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El Derecho a la Tierra: Rural and Urban Grassroots Resistance in the Dominican Republic

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El Derecho a La Tierra: Rural and Urban Grassroots Resistance in the Dominican Republic

by

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Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

August 2018

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank members of Mujeres Unidas of Los Platanitos, and of the Loma Miranda movement for their openness and collaboration in sharing their stories of resistance with me and with each other and for your patience and care as I went through my diasporic journey. I will also like to thank my advisors Dr. Jossianna Arroyo-Martinez and Dr. Bjørn Sletto for your advice, feedback and support throughout this process. Thank you to the Teresa Lozano Long Institute for Latin American Studies, the Benson Collection, and the National Science Foundation for your support. To my colleagues and friends Andrea (Andy), Juan, Julia, Black Sovereign Nation, Deborah, Njera and many other Austin, and Texas people, honestly, I don't know how I would've survived graduate school without you all. To my chosen queer and blood family in Kiskeya/Ayiti and so-called United States for your deep spiritual guidance and support. To my best friend and loving life partner Yucca and their family for their unconditional love. To my elders that have passed and ancestors that are always with me.

Abstract

El Derecho a La Tierra: Rural and Urban Grassroots Resistance in the Dominican Republic

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2018

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This project investigates and collects stories of resistance from women defending their land, water and community in the Dominican Republic (DR) and puts them in conversation with each other. These movements are different from each other as one is in the community of the Los Platanitos, in the Guaricanos of Santo Domingo Norte, while the other is in Loma Miranda, a community about 20 minutes from the town of La Vega. The barrio of Los Platanitos is situated next to a cañada (ravine), which due to recent developments has now been covered by a road. Mujeres Unidas is a group of women from the community, who are organizing to protect their community from displacement, submitting "propuestas" (protests in a form of proposals) to government officials in order to improve their living condition against flooding, in addition to empowering themselves through entrepreneurship initiatives. In the community of Loma Miranda, Falcondo - a mining corporation - proposed an expansion mining project in the mountain. This mountain belongs to the foothills of the northeastern part of the *cordillera central*, the highest mountain range on the island of Dominican Republic. Loma Miranda is one of the most

biodiverse regions of country. The mountain is also considered a “water mine” because of the many springs, basins and rivers flowing through it. In the Loma Miranda resistance movement, women are playing a significant role “behind” the scenes and on the frontlines. As the researcher the insider/outsider positionality plays a significant role in choosing to use a decolonial methodology in which alternative forms of knowledge production are used in the writing of this thesis. Part of this methodology is the transformation of silence into action by having the women speak for themselves through poetry, creative writing, first person memoirs and narratives, and sharing stories of struggle by connecting these movements through intentional gathering.

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I felt this deep fire in my chest the kind of fire that feels like it's going to explode, pushing up against the walls of the chest, travelling through the tunnel of my throat, I screamed. A scream, a gurgling noise, mixed with snot and mucous after crying too much. I stood there and watched, still and unmoving, fists clenched at my side. Location: Forest in East Texas 9/29/12. Tree after tree ripped from its roots with no care for the creatures or the people of the forest. In a matter of 30 minutes an entire field of forest were broken limbs, heads of

trees torn off, their trunks barely left rooted in the ground. We all tried stopping them, putting our bodies in front of the feller buncher as it was moving, land defenders have been hurt and killed like that, but we were willing to do anything. My friend's body slumped over, cradling the headless trunk of a tree, sobbing, as I stood behind her, staring out into the abyss. For me, for us it was a matter of life or death. We were trying to stop the Keystone XL from being constructed. For me at the moment, I understood that I was a settler on that land. That due to imperial violence of the so-called United States to Kiskeya, Dominican Republic, that my family was forced to leave their homes and work to migrate to occupied stolen Lenape territory, NYC. Although, I was not a settler by choice, I still made it my responsibility to be more than just an ally, to be an accomplice in situations of land and water protection.

Throughout the past several years of witnessing spaces consisting of land and water defenders, this determination that spiraled through my body that day, the "by any means necessary" feeling, I saw that energy emitting beyond the confines of their bodies alone. These defenders are women (trans and cis), people of color, queer, two spirit, Indigenous and Black. Their struggles spanning across varied spaces and places from urban to rural and international state colonial sanctioned borders. Land and water defense in these spaces and for these communities embodies an array of definitions and meaning. These movements consist of struggles against gentrification, resource extraction, land grabbing; it also goes beyond the physical manifestations of defense for land and water but also into the defense and reclamation of the spiritual and historical connections to that land and water; the struggle for sovereignty and the simple but complex right to live. Self-

determination, community, resistance and within that life and death are represented in these spaces, in these people. There is an interlocking web of struggles and (in)justices that exist within the movement to defend the land and water. These movements are interwoven and cannot be separated from anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism. Resource extraction and land grabbing are continuation of an old colonial system that is manifested in a different way but still currently exists in a new colonial form.

In most social movements the roles and participation of women are invisible. This is due to a long history of machismo as a structural form widely within society that also manifests itself within social movements and participatory development. Often, women are excluded from "the table." The table is a metaphor and also a reality for community decision-making and the structural system. Even when women struggle to participate at "the table," their voices and opinions are ignored or not heard; their opinions are not taken seriously. Within social movements, women assume various roles, public and private roles. One of the private roles is the women who feed the movement. Many times, this is not seen as a real activism or an important role within movements. The Black Feminist academic, Patricia Hill Collins, tells us that we need to see all the roles of women as activism and the foundation of a social movement (Collins 1990). There are also the more public roles assumed by women, such as leadership and organizing roles and participation in marches and protests. However, even when women participate in these public roles, articles and media do not write about them or cite them, their image is invisible, it is not seen.

Within my research I am taking stories of women defending their land, water and community in the Dominican Republic (DR) and putting them in conversation with each

other. These movements are different from each other as one is in the community of the Los Platanitos, in the Guaricanos of Santo Domingo Norte, while the other movement is in Loma Miranda, a mountain about 20 minutes from the town of La Vega. The barrio of Los Platanitos is situated within a cañada (ravine). The community is prone to flooding and there is a lack of municipal trash collection. During floods, people had to hang up or otherwise elevate their beds so they wouldn't be soaked in filthy floodwaters. In the past year, a new stormwater infrastructure project has almost fully covered the cañada, but the homes of residents were demolished and they are now living in temporary rental housing paid for by the agency responsible for the project, which is the Corporación para el Acueducto y Alcantarillado de Santo Domingo (CAASD).

In Los Platanitos exists the organization Mujeres Unidas, which is an important part of the struggle to protect the area. The majority of the members are women from the community, who are organizing to empower and better their homes through submitting "propuestas" (protests in a form of proposals) to government officials in order to improve their living condition. In addition, the women demand spaces of participation, fighting for a seat at "the table," and speaking at conferences and panels. Despite very real socio-economic challenges around finding the time and resources, these women have tried to develop entrepreneurship initiatives, including a vermicomposting (composting using earthworms) and the manufacturing of household cleaning products, in order to become autonomous and empowered. I was able to connect with this community through the 10 year-long co-investigator relationship built between the University of Texas and Los Platanitos. My original research proposal was to solely work with Loma Miranda; however,

I was given the opportunity to conduct summer research with Mujeres Unidas through an International Research and Education (IRES) scholarship provided by the National Science Foundation via a grant to Dr. Bjørn Sletto, School of Architecture, The University of Texas.

In the community of Loma Miranda, Falcondo - a mining corporation - proposed an expansion mining project in the mountain around the year 2010. This mountain belongs to the foothills of the northeastern part of the *cordillera central*, the highest mountain range on the island. Loma Miranda is one of the most biodiverse regions of DR, about 16 square miles in size with several ecosystems ranging from Rainforest to Pine and Riparian forests, and over 400 species of plant and non-plant life. The mountain is considered a "water mine" because of the many springs, basins and rivers flowing through it, which provides water to the city of Santiago de los Caballeros and over 20 towns in the region (Lewis 2015). Although residents have been living in the mountain for generations, many have now been displaced to the base of the mountain, paid off by Falcondo as well as given false promises that they will receive a portion of the profits from the mining project. In the Loma Miranda resistance movement, women are playing a significant role "behind" the scenes and on the frontlines, although these women are not seen as leaders by men in the movement and by the media. They are leaders in their own right, as women born in the mountain or having a relation to it, defending the land and water through civil disobedience and other "behind the scenes" work.

The purpose of my thesis is to make these voices and stories of women visible within and outside the academy, and also in social movements and general spaces. I also seek to gain knowledge and better understand the role of women in the struggle for land.

My research questions are: How are women organized? What strategies are they using? What does it mean to fight for land, home and water as a woman?

I am using a decolonial methodology in my research and in how I represent the stories and my data. This methodology tries to break with the academic norms based on colonialism practices. Academic research has a long white European colonial history in which researchers speak of communities as foreign, and where they believe that their knowledge is the only and universal. With the understanding that my research would embody both of these communities, I feel a commitment to bringing them together. Part of my decolonial methodology is sharing knowledge between groups, in which I've taken the story of Loma Miranda to several communities including that of Los Platanitos. A future project that I hope to implement is a meeting between Mujeres Unidas and members of the Loma Miranda movement in an effort to form ties of solidarity, allowing both groups to share their stories of struggle with each other. In addition, in the future I would like to create a Zine, a booklet, that has historically been used by politically and socially marginalized communities. The zine will present the stories of these struggles in an accessible format that can be distributed to various groups and organizations.

