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**Liminal Lives: Haitian Migration to the *Barrio* of La Zurza, Santo
Domingo, Dominican Republic**

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**Liminal Lives: Haitian Migration to the *Barrio* of La Zurza, Santo
Domingo, Dominican Republic**

by

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Dedication

For my mother, María, who immigrated to the U.S. for us to have more opportunities, and for all immigrants who seek a life outside of their home countries. May you find a more just and promising world in which your lives and contributions are valued.

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Just as it takes a village to raise a child, so does a cadre of people to encourage and support a graduate student's life. This thesis is a result of an inspirational group of professors, advocates, family, and friends without whom this document would not have become a reality.

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I want to thank the Haitian community of La Zurza for allowing me into their community and sharing with me their stories and experiences. Your stories have left an impact on me and I hope to continue fighting for human rights and justice in my future research and work. Thank you for sharing a part of yourselves with me. Thank you to Danila Yosef for your kindred spirit, laughs, and welcoming me into your home and community in La Zurza. Without you this project would have turned out differently. Know you have also left a tremendous impact on me. May you soon be reunited with your family.

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lose sight of those who have less and to continue fighting for human rights and dignity for all.

Abstract

Liminal Lives: Haitian Migration to the Barrio of La Zurza, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2017

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Immigration by Haitians to the Dominican Republic is a long-standing phenomenon, and today, an estimated 210,000 Haitians live as undocumented immigrants in the Dominican Republic. Immigration from Haiti has been driven by a variety of factors, including historic labor programs designed to attract cheap labor; and poverty, political turmoil and lack of economic opportunities in Haiti. In the Dominican Republic, Haitians tend to primarily live in ethnic enclaves, including a high concentration in the capital, Santo Domingo, and particularly in the informal settlement of La Zurza. Using the concepts of “black sense of place,” liminality, and maroonage, I contend that Haitians in La Zurza have built support networks that create community and a sense of solidarity, serving as a source of resilience to contend with the precarious conditions they encounter in La Zurza daily. A survey conducted with two dozen Haitian-born residents of La Zurza shows that Haitians remain in the community for several years, suggesting that their informal support network

helps them contend with racialized violence in places such as the Duarte Market in La Zurza, which serves as the principal source of employment for Haitians. However, while Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent have thus created a black sense of place through the constant (re)negotiation of their identities, their liminal, undocumented status also serves to reproduce their state of displacement and placelessness. In particular, their vulnerable position has been exacerbated by the passage of Law TC 168-13 in 2013, retroactively stripping Dominicans of Haitian descent of their citizenship and further intensifying anti-Haitian rhetoric. Undocumented Haitians thus must contend with an ambivalent legal status, which limits their social and geographic mobility and their access to economic opportunities.

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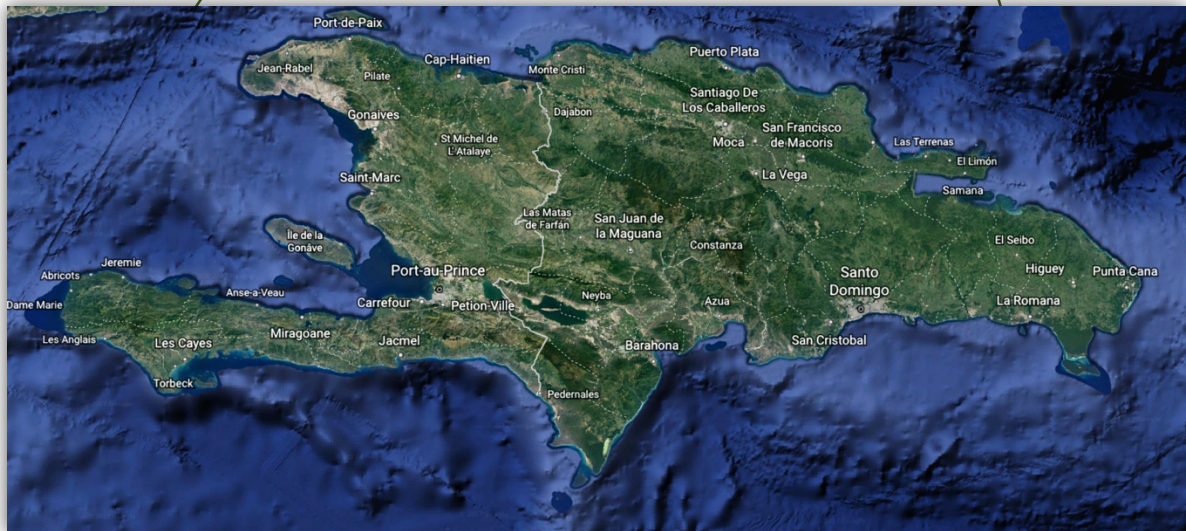
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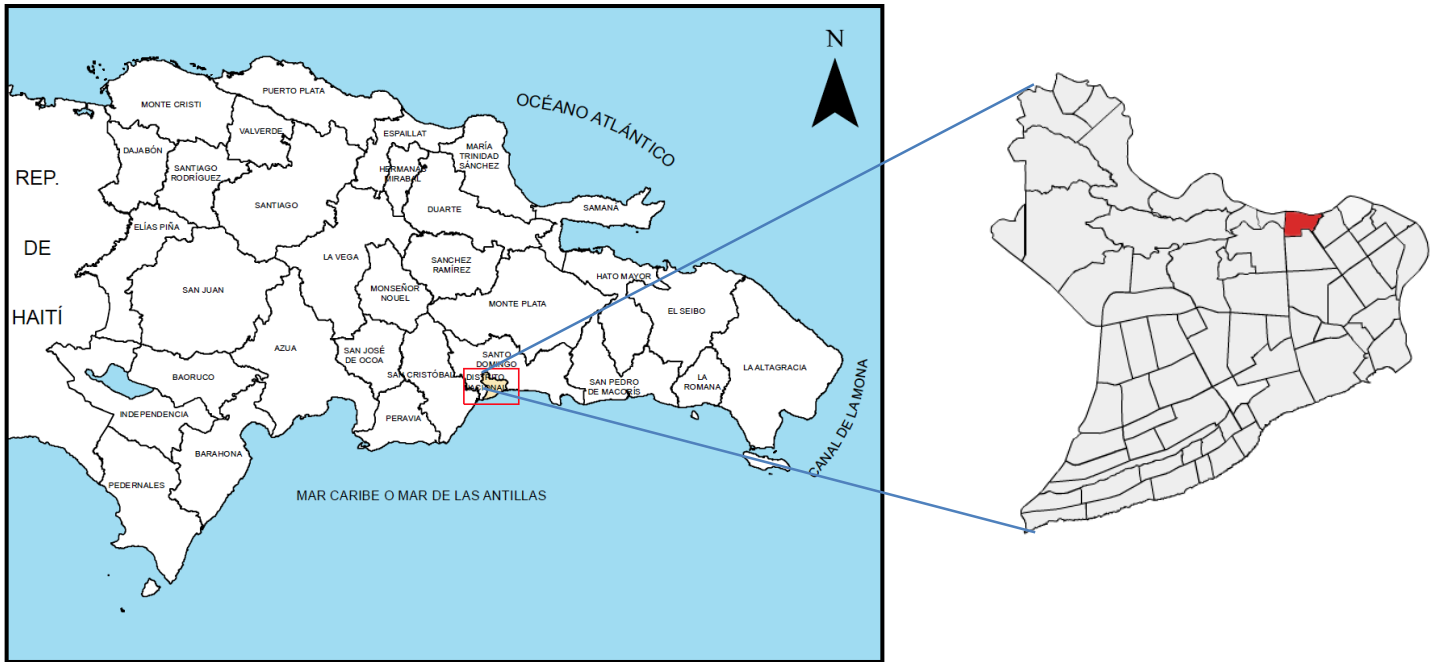
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Map 1.1| Island of Hispaniola
Source: Google Earth



Map. 1.2 | District Map of the Dominican Republic
 National District highlighted and barrio of La Zurza filled
 Source: Oficina Nacional de Estadística (ONE) Dominican Republic

Map 1.3 | Satellite view of
 La Zurza and boundaries
 Source: Google Earth



Chapter 1: Introduction

The 2016 documentary, *Our Lives in Transit*, explores the aftermath of the controversial law passed in the Dominican Republic in 2013, which stripped Dominicans of Haitian descent of their birthright citizenship. The law, TC/0168/13, commonly known as *La sentencia* or “The Sentence,” applies to all Dominicans whose parents were not born in the Dominican Republic, and is retroactive for anyone born in 1929 or after.¹ This law has left an estimated 210,000 individuals either stateless or in limbo. In the film, viewers witness a year in the life of a young, courageous community leader and lawyer by the name of Rosa Iris Diendomi, who actively fights for the rights of her community through her activism and professional work. For Diendomi and others in her position, not having documents or a *cédula*, a national identification card makes it a challenge and at times impossible to live out their daily lives in the Dominican Republic. Without a nationality, basic rights that all citizens should be afforded such as access to an education, the job market, a driver’s license, the ability to buy or sell property, legally marry, vote, open a bank account, or even buy and own a cell phone through one of the major cell phone carriers are forfeited.

This thesis will explore the Haitian community in La Zurza in Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic, examining the roles of both the Dominican and Haitian states in effecting structural violence² through discriminatory laws and policies, neoliberal and capitalistic extractions that perpetuate a cycle of poverty and necessity for cheap labor,

¹ Martínez, S. and Wooding, B. (2017, pg.101).

² Galtung, J. (1969).

and apathy from both countries. I first became interested in the Dominican Republic after hearing the phrase, “*Tenemos el negro detrás de la oreja* [We have the black behind the ears]³” from a conversation with one of my undergraduate professors, the anthropologist Dr. Christine Hippert. This phrase caught my attention and sparked my curiosity as to why it was common for Dominicans to say this. After a series of conversations with Dr. Hippert, I set out on researching as much as I could about the Dominican Republic and learned she was going to be taking students on a faculty-led trip to the Dominican Republic in 2012. In March 2012, I visited the Dominican Republic for the first time to carry out preliminary research and explore Dominican racial identity formation and Dominicans’ relationship to its neighboring country, Haiti. The trip had a tremendous impact on me and I knew I wanted to return to study the country further. After my first year of my graduate studies in Latin American Studies and Community and Regional Planning at UT, I returned to the Dominican Republic, specifically to La Zurza, Santo Domingo, in June 2015 to carry out preliminary field research on *buzos* or recyclers. Specifically, I wanted to focus on the role Haitian *recicladores* (recyclers) play in the informal economy of the Dominican Republic, and the spaces they occupy in often the most marginal of places. After my preliminary research, I decided to focus more broadly on Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent and their daily lives in La Zurza and the ways they navigated different forms of marginalization, labor in the informal economy, and the role of the city market in their community.

³ Alix, J.A. (1883). 19th century poem, “El negro detrás de la oreja”

The thesis is based on two periods of formal and informal field work in La Zurza, in June 2015 but also in summer 2016. My research in 2016 was funded by a scholarship awarded by Dr. Bjørn Sletto's National Science Foundation (NSF) International Research Experience for Students (IRES) grant. The preliminary research in 2015 was funded by a FLAS Fellowship through the U.S. Dept. of Education, which allowed me to spend three weeks in Santo Domingo familiarizing myself with the city. Through the Haitian Studies Summer Institute at Florida International University (FIU), I spent four weeks in Miami in 2015 learning Haitian Creole and two weeks traveling throughout the southern coast of Haiti and Port-au-Prince.

METHODS

In my research, I used a mixed method approach with both qualitative and quantitative research methods. These included semi-structured and open-ended interviews, observations, and *caminatas* (or walkabouts) throughout La Zurza to observe and gather information from key informants that included Haitian residents, and administrators from the non-governmental organization (NGO) Fundación de Saneamiento Ambiental de La Zurza (FUNDSAZURZA). In addition, I also interviewed representatives from the NGO Comité Para la Defensa de los Derechos Barriales (COPADEBA), and immigration lawyers with Fundación Juan Bosch, and the former Dominican Ambassador to Haiti, Alberto Espradel. Furthermore, I had the opportunity to travel to Dajabón, a city on the border of the Dominican Republic and Haiti, to see the border, the market, and Haitian street vendors to contextualize the migratory experience of Haitians not only in Santo Domingo but also in a border city.

POSITIONALITY

As an interdisciplinary scholar, my work is strongly influenced by geographer and black feminist Katherine McKittrick. I adopt Katherine McKittrick's concept of creating a "black sense of place" in contested sites in the Americas, whether it be prisons, plantations, or slave ships, and their roles in reproducing racialized violence which in turn serve as attempts to destroy a black sense of place. A black sense of place can be defined as the "process of materially *and* imaginatively situating historical and contemporary struggles against practices of domination *and* the difficult entanglements of racial encounter."⁴ It sheds light on the ways in which racial violence shapes but does not entirely define black worlds. This racial violence, according to McKittrick, involves acts or structural patterns aimed or constructed to inflict harm. These acts include institutional racism and hate speech, lynching and economic exploitation, segregation of people based on assumptions of biological differences, and containment, militarism, policing and surveillance.⁵ Many of these activities have been witnessed or remain present in the Dominican Republic.

In my research, I see Haitians' knowledge of their own communities (whether in Haiti or La Zurza) and their contributions to "both the real and imagined human geographies" as potentially both political acts and forms of expressions. Research in black geographies reveal how the racialized production of space becomes possible through "explicit demarcations" of the spaces of "*les damnés*."⁶ This research has revealed a brutal

⁴ McKittrick, K. (2011, pg. 949).

