note here that Dominican women did not go into this salon to achieve a "white" style of hair but instead a Hispanic look, a Hispanic look was also rated as more desirable than that of white and Black models (Candelario, 2000). The goal is instead to have hair that looks effortlessly processed as to not be overdone, as that signifies that hair is difficult to maintain and therefore signifies blackness and not Hispanic identity (Candelario, 2000). Hair that can be described as curly, kinky, or coily is associated with certain textures that have been assigned to blackness and therefore othered. The treatment and discourse on hair is relevant to Dominican racial identity as it is an offshoot of anti-Black (and therefore anti-Haitian) stigmatization.

Comments that can be seen as anti-Black in the Dominican racial imaginary are inherently anti-Haitian. The association of these two terms was heavily indoctrinated by the

former dictator Rafael Trujillo. Surprisingly, Trujillo did have Haitian heritage but repeatedly implemented anti-Haitian policies within the Dominican Republic (Paulino, 2016). Participants were not able to offer first-hand accounts of Trujillo's regime; however, they were able comment on their parent's remarks about Trujillo. Most of my participants said that their family spoke out against Trujillo's oppressive regime but at the same time were nostalgic about the order and discipline implemented in his time.

In order better situate my findings I will address the historical context of the Dominican Republic in a brief timeline from the beginning of slavery to the late eighteenth century. Before the colonization in the early fourteenth century by Columbus, indigenous people had long existed on the island of Hispaniola (Eller, 2016). The indigenous group of *Tainos* were wiped out by the harsh conditions and disease brought on by the Spanish (Peguero, 2004). The Spanish and later the French would compete for the abundant natural resources of the island including gold, mahogany wood, and iron ore (Peguero, 2004). By 1777, there were multiple adjustments of the border of Hispaniola that divided what would later become Haiti and the Dominican Republic (Eller, 2016). Fighting between the two colonized sides would continue amidst Spain releasing a part of the island to the French in 1795 (Eller, 2016). It would take just over a decade for Haiti (then still called Santo Domingo) to abolish slavery and declare itself one of the first free Black nations (Eller, 2016). Despite the success of the Haitian revolution, Haiti still lacked proper recognition from countries such as Spain and France. The would-be Dominican side of the island would reject Haiti's abolishment of slavery and have it reinstated two times after the initial 1804 revolution (Eller, 2016).

The Dominican side of the island would strive to separate itself from the Haitian side until the unification (or occupation) of the island in 1822 (Eller, 2016). The term *occupation* comes into use as an opposing description of the unification, meant to represent unfair treatment that Dominican side of the island, though there are likely more people who refer to the period as unification (Santiago, 2004). The Haitian Unification was implemented by then President Jean-Pierre Boyer (Eller, 2016). Those who lived during the unification even noted a special type of bond growing between Black Dominicans and recently arrived Haitians, other industries such as tobacco flourished economically in this period (Eller, 2016). At this point in history Dominicans typically did not categorize themselves as being Black. As being Black and Dominican was seen as mutually exclusive. Instead, many Dominicans and scholars saw the Dominican racial identity as a combination of being Hispanic and Taino (or *indio*) (Ricourt, 2016). The complexity of one's identity consisting of the oppressor and the oppressed creates the myth of the *indio* (Howard, 2001). The Haitian Unification lasted from 1822-1844 and ended with President Boyer fleeing to Jamaica in 1843 to escape forces looking to overthrow him (Eller, 2016). The Spanish would annex Santo Domingo for a last time in 1861, but still had colonial control over the islands of Puerto Rico until 1898 (Paulino, 2016). Spain's loss of Puerto Rico would prompt new interest in the Caribbean for the United States. Combined with Theodore Roosevelt's Monroe Doctrine of 1904 U.S. occupations in Haiti (1915-1934) and the Dominican Republic (1916-1924).

The Dominican Republic would be forever marked by the legacy of Rafael Trujillo who ruled the Dominican Republic from 1930-1961 (Paulino, 2016). Trujillo was installed after the coup d' état of Horacio Vázquez (Paulino, 2016). Though Trujillo would later become a strong

supporter of anti-Haitian rhetoric his first years in office had little to no signs of anti-Haitian propaganda (Paulino, 2016). Trujillo was even quoted once as saying that his maternal grandmother was “Haitian, not Dominican alone” and that “a high proportion of African blood runs through his veins” (Paulino, 2016). I would like to examine Trujillo’s phrasing here, although he was possibly trying to assert his own shared heritage or similarities, he is still separating Dominicans and Haitians. The specification of “African blood” conjures an idea that it is somehow different from the blood of Dominicans. Trujillo was even known to use face makeup daily to lighten his complexion and disguise his Haitian heritage (Wucker, 1999). Trujillo’s regime would continue to disrupt the Haitian identity as he used propaganda to equate Haitianess to Blackness (García-Peña, 2016). As Haitians were newly identified with African heritage other “issues” arose such as the Haitian threat to Hispanidad:

Our racial origins and traditions as a Hispanic people should not keep us from recognizing that our nationality is in danger of disintegrating if we do not employ drastic measures against the threat represented by the neighboring Haitian people [. . .] In order to correct this, we might have to employ tactics that will, without a doubt hurt the sensibility of the Haitian people what's Santo Domingo desires is to preserve its culture and customs of the Hispanic people we are, and stop the disintegration of our soul and the loss of our distinctive characteristics (García-Peña, 2016 p. 98).

This quote by Joaquín Balaguer, a long-time politician and former president of the Dominican Republic, is representative of the fear mongering type propaganda that was created by the Trujillo regime. The role of the victim in this quote has been turned over to the Dominicans who

are notably identified as Hispanics with Hispanic culture, which is meant to further separate Dominicans from Haitian identity and culture (García-Peña, 2016).

The Dominican Haitian border was quite fluid before Trujillo's politics. Before the militarization Haitians and Dominicans crossed the border for religious ceremonies, celebrations, and daily activities (García-Peña, 2016). Leading up to the Parsley Massacre Trujillo had even created a false sense of unity between himself and Haitians (García-Peña, 2016). Trujillo had originally framed the massacre as an insurgent that needed to be contained, with the tactics learned from the U.S. National Guard Trujillo ordered the killing of tens of thousands of people along the Dominican Haitian border (Paulino, 2016). The border was recognized for having a strong presence of Haitian, and Dominican born Haitians (Paulino, 2016). The massacre lasted for several days in October of 1937 and Trujillo later greatly under reported the number of deaths the massacre caused (Crassweller, 1966). Those involved with the Trujillo regime were forced to remain quiet about the genocidal attack, and bodies of the dead were burned and buried in mass graves (Paulino, 2016). Within a decade after the massacre members of Trujillo's cabinet were charged with justifying the killings (García-Peña, 2016 p. 100). At the same time Trujillo had other members of his party publish numerous books describing the attacks as victimizing Dominicans and led by Haitians, Trujillo in full force justified the massacre (García-Peña, 2016). In defending Trujillo's hispanophilic ideals Joaquín Balaguer exclaims that the "*ennegrecimiento*" or "blackening" of the Hispanic (Dominican) population was what needed to be stopped by the massacre (García-Peña, 2016). These ideals were held for decades as curriculum in Dominican schools, today there are more accurate representations of tragedies such as the Parsley Massacre (Paulino, 2016).

The narrative of anti-Haitian rhetoric has become interwoven in the history of the Dominican Republic. One of the most prolific stories, The Galindo Virgins, relates back to the time of unification and tells of how Dominicans were victimized by Haitians. The Galindo Virgins were three girls who lived with their nanny and widowed father at the Andújar Hacienda (García-Peña, 2016). The story follows as two men, Cobial de la Cruz and Gómez, who broke into the Andújar Hacienda where the three daughters were raped, killed, and their bodies were disposed of in a well. The murders occurred in 1822 and were documented by official court documents. The reflections of the Galindo murders did not appear in poetry or art until the 1860's -1890's, where the narrative became increasingly anti-Haitian and pro-Hispanic. The refocusing of the Galindo virgins as white and the killers as Haitian was rooted in strategic racial ideology:

This discursive strategy helped to sustain elite desires for European cultural identity while appeasing global anxiety over the potential creation of another free Black nation on the island of Hispaniola. Literature and history worked together in the production of Domincanness in contrast to Haitianness; Galindo became one of the most important motifs for sustaining anti-Haitian ideology (García-Peña, 2016 p. 25).

The three Galindo Virgins were meant to be the epitome of Dominican Hispanidad and innocence, while the killers were shown as Haitian and therefore Black, ferocious, and merciless. This twisting of a story not only negatively portrays Haitians but reinforces a state of victimhood for the Dominican Republic. This narrative would follow Haiti throughout centuries of Dominican discourse, Haiti had become branded as the “perpetual enemy” of Hispanidad in the Dominican Republic (García-Peña, 2016, p.43). Haiti would be labeled as the oppressor of the

Dominican Republic rather than Spain. At the time Dominicans still very much identified as Hispanic to symbolize their connection to Spain. This led to the refortifications of terms such as *indio*. Essentially the term was used to signify one's racial identity in a purposely vague way and not as Black (Howard, 2001). The myth used to describe the *indio* identity refers to one's heritage being Spanish and indigenous. On the contrary, the majority of indigenous people were killed within fifty years of Spain's arrival due to disease and enslavement. *Indio* is a term more based in racial separation rather than the factual history of Dominicans and Haitians (Howard, 2001).