Since last summer of 2017, I've been asked to give two workshops on Loma Miranda before I knew I would be working with Mujeres Unidas. In the first workshop, I was asked to tell the stories I gathered of the anti-mining resistance movement happening at Loma Miranda. The workshop was held in so called Rhode Island at an Action camp set up by the Pokanoket Nation, a non-federally recognized tribe, that due to the actions following this camp they were able to reclaim their land back from Brown University. At

the camp, during my workshop I was surrounded by women of color, indigenous, and black, who listened to the story about Loma Miranda. There was an elder at the workshop that only spoke Spanish, in all other workshops, there was a translator for her. Once we realized that most of the people in my workshop spoke Spanish, minus one or two people, we decided to shift the paradigm and I gave the workshop in Spanish. I began with telling them about the determination of the women I interviewed. About these women literally stating, "Con un tiro en la frente," with a bullet shot through their forehead would they ever let this Falcondo mine enter their community, into the mountain. In all the land and water defense spaces I've been in, from working with Ponca women in so called Oklahoma, Lakota women on the Pine Ridge Reservation, and Black Dominican women in Loma Miranda and Los Platanitos, they've all expressed to me how they are willing to give everything for their land and community. For many of these women, there *is* no other choice. When I told this story to those in the workshop in Rhode Island, I also brought in the personal. Because for me the personal is political, the political is personal, those women in Loma Miranda and the women of Los Platanitos in Santo Domingo are part of my community. They are part of my Dominican and resistance community. I hold an insider-outsider perspective that positions my research as a colonized/diasporic body simultaneously having a relationship to the community and culture I am working with. Due to this positionality, I have taken steps to being reflexive about how I should work with these communities as well as the way in which I am representing their stories and struggle.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

The literature that informs my research in Loma Miranda and Los Platanitos, Dominican Republic includes environmental justice, women of color (WOC) led movements, and alternative forms of knowledge production. I will engage with the literature in environmental justice to get an understanding of the impacts and implications of resource extraction and land grabs within communities in Latin America. Within this literature there are sub-areas of inquiry and body of literature including colonization and environmental racism. Specifically, I will be looking at research that analyzes how a major driving force of the capitalization of colonization came from the extraction of resources such as gold and the seizing of land for sugar plantations, among other crops, violently utilizing the slave labor of black and indigenous peoples. I will focus on literature that speaks of the modern forms of environmental racism, where corporations take calculated measures to place environmental hazards within pre-dominant communities of color and/or low-income communities.

The work written about environmental justice, colonization and environmental racism articulates closely with the literature on women of color led movements, in the sense that women are often at the forefront combating these environmental destructive projects. The literature on women of color led movements serve as specific case studies of women around Latin America, organizing for justice within their communities, may it be environmentally focused or anti-gentrification type of struggle. This literature includes specific commentary about the experiences of women in these movement spaces. In addition, in the studies the writers are taking a specific feminist approach to how they are

writing these pieces and why they believe they are important in order to break from traditional forms of writing about movements. For this reason, the next body of literature, Alternative forms of Knowledge Production, fit together and closely connect to these case studies. The literature is utilized as both a guide throughout my thesis and a method that is intentionally incorporated into how I've written parts of thesis. This literature speaks on different mediums to write stories and history that are collected as people and researchers, such as: zines, integrating the voices and knowledge of the people from the community and choosing to use poetry and creative writing to break from traditional forms of academic writing, among other formats. The sub-area within this body of literature is the co-production of knowledge with community members and the researcher; the literature is applied throughout the workshops I facilitate with the community, where I use popular education and discussion-based exercises. The expectation through this workshop style is that people from the community will express their stories and engage with others stories in an open and comfortable space. Furthermore, I've utilized this literature in how I chose to write my thesis by using creative writing and poetry to give the thesis a more story-like style; engaging with people's stories by including their narratives in the telling of the movement and its process.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

According to the First People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in Washington D.C., the Principles of Environmental Justice were created and agreed upon, and still stand as a guiding set of principles for the Environmental Justice Movement today

("Principles of Environmental Justice" 1991). One of the principles within the document are "Environmental Justice affirms the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural and environmental self-determination of all peoples," ("Principles of Environmental Justice" p.1) and another principle is "Environmental Justice affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction." These principles are the foundations that people are fighting for, but which are often not met due to environmental racism and colonization.

When looking throughout history at anti-resource extraction and land defense movements, it's usually a fight for the water, the rights to territory and community, for the livelihood of the people (Klak 1998, Perry 2004, Offen 2003). Those that are most affected by these industries are indigenous people and people of color. They are usually at the bottom of the socio-economic spectrum. The specific targeting of certain spaces where indigenous and people of color live to conduct environmental projects such as resource extraction is called environmental racism. I understand what environmental racism is, not from reading theory but from seeing it first hand in my community in NYC and seeing it in the communities that I've supported through my organizing. Environmental racism consists of either blatant or coercive actions by corporations and companies, predominantly in indigenous and communities of color. These communities are chosen for a number of reasons, to name a few, they may not have the political power to defend themselves, there is more fear to fight back such as in a predominantly undocumented community, and in my opinion the primary reason would be the disregard for the human rights of certain people based on their race and ethnicity.

In Thomas Klak's "Globalization and Neoliberalism: the Caribbean Context," the author focuses on how the Caribbean has been one of the first beginnings of globalization, through forced sugar plantation labor and exporting these crops during the colonial era

(Klak 1998). Klak presents 13 theses in his book, in which he first states that the Caribbean is the most globalized region of the world. Since the 1500's these regions have been controlled by outside powers, economically based on forced labor, and the land used for monocrop production, such as bananas and sugarcane. Klak claims that, "all dimensions of Caribbean society were exogenously constructed and transplanted there, the culture of Afro-Caribbean people from the outset has been detached from its historical and geographical roots and therefore modern and global" (Klak 1998, 6). The insight that I receive from this piece is the acknowledging and witnessing the modern forms of colonization, through displacement/gentrification and resource extraction that I am witnessing with the communities I've been working with in Loma Miranda and Santo Domingo, DR. I hope that by looking at the issue of resource extraction and exporting within the colonial era, I can make the point that these issues are continuing today with the example of Loma Miranda, a mountain that is being proposed as a mine for nickel, to be exported to the world. In addition, I aim to contribute to this literature by showing how urban land grabbing is part of the plan to "clean up" the city of Santo Domingo, opening up the space to globalization and tourism.

There are several authors who have written on resource extraction, displacement, community resistance and state responses within Latin America including Sara Diamond, Christian Poirier, and Thomas Perreault. In the articles written about these specific issues, the various authors also make sure to incorporate community organizing and states response to resource extraction. In the article "Brazil's Native Peoples and the Belo Monte Dam" by Diamond and Poirier, about an indigenous community in Brazil resisting a hydroelectric dam project, the government funds a major propaganda campaign to convince people that this will be a huge economic growth and human development project. The dam would have impacted the local communities by reducing the water level,

preventing them from travelling by boat to sell their products and thus threatening their indigenous cultural identity and traditions. I will utilize this literature to understand how the state plays a role in using similar campaigns to push economic interests when referring to potentially environmental and culturally destructive projects.

In Perreault's article "From the Guerra Del Agua to the Guerra del Gas," he speaks on the gas and water wars in Bolivia and the protests that have been happening. (Perreault 2006) This article aims to look at how the protests have set demands for autonomy, livelihood rights, and how the notions of citizenship and the nation play into this. Perreault theorizes that certain issues became either more regional or took on a national focus depending on the context. In addition, this literature discusses resource governance, where the government and institutions regulate how power and functions of natural resources are used. Loma Miranda grew from a regional movement to a national issue. Due to the immensity of this issue, there are certain state and civil responses, such as officials and President Danilo Medina using the constitutional laws to determine how natural resources are utilized. Similarly, the Dominican government and extractive industries have taken measures to control the usage of natural resources.

In the article "Historizar el Lugar para Resistir el Desplazamiento por Minería de Carbón," Gonzalez and Melo describe the community of Boqueron in Colombia, which has faced displacement and dispossession of their culture and festivals due to coal mining (Gonzalez & Melo 2015). They theorize that by historicizing the places and the traditions of these communities, it may become a form of strategy in resisting displacement due to coal mining. The strategy of historicizing the place is one that I have seen utilized throughout my time working with Mujeres Unidas and Loma Miranda, where community members are collecting oral histories from elders in Los Platanitos and identifying significant archaeological sites in Loma Miranda. Other than the historicization of the land

to appease and to be recognized by outside forces, my research will show that these historical and cultural imprints people are creating and identifying are also for themselves, taking the form of a community archive to pass down, hold on to, and demonstrate traditions, knowledge and pride.

In addition to utilizing academic articles written about environmental justice within Latin America, I will draw on texts about Loma Miranda from newspaper articles, books and research done by those within the movement about the environmental impact, flora, fauna and waters in the mountain. For Los Platanitos I will look at books written by students of the University of Texas and Professor Bjorn created during the 10 year long co-investigation Dominican Practicum project. These various pieces will bring in detailed facts, research and narratives about the past, current and future impacts of these projects.

Lastly, the articles and research will help in my understanding the historical permanence and trajectory of resource extraction and displacement as seen through colonization and modern forms of colonialism. This literature will help me gain an understanding of the impacts and implications of resource extraction on communities in Latin America and the responses that come from multiple players, such as the state/government and the community. However, I hope to bring specifically the experience of black women and women of color resisting and organizing against similar projects, which is a gap in their work through the intentional inclusion of women's voices from Los Platanitos and Loma Miranda.