⁵ McKittrick, K. (2011, pg. 960).

⁶ McKittrick, K. & Wood, C. (2007, pg. 4). In this reference both authors reference Caribbean literary scholar Frantz Fanon's *Les damnés de la terre* (1961) or *The Wretched of the Earth*.

segregation, producing La Zurza as a site marked by abandonment, marginalization, vulnerability, and exploitation. Despite these characteristics, however, as McKittrick and Wood also state, sites such as La Zurza provide a way to begin thinking about the lives of subaltern subjects as shaped by, and shaping, “imaginative, three-dimensional, social, and political contours of human geography.”⁷ Embedded in these geographies are dominant and often repressive modes of power, but Haitians’ experience in La Zurza may also help us consider alternative ways of imagining the world and situate a black sense of place. In my research, I focus on three different sites within La Zurza: el Mercado Duarte (Duarte Market), Haitians’ homes, and lastly Haitians’ bodies. Through these sites, I hope to better illustrate not merely a black sense of place, but how Haitians living in La Zurza are both in place *and* placeless.

GREATER HAITIAN MIGRATION

When considering migration of Haitians, it should be understood within the wider context of Caribbean history after 1492.⁸ After the European colonization in the 16th century had nearly decimated the entire Arawak and Carib population of the Caribbean, the region became populated by African slaves, forced and purchased from slave traders to work in cattle and sugar cane plantations.⁹ The abolition of slavery in the Caribbean did not come to fruition until 1880, beginning in Cuba which by then was populated by an

⁷ McKittrick, K. & Wood, C.A. (2007, pg. 5).

⁸ Wooding, B. and Moseley-Williams, R. (2004, pg. 24).

⁹ See Martínez, S. (1995) for more historical information on cattle and sugar cane plantations in the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

estimated two million African slaves.¹⁰ As the slave trade and slavery came to an end, plantation owners sought other laborers from other countries and regions. A significant number of indentured workers from India settled in countries such as Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago in the late 19th century, many of them children.¹¹ Although the exact number of children of Haitian descent in the DR is unknown, an estimated 20 percent of the two to three million undocumented individuals residing in the Dominican Republic are children.¹² I would estimate however, this number to be higher after the 2010 earthquake to strike Haiti, as well as with the most recent hurricane in Oct. 2016, Hurricane Matthew.

It is also important to note that Haitians have not merely immigrated to the DR, but elsewhere such as Cuba, the Bahamas, Puerto Rico, the U.S., Canada, and other European countries (France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, and Switzerland), where they often remain undocumented or stateless.¹³ A stateless individual is regarded as ‘any person who is not considered as a national by any state through that state’s nationality legislation or constitution.’¹⁴ Thus statelessness does not solely refer to a geographical designation but also to social and political conditions.

The causes of statelessness are intricate and multidimensional, including factors such as state succession, decolonization, conflicting laws between states, internal changes

¹⁰ Wooding, B. and Moseley-Williams, R. (2004, pg. 24).

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Kosinski, S. (2009, pg. 382).

¹³ Migration Policy Institute tabulation of data from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2015). “Trends in International Migrant Stock: Migrants by Destination and Origin,” United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.201

¹⁴ Leclerc, P., & Coalville, R. (2007).

to nationality, and discrimination.¹⁵ In the case of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, a plethora of factors (which will be discussed further in the thesis) have driven Haitians to migrate to the Dominican Republic, including political turmoil, natural disasters, violence, repression, and extreme poverty. One important reason for migration is that the Dominican Republic today is arguably more prosperous than Haiti (the DR's economy is eight times the size of Haiti's), driving many Haitians to work in the Dominican Republic.¹⁶ Traditionally they have obtained jobs in sugar cane plantations (*bateyes*), typically along the border, through officially sanctioned labor programs.¹⁷ More recently, they have turned to construction work (see Petrozziello, 2013 and Wooding et al., 2004), and work in the informal sector as street vendors (harvesting and selling fruits and vegetables, or candy), and as market vendors (selling clothes or an array of household items). Because of the type of informal labor, they pursue and the lack of protections they have, Haitians often occupy a vulnerable socio-economic position within the Dominican economy. However, even though Haitians provide essential labor for the Dominican economy, there is pervasive discrimination against Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent, as we see in the barrio of La Zurza in Santo Domingo. Here, racist prejudices, economic exploitation, and police surveillance of Haitians is common. Before I delve into racialized violence in La Zurza, however, it is important to note some of its history and why this research location was chosen (Fig. 1.1).

¹⁵ Kosinski, S. (2009, pg. 379)

¹⁶ Nolan, R. (2015).

¹⁷ Martínez, S. (1995).

LA ZURZA



Figure 1.1 | A mural of Río Isabela and Río Osama (Isabel and Osama Rivers) meeting painted on the Puente Presidente Peynado just outside of La Zurza. Photograph by author

La Zurza is known for its water aquifer, which serves not merely as a source of natural spring water but also for recreational use among people of all ages. On any weekend, children will be bathing or jumping into the water and even men will be washing themselves in the river (but I never saw women in the water). But La Zurza is also known for extreme violence and delinquency. I do not say this to repeat the narrative of violence and delinquency portrayed in the media, even in the Dominican Republic. Rather, I base this on the experiences recounted by Dominicans as well as Haitians. For example, one day

I was informed by my research assistant that a Dominican man had been stabbed to death that morning before sunrise. An argument of some sort had transpired between two men, one of whom was Dominican and the other Haitian. Offensive comments were said to the Haitian man, who had retaliated with a machete and stabbed the man to death. I was struck by what had happened—that someone had died in the same neighborhood I was in that morning. However, what surprised me most was how typical this was. I was told it was a common occurrence for a fight or murder to take place, which is why very few people in La Zurza leave their homes before sunrise. Those who leave their homes before sunrise do so for work, such as cooking food to sell or preparing for the morning trucks delivering vegetables and fruits.

STRUCTURE OF THESIS

In Chapter 1, I briefly explain my methodology and research. Then I provide my theoretical framework through migration theory and liminality to better understand migration from Haitians to the D.R. in Chapter 2. I then provide a historical timeline of Haitian migration to the Dominican Republic and the indelible traces the different coup d'états, the U.S. occupations, and numerous dictatorships have left on the Dominican Republic in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4, I analyze the barrio of La Zurza, the reasons for Haitian migration to La Zurza, and the geography of the Haitian community in La Zurza. Next, in Chapter 5 I address some of the repercussions of Haitian migration to La Zurza and provide recommendations for legalizing their status, dignity, and human rights.

Chapter 2: Liminality, Hybridity, and Subjectivity in Hispaniola and the Caribbean

LIMINALITY

The concept of liminality is used to understand subjects' identity formations, relationships with power, and resistance to cultural and racial domination.¹⁸ Liminality can be defined as a state in-between two opposing cultural forces. In the case of Haitians in the Dominican Republic, their marginal status can be understood to derive from their liminal precariousness, as they are neither in Haiti nor safely situated in the DR. This in-between condition leads both to mimicry and resistance.¹⁹ As Homi K. Bhaba in *Location of Culture* (2007) argues, liminality takes the form of a stairwell: “in-between designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities.”

The liminal space affords the possibility of two worlds—the upper and lower part of the stairwell—but also allows for individuals (in this case, Haitians) to be neither of these two. This space can be negotiated apart from the dialectic of just Black or White, and can be designated as a space of both empowerment and resistance. However, liminal identities are not static. They are ever-changing and traverse both the upper and lower

¹⁸ Trewick, L. E. (2003).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

spaces.²⁰ Therefore, there is a negotiation of cultural identity that involves an exchange of cultural performances that “produce a mutual and mutable recognition (or representation) of cultural difference.”²¹ In other words, identities become negotiated and depending on the spaces people are in, they will perform or represent themselves in different ways. Bhaba refers to this space as “Third Space,” a site of enunciation, “the precondition for the articulation of cultural difference.”²²

In exploring this Third Space, the politics of polarity may be eluded and emerge as the other of ourselves.”²³ Haitians therefore do not simply have liminal identities (I will further explain this throughout the chapter), but also occupy this Third Space. As migrants from Haiti to the capital city of Santo Domingo, this Third Space may also contribute to forms of acculturation among Haitians but also a refusal of acculturation as a form of resistance. The Third Space “displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom.”²⁴ As migrants, Haitians create and produce new hybrid realities, whether it’s through the new networks of people in where they live, or even the families they form. These experiences through migration are both limiting and liberating. The Third Space can thus foster “strategies of resistance.”²⁵ When using the term “resistance,” I’m drawing on Lilleth Trewick’s derivation from Selwyn Cudjoe, who *Resistance and*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Bhaba, H. (2004, p. 38).

²³ Bhaba, H. (2004, p. 39).

²⁴ Bhaba, H. (2004, p. 211).

²⁵ Bhaba, H. (2004, p. 9).

Caribbean Literature (1980) sees resistance as acts “that may be enacted using mimicry, personal, organized, or subtle responses to hegemonic forces.”²⁶ As Haitians resist the Haitian government or state by migrating to the Dominican Republic, the liminal spaces Haitians occupy are therefore necessary for both resistance and survival.

Scholarly debates on Liminality, Hybridity, and Subjectivity

The terms liminality, hybridity, and subjectivity help explain the relationships between the oppressed and the oppressing, and are helpful tools to articulate Haitian migratory experiences to Santo Domingo. Hybridity can be defined as, “the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization.”²⁷ Cultural identity per Bhaba, always emerges in contradictory and ambivalent spaces. Like liminality, this “in-between” space carries the “burden and meaning of culture,” which is why hybridity becomes an important concept in post-colonial discourse.²⁸ Subjectivity, meanwhile, considers peoples’ perception of their selves (in this case Haitians) and who through “their capacity to resist the conditions of their domination, their ‘subjection’ comes into play.”²⁹

After reviewing the work of important scholars in postcolonial, feminist, and literary studies, such as Aimé Césaire, Édouard Glissant, Frantz Fanon, Maryse Condé, Edward Said, Stuart Hall, Michelle Cliff, Chandra Mohanty, I am choosing to focus on Bhaba’s influential work on the concepts of liminality, hybridity, and subjectivity, as well

²⁶ Trewick, L. E. (2003).

²⁷ Ashcroft, B. et al. (2007, pg. 108).

²⁸ Ashcroft, B. et al. (2007, pg. 109).

²⁹ Ashcroft, B. et al. (2007, pg. 201).

as the work of Maurice Hall, Marwan Kraidy, and Rake Shome. These scholars can help us understand the migration experiences of Haitians to Santo Domingo, as well as the role of space and place in the lives of Haitians in La Zurza.

In his essay, *The Postcolonial Caribbean as a Liminal Space: Authoring Other Modes of Contestation and Affirmation* (2007) Maurice Hall examines the roles of liminality and hybridity for identity and cultural production in the English-speaking Caribbean. He describes the limits of these terms through “spatial and temporal metaphors,” and seeks to offer an alternative perspective through performance as a way of “theorizing resistance hegemony as communicatively constructed.”³⁰ Hall argues the debate on liminality must be situated within the wider context of postcolonial studies, and is therefore intertwined in the complexities of history, power, culture, and nationality.³¹ That is to say, postcolonial studies seeks to address the “problematics of colonization and decolonization”³² and is therefore informed by a stance that is explicitly emancipatory, unlike other critical theory such as feminist, Marxist, queer, and critical race theory.³³ He examines the framing of the Caribbean as a liminal space and views Bhabha’s work as influential but also controversial. Similarly, Ania Loomba argues that Bhabha’s work “generalizes and universalizes the colonial encounter”³⁴ as it does not focus on specific histories or locations. She further argues that his emphasis on discourse ignores or sidelines

³⁰ Hall, M. (2007, pg. 1).

³¹ Hall, M. (2007, pg. 2).

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Hall, M. (2007, pg. 3).

³⁴ *Ibid.* Hall derives this from Ania Loomba’s work, *Colonialism/postcolonialism* (1998).

the “very real, material conditions of poverty, violence and domination,” that were hallmarks of the “colonial enterprise and its aftermath.”³⁵ Indeed, the conditions of poverty, violence, and domination experienced by Haitians in La Zurza are tangible and felt throughout the neighborhood.

Another critique of hybridity is that the concept is “fuzzy and useless theoretically.”³⁶ The term is too pervasive and its common use affirms the “corporate rhetoric of globalization” that treats “world cultures as vast market places.”³⁷ Kraidy argues these concepts do not address the imperialism and domination that people in the developing world face and suffer. As stated previously, this domination is present with Haitians in Santo Domingo and in La Zurza, despite the jobs they can obtain in the informal economy. Imperialism and its remnants from the French are deeply embedded in Haiti and continue to shape the sociocultural climate of Haiti, which suggests that Bhaba’s concept of hybridity may be limited in revealing the legacy of imperialism and domination that remains in Haiti today.

Hall discusses Raka Shome’s arguments against hybridity in that it limits the “undergirding spatial” metaphors typically used to evaluate culture, power, and identity. Metaphors that are spatially oriented such as center-margin, location-dislocation, border and in-between-ness are problematic as they assume a fixed, static, and “unproblematic

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Hall, M. (2007, pg. 4). References Kraidy, M. (2002). Hybridity in cultural globalization. *Communication Theory*, (12), 316-339.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

reality rather a material,”³⁸ restricting how cultural power is achieved in ways that have ramifications for identity and agency. However, these spatial metaphors clarify both cultural power and politics in relation to development and cultural production. The “material” manifestations of power “are necessary, but often excluded dimensions” in the analysis of hegemonic realities.³⁹ Hall states that it is important to be mindful of this debate to examine how power, production of culture, and identity can be evaluated through spatial metaphors. To better comprehend the nuances and complexities of the Caribbean and go beyond the metaphor of liminality, Hall argues, we must understand its geography.