Discussion

Before starting my research, my I had taken a class "History of Blacks in the Caribbean from 1492", this was the first time I had learned of the complex concepts of race and identity within the Dominican Republic. This opened my interests to the problematic anti-Haitian sentiment and racial ideology that colored the history of the Dominican Republic. As previously stated, the complexity of race in the Dominican Republic is not transferrable to when a Dominican immigrates to the United States. In doing my initial research, I expected to find interviewees who would not be comfortable discussing their racial identity. Race is infamous in the Dominican Republic, where race there refers to nationality and not skin color (Giselle, 2020). Despite my predictions, all of my interview participants were open to discuss their own racial identity and how it related to their family.

Participants' interviews were coded into three themes which included racial identity, family, and cultural symbols. Each participant identified their racial identity as mixed. For example, Mariela and Giselle used the term mixed to refer to their Afro-Latina heritage, Ricardo

and Marisol used mixed to describe the many features of their Dominican identity by referring to it as a spectrum, and Luis used the term mixed to describe his own heritage which included Spanish and European ancestry. None of the participants could say that there was a “Dominican look” or quality that defined Dominicans, the use of the word spectrum as a way to define Dominicanness and examples of different racial identities in one’s own family were brought up, Marisol described the difference between her and her son’s skin tone, which she noted was lighter than her own. Overall, the sentiments about race between participants was more open minded than the historical ideologies represented in my research.

All of the participants interviewed had lived in the U.S. all their lives or at least a significant portion of it. For the participants who had not lived in or traveled to the Dominican Republic they still shared nostalgic memories of how older members of their family described living in the Dominican Republic. For example, Giselle’s parents had grown up in the Dominican Republic and left for the United States due to political instability (2020). Giselle noted that her family enjoyed the United States but still were closed off to some information that was relevant to their Dominican identity. Giselle identifies as a Black woman and as Afro-Latina, where as her mother identifies as a Black Dominican. This led to times where Giselle would be able to help bridge knowledge about race or history in Latin American countries to her mother (2020). Though Giselle had never lived in the Dominican Republic, her knowledge of Latin American had allowed her to connect intergenerationally with her mom. Participants placed importance on acknowledging the complex history of the Dominican Republic. This intersectional point of view allowed participants to be aware of dichotomous racial identities,

racial imaginaries and social locations pertaining to their life in the United States and their knowledge of the Dominican Republic.

Black Lives Matter in the Dominican Republic

In lieu of the recent Black Lives Matter protests I feel the need to address this movement as my work centers on Blackness within the Dominican racial identity. New York City, one of the largest receiving cities of Dominican immigrants, has seen some of the largest demonstrations for Black Lives Matter. I would like to shift my focus from the U.S. to the smaller scale of the Dominican Republic. It is no shock that New York City was a welcoming stage for these demonstrations, what I would like to discuss is the emergence of Black Lives Matter demonstrations in the Dominican Republic and the Twitter hashtag *#PeroNoSomosRacistas*, which translates to *#But we are not racists* (Alcántara, 2020). This hashtag is meant to be ironic and used by Dominicans to call out racist tendencies within their own community. The use of irony and social media to call out examples of anti-Black racism is both self-critical and self-reflexive. These tweets are directly addressing the embedded biases within the history of the Dominican racial identity. I see these tweets as progress and proof that there is change occurring in how some Dominicans view their own social position in a contemporary and socio-historical context. I chose to focus on the Black Lives Matter demonstrations within the Dominican Republic as that is where the root of anti-Haitian rhetoric began. In a country that once saw blackness as a threat to their own status as Dominicans, Black Lives Matter demonstrations have happened as recently as last summer in the Dominican Republic. Anti-Haitian rhetoric is inherently anti-Black and these tweets are a sign that there is

an emergence of critical self-reflectivity shining through to address this sentiment on and off the island of Hispaniola.

Conclusion

Lastly, I would like to refer back to my original research title: Why There Are No Black Dominicans: How Anti-Haitian Sentiment in the Era of Trujillo and the Deeply Rooted Black History of the Island of Hispaniola Affects How Dominicans Racially Identify in New York Today. I have found that among my sample of five Dominicans that anti-Haitian sentiment from the era of Trujillo somewhat had an effect on the participants. It is important to note that not all of the participants had the same amount of racial awareness. Participants such as Giselle and Mariela were most aware of their intersecting points of identities including race, gender, class, and ethnicity. Luis, Ricardo, and Marisol were of course aware of their social location in society and how they were perceived, although their identities were less contextualized in existing social structures and institutions. Luis, Ricardo, and Marisol rather contextualized their identity more so to their lived experiences and family. There is no incorrect way to see one's identity, it is more of matter of realizing how many moving parts make up one's identity.