BLACK WOMEN OF COLOR-LED STRUGGLES

Often times, those on the frontlines of land and water defense movements are women, black, indigenous, and queer people of color risking their freedom and life. These activists are committed to fighting for the basic material survival of their families,

communities and themselves; their political actions are embedded in the larger power relations of community, nation, region and the world (Lynn 1997, 267). However, these people are oftentimes seen as secondary to men's activism (Jenkins 2014, 447). Outside of feminist activist movements, in any other form of activism, women are almost forced to repress feminist discourse, or speak on women's issues. This repression is manifested through the silencing of women who wish to speak on these issues or they are placed within typical domestic roles, such as cooking and cleaning for the movement. In the article "Encountering Latin American and Caribbean Feminisms," Alvarez speaks about the division between proclaimed feminists compared to political or militia identified women (Alvarez 2003, 542), in which the militia women had to repress feminist discourse and women's issues seen as secondary to the current political movement. Despite these boxes that women are placed into and regardless of the divisions, women still fight on the frontlines as mothers, feminists, indigenous, queer women etc. In the face of their actions and activism being ignored, women continually show up in these spaces, in these anti-extractive movement spaces because they are also going to face the devastating impacts. Through the choice of using this body of literature, I hope to make space for women leading struggles to be seen and bring narratives that are missing in the articles from the first section of this review. Included within the literature are women leading anti-extractive movements, those that are unseen leaders participating in "behind" the scenes movement work and those organizing against displacement. In addition, certain pieces within this section discuss the importance of writing about women through a feminist lens in which they have a say in how their narrative is portrayed.

In anti-extractive movements, the imagery of hurting and raping Pachamama or Mother Earth is often used. But this imagery is a daily reality that is being inflicted quite literally on the bodies of Indigenous trans-women, cis-women, and queer people of color.

These extractive industries within our capitalist society are patriarchal and hold up toxic masculine traits, such as aggression, violence, unemotional, and competitive nature. In addition to the sexual violence and the continuation of gender inequalities in communities, the most obvious impact of extractive industries on communities are the immense health and mental effects.

In Katy Jenkins "Unearthing Women's Anti-mining, activism in the Andes: Pachamama and the 'mad old woman,'" we see the same invisibilization of women's activism in the anti-mining movement. Jenkins collects about 26 accounts from women in Huancabamba, Peru and Cuenca, Ecuador. The women have been doing anti-mining activism for over 7 years (Jenkins 2015, 443), which includes protesting, coordinating petitions and giving out informational propaganda on the negative effects of the mining. In doing this work they have endured severe violence from the state, having been dragged, kicked and arrested. However, their activism is still seen as just doing the support work for the men. But these women have every reason to be standing on the frontlines and have suffered mental and physical injuries. Due to society placing these women into feminized and domestic roles, these women have a broader understanding of the impact mining or whatever extractive industry will have on their livelihood. In the region where Jenkins conducted her research, women could directly see the consequences that a mine would have on their water source. Their principal concern was the impact on water quality and potential water contamination and the health issues that could come with a mining project. According to one account, a woman states that water is literally used for everything: cleaning, cooking, cultivating the land. (Jenkins 2015, 449). This is something that men may not notice, because they are not within the domestic space all day and are often working outside town.

In the community I grew up in West Harlem, NY, the organization WE ACT (West Harlem Environmental Action) for Environmental Justice began in 1988 in response to the environmental racism very much present within African-American neighborhood with a growing Dominican immigrant population (Miller et al. 1996). What sparked the movement was the proposed North River Sewage Treatment Plant (NSTP) to be built on the Hudson River. The plant was originally supposed to be built in the white, affluent neighborhood of the Upper West Side (Miller, V. et al. 1996). At the time, West Harlem felt like a dumping ground for the city, housing 13 environmentally hazardous facilities, including 7 municipal bus depots and a solid waste marine transfer station.

Due to the odors, most often described as rotten eggs, people from the neighborhood would complain about not being able to go on their fire escape, balcony or open their windows. The odor became unbearable and worse during hot summer months. It was said that the odor would reach almost a two-mile radius. In addition, after the opening of the North River Sewage Treatment Plant, many residents complained of itchy eyes, shortness of breath, and other symptoms often related to asthma and respiratory ailments. At a certain point, day-care centers couldn't stay open and the children would be sent to family members further away from the neighborhood. I remember stories my mom told me of taking me to the hospital at two years old because I couldn't breathe. When industries like these come into communities they hurt the health of children, and due to the established roles within communities, women face the brunt and responsibility of taking care of the children, once again reinforcing the patriarchal dimensions of these industries. WE ACT filed a lawsuit against the sewage waste plant due to its contribution to the already polluted air of Harlem.

WE ACT was started by black women concerned for the health and safety of their community. One of the Co-Founders and Executive Director, Peggy Shepard, continues to

be in the organizing committee today. These black women, many of them senior citizens, were already leaders within their community at churches and in community gardens. The preexisting networks that they created through these spaces facilitated a stronger and deeper movement. When their concerns about the risks of the sewage waste plant were not heard they blocked traffic on the West Side Highway and Riverside Drive in front of the plant, bringing the traffic to a standstill on both roads. The fact that it was the middle of winter did not concern them, as it was a show of force and a demonstration of the self-determination and empowerment of the community.

Additionally, this body of literature describes black women organizing and resisting various forms of gentrification and land grab. In the book *Black Women against the Land Grab* Keisha-Khan Perry (2013) discusses how racism, sexism and classism operates within the urban development projects of Salvador de Bahia in Brazil. She uses narratives of community members, primarily black women, as the main voice throughout the book to speak about the complex resistance and violent struggle to gain land rights to their community of Gamboa de Baixo. Perry states one of the main reasons these women are defending their community is due to how their land has become a major social and cultural asset for them as black people (women), especially those who are economically marginalized. Despite the fact that the organizing and direct action are led by women balancing multiple forms of work, including household, wage labor, activism, and school, they are still invisible within the media and their work is undervalued and seen as disposable. Perry articulates how black women's leadership challenges the hegemonic lens fabricated by state officials, corporations and academic scholars who don't expect to see black women in these principal roles.

Similar to the women of Gamboa de Baixo, Fernando Valerio-Holguín writes about a black woman in Dominican Republic whose resistance has been undervalued and lost in

history. In the article, “La Triple Marginalidad: Florinda Soriano (Mamá Tingó),” he writes of Mamá Tingó, a Black Dominican woman who fought to defend her land and the land of other campesinos. Her story is ignored within Dominican History unless as a commodification of her image, unlike the Mirabal sisters, revolutionary lighter-skin affluent women who are revered across the country (Valerio-Holguín, 2011). Despite this erasure of a black Dominican women, Mamá Tingó was a leader in her community and is still held up as an idol. Her resistance has inspired many artists from street theater performers to merengueros dedicating songs to her. Those who choose to keep her legacy alive are showing that her fight for land converted her into Madre Tierra (Valerio-Holguín, 2011). Her conversion to Madre Tierra makes it so that her spirit is everywhere at the same time, her spirit is incarnated through the landscapes of Dominican Republic. If she is seen as Madre Tierra she has become inescapable; therefore, she is undefeated.

Within these movements black women play a significant role “behind” the scenes and on the frontlines in defending their land. However, the leadership that black women take are oftentimes not seen as “real” leadership or their work is invisible due to a number of reasons, including gender and race. Although they are not seen as key representatives by those in the movement, they are leaders in their own right, as women that possess that eternal flame of defending the land and water through civil disobedience and other actions considered “behind the scenes” work. In the literature utilized in this section of my theoretical framework, black women of color leadership are a key element in sustaining and driving these movements to success. The lack of this leadership would have led to gaps in the strategy and tactics, utilized in organizing against these landowners and infrastructure projects. The women of these movements and the legacy of their work will follow them and are influenced by their spirituality, embodiment and personification of the tierra and the water they protect.

Furthermore, black women are at the forefront fighting for the land and water, for the health and self-determination of their community. Despite the physical, physiological, mental and spiritual violence they endure, despite the chemicals that entered their bodies, the fires that burned the trees, despite the shots that guns fired into the air, a deep fierce love moves inside of them. “It calls you. Because you want to, because it moves you, something grows inside you. Because everyone that fights for a cause knows that it’s because it moves you not because they are going to pay you” stated one of the women of the Loma Miranda in June 2017.

Although the imperative and irreplaceable work that these women do is not justly recognized, it is the responsibility of the researcher to acknowledge and write about marginalized roles and stories and to not continue perpetuating the same gendered dynamics that these movements and the extractive industry exhibit. This was difficult to navigate when conducting my own research as the men were the first to approach me or more open to being interviewed. With understanding the necessity to be sensitive as an outsider, it is important for researchers to assert themselves to make sure women’s voices are not drowned out by male activists. In addition, it is also our responsibility as researchers to identify these gendered dynamics when we do our fieldwork and to make women’s voices visible within our writings. In Perry’s writings, she states how women are invisible in the movement and intentionally includes quotes and narratives from the women in the community. The challenge in contributing to this body literature is utilizing methods that centralize women voices to foreground their narratives of their resistance and the issues they are dealing with.

I hope to take this literature of black women resistance in an urban area and apply it to Mujeres Unidas, who are defending their community of Los Platanitos in the city of Santo Domingo Norte, and also to the women of Loma Miranda, where they are asserting

themselves in political, spaces, in the streets protesting, that are not made for them due systemic racism and sexism. Lastly, the books and articles within this body of literature will contribute to understanding how women of color in resistance are seen by society, how they are written about, and how as researchers we can share their stories in a just and dignified manner.

ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

When I entered graduate school in August, after 5 years of refusing to go back to academia, I fell into shock. I wanted to run away, I wanted to leave. Naively, I had other expectations, especially when it came to the literature I was reading. In some classes we were assigned articles written by "great researchers and thinkers." These "great researchers," who were mostly men and white, wrote about ideas and thoughts that I've heard my indigenous friends, family and friends of color talking about for years. But my indigenous friends, family, and friends of color are not heard or seen because they do not hold the power when it comes to the production and dissemination of knowledge; they do not have the credentials or know how write in a specified style and language. I was frustrated and stressed because I felt that I needed to write in this way to be respected, to be seen.