The island states of the Caribbean encompass an archipelago running north from the coast of Venezuela some 2,500 miles to the south of Florida, separating the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico from the Atlantic.⁴⁰ Nearly 34 million people live on the islands, which at one point or another were colonized by the French, Spanish, English, and the Dutch. The inhabitants of the Caribbean are “ex-slaves of Black African descent,” but the cultures of the islands are mixtures of both European and African influences. The Caribbean islands therefore are situated between two large continents to the north and to the south, but the terms south, north, and in-between also have a political, economic, and cultural weight.⁴¹ An example of this is that the Global South is commonly associated with “poverty, socio-cultural adolescence, and technological infancy,”⁴² while the north

³⁸ *Ibid.* Emphases the same as Hall. He cites Raka Shome’s (2003) work, *Space matters: The power and practice of space. Communication Theory, 13*, 39-56.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Hall, M. (2007, pg. 5).

⁴² *Ibid.*

signifies “wealth, socio-cultural maturity, and technological sophistication.”⁴³ Because of this, the Caribbean and its in between-ness take on the connotations of “political, economic, cultural oppression, as well as racial domination and geo-political isolation.”⁴⁴

Because of its location between North and South America, the Caribbean is also paradoxically both visible and invisible. For those in the global north, the Caribbean is most visible and recognizable as a “premiere tourist destination.” It is a paradise that lies at the edge of North America. However, for those who live in the Caribbean islands it is not always a paradise. Despite their visibility as tourist destinations, the islands “are invisible as nation states” and viewed as irrelevant to discussions of the information age, technology infrastructure development, and globalization.⁴⁵ Hall also contends the Caribbean islands exist in a “context of economic dependency and subordination in the aftermath” of programs imposed through institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.⁴⁶ Furthermore, the policies that have been enacted or associated with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) leave the Caribbean deserted in terms of trade and other relationships with neighbors to the north.

Hall further argues that the position of the Caribbean islands has made them susceptible and/or vulnerable to the “ravages of colonial capitalistic enterprises.”⁴⁷ Both Haiti and the Dominican Republic have been dominated by disaster aid relief and non-

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Hall, M. (2007, pg. 6).

governmental organizations (NGOs). Though many NGOs are well intentioned, there has been a history of exploitation and mishandling of monetary donations.⁴⁸

At the same time, the mixture of European, African, and Indian populations has created a rich Caribbean culture. The geographical location of the islands has created a crossroads where a multitude of cultures and nationalities of the world are represented.⁴⁹ The Caribbean and its islands therefore becomes a contested site politically, economically and socio-culturally. For example, while Haiti and the Dominican Republic were colonized by the French and Spanish, respectively, neoliberal policies, capitalism, and globalization have left indelible marks in both countries and produced them as liminal spaces. The concept of liminality then, allows for an analysis of the impact of geography and history on identity formations throughout the Caribbean, whether it is the Spanish speaking, Francophone, or Anglophone islands. In Haiti, the legacy of the French remains, while the colonial history and dominance by Spain is deeply embedded in the political, economic and socio-cultural climate of the Dominican Republic.

Liminality, Postcoloniality and Space

The term postcolonial, according to Hall, is contested because it assumes a “fixed relationship with a colonial past that is indefinite” and relies on the historical and cultural

⁴⁸ For more information, see: Schuller, M. (2012). *Killing with kindness: Haiti, International Aid, and NGOs*. Also, Schuller, M. (2016). *Humanitarian aftershocks in Haiti*. For more on public health, see Paul Farmer's work. To learn more about the role of international players' role in Haiti, see Maguire, R. and Freeman, S. (2017).

⁴⁹ Hall, M. (2007, pg. 6).

interpretation of Europe as the center and the Caribbean as the margin or periphery.⁵⁰ In addition, the word “post” colonial implies that the current political context is no longer associated with the colonial history.⁵¹ However, the politics of location are important to consider, especially as the geopolitical locations of Haiti and the Dominican Republic serve to reproduce “the active, structuring, material workings of power.”⁵² Because of its geopolitical location, Hispaniola becomes eroticized, exploited, and tested upon, and continues to be colonized and even dismissed not only in economic and political venues, but also in the academy. There needs to be a decolonizing of the Caribbean, especially in Haiti and in the Dominican Republic, and a revival of African and Taíno histories and cultures.

If liminality is understood as fixedness and premised on a degree of vagueness,⁵³ and if researchers fail to focus on the body, “concrete, material realities of racism and gender oppression [will be] inadequately explored”. While debates surrounding liminality are centered on how culture, politics, and history of the region influence societies, individuals’ bodies and their embodiment in the way they live and author their lives becomes less of a focus. Residents of the region “actively participate in writing against the

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Hall, M. (2007, pg. 7). Hall references H. Bhaba’s (1996) work, *Postmodernism/postcolonialism*. He also references A. Kavoori’s (1998) work, *Getting past the latest ‘post’: Assessing the term ‘post-colonial.’* R. Shome’s (1998) work, *Caught in the term “post-colonial”: Why the term “post-colonial” still matters.*

⁵² Hall, M. (2007, pg. 7). Hall references R. Shome’s (2003) work, “*Space matters: The power and practice of space.*”

⁵³ Hall, M. (2007, pg. 8).

political and historical incursions that have marked the region and their existence.”⁵⁴ It is therefore important to focus not only on the external elements that influence Haitians living in Santo Domingo or La Zurza, but also on the role of their bodies and how they are read or interpreted.

Blackness continues to be negated in Haiti and the Dominican Republic,⁵⁵ and is devalued in relationship to White and indigenous heritages. However, it is important to acknowledge there is now a celebration and revival of African and indigenous cultures in both countries. People in the Caribbean islands continue to negotiate dominance of White identity “in the face of systematic subordination of African and Indian identities.”⁵⁶ African and indigenous populations have had to fight to preserve their own cultural and religious practices in the face of continued colonialism and mimicry, expression, performance, and desire for White European culture while regarding Blackness and African culture as inferior.

Ultimately, liminality and hybridity are useful concepts in helping to explain the (re)negotiation of identities and their connections to the political, economic, and socio-cultural discourses throughout the Caribbean. It is important to consider the enduring colonial legacies in both countries and how socio-cultural discourses play out in the everyday lives of Haitians and Dominicans. It is essential when discussing these terms to also consider how the body and the self may serve as forms of resistance and agency

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Howard, D. (2001), Torres-Saillant, S. (2000), Candelario, G.E.B. (2007), Ricourt, M. (2016).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

towards hegemonic and colonizing forces. Migration can be one way Haitians resist and create their own forms of agency against colonialism and modern state powers, but this resistance must be understood within a historical context defined in part by a shared border and a history of both conflict and co-dependency.

Chapter 3: A Brief Historical Overview of Haitian and Dominican Relations

The Haitian Revolution left an indelible mark on Haiti. It was at once demarcated as both the first free Black Republic through the first successful slave uprising in the Western Hemisphere and as a model for future hemispheric revolutions against hegemonic powers. Despite this historic moment, Haiti has struggled post-independence to maintain stability. In what ways have these shifts contributed to a Haitian exodus, particularly to its neighboring country, the Dominican Republic? In this chapter, I analyze the history of Haitian migration to the Dominican Republic and some of the reasons for migration.

How is Haitian migration different from other forms of migration? Since both countries make up the island of Hispaniola and have a shared history, despite the differences in the nations who colonized each one, there has long been migration by Haitians to various parts of the Dominican Republic. Whether it's border cities such as Dajabón, Jimaní, or Monte Cristo; or cities on the coast like Barahona, Puerto Plata; or San Pedro de Macoris and even cities in the interior of the country such as La Vega, Santiago; or the capital city of Santo Domingo, Haitians are migrating to cities seeking jobs in the informal sector as street vendors and market vendors.⁵⁷

To understand the difficulties Haiti faces and to challenge the stereotypical exceptionalism associated with Haiti, it is important to consider the intersectional forces at

⁵⁷ Petrozziello, A.J. (2012) and Wooding, B. & Moseley-Williams, R. (2004).

play. These include concepts such as “power, class, the state, empire, gender, nation, and race” which are integral and provide “heuristic tools to understand the Haitian reality.”⁵⁸ This Haitian reality is shaped by formidable forces such as the Haitian bourgeoisie, an imposed neoliberal regime, a crisis of governability, and some of the natural disasters such as the January 2010 earthquake and the most recent, Hurricane Matthew, in October 2016. Per a New York Times article, Hurricane Matthew was the worst natural disaster to strike the country since 2010.⁵⁹ Using Futton, Jr.’s concept of the “outer periphery” to describe Haiti, the country can be understood as “a new zone of catastrophe and zero-sum politics” that consists of states under “international tutelage or occupation.”⁶⁰ In other words, international actors’ interference in Haiti have in part caused it to enter into an “outer periphery.” These forces inadvertently drive people Haitians to migrate elsewhere, whether it’s to the Dominican Republic, the U.S. (particularly cities like Miami, Boston, New York), Jamaica, the Bahamas, Brazil, or other Caribbean nations as well as across the Atlantic to countries such as the Netherlands or Spain.

The idea that migration will improve an individual’s life is rooted in “equilibrium theory,” which has been a dominant perspective in migration studies.⁶¹ Equilibrium theory takes into consideration the “spatial imbalances” in labor supply and demand between the sending and receiving areas. However, this theory reduces migration to “rational calculation” of personal costs and potential benefits that can be derived from migrating and

⁵⁸ Futton, R. Jr. (2014, pg. 5).

⁵⁹ Ahmed, A. (2016).

⁶⁰ Futton, Jr. (2014, pg. 9).

⁶¹ Martínez, S. (1995, pg. 18).

living in another area.⁶² Like other migrants, Haitians migrate to a different country as laborers, not to establish residency, so they can return home with more resources. In the process, ties that bind families together may become stronger or severed, depending on one's documentation status.

Reconciling the Haitian Revolution and silenced history

Although slavery was abolished in 1880, Haitians had gained their independence from colonial powers 76 years earlier, on January 1st, 1804 after a bloody and tumultuous 12-year struggle that started in 1791 between French colonists and slaves for the liberation of San Domingue. This 12-year struggle for independence culminated in the liberation of San Domingue or Ayiti as it would later become called in the Haitian Revolution. The Haitian Revolution prompted a slave uprising that led to the first Black independent nation in the Western Hemisphere. The revolution's ramifications reverberated throughout the Americas, but was later silenced and not acknowledged as a precursor to anti-colonial and liberation movements in Africa. This silencing of the past is an all too common occurrence, which Michel-Rolph Trouillot states in his book, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1995). In this, he describes the Haitian Revolution as an event unthinkable even as it unfolded. French colonists were convinced slaves were "obedient and tranquil" and that they had nothing to fear from the 'Negroes.' "The Negroes were very obedient and always will be." Many of the colonists slept with their doors and windows open. "Freedom for Negroes is a chimera."⁶³ To their utter surprise and horror,

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Trouillot, M.-R. (1995, pg. 72). Trouillot cites historian Roger Dorsinville as stating these words.

the unthinkable reality of the Haitian Revolution challenged the “ontological and political assumptions of the most radical writers of the Enlightenment.”⁶⁴

After Saint Domingue’s independence it became known to the world as Ayiti, or Haiti. Haiti’s independence did not last long, as a new elite dominated by Haitian mulattoes (those of mixed African, French, and Spanish descent) emerged to replace the French and exerted their own political and economic power.⁶⁵ Soon the young nation encountered barriers erected by the major world powers Britain, Spain, the U.S., and France, which were “nervous about the existence of a black republic.” Fear of the ramifications of Haitian independence haunted these nations, as it could set a precedent for other slave-based colonies. Haitian merchants were denied official representation from foreign nations to which the country traded and/or did business. Haiti “had to compete with the competition of plantations” in Central America and the Antilles. ⁶⁶ It took 60 years for the U.S. to grant diplomatic recognition to Haiti.⁶⁷

Haitian Migration & Exodus: Three Periods

In the 19th century, sugar became one of the most valuable agricultural exports from the Caribbean. Countries best suited for sugar production included not just Haiti, but the Dominican Republic and Cuba, and to some extent Puerto Rico.⁶⁸ These Caribbean islands have large areas of fertile land that is relatively flat and well irrigated through rain and

⁶⁴ Trouillot, M.-R. (1995, pg. 82).

⁶⁵ Coupeau (2007, pg. 34).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Coupeau (2007, pg. 37).

⁶⁸ Wooding, B. and Moseley-Williams, R. (2004, pg. 24).

rivers, which makes it ideal for crops like sugarcane and coffee to flourish. However, what the Dominican Republic and Cuba did not have was the manual labor that was required in the new plantations to cut the sugarcane.⁶⁹

Some of the first sugar cane workers to be brought to the Dominican Republic and Cuba from other islands were *cocolos* from the English-speaking eastern Caribbean islands, but the principal workforce brought to the new plantations was Haitians. Approximately 30-40,000 Haitian laborers, known as *braceros*, “annually went to the Oriente province of Cuba from 1913 to 1931.”⁷⁰ A significant number of Haitian braceros went to estates “illegally,” before contract labor was introduced by the U.S. military governments in 1919. The number of Haitian braceros who were contracted on a yearly basis, two decades after 1919 is unavailable. Close to 5,000 a year is a rough estimate. In the Dominican census of 1920, 28,258 Haitians were contracted and 52,647 in 1935.⁷¹ After World War II, Haitian workers cutting sugar cane ceased in Cuba, and the main destination became the Dominican Republic and the French Caribbean territories (Guadeloupe, Martinique, French Guyana, San Martin), the U.S. Canada, as well as mainland France.