My findings are socially significant as they dispel common motifs of identity in the United States. First, the idea of a melting pot as representative of a culture or community is disproved as these participants still felt very connected to their Dominican identity. Pride in their own ethnicity was shown through their connections with food and other home practices. Giselle for recalls that even how she was herself relates to her grandmother who lived in the *campesino* rural part of the Dominican Republic:

When I shower I hand wash my underwear and that's like a custom in Caribbean culture.

That's the first thing I do I shower and then I let it air-dry, that's something I've done since I was a little kid. Like that's your washcloth in a way because you didn't always have access to washcloths (2020).

Giselle, like many other participants, maintains a closeness to her ethnicity through shared familial practices. Participants also connected over the type of food, dance, and music shared throughout their family. This is not meant to romanticize family dynamics, but instead represents the liveliness within those who participated.

Race within the Dominican racial imaginary is not simply is turned off when someone immigrates to a new country with a different social construction. Dominicans who have migrated from the Dominican Republic to the United States are now categorized as Black when they may have never identified with this term in the home country (Mariela, 2020). My work is inspired by the authors cited below and their commitment to materialize the Dominican identity in its diverse complexity. The United States' Black and white view of race is greatly limiting to anyone who subscribes outside of these identifiers. Dominicans make up a large percentage of immigrants within New York. In order to better cater and address issues that Dominican communities may face, the idea of groups only being Black or white should be rejected. I am not suggesting that each ethnic or racial group receive a specialized plan but rather policy makers start by understanding the oversimplified racial dichotomy that often excludes many. In order for programs and policies to be implemented they should consider the intersectional identities of those they aim to serve.

Moreover, the research and literature I have been exposed to in my work is endlessly fascinating. As a one person team with guidance from my seminar professor, I would like to acknowledge my own small contribution to the vast field of Dominican identity. My work does not come close to encapsulating all factors of Dominican identity however, I would like to address some of my limitations. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the plan for doing all interviews in person was quickly changed in order to ensure the safety of the participants. Marisol, a longtime friend of mine, completed her interview in person as it was easiest for her to travel with her young son to my house. Phone interviews also created a unique position for me, as I was only able to describe people's identities from their voice and answers to the questions. My participant selection was based on a first come, first serve basis where those who agreed to do the interviews were accepted as soon as they met the requirements. This however, led to four out of five of my participants being either undergraduate or graduate students. Following this trend, my participants ranged from their early twenties to early thirties, leaving a gap for other age groups who may have different lived experiences. If I were able to conduct more interviews I would have like to talk to Dominicans who are above the age of forty and have varying levels of education. If I were to re-conduct my interviews, I would add an additional question to the script in order to properly address Trujillo's regime. The mentioning of Trujillo was typically brought up at the end as an unofficial last question. Overall, I have covered the broad strokes of Dominican racial particular to the anti-Haitian rhetoric promoted by Trujillo. This thesis aims to mend together the historical connections and lived experiences of Dominican who reside in New York today.

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Appendix

Interview Questions: All interview participants were at least 18 years of age. Each interviewee was asked for permission to have their interview recorded, all agreed. Each participant was offered the opportunity to be debriefed on the research and thesis once more of the work had been completed.

1. What types of groups do you see yourself belonging to?
 2. What does Dominicanidad mean to you?
 3. What in your daily life identifies you as Dominican?
 4. What physical features are labeled as desirable or ideal in your family?
 5. Does the way you racially identify differ from how others in your immediate family identify racially? If so, please elaborate.
 6. What do you associate the term Afro-Latina/o Afro-Caribbean with?
 7. Do you believe there is any connection between Dominicanidad and blackness? If so please elaborate.
 8. How similar are the histories of Haiti and the Dominican Republic?
 9. An impromptu ninth question was asked in each interview. The questions asked if the participant had ever heard of Trujillo being spoken of in their house. If so they were asked to explain how he or his time in power was discussed.
- Telephone interview with Mariela, 20 years old, SUNY New Paltz senior, from Westchester, March 18, 2020.

- Telephone interview with Ricardo, 25 years old, CUNY Queens College student, March 18, 2020.
- Face to face interview with Marisol, 22 years old, Young mother with 9 month old son, March 19, 2020.
- Telephone interview with Luis, 32 years old, Geology graduate student born in the Dominican Republic, March 22, 2020.
- Telephone interview with Giselle, 19 years old, SUNY New Paltz Sophomore, March 28, 2020.