Therefore, my aim is to produce knowledge that encompasses a decolonizing method by using creative writing, ethnography and poetry (my own and others), making space for their stories and letting the voices of the people in the workshops and the women I interview to transfer through this thesis in a manner that lets them speak for themselves. (Re)producing this knowledge as someone whose family is from this land makes it difficult to not insert personal stories into the writing; however, I do my best to not overwhelm the

stories of others with my own. This requires a balance and also an understanding that it is ok to produce knowledge beyond the confines of "traditional" academic writing.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith's book, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples,* speaks about this balance, i.e. the difficulty in producing knowledge as a person from the community but also conducting research about this space. Smith specifically talks about indigenous researchers, but I believe that this methodology and literature is important for my own research and writing process. This method is about thinking critically about the ways that we write. Imperialism and colonization have brought a complete disconnection to history of communities and their relationship to land and water, which prevail within academic spaces. Writing theory for communities of color becomes a form of intimidation and can be alienating between the reader and the written piece. Representation is important for reclamation of space, of language, and of history. There is a major problem when we, as people of color and marginalized people, cannot see ourselves in the text, when we barely recognize ourselves. "To write in the language of the colonizer was to pay homage to them," (Smith 1999, 85). Smith quotes Ngugi Wa Thiong'o as saying. Our stories are places of resistance and hope. We need to write critically and, in our way, to delegitimize the colonial and dominant ways of writing about our communities. Smith speaks on the history of research through imperial eyes, in which "western" views of talking and interacting with the rest of the world are embedded in racialized discourses. This discourse was developed through colonialism and the colonization of knowledge. Through the act of collecting/stealing territories, flora, fauna, mineral resources and cultures, colonization rearranged, re-presented, and re-distributed this knowledge in a form that "repositioned [colonized people] as outsider in order to legitimate the imposition of colonial rule," (Smith 1999, 63). These discourses Smith says are the foundation of western academic research. The knowledge produced through this western academic lens are seen

as universal notions, i.e. their knowledge is the most rational way to make sense of the world.

Due to this trajectory, research is both highly institutionalized and most research methodologies assume the researcher is from outside the community. According to Smith, insiders - those from the community - are in constant need for reflexivity, having to live with their consequences and so do their communities in how they choose to portray and represent their research. Although Smith briefly states that an outsider also has to go through such a reflexive process, I would challenge her to write more about the responsibilities of the outsider. However, I do understand the constant need to reflect on my actions and how I choose to speak and portray the stories of the community. Smith mentions several indigenous research projects and methodologies that can be used when doing this type of insider research: storytelling, connecting, reframing, protecting and sharing among many others. Storytelling is part of creating a collective story, it "connects to the past with the future, one generation with another, land with people and people with story," (Smith 1999, 242). The storytelling is part of the "connecting," which is about establishing a wholeness of relationships around issues of identity, place and spirituality. Through "reframing," by controlling the issues that are discussed, I believe deeper connections are built. Smith speaks of "protecting" people, communities, languages, land and natural resources, and of "sharing" knowledge between indigenous groups through community gatherings. Therefore, my goal is to ultimately bring in the five methodologies presented by Smith and utilize it in how I disseminate the knowledge and information I receive with the community of Loma Miranda and Los Platanitos. I will use literature by women of color across and within the diaspora that write as a form of resistance in order to achieve this goal. The written pieces include poetry, memoirs, creative writing, and prose. The book *Women Writing Resistance: Essays on Latin American and Caribbean*, is

a collection of pieces written by women who are either living in these regions, have familial connections, or are living throughout the diaspora and "transgressing borders." They are speaking about parts of their culture and history had little awareness at the time. One of the pieces included in the collection is "Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to 3rd World Women Writers" by Gloria Anzaldua, in which she discusses how, being a women/lesbian of color writer, she is inaudible, non-existent, and, as if when she speaks, it sounds like she is speaking in tongues. She argues that writing feels unnatural to us because our language has been ripped from us. However, Anzaldua declares "I write to record what others erase when I speak, to rewrite the stories others have miswritten about me, about you." In order to achieve this, one would write in a matter that embraces their own experiences and lives. Anzaldua states that women who write have power and should be writing "with tongues of fire" in order to express their truths. I would challenge this piece by expanding the ways that we can speak, record, and rewrite our stories that are not solely based in the act of writing. From witnessing my personal family experience as women from the "third world" and working with women from these areas, there are a lot of women that do not have the ability to even read or write. Perhaps, Anzaldua was speaking beyond the tool of writing for women to express themselves. As part of my research, I want to expand this to include drawings and even women expressing their poetry through speaking it.

In the book *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Feminists of Color*, there are pieces that are about women speaking their truths despite potential consequences (Anzaldua 1990). In her piece, "Talking Back," bell hooks shared her experience of punishment when questioning authority and the contributions of why black women stay silent. She states that the cause of this silence varies from the acts of Racism/Sexism/Classism, and in less obvious ways the internal struggles and lack of confidence to write and develop a skill as black women. Despite these barriers,

"true speaking is not solely an expression of creative power, it is an act of resistance," (hooks 1990, 210). This truth-speaking is important to my research, as women are reclaiming spaces that are constructed to ignore their opinions and not give them the time to speak when they are expressing the problems and distress of their communities. Lastly, in her piece, "Poetry is Not a Luxury," Audre Lorde speaks of poetry as a revelatory distillation of experience beyond the "word play" created by Europeans, but about survival, about creating hope and giving "name to the nameless." Poetry for women is about identifying and feeling these experiences in order to be free, "I feel, therefore I can be free" (Lorde 1984, 38). Similarly, to bell hooks, Lorde writes about the risks but also the revolutionary change that may come from breaking the silence that stems from the vulnerability of being visible to the outside world, especially as black women. In addition, another of Lordes' piece, "Transformation of Silence into Language and Action" (Lorde 1984) speaks of about the act of "breaking" and "transforming" in the reclamation of language to define oneself and speak what is important, "even at the risk of being bruised and misunderstood" (Lorde 1984, 41). This piece of literature is important throughout my research because these women are speaking for themselves through unapologetic actions. They are (re)claiming highly institutional and community spaces as places that they have a right to participate in. This literature will influence my methodology as I've developed methods, such as organizing spaces where knowledge is exchanged and developing a Zine, in which some women will be able to use poetry and creative arts as forms of resistance and breaking the ever-present silence that exists within their daily experiences.

The creation of a zine is one part of the decolonizing method that will be utilized within and beyond this research and thesis. Historically, marginalized communities have used Zines globally to express themselves, tell their stories, and challenge corporate and mainstream media that are dominated by a few and are selective about who can express

themselves. Through this form of alternative written production, people are able to "create their own versions of reality." In the article by Melanie Ramdarshen Bold, "Why Diverse Zines Matter: A Case Study of the POC Zine Project" (Bold 2017), she states how these forms of media are a safe space for self-expression, turning people into active cultural producers. In addition, Bold declares the importance of POC zines that can be accessed through other mediums. She describes the case study of the POC Zine project, where the creators are developing a digital zine platform to empower contributors and readers to control their experiences and words.

Zines are also a more accessible and economical way to disseminate knowledge and information. Within the Zine making world, there is also a "gift culture" that Alison Piepmeier describes in her piece, "Why Zines Matter: Materiality and the Creation of Embodied Community" (Piepmeier 2008). The "gift culture" is the free form in which Zines are distributed and circulated between the readers and the creators. This form of circulation "instigates a connection between embodied communities" (Piepmeier 2008, 214). When I have produced the Zine, I will share it with other organizations and communities that fight for their land and also with alternative libraries. Within certain activist spaces, people purposefully create Zines void of copyright, meaning they are allowing anyone to make copies of the information to share to a larger audience. Others and myself can easily replicate the Zine in order to share among organizations, radical bookstores, and collectives. Zines promote alternative pedagogies. Through both of these methods, I hope to center the voices of the women within these two movements in the Dominican Republic.

Chapter 3: Historical & Political Context of Loma Miranda and Los Platanitos

Mamá Tingó was a black Dominican woman, born Florinda Soriano on November 8th, 1914 in La Cueva del Licey, Villa Mella in the middle of the forest. Later she moved to Hato Viejo with her husband's family. During the Trujillo dictatorship (1930-1961), large tracts of land from this region were taken and families were pushed out. After Trujillo's assassination in 1961 and during the various presidencies of Joaquin Balaguer's period (1960-1962, 1966-1978, 1986-1996), there were state policies that promised distribution of land and advancement of *campesina* women (Ricourt 2011) with little to show for it. Mamá Tingó fought and organized for the right to her land, which led to her murder. On November 1st 1974, the day of her death, Mamá Tingó took her case to the Monte Plata Judicial Court and the judge deferred the hearing due to the absence of the landowner. Upon arriving on her land, she realized her pigs were untied and released. When she went to tie them up she was met with the groundskeeper that worked for the landowner. He had a rifle and shot at her. When she came at him with her machete, he shot her twice, once in the head and once in the chest.

Her death lead to an outcry from *campesinos* and others across the country. My uncle was living in Santo Domingo at the time of her death and he recalls protests breaking out into the streets: "the city was on fire, there were protests everywhere." Mamá Tingó became a symbol of resistance for the *campesina* woman, she was a resilient figure for people defending their land. In the eyes of those that keep up her legacy, she became the earth. Her conversion to Madre Tierra makes it so that she is everywhere at the same time, her spirit is reincarnated through the landscapes of Dominican Republic.

In the quote initiating this chapter, she states "To take away my land, they will have to take my life, because my life is my land and the land belongs to the one who sows it."