A decreasing number of West Indians were brought to the Dominican Republic in the late 1920s as many were discouraged from going there because of the falling rates in sugar cane production, while others found more lucrative forms of income, including oil

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Wooding, B. and Moseley-Williams, R. (2004, pg. 24).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

refineries in Aruba and Curaçao.⁷² Many migrants (including Haitians) regarded the Dominican Republic as a second home, and in many cases as the principal home if they were not able to return to their respective countries. As is the case today, this network of family members and friends became support systems when hard times set in. Second-generation *cocolos* as late as 1942 were provided voyages to Dominican ports from St. Martin and St. Kitts.⁷³ However, the regulation of Haitian recruitment in the sugar cane industry did not begin until 1915, when the first U.S. invasion caused emigration to Cuba and the Dominican Republic to attain “really frightening proportions.”⁷⁴ As many as 600,000 Haitian men emigrated to Cuba as harvest laborers in the cane fields of the eastern provinces between 1915-1930,⁷⁵ while an estimated 80,000 men emigrated to the Dominican Republic and were “lost” to the cane fields across the border.⁷⁶

The global financial crisis of the 1930s-triggered economic nationalism in countries that in the previous three decades had welcomed Haitian workers and their labor. In the Dominican Republic, the economic situation took its toll as pay cuts reduced cane workers’ wages in half. For Haitian braceros, anti-immigrant legislation “soured the political climate”⁷⁷ as the *Congreso Dominicano* or Dominican Congress began to pass laws that required businesses to employ at least 70 percent Dominicans. This is also when the

⁷² Martínez, S. (1995, pg. 40).

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Martínez, S. (1995, pg. 41).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* The author cites Pérez de la Riva (1979, 34-35, 38-39) for this figure.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* The author cites Castor (1971, pg. 84). *La ocupación norteamericana de Haití y sus consecuencias (1915-1934)*. Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno Editores.

⁷⁷ Martínez, S. (1995, pg. 44).

notorious and sanctimonious Dominican dictator, Rafael Trujillo Molina, entered power until his assassination in 1961. Trujillo warned that he wished to restrict the use of foreign labor in the agricultural and sugar industries, while in Cuba, legislation passed in 1937 led to the deportations of thousands of Haitians and Jamaicans.⁷⁸ Despite the legislation, Haitian braceros continued to emigrate to work in sugarcane plantations, known as bateys or *bateyes*.

Tensions between the Dominican Republic and Haiti increased in the 1930s. The Dominican government feared a ‘peaceful invasion’ or ‘*invasion pacífica*’ by Haiti, and that Haiti might “insidiously gain hegemony” overall the island of Hispaniola through the infiltration of the growing number of Haitians in the country.⁷⁹ Neither government had much control of the border and people circulated freely between the two countries. Finally in 1937, Trujillo unleashed what has become known as the Parsley Massacre, or “*El corte*” (the mowing down) of more than 25,000 Haitian men, women, and children who were living on the border between the Dominican Republic and Haiti. They were brutally murdered by members of Trujillo’s “national constabulary” and loyalists in what became one of the most “horrid attacks on an unarmed civilian population in Latin American history.”⁸⁰ Thousands escaped the massacre and fled into Haiti, never to return despite many of them having been born in the Dominican Republic and never knowing another home. What Trujillo’s intentions remain unknown to this day, the legacy of the massacre

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* The author cites Leyburn, J. (1966, pg. 271). *The Haitian People*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

continues to be embedded in the minds of both Haitians and Dominicans. Following the massacre—or state sponsored genocide—the Haitian government suspended permission for recruitment of braceros.⁸¹ This however, did not stop sugar companies from recruiting Haitians to work. Dominican authorities increased its military presence on the border and intercepted a large number of undocumented migrants, how were then “transshipped” to sugar plantations for a fee. This practice limited undocumented immigrants’ freedom to choose where they would work after entering the Dominican Republic.

Tensions between the two countries would remain, even after the assassination of Trujillo, but whereas one country lost a dictator, the other gained one. In 1957, François Duvalier or “Papa Doc” came into power in Haiti, bringing a brutal dictatorship which in turn created a chasm in the country which is still felt today.

The Duvalier Regimes

François Duvalier held power in Haiti from 1957-61, after which his son Jean-Claude, or ‘Baby Doc’ took over until 1986. Threats of war led to further militarization of the border in 1963 and again from 1967-70. The exact exodus of Haitians out of Haiti and into other countries such as Canada, the U.S. the Netherlands, Spain, and the Dominican Republic among others is not known, but migration from Haiti became unparalleled during the Duvalier regimes. As Phillippe Girard writes in *Haiti: The Tumultuous History: From Pearl of the Caribbean to Broken Nation* (2010), the Duvalier legacy “was less glorious but no less enduring: charred bodies and swollen bellies.”

⁸¹ Martínez, S. (1995, pg. 45).

The Duvaliers hijacked *noirisme* or an ideology “which advocated total control of the state apparatus by black representatives of the popular classes.”⁸² This ideology is best understood as a “radical, psychological, cultural, ethnological and political ideology that argued for black supremacy in Haitian politics.” Many have referred to *noirisme* as Haiti’s version of *Négritude*. However, as Michael Dash points out, most *Négritude* writers quickly distanced themselves from *noirisme* when they realized the extents of its radicalism.⁸³ Papa Doc became the “worst offender”⁸⁴ and the violence of the regimes left an indelible mark on Haitian politics, as pro-Duvalierists and anti-Duvalierists each still attempt to claim the rightful spirit of the black masses.

Papa Doc targeted elite families, educated professionals, and students, which resulted in the mass exodus of Haiti’s “skilled citizenry” and created a brain drain in the country from which Haiti has still not recovered, but which also gave Papa Doc a “firm grip on the country.”⁸⁵ Those most educated fled Haiti for places like Miami and Paris. Through a 1969 purge of the *Office National d’Alphabétisation et d’Action Communautaire* (National Bureau of Alphabetization and Communal Action), he condemned Haitians to illiteracy, preferring to govern people who were “poor, illiterate, and submissive” rather than working to build a “prosperous, informed, and restless” population. Under the rule of Baby Doc, corruption became so prevalent that it bankrupted

⁸² Smith, M.J. (2009).

⁸³ Dash, M. (2011). *Citation derived from Haitian blog found at <https://haitianhistory.tumblr.com/post/95052036013/noirisme-in-haiti-part-ii-images-courtesy>

⁸⁴ Girard, P.R. (2010, pg. 111).

⁸⁵ Girard, P.R. (2010, pg. 112).

state finances. As Phillippe Girard states, Baby Doc nor his three hundred thousand *Macoutes* and five thousand soldiers have “any qualms about fighting over the IV dripping foreign aid into Haiti’s dying body or sharing the victim’s remains before the body was even cold.”⁸⁶

The image places a grotesque scene in one’s mind, but I would argue, an accurate depiction of the unsurmountable havoc it placed on the majority of Haitians, which only further contributed to the corruption and exodus of Haitians into the Haitian diaspora worldwide. Just as in colonial times, Haiti today continues to be vilified, whether it’s the designation as “the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere,” as a place of tragedy, as a place of poor governance, as an underdeveloped nation, or as a victim of international interference with its sovereignty. It is important, therefore, to recognize that this rhetoric about Haiti was forged over 200 years ago. The continued discourse of racism, discrimination, xenophobia, and extraction concerning Haiti not only continue to demarcate it from other countries, but has left an indelible stain on Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descents, marking them as the Other and making them symbols of migration. For example, a recent article from *The New York Times* in the Sept. 22, 2016 issue was titled, “U.S. to Step Up Deportations of Haitians Amid Surge at Border.” While the article described migrants from at least two dozen countries, the headline focused on a recent influx of Haitian migrants.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

Haitian Subjectivity and *Marronage*

While a review of Haiti's history helps explain some of the underlying reasons for why Haitians continue to emigrate, it is essential to consider the implications of these periods of violence for Haitian subjectivities, both in Haiti and in the Haitian diaspora. Modern day migration of Haitians throughout the Caribbean may be considered a form of maroonage⁸⁷ a concept which is critical to an understanding of Haitian subjectivity and its relationship to the political, economic, and socio-cultural factors that drive Haitians to migrate.

Marronage (or *marronnage*, *maroonage*, *maronage*) refers to a group of people who isolate themselves from a “surrounding society to create a fully autonomous community.”⁸⁸ These maroon societies are also commonly known by other names, which includes but is not limited to “*quilombos, palenques, mocambos, cumbes, mambises, rancherias, ladeiras, magoes, and manieles*,”⁸⁹ and is derived from the indigenous Arawak and Taino. This gathering of a group or collective has shaped the way freedom is interpreted in Haiti and in other Caribbean islands and Latin American countries. These ‘maroon societies’ will (re)locate or remove themselves from areas such as a plantation to higher ground areas or in the mountains as far from plantation life as possible.⁹⁰ Another term for these communities is *cimarrón*, a Spanish word that originally referred to Spanish colonialists’ feral cattle on the island of Hispaniola. The word then evolved to encompass “Amerindians seeking refuge in those areas, and ultimately (by the early 1530s)” to Africans that were

⁸⁷ Roberts, N. (2015).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

enslaved and sought to escape chattel slavery and away from the confines or boundaries of plantations.⁹¹

It is important to denote the meaning and origins of the words *maroon* and *marronage* because like other words, they become politicized and used for power and/or domination. Using the concept of *marronage*, Neil Roberts in *Freedom as Marronage* (2015) states that migration was an essential experience of Haitian slavery and is “integral to understanding the Haitian Revolution.”⁹² In addition, migration was not only fundamental to the Haitian Revolution but it spread to other nations in Europe, the Western Hemisphere, and other diasporic groups, leading to his theory of “freedom as marronage.”⁹³ As such, immigration can be a form of escape from political, economic, or social persecution in order to gain freedom from the forces that impede an individual’s quality of life.

The exodus of Haitians from Haiti to other countries, particularly to the Dominican Republic and to the barrio of La Zurza in Santo Domingo, could be considered a modern form of maroonage. As Roberts also states, maroons are “non-state actors” who build clandestine forms of hidden narratives that oppose zones of governance and appropriation innate to current “state regimes of slavery.” Maroons do this by creating freedom on their own terms in a social space that will allow for words, gestures, or other social practices which oppose the beliefs of the enslaving agents. In this case, other Dominican and/or the

⁹¹ Roberts, N. (2015, pg. 5).

⁹² Roberts, N. (2015, pg. 4).

⁹³ *Ibid.*

Haitian or Dominican state could be identified as the “enslaving agent” of Haitian immigrants. In his book, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, James C. Scott describes maroons’ presence in locations and away from state power as “zones of refuge.”⁹⁴

For Haitians in La Zurza, Santo Domingo, their subjectivity is shaped by the dislocation that has occurred in their lives. However, as people who are a part of a diasporic enclave within a larger society, Haitians in La Zurza can also be agents to write their “(dislocated) lives” even though they are locked into place by “surrounding structures and discourses.”⁹⁵ This sense of being locked in place by surrounding structures and discourses shapes the subjectivity of Haitians in La Zurza, as indicated by many Haitians I interviewed. Thus, per Brodwin, one could argue this subjectivity of Haitians in La Zurza is centered on their sociocultural attributes, whether it’s musical forms, religious practices, political projects, etc.⁹⁶ One of the strongest sociocultural markers that distinguishes them from other Dominicans in the neighborhood is their Haitian creole language.

Another way to analyze subjectivity is the effect a place has on individual or group identity. Haitian migrants who live in “separate national societies” develop different conceptions of “their groups’ essential characteristics.”⁹⁷ As Brodwin contends, Haitians living in Guadeloupe have a different collective identity not merely derived from travelling from other countries, but also from their daily experiences. This daily experience is often connected to marginalization on the streets in the island’s principal commercial city,

⁹⁴ Roberts (2015, pg. 5) He references James C. Scott’s *The Art of Not Being Governed* (2009).

⁹⁵ Brodwin, P. (2010, pg. 14).

⁹⁶ Brodwin, P. (2010, pg. 15).

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

Pointe-à-Pitre. Similarly, I argue that Haitians living in La Zurza and elsewhere in Santo Domingo have a different perspective than other Haitians living outside of Haiti, and even those living in more rural areas of the Dominican Republic. An individual's documentation status also provides a different perspective on one's identity. For Haitians who are free to return to Haiti and come back to the Dominican Republic, transnational connections are stronger. Haitians' subjectivity is thus important in understanding their interactions with other groups or Haitians, as well as how they view their own identities.

Haiti's location in this outer periphery as described previously is worth noting, as Fatton Jr. elaborates. However, one must also question this outer periphery as not reifying Haiti's exceptionalism. Too many scholars (including myself) tend to place Haiti in this exceptionalism narrative. That is why it's important to take into consideration the political, social, economic or environmental factors that have driven and continue to drive Haitians to migrate to other countries. Furthermore, it is imperative to take into consideration Haitians' subjectivity in these processes of migration and how it affects their identity or sociocultural formations.

Migration, Blackness and Racialized Violence in the Dominican Republic

A black sense of place is not one that is fixed or homogenous, but rather one that reflects “legacies of normalized racial violence.”⁹⁸ This racial violence dates to a century-long anti-blackness towards Haitians and the negation of blackness, as discussed previously. As literary scholar Lorgia García-Peña states in *The Borders of Dominicanidad* (2016), anti-Haitianism manifests itself through the continuous exploitation, erasure, and destruction of black bodies.⁹⁹ However, while black and brown bodies have a history of subjugation and exploitation that dates to colonial times, to different contexts such as slavery and plantation life, as McKittrick states, black sense of place and racialized violence is not fixed or homogenous. Instead, black geographies and its “inhabitants”¹⁰⁰ are denigrated and Haitian bodies become categorized as dangerous, as the “other”.

The way Haitians’ bodies may be perceived in La Zurza is important to examine. Blackness operates in myriad and often complicated forms in the Dominican Republic, and it is important to recognize how the U.S., Spain, and the colonization of Hispaniola have shaped the ways in which Dominicans negotiate their racial identities both within and outside of the Dominican Republic, and how they perceive Haitians or Dominican of Haitian descent. As García-Peña suggests, national belonging is viewed across geographical and symbolic borders. The noun “border” points to tangible objects such as signs, sites or walls which can intervene people’s access and belonging to region or

⁹⁸ McKittrick, K. (2011, pg. 950).

⁹⁹ García-Peña, L. (2016, pg. 205).

¹⁰⁰ McKittrick, K. (2011, pg. 951).

territory,¹⁰¹ but “bordering” evokes a “continuum of actions that affect human beings.”¹⁰² Bordering alludes to an actor (the one who enacts the bordering) and the recipient (those who are bordered). I argue along with García-Peña that borders act as both a tangible location where people *live*, as well as an *embodied* location.¹⁰³ García-Peña refers to this as “El Nié.” This Nié is the place where multiple deceptions of the “nation-state” and “imperial-colonial” discourses occur.¹⁰⁴ As she also states, it is these dictions which create a border subjectivity, one that is always historical and translocal.¹⁰⁵

I would argue that this bordering and the various subjectivities it produces—whether it’s an individual’s race or ethnicity, gender, or documentation status—all contributes to a person’s liminal status. This is especially true for Haitian migrants in the Dominican Republic, as they are frequently seen as the Other and are thus subject to racialized violence. The racism and discrimination faced by Haitians in La Zurza is deeply rooted in nineteenth and twentieth-century political and ethnic conflicts, with the Trujillo regime as one of biggest propagators of anti-Haitianism and *blanqueamiento* or whitening of the population. One of the most “pervasive bequests” of the Trujillato was the production of black bodies¹⁰⁶ which are imagined as both Haitian and foreign. The term *haitiano* (Haitian), then, becomes associated with what seems two ubiquitous events: “a symbolic

101 García-Peña, L. (2016, pg. 6).

102 *Ibid.*

103 My emphasis added.

104 García-Peña, L. (2016, pg. 11).

105 *Ibid.*

106 García-Peña, L. (2016, pg. 204).

and civic exclusion of ethnic Haitians from the Dominican Republic” as well as the designation of the Dominican Republic as a “monolithic Hispanic nation.”¹⁰⁷

The result is a narrative of *haitianidad* which has historically excluded ethnic Haitians and Afro-Dominicans from the national imaginary, creating myths about Haitians that pervade the Dominican Republic and fuel anti-Haitianism and xenophobic sentiments. Some of these myths include Haitians trying to “recover” the Dominican Republic’s territory to unify the island as it once was in 1822, that Haitians are murderous rapists coming to pillage and destroy the country, that Haitians will “contaminate” the Hispanic language and culture of Dominicans, or that Haitian migrants take away the jobs and resources available to Dominican citizens.¹⁰⁸ These myths resonate with ideologies of the mid-twentieth century and present a false narrative that Haitians drain the economy by taking jobs, act as moral corruptors by bringing drugs and violence, and bring diseases and illnesses. Repetition of these sentiments in media outlets and newspapers contributes to (as anthropologist and literary scholar Michel Trouillot warns) “maintaining structures of power that create oppression.”¹⁰⁹

García-Peña notes that the profitability of corporations that operate in the Dominican Republic is dependent upon the “successful antagonism” of Hispaniola’s poor black folk, as the exploitation of Haitians or Dominicans of Haitian descent sustains the country’s economy. The Dominican and Haitian states thus engage in what Johan

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ García-Peña, L. (2016, pg. 205).

¹⁰⁹ García-Peña, L. (2016, pg. 206). The author references Michel Trouillot’s *Silencing the Past: Power and Production of History* (1995).

Galtung¹¹⁰ refers to as structural violence that prevents Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent from reaching their full potential because of systematic or structural barriers.¹¹¹ Structural violence is connected to social injustice and is used as a “social machinery” of oppression. Without providing basic human rights and protections, the State becomes culpable as it establishes further impediments, such as ruling 168-13, or *La Sentencia*, which dictates that all people born to ‘illegal immigrants’ or ‘persons in transit’ are not considered citizens.¹¹²

Enacted in 2013, *La Sentencia* was written to curb immigration from Haiti to the Dominican Republic following the 2010 earthquake. Calling for the expulsion of black Dominicans of Haitian descent from the country,¹¹³ Law 168-13 has affected more than 200,000 people. This legalized process of expulsion, referred to as a *juridicalización reaccionara* or reactionary juridicalization, can be understood as the culmination of a process that started with anti-Haitian legislative reforms over a decade earlier.¹¹⁴ As early as 2000, a new immigration and citizenship policy had been forged, and Law 168-13 served to expand this policy.¹¹⁵ Consequently, the law and the bureaucratic measures it spawned have erected a barrier against the mobility of Haitians and the economic aspirations of Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent, leading to resistance in the activist legal community. Organizations such as Reconoci.do (Recognized), MUDHA (Movimiento de

¹¹⁰ Galtung, J. (1969).

¹¹¹ Farmer, P. & et al. (2006, pg. 1686).

¹¹² García-Peña, L. (2016, pg. 204).

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Martínez, S. and Wooding, B. (2017, pg. 97).

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Mujeres Dominico-Haitianas, or Movement of Dominico-Haitian Women), and Participación Ciudadana (Citizen Participation) are now fighting for recognition of the poor political and economic conditions endured by poor Dominicans and poor Haitians. However, Haitians' familial and social networks also serve as forms of resistance and propel their agency in challenging hegemonic and colonizing forces.

Chapter Four: Building a Home in La Zurza

La Zurza is in the northern part of Santo Domingo on the edge of the Osama and Isabela Rivers, near the well-known Mercado de la Duarte, or Duarte Market. La Zurza is one of the most vulnerable, impoverished areas in Santo Domingo with some of the highest rates of crime and delinquency. The barrio derives its name from a natural spring, which serves as a rare source of uncontaminated water for recreation and bathing (*Figure 4.1*).



Figure 4.1 | Children and teenagers playing in La Zurza
Source: Luis Gómez, Diario Libre, 2012

However, despite the aquifer and its surrounding green spaces, the river is contaminated. The water smells of chemicals and large lily pods bloom on both sides of the rivers. There are five other water aquifers apart from La Zurza in the community, and six ravines cross the community. One of the most notable is called *La cañada del Diablo*

(Devil’s Gully) because of its “chameleonic colors,” which change depending on the chemicals that are spilled into it (*Figure 4.2*).¹¹⁶

Because of La Zurza’s location on the periphery of the Ozama and Isabela Rivers, the terrain is rough and many of the homes are built in steep *barracones* (or barracks). The streets and sidewalks are in poor condition and difficult to walk on, and one major street, the Hector Díaz, is “internally formed by a maze of alleys and interconnected by concrete steps in the form of spirals.”¹¹⁷ This is to say, the geographical and environmental conditions that Haitians live in contribute to their vulnerability in La Zurza (*Figure 4.3*).



Figure 4.2 | Cañada del Diablo (The Devil’s Ravine) Runoff of toxic chemicals from shipyard along the Río Isabela just on the perimeter of La Zurza. It is known by this name because of the different colors it turns, depending on which chemicals runoff. This is a

¹¹⁶ González, J. (2014).

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

toxic and hazardous site, one that appears to be neglected by the Ayuntamiento Distrito Nacional (ADN). Photograph by author



Figure 4.3 | One of many entrances to La Zurza neighborhood. Across from this is the Rio Isabela. Photograph by author

Survey Results

The surveys were conducted over a period of 4 weeks in summer 2016 with the help of a research assistant, Danila Yosef, a local Haitian community member. She was key in helping me recruit participants in a community difficult to access for an outsider, and she served as an interpreter while I was disseminating the survey. As Danila told me, when I first began to conduct the survey, Haitians were fearful of me as they thought I was an immigration official or an informant. She reassured them this was not the case; rather, I

was a student simply interested in learning about their lives. After returning to the community on a regular basis, Haitians became interested in what I was doing.

Based on Danila's knowledge of where Haitians live in La Zurza, she helped determine where I could feasibly and safely carry out the survey. In addition, her personal relationships with members of the community influenced who I approached. I made it a point to survey both men and women to develop a more comprehensive understanding of Haitians' lived experiences. The survey was adapted from a questionnaire carried out in 2004 by the NGO, Movimiento de Mujeres Dominicano-Haitianas (MUDHA) with Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent throughout the Dominican Republic. My survey had a total of 62 questions broken into 4 sections: 1) Sociodemographic characteristics, 2) Reasons for immigrating or coming to the Dominican Republic and information about their journey into the country, 3) Their living and working conditions, and economic activities, 4) Social relations, and 5) Access to organizations or basic services. (See Appendix for the survey questions). I conducted 13 surveys with women and 11 with men for a total of 24 surveys. Respondents' ages ranged from 10 to 60, but more than one-third were between the ages of 25-34. All respondents were born in Haiti.

Haitian Emigration to La Zurza

My surveys in La Zurza show that 63% or (15/24) of Haitians immigrated to La Zurza to work, as half (11/23) respondents had been told or thought there were jobs in the Dominican Republic. In general, respondents believed they would have a better life or that there were more jobs and opportunities available to them in La Zurza. However, there were significant costs associated with making the move from Haiti: respondents paid from 500

pesos to \$6,000 pesos to make the journey, with 1/3 of the respondents (8/24) paying at least \$5,000 pesos or the equivalent of \$105 (USD). In addition, over 62% of the respondents (15/24) paid for the trip themselves by selling livestock, belongings, or working to save the money to immigrate to the Dominican Republic. Another 25% (6/24) of respondents had a family member pay for their trip or had some financial assistance, while only two had a spouse pay for them to immigrate and one had an uncle bring them from Haiti to the D.R. Once they arrived, not everyone found the work they had hoped for. Half of the respondents (12/23) said they were doing what they immigrated to the Dominican Republic for, but 11 stated they are currently not doing what they originally intended.

Based on these results, it is clear one of the principal motivating factors for Haitians immigrating to the D.R. is to seek work. As anthropologist Samuel Martínez states, the Haitian land tenure system, along with the gender and age-based divisions of jobs and the patterns of socioeconomic inequality, are due chiefly in part to the history of struggle and accommodation of social classes.¹¹⁸ These aspects play a role in the Haitian social structures and may play a role in deciding, who, when, and where migrants are arriving from into the D.R.

Haitian immigrants in La Zurza hail from a variety of cities, including small towns. Three were born in Anse-à-Pitres (a city on the Haitian-Dominican border), three in Côte-de-Fer, and two in Jacmel. Surprisingly, only two of the 24 respondents were born in Port-

¹¹⁸ Martínez, S. (1995, pg.160).

au-Prince. Among those migrating, over 37% (9/24) of the respondents had a family member who immigrated with them (*Figure 4.4*). Nearly 21% (5/24) immigrated by themselves, another (4/24) or one-sixth immigrated with a friend, and three respondents immigrated with their children: 17/23 of the respondents had a son, 20/23 of them had a daughter as well, and 59% of respondents have their children with them in the D.R. As many as five of respondents' children reside in Haiti, while four respondents had children who live both in the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Six of 22 respondents had at least one parent who lives both in the D.R. and Haiti. (*Figure 4.5*). Seventy-five percent of Haitian migrants surveyed had someone who accompanied them in their migration to the D.R., whether it was a spouse, child, family member or even a *buscón* (smuggler).