Due to her being a symbol for the defense of land, I felt like she would be an important figure to open up this chapter. Her story is integrated within the history of land defense in Dominican Republic. A history that did not necessarily begin with her story but has become a base for land defense and, I would say, land justice movements in DR. In addition, the story of Mamá Tingó includes an element that are seen in other resistance movements since the 1930's, which are the rulings and influence of Dictators Rafael Trujillo and "strongman" Joaquín Balaguer. The stories of Falcondo in the country and that of housing rights in Santo Domingo very much include the dictatorship and rulings that scarred Dominican society for a cumulative of 55 years. In addition, the choice of including Mamá Tingó, a black Dominican woman leader to open this chapter was intentional to the essence of this thesis. In order to continue with the decolonial methods of representation, rather than beginning a chapter on the history of these movements with the corporation and company on the forefront, it is important to put those that are underrepresented first to break from traditional academic representations. This method of representation I will continue to discuss in a later chapter.

This chapter will focus on the history of Falcondo in the Dominican Republic, describing how it became a part of the mining history in the country and the resistance against these projects that continue until today. Secondly, I will discuss the story of the housing movement in Santo Domingo and the relationship to land defense in the community of Los Platanitos in Santo Domingo Norte.

LAND DEFENSE & ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

In this chapter I will be using the terms Land Defense & Environmental Justice interchangeably, as I believe both terms can embody the same meaning. They are terms that speak about the rights that all people have to living a healthy and fulfilling life, one

that is free of mines that pollute their water, or free from sewage waste water flooding into their homes and businesses. Environment and Land are the literal spaces that people inhabit, may it be urban or rural. These spaces represent the connections of home, community, and spirituality that people have. Defense and Justice are about manifesting the rights one has to their home, community and spirituality into a reality: putting these words into action. These words are both the act of defense taken by these communities to protect their families and land and the seeking of justice to rights they deserve. In the history of anti-mining organizing against Falcondo and the housing rights movement in Santo Domingo, the forms of actions have shifted due to political and societal changes. However, certain tactics and strategies of organizing still remain the same.

FALCONDO & LOMA MIRANDA

In Santiago De Los Caballeros, only an hour from Loma Miranda, I sat with Félix Díaz, an agronomist and engineer and land rights activist. His balcony was full of potted plants hanging from the ceiling. Although we were in the city, sounds of birds filled the open spaces through the apartment and between the furniture we sat on. Díaz was the first person to inform me about the connection of Falcondo to Trujillo and Balaguer, I took this information with me but had to dig deeper to find any books written about this political connection. Díaz's environmental and social defense work was primarily during the Balaguer era, whom he also considered a Dictator along with Trujillo, "They [Government officials] said that [Falcondo] were granted the rights to the territory," Díaz stated to me in response to my question on why the President won't declare the Loma Miranda a National Park:

> We asked them, 'who granted them those rights?' they said Trujillo. 'Well that was during the dictatorship era, Trujillo is in hell burning up in flames.' [We told them]. What Trujillo granted has no reason because they were illegal acts. Trujillo

> never won elections here. He killed a lot of people, that he sent to be assassinated and killed. None of the acts of Trujillo and Balaguer are legal. They have no value. A state run by dictatorship, by the United States, by the North American military, and the CIA, there is no legality there. Where we are now, in a democracy, that is legal.

The historical and political context of a place determines how people define sovereign land and rights. For economically marginalized black people, black women in rural and urban locations in Latin America there is a spiritual, identity and self-liberating aspect to (re)claiming and asserting one's land rights from outside forces; land has become a great social and cultural asset, and the fight for land rights is integrated with the preservation of material and cultural resources (Perry 2013). In the article, "Territorial Turn: Making Black Territories in Pacific Colombia," Offen argues that rural people have a "material, symbolic and spiritual attachment to the land that supports their livelihood," and for black people in these regions the land and territory are imbued with the experiences of violence, slavery, and struggle, giving a new meaning to territorial rights.

Dictatorship and the World Bank

During my research to find this political and corporate connection, I came across a critical analysis of the World Bank financing projects such as mining by Cheryl Payer. According to Payer, in 1956 the Canadian-based ferronickel[1] private mining company Falconbridge Dominicana, also known as Falcondo, acquired rights to the nickel-bearing ores in the Dominican Republic. The previous owner of the land was owned by INCO, the largest producer of nickel in the world today. Payer states that INCO gave up the property when Trujillo "demanded too big a bribe," (Payer 1982, 168). On the official Falcondo website the Quisqueya 1 concession, gave them the rights of exploration and exploitation

[1]Ferronickel is a combination of iron and nickel used in the production of steel and alloy.

of nickel. That year, Falcondo launched a program of research by beginning a pilot plant. However, once Trujillo was assassinated in 1961, the country became an unstable environment for investments by foreign corporations.

In 1962, Professor Juan Bosch was elected to the presidency. In his short-lived presidency of one year, he began to implement programs prohibiting large landholdings and restricting foreign ownerships of land. In 1963, Bosch was overthrown by a military coup. However, due to the dissatisfaction of the people and economic decline, a rebellion known as the Dominican Civil War or Revolution began two years later in 1965 lead by Colonel Francisco Caamaño, where civilians, reformists, and insurgents that supported Bosch seized the national palace. As a response, U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson invaded the Dominican Republic with 20,000 Marines. In 1966, Joaquín Balaguer was installed as President and ruled the country on and off for 20 plus years. During this period, Superior Oil, a Texas Company financially connected to Lyndon Johnson, bought control of Falconbridge and made plans to expand nickel operation (Payer 1982, 169).

I was introduced to Narciso Isa Conde, a prominent activist and Marxist leader of the Caamañista Movement, and participant in the 1965 Dominican Revolution. In the months I spent doing my fieldwork, I made my way to Santo Domingo to interview other people who had participated in the Loma Miranda movement. I was also invited to a Marcha Verde movement meeting. The Marcha Verde movement started a couple of years ago due the continual political corruption and impunity in the country. Narciso has been one of the main Santo Domingo leaders and representative of the Loma Miranda movement at Marcha Verde meetings. Ironically, Narciso's brother Antonio Isa Conde is the Minister of Energy and Mines in the Dominican Republic. During an interview with Narciso, he discussed his role within the Loma Miranda movement and his activist past, "Historically, I have participated in the revolutionary fight from the end of the 1950's until this date. In

the past I was part of the student movement, a Caamañista organizer, [and] part of the leftist movement. But I've given a lot of attention to the environmental issues within Dominican Republic, and I've committed myself to the defense of Loma Miranda. Loma Miranda is the entrance of the central mountain range, and the main water reservoir of the country."

Narciso made it a point throughout our interview to mention the connections between the financial world and resource extraction. Narciso along with another member of Loma Miranda were elected, at an assembly gathering, as spokespeople of Loma Miranda during the Marcha Verde organizing meeting. "In fact, the issue of mining is mixed with the financial issue," Narciso stated. In all forms of infrastructure projects, resource extraction or otherwise, financial institutions are part of the funding and the launching of these projects. According to Payer, mining first began in sites that were both rich in minerals and relatively financially and politically stable. However, due to the exhaustion of rich ores in these sites, companies expanded into more "remote areas," (Payer 1982, 160). In order to obtain more security, mining companies-initiated strategies such as participating in joint ventures or seeking support from international financial institutions such as the World Bank for financial and political insurance.

When the World Bank was founded in 1944 at the Bretton Woods Conference, it was dominated by the United States with 37% of the voting power. Its primary function was to arrange long-term funding and loans for infrastructure and industrial projects, in addition to also "providing a world within which competitive markets forces would operate freely without government interference" (Payer 1982, 22). Once Robert McNamara—the longest serving Secretary of Defense in the U.S. for Presidents Kennedy and Johnson—became president of the World Bank in 1968, they expanded the types of project that were funded and extended their lending to natural resource extraction projects, such as mineral development and loaning to oil and gas companies.

During this period, the bulk of financing for Falcondo projects was provided by First National City Bank in New York, Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce and the World Bank. This financial security, minimized "the financial commitment of the shareholders in a country with massive potential for political upheaval," (Payer 1982, 169). The role of Falcondo within Dominican Republic went beyond that of only implementing a mining project. The company held decision-making power within the country as the Falcondo general manager practically wrote the Dominican mining laws (Payer 1982, 170). According to Payer, the Dominican government barely had input and control over the marketing, management of profits and the production of technology. Thus, one can infer that the power and control Falcondo has may influence the government's decision when it comes to implementing a new mining project; as seen with the neglect of people's evident outcries for such a project, where official decisions still have not made about Loma Miranda.

In the past 60 years of Falcondo presence in the country, the company has gone through several changes, financial and otherwise. In 2006, Falcondo was a subsidiary company to Xstrata, one of the largest commodities companies in the world, specializing in mining. In 2012, Xstrata was met with protests against human rights violations in Peru and Colombia. In 2013, they merged with Glencore, a Swedish commodities trader and mine operator. Glencore has also been investigated in the past for tax evasion and illegal dumping of raw acid from a copper refinery in a river in the Congo. The merger between the two companies made them the 4th largest mining company in the world. During the merging of the companies, Falcondo was accused of undervaluing the average price of nickel, in addition to avoiding millions in tax dollars owed to the Dominican government. Currently in 2015, Americano Nickel acquired most shares from Falcondo. "Economically speaking the company is really bad. So, they have made joint ventures with other

corporations, because they are in a bad place. They wanted to sell but nobody would buy it. So, they did a joint venture with the company Americano Nickel. It's the same company but they wanted to wash their hands clean from it," stated Diaz the agronomist and engineer land rights activist. In terms of the mining process for Loma Miranda, Falcondo proposes using a method called "progressive mining," which entails stripping portions of the land, waiting until it has been mined and reforested, then stripping another portion, which supposedly would take a total of 12 months. However, this does not minimize the concerns and fears of people like Diaz.