Figure 4.4 Person accompanying on trip

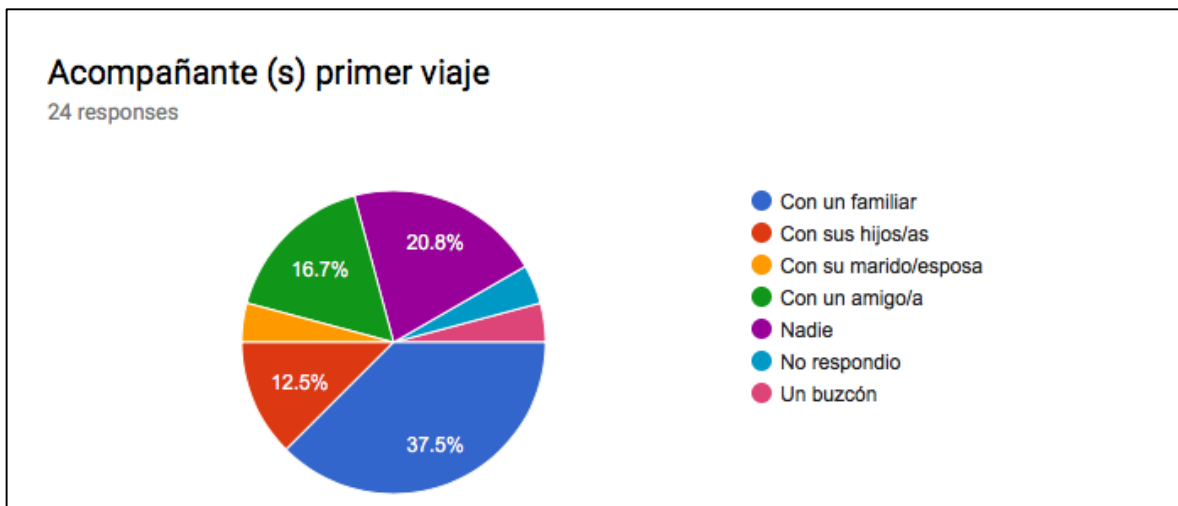
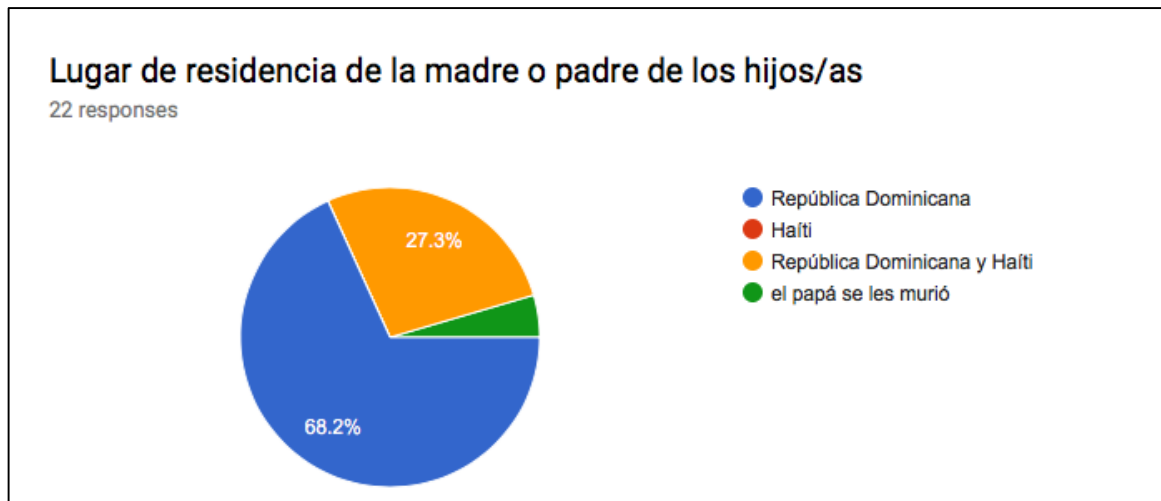
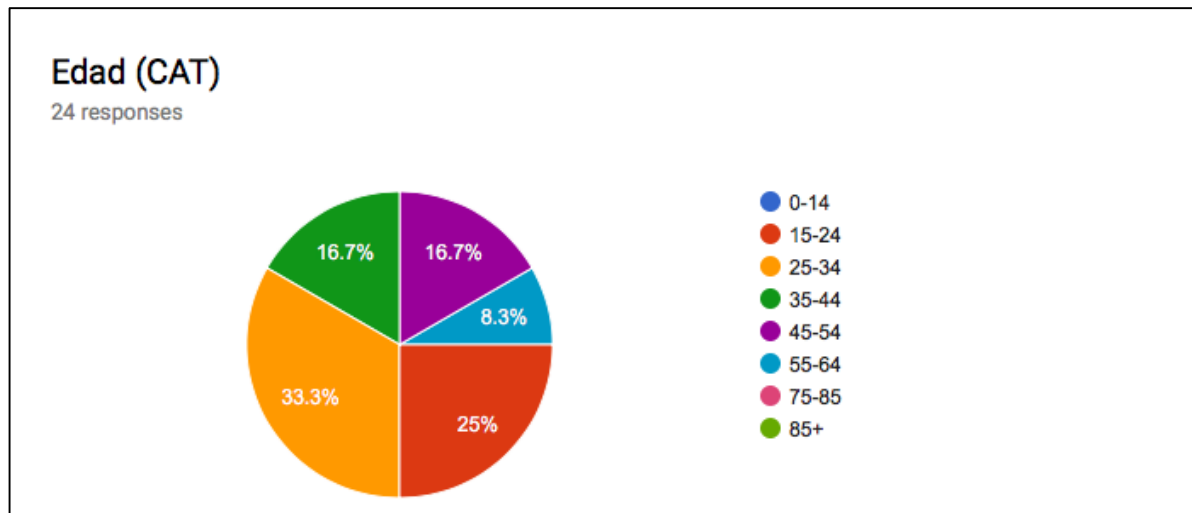


Figure 4.5 Place of residence for parents



In terms of the age of immigrants, eight (33%) of the respondents were between the ages of 25-34 or 8/24 total, about 25% (6/24) between the ages of 15-24, and 32% between the ages of 35-54. Only 8% or 2/24 of the respondents were between the ages of 55-64. This indicates 1/3 of respondents are younger Haitian migrants and the other 1/3 as older or mid-age. This could also signify many Haitian migrants tend to migrate at earlier ages (20s or 30s) instead of at an older age. (Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6 Age of Respondents Surveyed



This is an important distinction among Haitians who have immigrated to La Zurza compared to other migrants. Haitians brought their children with them, distinct from other migrants from Central America, Mexico, or other Caribbean islands. Furthermore, those who chose to reside in La Zurza all have a family member or some other prior connection in the community. The importance of creating a home or community within La Zurza is evident. One respondent stated, “I feel good about other Haitians, they’re my own blood, if they are cut, I also feel cut.” When I asked Haitians questions about their experiences interacting with other Haitians within La Zurza, 42% or 10/24 of the respondents expressed their relationships were good or *buenas*, while 29% (7/24) said their relationship with other Haitians were regular (*regular*) and 12.5% or (3/24) stated they get along with other Haitians just fine. Overall, 83% (20/24) of respondents said they get along well with other Haitians in La Zurza.

As I conducted my surveys, respondents commented they did not have any issues with other Haitians but instead feel camaraderie with them. In one instance, a respondent stated when they need food or something else, other Haitians will lend them what they need. This sense of community may be an important reason why many Haitians remain in La Zurza, although they didn't intend to stay long. The longest time one of the respondents has resided in the Dominican Republic is over 30 years, but the shortest was 8 months (Figure 4.7).

Figure 4.7 Time Living in the Dominican Republic



The notion of Haitian migrants as “transitory” in La Zurza is therefore inaccurate. Nearly 67% (16/24) have lived in the Dominican Republic for more than 5 years; 25% (6/24) have lived in the D.R. for less than 5 years and only 8% (2/24) have been living in the country for a few months or less than a year. Despite living in La Zurza for 8 months or even for more than 5 years, because of Haitians’ socio-economic status and the precarious conditions they live in, I see them as “being in place, but placeless” within La

Zurza.¹¹⁹ Haitians in La Zurza live, as Roberts suggests, as “maroons” “in liminal suspension between slaves on a plantation and colonizers.”¹²⁰ While Haitians have made a home for themselves in La Zurza, at the same time they are also placeless.

To understand how Haitians, interact with others in La Zurza, it is important to describe what spaces they navigate on a day to day basis. In La Zurza, Haitian families would live close to together, as they all speak Haitian Creole, have similar cultural or religious practices, and can feel safe or in a supportive environment along with other Haitians. Haitians are concentrated in a handful of areas, including Kilombo,¹²¹ a zone of makeshift, informal housing along the riverfront. The housing here has two floors with multiple bedrooms on the second floors housing at least 2-3 families per room. What was most striking to me was the communal area on the second level of an apartment complex, just outside of the hallway and individual rooms. Here, Haitian women sit conversing while holding their babies, and toddlers play on the concrete floor next to their mothers. This was an unusual sight, as I had mostly witnessed Haitian women either preparing food to eat, sell, or walking throughout the community selling fruits, vegetables, household items, or clothes. These women and their children symbolized more than just motherhood. More importantly, seeing them with their children humanized the issue more and made me ponder the injustices the women continue to face daily.

¹¹⁹ McKittrick, K. (2011).

¹²⁰ Roberts, N. (2015, pg. 5).

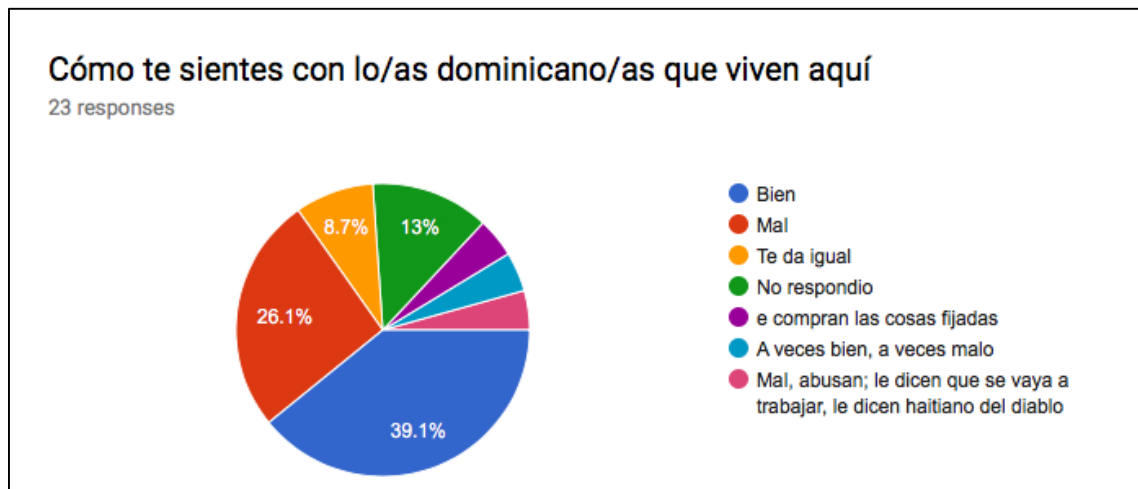
¹²¹ González, J. (2014).

Feelings and treatment within La Zurza

In my study, I also wanted to understand what spaces Haitians deemed to be unsafe or where they felt uncomfortable. This would help me gain a better sense of Haitians' feelings towards other Dominicans living in La Zurza, and Dominicans' attitude towards Haitians. I found that few Haitians felt uncomfortable in La Zurza: 46% (11/24) stated they feel good or do not have any issues walking throughout La Zurza. Only 12.5% (3/24) commented on *ladrones* or robbers causing them to feel unsafe or uncomfortable in La Zurza. Similarly, when asked about Haitians' feelings towards other Dominicans the results again were surprising.

The results of the survey contrasted with my own pre-conceived notions and the rhetoric regarding tensions between Dominicans and Haitians, perhaps because Dominicans and Haitians live next to or across from each other in La Zurza. More than one third (9/23) of Haitian respondents said they feel good about other Dominicans in La Zurza, whereas 26% (6/23) stated they do not think highly of other Dominicans. Another three respondents stated they sometimes feel good about Dominicans and other times they feel bad. On the other hand, one respondent candidly said that Dominicans are abusers—many of them have told him to find a job or have called him, "*Haitiano del diablo*," or "Haitian Devil." Furthermore, 43% (10/23) of Haitian respondents stated that Dominicans treat them badly and say hurtful comments, such as "go back to your country," "eat shit," and more. *Figure 4.8* below shows some of the responses from Haitians regarding their attitudes towards Dominicans living in La Zurza.

Figure 4.8 Haitians’ attitudes toward Dominicans



Below are some responses from Haitians about their interactions with Dominicans:

“A veces tengo buenas impresiones, a veces no.”

“Algunos lo tratan bien, algunos otros lo tratan mal; El que no tiene Cristo en su vida, piensa mal.”

“Lo maltratan a uno; ha habido golpes de otros haitianos”

“No me gustan, pero aguanto el tratamiento de los demás a fuerza”

“Ellos están en su país, uno no puede hacer nada; La mayoría de los dominicanos son abusadores, hablan mal de uno. Si no tiene papeles, uno no puede salir.”

“Los dominicanos son chismosos, y me han tirado la basura donde vivo.”

“No me siento bien. Los dominicanos me han maltratado; también me han asaltado.”

“No hay problema con las mujeres dominicanas. Los hombres dominicanos me tratan mal, me amenazan. Me dicen que van usar un machete o una pistola, o también un palo; me dicen que me van a golpear.”

“Los dominicanos tratan mal a los haitianos; dicen que nos vayamos de su país, vete de aquí, que coman mierda.”

“Maldito haitiano” dicen. No quieren pagarme por mi trabajo hecho. Yo trabajo a buscar la vida, se tiene que trabajar.”

“Los dominicanos lo maltratan—lo ofenden diciéndole cosas como, “que coma mierda, que se vaya a su país, u otras cosas.”

“Por lo general, se siente bien con los demás dominicanos pero le molesta cuando se ponen a decir cosas como, “Haitianos del diablo, vete para tu país.”

[“Sometimes I have a good impression, other times I do not.

“Some treat me well, others poorly; those who do not have Christ in their life, think badly.”

“They mistreat you; there’s even been several Haitians who have been beaten.”

“I don’t like them, but I endure their treatment by force.”

“They (Dominicans) are in their country, one cannot do anything; Many Dominicans are abusers, they speak poorly of us. If you do not have papers, you cannot go outside.”

“Dominicans are gossipers, and they have thrown their trash where I live.”

“I do not feel well. Dominicans have mistreated me; they have also assaulted me.”

“There is no problem with Dominican women. Dominican men however, treat me badly, threaten me. They tell me they are going to use a machete or a gun, or a stick; they tell me they are going to hit me.”