Loma Ortega

Loma Miranda was not the first anti-mining struggle that Félix Díaz confronted in his lifetime; it was not the first with Falcondo either. As he said in my interview, "I've been through a lot of battles, at a young age I went to prison for social and environmental issues. I've always had a passion for the environment...I've always worried a lot about sustainability, the ability of life, I worry a lot about these small islands." For Díaz, the movement to save Loma Ortega taught him the strategies and lessons he brought to the Loma Miranda fight more than 20 years later. Around 1988, Falcondo bought a contract for Loma Ortega in La Vega, a city about 20 minutes from Loma Miranda. The contract enabled the extraction of nickel ore and the development of multiple mines operating simultaneously in the mountain. "During that battle I was a young leader. It was the era of Balaguer's dictatorship, it was bad. Citizens didn't have rights," Díaz said. Certain reporting's by local Dominican media (Hoy Digital 2017) state that Falcondo has intentionally started a process of remediation to restore the vegetation of Loma Ortega. In addition, the Dominican Society of Geology (SODOGEO) has posted that the health impact of the mine is minimal to none. Contrary to these statements, Díaz has noticed significant

environmental changes in city. “They imposed themselves and destroyed Loma Ortega throughout these 26 years,” Díaz said. “Apart from that mine being terrible, the heat waves were stronger after the mine when the forests disappeared. There are persistent and frequent pulmonary illnesses and [rashes] on the skin in La Vega. The medical doctors say the same. I always stayed with that pain. But we gained enough experience.” Through this experience Diaz witnessed what a mining project can do to a community. These experiences shaped his agenda and strategies going into the Loma Miranda movement.

Flora, Fauna, and Agua.

As Díaz said: “In 2011, I learned they wanted to do the same thing [a nickel mine] but in Loma Miranda [this time]. I connected with various organizations and academics, and we looked at anthropological and environmental studies and analyzed them. The Science Academy accompanied us in this process, along with the Environmental Commission [official government entity], and Natural Resources Department of the UASD [Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo]. We began an educational process and sharing [these studies] with people.” In 2012, the Academia de Ciencias (Science Academy) of the Dominican Republic, an institutional private entity focused on science and technology research of the country. This institution created an informational bulletin with information about the flora, fauna, and rivers in the mountain (Academia de Ciencias de la República Dominicana 2012). The bulletin begins with a rather dark poetic telling of the painful trajectory a mine on the land entails:

> Mining is one of the human activities that leaves the deepest traces in nature due to its intrinsic predatory essence. Where they have to strip the top soil to extract the minerals from the very bowels of the earth, removing the natural vegetation, fragmentation and ruining the natural habitat of the animal groups present and affecting water sources in several ways. Mining transforms the topography completely and drastically modifies all the natural relief; destroying the beautiful

> natural landscapes, simplifying them, subtracting their quality and amenity, and turning them into lunar environments, inhospitable to human survival (2).

Loma Miranda. In the area that the mining company would like to exploit lives a butterfly known as Damisela Gigante de la Hispaniola (Phylolestes ethelae), the Cuyaya ("little eagle") and several hummingbirds, including one endemic to the island called Zumbador Esmeralda. Some of these species "are listed in Appendix II of the Convention that regulates International Trade in Species Endangered of Wild Fauna and Flora, better known as CITES" (Academia de Ciencias (Science Academy) of the Dominican Republic 2012, 6). Loma Miranda belongs to the foothills of the northeastern part of the Cordillera Central, the highest mountain range on the island. Loma Miranda is located right on the border between the provinces of Monseñor Nouel and La Vega, where the municipalities of Jima and La Vega meet each other, about 17 kilometers from La Vega and barely 7 kilometers from Jima. The mountain is one of the most biodiverse regions of the Dominican Republic, about 16 square miles in size with several ecosystems ranging from rainforest to endemic pine and riparian forests, and over 400 species of plants and animals. The mountain is considered a "water mine" because of the many springs, basins and rivers flowing through it, including the Jagüey River and Acapulco waterfall, which provides drinking water to the cities of Santiago De Los Caballeros, Salcedo, El Pino, and dozens of other communities (Lewis 2015). These rivers also serve educational and recreational purposes for those cities. The water is also a form of sustenance for agricultural development in La Vega used for irrigating about 122 Hectares of cultivated rice lands and sustains the Presa de Rincon, a dam near the mountain. In addition, the bulletin describes Loma Miranda as a "natural sponge" that absorbs moisture from clouds, condensing it and converting it to rain.

On the island of Haiti/Dominican Republic, 98 out of the 201 plant species are in Loma Miranda. The bulletin made by the Academia de Ciencias is only one of several reports, articles, analysis, and studies made since Falcondo began exploiting the mountain. In 2013, the United Nations Development Programme (UNPD) reviewed an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) about Loma Miranda, concluding that the study was based on incomplete and inadequate information, making it difficult to establish the impacts in the area.

Currently, any form of exploitation to the land is supposedly halted by way of a congressional decision. In 2014, the National Congress of the Dominican Republic wrote a law disallowing Falcondo to exploit the land, and converted Loma Miranda into a national park, stating:

> **Sixth Consideration:** That Loma Miranda and its neighboring mountain Loma Manaclita and La Llovedora possess immense carpets of Creole pines, cloud forest[…]accompanied by mountain landscapes of indescribable beauty, spas, waterfalls, pine forests, orchids, bromeliads, native birds, migratory, and endemic that can serve as support to the development of eco-tourism, environmental education and the full enjoyment of Dominican society.
>
> **Fifteenth Consideration:** article 67 on protection of the environment, numeral 4, of the Dominican Republic constitution clearly states that: "In the contracts that the state holds or in the permits that are granted that involve the use and exploitation of natural resources, it shall be included the obligation to conserve the ecological balance, the access to technology and its transfer, as well as to restore the environment to its natural state (Loma Miranda National Park Bill 2014).

The statement by the National Congress reflects studies by several organizations. However, despite the Congress proclaiming Loma Miranda a national park to be protected, President Danilo Medina revoked the law in September 2014. Medina drew on Article 7 of the Dominican constitution which states that “natural resources must be utilized.” Medina postponed any decisions regarding Loma Miranda until “legislative power dictate the law

that the Constitution of the Republic mandates...so that in a rational way, the protection of our natural resources is maximized and responsible mining development is fostered" (Medina 2014, 8). He expressed concern about losing future foreign investments in mining concessions if such a law were to pass.

Tierra Roja

"They haven't received permission to exploit but they have permission to explore, [decision] still pending…We handled it with great prudence, never made a disorder. In many occasions, buses would come, with people that were paid by them. They [Falcondo] paid those people to light the mountain on fire, to poison the water," stated Diaz about his experience during the past seven years that is slightly different after the permit denial in terms of less violent interventions into the community. However, members of the movement stay vigilant, constantly surveilling any suspicious activity that may occur in the mountain. During my time there I was able to go on one of their scouting ventures.

Figure 1: Xstrata/Falcondo sign. 2017. Photography by author.

Remnants of Falcondo's abandoned work camp for their employees scattered on the land, buried under overgrown grass are seen in the photo (Figure 1). During my visit to Loma Miranda I was able to see the site of the camp where workers lived. I had learned about two entrances into the mountain from highway Duarte. The most common entrance would bring you through the community, the second entrance was guarded by police, who claimed they were preventing anyone unauthorized including Falcondo employees to enter, a decision that took effect after the government halted the company's exploration permit in 2014. We were allowed to go up the mountain to check out suspicions of exploitation activities happening; this allowed me to see the work camp.

I sat in the back of the truck driving up the steep mountain. The higher we drove up on the curves of the rocky and muddy road, the better I could see the rest of the mountains over the edges of the trees and the rivers that ran through them, and if I strained my eyes to look further I could faintly see one of the major cities close by. The drive took longer than I expected, close to 30 minutes, passing an abandoned school on the way that was part of a community that once existed in the area. I was the only woman there and they made it apparent with their assumptions about my comfort level and experience; with every major bump or curve along the road they would ask me if I was ok. Once arriving at the site, we walked down a steep muddy hill for about a mile. Clumps of wet red clay covered my shoes, small chunks flying on my pants leaving its mark after I wiped them off. After getting to the bottom we climbed up one last hill. The closer I got to the top of the mountain, I unexpectedly saw an open sky. A large portion of the forest had been cleared, trees were tossed to the side as red dirt clung to the bottom of their roots. I observed the faces of those I came with. One person from the Loma Miranda community shook his head in what could be a mix of sadness and anger. "What does this mountain mean to you?" I thought back to

a week ago sitting in Diaz's apartment, in which he responded, "A piece of my life, a piece of my children's life, of this country."

LOS PLATANITOS

Derecho a la Ciudad

During the semester year of 2017-2018 the Dominican Practicum course was offered through the Community Regional Planning program at University of Texas in Austin. In this course we ended up going to Santo Domingo to continue the 10 years of co-investigation work with community members of Los Platanitos. The purpose of this project was to help the community in addressing displacement issues among other issues caused by a recent infrastructure project. We were given a historical tour of the city by a prominent architect. He stated that during the Trujillo era, the city of Santo Domingo was primarily for the rich and those with allegiance to the dictatorship. At the entrance to the city were checkpoints inspecting those who wished to enter, who were taking the risk of potential arrest if they didn't demonstrate their loyalty to the government. However, after the assassination of Trujillo an influx of people from the countryside and other towns migrated to Santo Domingo. People began to build their homes and neighborhoods. Within these neighborhoods there is a history of organizing and protests. During the revolt of April 1965, residents from these areas formed commando groups to resist the forces of the U.S. Navy and pro-government entities. Although the groups faltered, the development of a rebellious identity stayed present among the youth and community organization, such as in sports clubs, later becoming supporters of anti-Balaguerista and anti-imperialist movements. Around the late 1970's, residents coming from these clubs began creating committees in their respective communities to deal with police raids, defend housing rights, protest electrical blackouts, and claim garbage collection services. Eventually these committees

combined forces into one major organization, the Committee for the Defense of Neighborhood Rights (COPADEBA) (Betances 2010, 2015).

In the late 1980's, COPADEBA collaborated with other groups such as young intellectuals realizing that protesting was not enough, but it was necessary to have technical proposals that clearly defined their demands. They needed to develop "protests with proposals." With this idea arose the creation of a separate advisory and financial entity that would produce alternative proposals to the urban plans with the participation of residents, and also be authorized to receive funds. The entity was founded in 1988 and given the name Ciudad Alternativa (Alternative City). Immediately after its commencement, Ciudad Alternativa along with COPADEBA had to contest President Balaguer's urban renewal plan. In addition, one of the most powerful families in the country, claimed that Trujillo had expropriated the land where these neighborhoods exist. They demanded residents and the government pay for the land or forcibly evict people from the property. In response, COPADEBA took an educational approach, published a newsletter and led popular education workshops and talks explaining to residents how their land did not belong to this powerful family. COPADEBA led protest marches in front of the National Palace and other major offices. The Balaguer government promoted an urban renewal plan that involved massive evictions of residents within the northern zone of Santo Domingo. The plan responded to the "disorderly growth" of the region, proposing the construction of a highway bypass that involved the removal of most of the neighborhoods in the area. During this period, it was calculated that about 30,000 families were evicted from the center of the city to the periphery where they had less access to basic services such as electricity, drinking water and public transport. The majority of the evictions were accompanied by repression, intimidation, manipulation and promises of new homes. COPADEBA and Ciudad Alternativa could only support residents as long as they lived in

the neighborhoods, otherwise there was no capacity to help. Currently, Ciudad Alternativa supports residents of Los Platanitos as they develop their own organizations, and COPADEBA runs a local chapter that seeks to provide education and build awareness about housing, human and land rights to community members in Los Platanitos.

Derecho a Mi Barrio

Los Platanitos was formed in the 1980's on top of a previous landfill and next to a cañada (ravine), mostly by residents moving to Santo Domingo from different parts of the country. Originally building their homes from tin, wood, and scrap materials, today they build with cement, aluminium and wood. The repurposed materials was an important aspect of the plant culture of the community, with natural elements adorning their homes; planters made of coffee cans and buckets to hold their trees, shrubs and tropical plants such as Aloe, oregano poleo and limoncillo. Many of these plants used for medicinal purposes. People have spent decades building their homes and developing deep relationships with their neighbors, and are open to positive improvements and willing to defend their community.

Members of the community tirelessly demanded municipal officials to fix the flooding, garbage waste collection, among other issues. The cañada runs through the neighborhood for about one mile. Trash easily accumulates in the water due to the lack of municipal waste collection, which in turn causes flooding when it rains. Occasionally, politicians fix an issue in the community such as building stable stairs with banisters, when in need of votes. Through the co-investigation program with UT, many new developments have occurred to improve the conditions in the community. Community members have demanded a seat at the table with officials of the municipality and other government entities, where they were able to voice their concerns. Aside from asserting their claims to

higher authorities, in 2012 members of the community developed projects by using their own agency to bring improvements to the neighborhood. One project was vermicomposting (composting using earthworms), where they built composting bins out of found materials. The vermicomposting has the potential to turn organic household waste into income by selling vermi-tea (i.e. liquid fertilizer) or compost in soil form. Residents took the responsibility of educating others about the process of vermicomposting. In addition, women started a micro-enterprise business making and selling cleaning products. The hope is that these projects could increase autonomy for the women as well as help them economically. These projects are run by Mujeres Unidas, a group led by women from the community which was formed in 2012. This organization develops leadership skills among the members, manages these projects of vermicomposting and the micro-enterprise business, and empower each other to be more confident in their abilities and voices.

In 2017, the community went through a major infrastructure project. The cañada was partially covered by the Aqueduct & Sewage Corporation of Santo Domingo (CAASD), an autonomous public service institution that deals with issues of potable water, sanitary sewer services, and treatment of wastewater. Since the homes were built practically on top of the cañada, people were displaced and homes were demolished. They were given two weeks' notice and promised a new home within a couple of months. However, almost a year later they are yet to receive a new home. The majority of the displaced families are renting a home, paid for by the CAASD.

Also, the road built on top of cañada is built so high that remaining homes are half buried. Septic pipes were covered by the road rendering bathrooms nonfunctional. Although flooding was an ongoing issue, due to the new changes, the problem became bigger. In the past, when it rained the water drained fairly quickly, usually within 5 minutes; now the water stays stagnant longer, emitting foul odors and increasing health risks.

Residents responded by puncturing holes in the road to create drainage pipes, and also contacting local media during a major storm to report what has been happening. Among intense realities like these lies paradoxical feelings. Despite the negative impacts of the new infrastructure there are benefits from the project. For example, vital vehicles such as garbage trucks and ambulances are now able to enter the community.

The information here comes from books created by students at UT-Austin. Residents in Los Platanitos have been working with Associate Professor Bjørn Sletto, Community and Regional Planning, via an interdisciplinary course where students co-produced knowledge with community members. The relationship between UT-Austin and Los Platanitos began in 2008, and I had the opportunity to participate in this course. From 2008 until now the community has gone through major positive and negative changes. I had the opportunity to witness the impacts of the new project by listening to people's stories. While there I helped co-organize a conference commemorating 10 years of a relationship between Los Platanitos and UT Austin. Many people attended the 3 day conference, including local government officials, university students, and visiting professors from Latin America. Community members, especially members of Mujeres Unidas, facilitated workshops and were able to speak up to voice their opinions and concerns about Los Platanitos. The conference was a bittersweet gathering, first celebrating this international co-production of knowledge, but still with the understanding that the struggle has not stopped and that residents of Los Platanitos still need to fight to defend their land.

MI VIDA ES MI TIERRA

The history that precedes that of Loma Miranda and Los Platanitos are similar in the political involvement and corruption that led up to these movements. In addition to the

political connections, the land defender Mamá Tingó was a major influence among agents for justice and change. There are certain limitations to my research within this chapter, as the majority of the historical context I obtained came from texts and publications. I would have preferred to receive more personal testimonies to this history, especially from women. However, I think I primarily focused my questions to the women about their current experiences to the movement and connection to the land. Given these limitations, in the next several chapters I've done my best to have the women speak for themselves.

Chapter 4: Speaking from Loma Miranda

I remember reading about people trying to save Loma Miranda in an article I happened to come across on social media. This was after spending over a year in 2012 to 2013 volunteering full time to resist the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline in both East Texas and Oklahoma. I had been immersed completely at the time, abruptly leaving my home in NYC as did many of us to dedicate our time to stop this pipeline. We had experienced and seen violence to land as whole forests were cleared, and police violence as they arrested and physically assaulted people that I had been working and living closely with. By the end of that year, I decided to leave for a number of reasons. There were frustrations with the interpersonal relationships, specifically the race and gender dynamics: even though we were all fighting against a system that oppressed us, we still perpetuated that same violence and repression.

I headed back to NYC in the summer of 2013, feeling exhausted, frustrated and disconnected from my people. Needless to say it took me awhile to process all that happened during that time, which is common in any social justice, land defense, type of movement you've immersed yourself in. During the fall, my family and I went to an event where my dad introduced me to Padre Rogelio, a highly visible participant in the Loma Miranda movement. I barely talked to him because of the line of people waiting to take a photo and chat with him. In December, my family and I decided to spend the holidays in Dominican Republic. This was the first time I had traveled to the island in seven years. I would be seeing the land with an awakened consciousness. When we arrived in Santo Domingo, we spoke to my uncle, Andrés, a professor of Philosophy at the UASD, a university known for its protests and resistance by students and faculty against the government and state corruption. As we sat in his apartment, Tío Andrés told us of students

and professors from the UASD that have been participating in the movement for Loma Miranda, some who participated in collecting data about the number of species, flora and fauna within the mountain. He had only visited once and told us how the people there took him on a hike through the mountain and he was able to swim in the river. The mountain was located in the Cibao, a region located in the northern part of DR. Since the entrance to enter the base of the mountain was just off the Autopista Duarte, a busy highway connecting major cities within DR, he gave my dad detailed directions: he would know he was in the right place when he saw the Chicharrón stands by the highway.

As we traveled down the Autopista seeing Lomas, which are not quite a hill but not quite mountains either, lush green vegetation, rolling past my open window. The Lomas were just low enough to see the open sky. Sprinkles of coconut filled palm trees appeared on the edges of the road to remind me that I was still surrounded by the sea. I felt that I was seeing the country for the first time, immersed within the landscapes, diesel exhaust leaving the pipes of motorcycles and small trucks that carry loads of mangos, platanos, and other materials, and fruit stands. Before I knew it, we were driving on the dirt packed road leading to the base of the mountain, with houses and *colmados* (convenience stores) lining the street. We stopped right before the flowing river, a narrow road and bridge lived over part of the water. To the left of us was a tall open fence attached to brick walls that had a mural of a person with an afro, their face encompassing all colors, a faded mountain with the words “Parque Nacional.” The brick wall next in graffiti letters said “Loma Miranda.” A tent made of blue tarps with a green flag peeped from the top of the brick wall (Figure 2). We were obviously at the *campamento*. Through the fence was a large open space, to the right there were more tents, some made of blue tarps, others of military green material, rocks used to hold down the edges. There was a two-story open-air building, the first floor an open space. Later I learned that the movement had raised money to buy the community

center. In the center they hold meetings and it became a sleeping space during the encampment for those without tents.

Figure 2: Tents in Loma Miranda Encampment, 2014. Photography by the author.