“Dominicans treat Haitians badly. They tell us to leave their country, get out of here, to go eat shit.”

“Damn Haitian, they say. They (Dominicans) do not want to pay me for my work done. I look to make a living, to do so, you have to work.”

“Dominicans mistreat me, they offend me by saying things like, “Eat shit, to go back to his country, among other things.”

“Generally, I feel good about Dominicans, but it bothers me when they say things like, “Haitian of the devil, go back to your country.”]

These comments reflect anti-Haitian, discriminatory, and racist sentiments based on a long history of animosity between the two groups. Based on my research, I found that only 30% or (7/24) of Haitians regularly interacted with other Dominicans. Only two respondents replied their interactions with Dominicans were *regulares* (regular); the majority do not interact with other Dominicans beyond greeting them in passing. (See Figure 4.9)

Figure 4.9 Activities with Dominicans



Ultimately, as Lorgia García-Peña argues,¹²² La Sentencia and the denationalization crisis that ensued were born out of a global war on blackness, emerging within a rising climate of xenophobia and the criminalization of migrants, as well as amid the structure of a ‘corporate-state union.’ Given these circumstances, it should not come as a surprise that Haitians also desire to move back to Haiti. Many feel unsafe or uncomfortable living in La Zurza, and Santo Domingo did not live up to their expectations or match the false narrative presented by family members or others.

As in the case of other migrant groups, because Haitians are undocumented, illiterate, or do not have an education, they tend to seek out positions or jobs that pay low wages. In turn, they become exploited or have their civil rights violated. As my surveys suggest, the clear majority of Haitians would like to secure legal documentation to remain in the country, realizing that their liminal status as immigrants make them more vulnerable.

¹²² García-Peña, L. (2016, pg. 210).

In addition, survey respondents indicate that their vulnerability stem from a lack of access to transportation, a lack of money, not feeling supported by others, and not having daycare. Some of the responses that reflect the socio-economic challenges Haitians encounter in addition to their mistreatment by other Dominicans include:

“Si tuviera dinero me iría a mi país (Haití), por cualquier cosa, me voy; estoy arrepentido de haberme venido, si hubiese sabido como era, me hubiera quedado en Haití.”

“Se siente limitada porque no habla el español, no tiene documento legales, no hay cuarto (dinero) y no está en su país.”

“No hay forma de seguir adelante sin papeles. Me siento limitada.”

“No le puedo mandar dinero a mi familia; a veces no hay dinero para pagar la casa. Lo que tengo lo mando a Haití, a veces \$3,000 o \$4,000.”

“No sé hablar el español, no hay cuarto para trabajar, no tengo a nadie quien me cuide a mi niña.”

“Porque no hablo el español, porque no hay cuarto. Quiero regresar a Haití pero es demasiado caro regresar. Tendría que ahorrar dinero para regresar a Haití.”

Me siento limitado a veces porque no hablo el español bien. Tampoco tengo trabajo fijo. Fue mi hija que me dijo que me viniera aquí (a La Zurza) a vivir. No tiene ayuda de nadie.

He formado una organización de haitianos. Doy misa en Kreyòl. Desafortunadamente sólo doy la misa, nada más aunque si por lo menos le doy apoyo a los haitianos recién llegados que no tiene adonde vivir en la iglesia. Lo que hace falta es una escuela—no hay ayuda de nadie. Hay haitianos que viven en la iglesia. No hay otro lugar. Duermen en el piso.”

“Me siento limitada porque no hablo mucho español, también me siento mal porque no tengo mucho dinero.”

“Me siento obligada de estar aquí. Tengo que trabajar para mis niñas, pero aquí es mejor. Mando dinero o cosas con miembros de mi familia cuando van a visitar a Haití.”

“Me siento mal en general. Igual porque no hablo el español para nada.”

“No he hallado otro trabajo para hacer. A veces me pongo a pensar que no tengo nada, y ya estoy viejo—nadie puede.”

“Me siento limitada porque no tengo papeles; relaciones complicadas. Porque no tengo mi acta de nacimiento o documentación, no mi atienden.”

“Quiero regresar a Haití, pero no tengo dinero porque no puedo trabajar. No se el español suficiente. No me gusta La Zurza.”

“Me siento mal en la Zurza pero me siento obligada de quedarme aquí; no tengo dinero para regresar. Quiero regresar entre 2 o 3 años cuando tenga cuarto.”

“Me siento incómoda porque a veces no hay dinero, tampoco para pagar la casa—tengo que pagar \$3,000 pesos mensualmente por la casa. Me vine a La Zurza porque pensaba que tenían o sentían un derecho de trabajar aquí.”

“Tengo problemas con los papeles de mi hijo—ha estado esperando por más de un año con 8 meses por sus papeles, aunque ya pagué por los trámites.”

“No entiendo lo que dicen otros dominicanos porque no hablo el español. No hay cuarto. Porque no se hablar el español, me hace sentir mal, y a veces me pongo deprimido.”

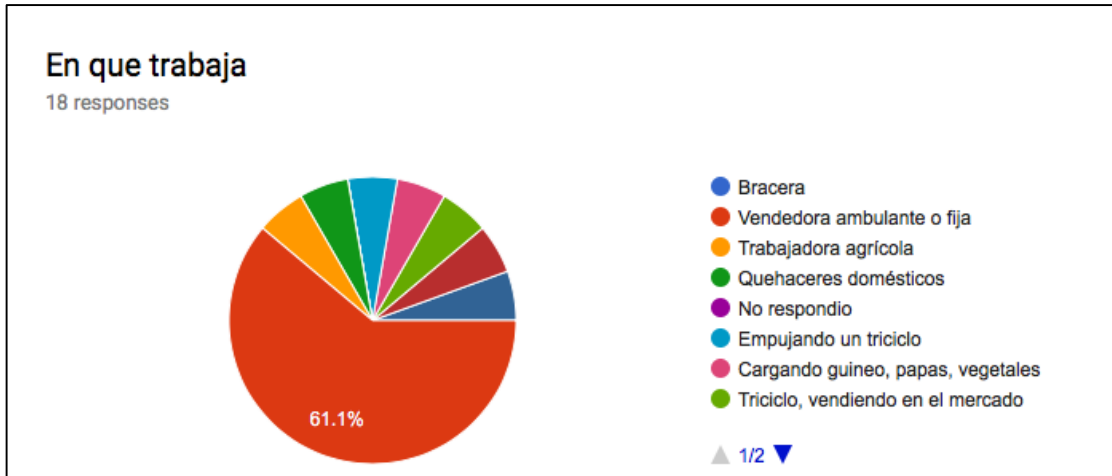
“No hay gente para atender a mi casa; no hay cuarto. También no hay cuarto para inscribir a mis hijos en la escuela.”

“No me siento bien. No tengo trabajo o a alguien quien me cuide a mi hijo.”

Another factor that make Haitians vulnerable in La Zurza is illiteracy. Only 58% of survey respondents (14/24) knew how to read and write: a full 1/3 of the respondents were illiterate. The educational attainment of respondents ranged from a 1st grade education level to high school education. Four respondents had not attended any school at all. In part due to their lack of schooling, most Haitians work in the informal sector and suffer from the

risks and uncertainties of informal labor. In my study, 11 of the 18 respondents who are employed work in the informal sector in La Zurza. (Fig. 4.10)

Figure 4.10 Type of Work Done



Further exacerbating the vulnerabilities of the informal sector, 90% (18/20) of the respondents work alone. Haitians working alone are more susceptible to discrimination, whether verbal or physical. Because of the vulnerability of their position and the exhausting nature of informal work, 55% of respondents (11/20) stated they do not like their current job. Respondents complained about how taxing the work is and the long hours they put in, and how hot it is to work in the sun. Still, 30% of those who responded (6/20) felt they had to stay with their job as they have no other options. A minority (25%) of the respondents stated they like their jobs because they can earn their own money; one of the respondents also indicated they like the freedom that working gives them.

Seven of the survey respondents work in the Duarte Market, a critically important place of employment for Haitians which, in part, accounts for why La Zurza has become a

favored destination of Haitian immigrants to Santo Domingo. The Duarte Market was established in 1973, at the time with close to 830 vendors. Forty years later this number had increased to well over 1200. In 2001, a study found that an estimated 22 million people rely on the market as their main source of income.¹²³ The market is hustling and bustling in the morning with people arriving from other parts of Santo Domingo and the countryside to sell their produce and household items and to buy merchandise and food. There is a cacophony of sound—trucks passing by, chatter from people buying and selling all kinds of goods, *tricyclos* (or little wagons) filled with produce pushed mostly by Haitian men, bachata and merengue music from radios. The Duarte Market serves as one of the main economic sources for people who live near it, as well as for vendors who arrive at the market with their trucks filled with predominantly vegetables and fruits including plantains, bananas, yucca, pineapple, and papayas. Many Haitians work in the market selling popcorn popped in their homes and fried plantains, or, as I came to know it, *bannann fri* in Haitian Creole. Many of the Haitian men are hired on a daily basis to pull carts (*carreteras*) or push tricyclos filled with plantains, corn, or other vegetables and fruits. Haitian women from what I observed make up nearly all the vendors on the sidewalks and streets. (Figure 4.11)

¹²³ Batista, L. (2015).



Figure 4.11 | A *tricyclo* with coconuts attached. It's not merely Haitians who ride a *tricyclo* and use it for their livelihood, but also Dominicans. The majority of those using *tricyclos*, however, are Haitians. Photograph by author

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Discussion

The Duarte Market, then, provides a livelihood and place of exchange between Dominicans and Haitians, but it is also a place of racial violence. As McKittrick and Wood suggest, the market could be considered a place of surplus and exclusion within which black and poor peoples are disposable because they cannot easily move or escape.¹²⁴ Even if Haitians were born in the Dominican Republic, they cannot be “Dominican.” They are in place, but they are also placeless. Their placelessness ultimately renders Haitians forgettable, unseen, and “occupying the underside of democracy.”¹²⁵

The geographical location of the barrio of La Zurza, situated between the two rivers Rio Isabela and the Rio Ozama, makes it one of the most vulnerable, impoverished areas in northern Santo Domingo with some of the highest rates of crime and delinquency. Haitian migrants continue to settle here primarily because of familial networks and to avoid areas of the city where state surveillance is more present. However, at the same time, they are subject to a twofold displacement: they are situated apart from the nation state in a different country, but they also feel displaced from the Dominican Republic and continue to rely either on familial connections and/or networks of Haitians in La Zurza. However, even with these connections, their socioeconomic and undocumented status often renders them vulnerable and ‘in place, but placeless’ because of the lack of public resources available to them and the fragility of their economic and labor status. Because of these economic realities, Haitians feel trapped or in a state of limbo. Even if they want to leave

¹²⁴ McKittrick, K. and Wood, C.A. (2007, pg. 3).

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

La Zurza, they cannot do so because of a lack of financial resources. Thus, Haitians are not as “transitory” as I initially thought, since they have settled in La Zurza and made a new life for themselves in the Dominican Republic.

Haitian emigration to La Zurza, therefore, can be considered a modern-day form of maroonage. As Roberts asserts, “maroons reside in liminal suspension between slaves on a plantation and colonizers” who command “standards of normativity.”¹²⁶ For Haitians in La Zurza, this suspension produces a liminal condition. The community which Haitians have built through their familial connections provides a source of freedom and potential for initiative on their own terms, in a social space that allows for their autonomy to transcend the barriers they face and make up for the lack of support provided by both the Dominican and Haitian states. Despite the racist stigma, structural violence and neglect they face from both the Haitian and the Dominican state, they have nevertheless persisted by forming a community which enables them to survive.

In my thesis, therefore, I have sought to avoid the rhetoric of Haitian exceptionalism and instead highlight Haitians’ everyday lives in La Zurza. Rather than seeing Haitians’ lives as the underside of democracy, I have focused on their reproduction of a supportive community despite the neglect by the Dominican and Haitian governments, their undocumented status, or the racialized violence they experience in the Duarte Market and elsewhere in La Zurza. While Haitians suffer microaggressions in the Duarte Market, this is also one of the few spaces where Haitians can interact with Dominicans. While the

¹²⁶ Roberts, N. (2015).

Duarte Market is a contested space, rather than simply perceive it as a site of injustices, it is important to also note Haitians' agency and the importance of their stories. They are more than just immigrants: they are people who have dreams and goals and who strive to provide for their families, despite the challenges they face on a daily basis. Despite the obstacles they encounter, Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent have created a black sense of place through the constant (re)negotiation of their identities, their (un)documented status, and their struggles as they confront structural violence.

Thus, Haitians' liminal status can be seen as a source of resistance and survival, but at the same time also serve to reproduce their state of displacement and placelessness. As Haitians struggle for their place in La Zurza, their vulnerability is exacerbated by their undocumented status or statelessness. An individual who is rendered stateless suffers from the inability to become recognized as a member of society, which creates psychological, emotional, physical, socio-economic, and socio-cultural impacts. Stateless individuals, such as Haitians in La Zurza, face the overwhelming challenge of "existing without an acknowledged identity."¹²⁷ Furthermore, statelessness has a debilitating effect on an individual's ability to function within a specific country or as a "citizen of the world."¹²⁸

Many Dominicans of Haitian descent or Haitian immigrants state they feel invisible. Without legal recognition by either the Dominican or Haitian state, their lives become suspended and perilous. A lack of identity or "proper documentation" prevents

¹²⁷ Leclerc, P. (2007). Interview with Phillippe Leclerc [Interview]. *U.N.H.C.R. Refugees Magazine*. Retrieved from <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/UNHCR/14bbdcab1076d21f508b51057342262f.htm>.

¹²⁸ Kosinski, S. (2009, pg. 378).

them from attaining education, health care, and the protections and constitutional rights conferred by the Dominican state, leaving them susceptible to expulsion.¹²⁹ In an attempt to curb migration from Haiti, the Dominican government enacted Law TC 168-13 that retroactively stripped Dominicans of Haitian descent of their citizenship. This decision reverberated internationally, prompting migration and legal scholars and activists to denounce the law and demanding it be overturned. Other countries also began putting pressure on the Dominican Republic to not simply reform the law, but also to nullify it.

Ultimately, the Dominican government must provide a pathway for citizenship to the 210,000 Dominican born, but Haitian-descended individuals and the family members affected by this decision. This process must be facilitated by translating documents into Haitian Kreyol and having organizers inform Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent of their rights. Furthermore, the country must begin the difficult process of acknowledging its racist and discriminatory past towards Haiti. The rhetoric surrounding Haitians must change, since it is “intrinsically” connected to the “hegemonic discourse” of white supremacy which sustains economic inequality and political disenfranchisement” across the world.¹³⁰ Furthermore, and heeding Barbara Tomlinson and George Lipsitz’s argument that scholars should “accompany positive changes in our world,”¹³¹ future research should expose the realities faced by Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent

¹²⁹ U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2008). Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Review of the Dominican Republic.

¹³⁰ Garcia-Peña, L. (2016, pg. 210).

¹³¹ Garcia-Peña, L. (2016, pg. 211). Referencing Barbara Tomlinson and George Lipsitz’s (2013) article, “American Studies as Accompaniment.” *American Quarterly*, 65 (1): 1-30.

living in the Dominican Republic and seek tangible ways to aid them. The responsibility certainly does not fall solely on the Dominican Republic, but also on Haiti to provide more for its people and for the greater Haitian diaspora. Only by shedding light on their everyday lives in places like La Zurza can we regain the humanity and dignity of all people, regardless of their race, ethnicity, and immigration status.

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Appendix

Encuesta sobre las experiencias de personas haitianas y dominicano-haitianos en La Zurza

Fecha: _____

Nombre: _____

Edad	0 – 14	15 – 24
35 – 44	45 – 54	55-64
75 – 85	85+	

Sexo: M F

1. Características sociodemográficas:

1. ¿Adonde naciste? _____
2. ¿Qué pueblo o ciudad? _____
3. Actualmente tú estás?
 - Casado/a
 - Soltero/a
 - Unido/a
 - Vive con un hombre o mujer
 - Tiene un amigo
4. Tiene hijos?
 - Si (Si es sí, ir a pregunta 5)
 - No
5. ¿Cuántos hijo/as tiene? _____ ¿Cuántas hijas? _____
6. ¿Adonde están tus hijos e hijas?
 - República Dominicana
 - En Haití
 - ¿En Haití y en República Dominicana?

7. ¿Si tiene hijo/as en Haití, cuanto hijo/as tiene allí? _____

8. ¿Adonde está la mama o el padre de tus hijos e hijas?

- En Haití
- En República Dominicana
- En los dos países

9. ¿Sabe leer?

- Sí
- No

10. ¿Sabe escribir?

- Sí
- No

11. A qué curso llegaste? _____

2. Razón o razones por inmigrase a República Dominicana y condiciones de trayectoria si han inmigrado

12. ¿Qué te motivó a venir o inmigrate a República Dominicana?

13. ¿Cuales informaciones tenías sobre la República Dominicana antes de venir? (Es decir, que es lo que sabías o te habías enterado del país)

14. ¿Es la primera vez que vienes a República Dominicana?

- Sí (pase a la pregunta 17)
- No

15. ¿Cuantas veces has venido? _____

16. ¿Fuiste repatriado/a?

- Sí
- No

17. ¿Qué tiempo tienes viviendo en el país?

- Semanas ¿Cuantas? _____

- Meses ¿Cuántos? _____
- Un año
- Menos de 5 años
- Más de 5 años

18. ¿Cómo llegaste a la República Dominicana?

- Con pasaporte visado
- Con pasaporte ilegal o ajeno
- Traficado/a o alguien
- Por los alambres
- Cruzando el río
- Por el monte
- Otra manera _____

19. ¿Cuánto te costó el viaje?

- 500 pesos
- 1000 pesos
- 1,500 pesos
- Más de 2,000 pesos

20. ¿Quién lo pagó?

- Usted mismo
- Un familiar
- Su marido/a
- Un amigo/a (Pase a la pregunta 22)

21. ¿Qué tuvo que hacer para conseguir el dinero del viaje?

- Vender un traste
- Vender la casa
- Hizo un préstamo
- Otra manera _____
- Sin respuesta

22. ¿Cuándo viniste por primera vez, con quien vino?

- Con un familiar
- Con sus hijo/as
- Con su marido/a
- Con un amigo/a
- Otra
- Sin respuesta

23. ¿En estos momentos está legal?

- Si
- No

24. ¿Cuales documentos tiene para saber que está legal?

- Carnet del CEA
- Acta de nacimiento
- Residencia
- Pasaporte
- Otros _____
- Sin Respuesta

25. ¿Le interesa arreglar sus papeles?

- Si (Pase a la pregunta 26)
 - No ¿Por qué?
- _____.

26. ¿Qué está haciendo para arreglar sus papeles?

- Se lo está arreglando una organización
¿Cual? _____
- Se lo está arreglando un “buscón”
- Se lo está arreglando un familiar

3. Preguntas de condiciones de vida y trabajo o sector de trabajo o actividades económicas

27. ¿Trabaja?

- Si (Pasar a pregunta 28)
- No

28. ¿En que trabaja?

- Bracera
- Vendedora ambulante o fija
- Trabajadora agrícola
- Quehaceres domésticos
- Otra _____
- Sin Respuesta

29. ¿Donde trabaja? (¿Por ejemplo, de su casa vendiendo cosas, en el mercado, en un restaurante, etc. aquí en La Zurza?) ¿O trabaja en otro barrio o sitio, fuera de La Zurza?

30. ¿Por cuantas horas trabaja por día?

- 1-3
- 4-6
- 7-9
- 10+

31. ¿Paga transporte para ir al trabajo?
- Si (Pase a la pregunta 32)
 - No
32. ¿Cómo cuanta paga diariamente a ir al trabajo? _____
33. ¿Cuánto gana?
- Diariamente _____
 - Semanalmente _____
 - Mensualmente _____
34. ¿Con que frecuencia le pagan?
- Diariamente
 - Semanalmente
 - Bi-semanal
 - Mensualmente
35. ¿Cómo encontró su trabajo? _____
36. ¿Por cuanto tiempo ha estado en este trabajo?
- Algunos días
 - Algunas semanas
 - Meses _____ ¿Cuanto(s)? _____
 - Año(s) _____ ¿Cuantos? _____
37. ¿Le gusta su trabajo?
- Si ¿Porqué? _____
 - No ¿Porque? _____
38. ¿Trabaja con otras personas?
- Si ¿Cómo ha sido trabajar con otro/as personas?

 - No
39. Aparte de ese trabajo, ¿hace algún trabajo complementario o extra para ayudarte?
- Lava y/o plancha
 - Cocina
 - Atiende niño/as
 - Otro _____
 - Sin Respuesta
40. ¿Con que frecuencia le pagan en este/os trabajo(s)?

- Diariamente
- Semanalmente
- Bi-semanal
- Mensualmente

41. ¿Está haciendo lo que vino a hacer aquí en la República Dominicana o está haciendo otra cosa?

- Si ¿Cual es esa cosa? _____
- No ¿Que hace? _____

42. ¿Qué hacía en Haití (por si se vino de Haití), antes de venir a la República Dominicana?

- Trabajaba
- No trabaja
- Trabajaba en su casa
- Era vendedor/a
- Otro _____
- Sin respuesta

4. Preguntas sobre relaciones sociales y

43. ¿Hay espacios adonde usted camina o va con su familia adonde no se siente bienvenido?
¿Por ejemplo, el mercado, adonde trabaja, otras casas?

_____.

44. ¿Cómo es tu relación con los demás haitiano/as y haitianos que viven aquí?

- Buenas
- Regular
- Nos son buenas
- Se llevan bien
- Comparten las cosas
- Tienen problemas
- Se llevan mal
- Otro _____
- Sin Respuesta

45. ¿Que actividades realiza con los demás haitianos y haitianas que viven aquí?

- Juega domino u otro juego
- Salen juntos a comprar, bailar, etc.
- Realizan trabajos junto/as
- No realiza actividad con ello/as
- No se mezcla
- Otra _____

Sin repuesta

46. ¿Cómo lo/la tratan los haitiano/as que viven aquí?

Bien

Mal

Te da igual

Otro _____

Sin Respuesta

47. ¿Cómo se siente con los demás haitianos/as que viven aquí?

Bien

Mal

Te da igual

Otro _____

Sin Respuesta

48. ¿Que piensas de los/as haitiano/as? ¿Cómo los/as ves? (Por ejemplo, le gusta que vive cerca de ello/as? Se siente parte de una comunidad con otro/as haitiano/as? etc.)

49. ¿Cómo está tu relación con los/as dominicano/as que viven aquí?

Buenas

Regular

No son buenas

Se llevan bien

Comparten las cosas

Tienen problemas

Se llevan mal

Otros _____

Sin Respuesta

50. ¿Qué actividades realiza con los/as dominicano/as que viven aquí?

Juega domino o cualquier otro juego

Salen junto/as a comprar, bailar, etc.

Realiza trabajo junto/as

No realizas actividad con ello/as

No te mezclas

Otro _____

Sin Respuesta

51. ¿Cómo lo/la tratan los dominicano/as que viven aquí?

Bien

- Mal
- Te da igual
- Otro _____
- Sin Respuesta

52. ¿Cómo te sientes con lo/as dominicano/as que viven aquí?

- Bien
 - Mal
 - Te da igual
 - Otro _____
- _____
- _____
- Sin Respuesta

53. ¿Que piensas de los/las dominicanos/as? ¿Cómo los/as ves?

54. ¿Cómo se siente viviendo en La Zurza?

- Bien
 - Mal
 - Te da igual
 - Otro _____
- _____
- Sin Respuesta

55. ¿Ha habido veces o a veces se siente incómodo o inconfortable viviendo aquí?

- Si ¿Porqué?

- No

5. Preguntas relacionado al acceso a organizaciones o servicios básicos

56. ¿Conoce de las diferentes organizaciones que existen aquí en La Zurza? (Por ejemplo, FUNDZAZURZA, Club de Madres La Zurza, Club Juvenil de La Amistad, Iglesia Alpha y Omega, Parroquia San Juan Bautista, Centro de Salud, etc.)

- Si (Seguir a pregunta 57)
- No

57. ¿Cómo es que se enteró de esta organización?

- Boca a boca

- Vecino/as
- Familiares
- Otro _____
- Sin Respuesta

58. ¿Qué me puede decir sobre _____ organización? (Es decir, ¿Cómo se sintió yendo a hasta organización?

- Bien
- Mal
- Te da igual
- Otro

Sin Respuesta

59. ¿Pudo conseguir lo que buscaba o necesitaba de la organización en que fue? (Por ejemplo, si necesitaba ayuda médica, matricular a su niño/a en la escuela, ayuda con comida, de encontrar trabajo, de conseguir documentos legales, etc.)

- Si
- No

60. ¿En qué manera se logró esto?

_____.

60. ¿Cuántas veces va a esta organización o ha ido?

- Una vez
- Dos veces
- Tres veces
- Cuatro veces
- Cinco veces
- 5+ veces
- Sin respuesta

61. ¿Se ha sentido limitado/a con el tipo de ayuda que ha podido recibir de esta organización?

- Si ¿En qué manera?

No

62. ¿Hay otra manera(s) en que se ha sentido limitado? (Por ejemplo, por no hablar el Español suficiente, por adonde vive, no tiene documentos legales, el transporte, no hay cuarto, no siente o hay apoyo de otras personas, no puede encontrar a alguien quien cuide a su hijo/as (si tiene)) _____.

Preguntas que seguir en el futuro

63. ¿Estaría disponible para ser entrevistado para hablar más sobre su experiencia viviendo en La Zurza?

- Si
- No

Pregunta de genero (por si es mujer)

64. ¿Me puede hablar un poco más sobre cómo es ser mujer aquí en La Zurza, en este sector, en su casa?

Seguir con preguntas abiertas relacionado a ser mujer y como piensa (si o no) que la han afectado con su experiencia en La Zurza.

Vita

A native of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, José Daniel Rubio-Zepeda is a dual master's candidate pursuing a joint degree in Latin American Studies and Community and Regional Planning (graduation December 2017). He holds a bachelor of arts in political science and Spanish, with a minor in International Studies, Latin American emphasis from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. His research interests focus on migration, transnationalism, race, ethnicity, gender, class, gender (more broadly, cultural studies), space and place within the context of the Caribbean, more specifically the Dominican Republic and Haiti, and the African Diaspora in Central America. As a first-generation college graduate, he strongly believes in the power of mentorship and credits his undergraduate professors for instilling him in a passion for research. He was selected as a McNair Scholar, propelling him into graduate school. The McNair Scholars Fellowship, along with other professors, administrators, and mentors were all instrumental in setting an example of the possibilities and value of higher education, helping him attend the University of Texas at Austin. He will be the first in his family to earn not one, but two master's degrees. One day, he hopes to pursue a PhD.

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This thesis was typed by the author.