Sitting in a plastic chair were two men, one wearing a camouflage outfit and looking at us suspiciously. With reason, as my brother started taking pictures with his digital camera. Other than those two men, the camp was completely empty and the town was very quiet, barely anyone on the streets. Since we came during the holidays, when most people are not working and school is out, I figured that those typically in the encampment had gone away for the break. After my dad name dropped Padre Rogelio, the man in camo agreed to walk us passed the bridge over the river into the mountain. He walked with my

dad while I trailed right behind them, trying to listen to what he was saying. There were fenced-in houses along the path and a small *colmado* with a covered porch to get water or snacks. We did not get too deeply into the forest, but stopped along an edge to jump into the water since we didn't have our bathing suits. Before heading back to the encampment, we met with several families living in the mountain. They told us how the *Movimiento,* as most people called it, were helping them rebuild their homes so that they more obliged to stay rather than sell to Falcondo.

Once making our way down to the encampment, my dad began to speak with an elderly man and he whispered to us saying that the majority of the movement participants from the community are women, from all ages, that confronted forces from police to Falcondo security; that most of the men from the community stay home and drink rum. At the time I had not realized this but it became apparent that in the beginning of my fieldwork my interactions and interviews with women, were initiated through by way of men introducing us to each other. We continued our trip that day through the Cibao. I left thinking about the words of that man. I connected his statement with my personal research and noticed that many articles I found rarely had quotes from women or did not mention them at all. I made it a point to go back to listen and record the experiences of these women.

DOÑA CARMEN

Doña Carmen Santos Bruno, or Mamá Miranda, as she is known in the movement, was the first women I interviewed when I returned to the island in summer 2015. That day Genaro, El Guía, one of the most knowledgeable guides from the community, beckoned his wife, Katy to walk me to find Doña Carmen, where she was hanging out at her neighbors' home. Doña Carmen is a woman in her early 80's, short with a salt and pepper gray afro. She is the oldest community member participating in the fight to save Loma

Miranda. She wore slippers and a nightgown with blue flowers that flowed past her knees, which she said she put on to cool down after cooking for a group that came for a tour that day. She agreed to an interview and we walked over to the community center. I began by asking her where she was born. She looked at me with slight confusion, "You want to know [my] whole story? from the beginning?" Nodding to her yes, she began, "I was born in front of La Llovedora...right in front of the water, right up there. It was beautiful back then, I was born there. Afterwards, I went to La Vega [a city about 20 minutes away] I grew up there." La Llovedora is a waterfall where visitors and community members go to swim. To get there one has to cross multiple rivers and hike up hills for over a mile. She lived in Loma Miranda until the age of 10, she was raised by her grandparents, "I lived right in that mountain… my grandfather had a [vendor] stand...I would go daily into the mountain to bring down bags of coal, it was a lot of work...leaving from deep in the mountain at night and spend all day selling coal." As a young woman, her mother ended up marrying a man and moved her away from Loma Miranda. "I didn't want to stay [there], so I left and went to La Vega, young, small, to work...if they tried to take me back, I would just escape because it wasn't easy living over there." During her time in La Vega, she ended up getting married and having her first child, "[then] we left to La Capital [Santo Domingo], because my husband found work, and I stayed there for 8 years."

However, her journey seemed to always bring her back to Loma Miranda. They ended up moving back to the mountain when her son became fatality ill, "in front of Majagüita, in front of Loma Miranda, that's where we moved." I remembered hearing about the Majagüita caves from Genaro earlier that day as he led us through the mountain. We hiked and crossed several rivers before reaching La Llovedora. The hike was an intimate experience as we would have to take our boots off to cross the waters, feeling the cold rushing water on our bare feet. Genaro is considered the best guide as he is the most

knowledgeable about every inch of the mountain. From a young age he would travel on his own through the mountain. He was "raised in this community, I've been walking in this [Loma] since I was 9 years old behind my father." At one point, he told me to stare at a small patch of trees, plants, and bushes, and said: "In this small patch of land, we have all kinds of medicinal plants. We have *limoncillo de la playa*, a plant that is good if you are having a nervous breakdown, you can take the leaf and make a tea. Or crush it between your fingers to get the aromatic medicine." His mind would then quickly move onto another element of the mountain. As we continued walking across the rivers of constant flowing water carefully stepping over the tops of slippery rocks, he told me that in order to reach the Majagüita caves we would have to cross several more rivers just like this. To get there and back would be a day trip. La Majagüita is an area of the mountain, a maroon Indian-black settlement, where people have lived for generations and there are several significant caves situated near the River Jagüey. In one of the caves you can find Taino pictographs depicting birds, butterflies, bats and engravings of deities. Some of the deities depicted could possibly be Atabey, the supreme goddess of freshwater and fertility, and Guabancex, the goddess of storms and winds. The mountain encompassed the spirits of the plants and its herbal medicine and that of the Tainos.

Like Doña Carmen, Genaro was familiar with the caves because he lived near them for most of his life. Stories were passed down through generations about the Taínos using each cave for rituals and practices, such as a cemetery, to pray and a cave for cooking. Certain mysteries were associated with these spaces. Stories of Los Indios appearing or voices were heard from inside the cave and would come out of the river. Oftentimes these

occurrences were at night. People who live in that area would say that they would cook and the food disappeared, believing that it must be Los Indios. .[2]

These caves were magical spaces that held strong energies. La Majagüita caves and the river became almost a place of healing for Doña Carmen when she moved back to Loma Miranda. As she said, "we had a small house, more people lived there. My husband had a farm, he had cacao, coconut, oranges, and cows. We would milk the cows. I was able to *live* there [emphasis added], because there I was forgetting about what happened to my son, because that river belonged to the Indio. My mother spoke about the Indio, but I didn't know what that was. That is why La Llovedora is also called Chorro de los Indios. Then I ventured to la llovedora, la Majagüita and there, I alone, heard people talking to me in the river, and that distracted me. They would yell at me and would talk to me. I took notice of a lot of things, until I realized that it was Los Indios, that were speaking. After that, I went to searching and searching until I came across what was up there, La Cueva de los Indios."

La Majagüita caves became part of the narrative to save Loma Miranda. The caves gave additional reasons for why it was important to not mine the mountain. Environmentalists from COOP Vega Real, a financial, social and environmental organization that serves over 30 communities, traveled to the caves and made a documentary talking about the importance of these spaces for Dominican culture. The organization also builds consciousness through educating people of environmental issues and demanding more regulations and remediation by polluting companies. In addition, archaeologists from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) investigated the petroglyphs and also found Taino ceramics, concluding that these caves were places for

[2]Video: Cueva Majaguita COOP Vega Real.

ritual practices where practitioners determined the course of natural phenomena such as rain, hurricanes, storms, floods, droughts and earthquakes. [3]

Our minds retrieved back from La Majagüita into our bodies sitting in the matching white plastic chairs when a man came over to greet Doña Carmen and take a photo of us. Although we were practically alone inside the camp's community center, we were immersed in the sounds of merengue and bachata blasting from car speakers and the conversations and laughter of people surrounding us. The narrow road to pass the bridge over the river was completely congested with cars and motorcycles. At a distance, I could see Genaro trying to direct traffic between those who desired to enter the mountain and those trying to get to the Autopista. That weekday happened to be a religious holiday and in the middle of summer, and was definitely a change compared to the quiet, still mountain I witnessed when I came for the first time in 2013. At that moment the mountain was vibrating with life.

FEEDING THE MOVEMENT

When the man took Doña Carmen's photo, she became self-conscious of her blue nightgown, tugging at her dress and using her fingers to comb her afro. Then she continued her story. "So, I belong to a church group, I'm part of the Catholic Church ministry. Today, it was my turn to cook food and make refreshments for the tour group. I changed into this [gown] to feel more refreshed...I thank god that I belong to all of these groups." A primary role for the women is cooking for participants of the movement. Since the beginning of the movement, more groups began coming to Loma Miranda to take a tour of the mountain and swim in the river. The tours were an initiative to bring more people to experience the

[3]Informe PNUD.

mountain for themselves so that they can connect to the land and water that the residents were fighting for.

When I returned for a longer stay later that week, a church group from Santiago De Los Caballeros, the second largest city in DR, about over an hour from Loma Miranda came for a tour. The group like hundreds of other groups that have made their way to the mountain were there to see the mountain. That specific day, I was able to witness and assist Doña Carmen and the other women cook for the tour. Since her kitchen was very small, Doña Carmen would cook in her backyard. She had a wood table with cement blocks adhered to the top, using pieces of chopped wood to heat up a large cast iron pot of *moros* (mix of rice and kidney beans) (Figure #3 & Figure #4). She used a plastic bag to keep the moisture and heat in the rice, like my grandmother used to do. Fruit trees of *plátanos,* avocados and coconut sprinkled her backyard and the front area of her granddaughters' home; no distinction of a fence was visible between the homes. However, behind her makeshift stove her neighbor's yard was separated with a wire and wood fence. Occasionally, she would call out to that neighbor to check on the status of the meat. Doña Josefina, another elder of the movement, made coffee and a salad consisting mostly of lettuce and tomatoes. They must have been awake cooking since the early morning, considering that the food was practically done when I woke up.

Once the food was about ready, we had to take everything to the community center which is only a five-minute walk from Doña Carmen's house. The scalding hot and heavy cast iron pot full of *moro* was the biggest challenge. Doña Carmen called out to several neighbors to find someone's brother or son to carry the pot with dish towels around the handles. I helped wash the plates, silverware, and cups and put them in a bucket to carry over. Doña Carmen gave me a look as if to say "are you sure you can carry all of that?" and then asked if I should just let one of the men do it. I told her it wasn't heavy and carried

it anyways. But on the way to the center, several men asked if I needed help, others commented on how strong I was. I politely declined or ignored the comments and offers. These comments could have been a subtle way of calling me "masculine" as I did not fit within feminine stereotypes. Once we arrived at the center, we set up the table to put the food and had a separate section for the coffee. We sat and chatted while we waited for the group to make their way down the mountain.

Genaro usually greeted the tour groups. First, they would sit in a circle inside the community center as he stood in the middle telling them the trajectory of the movement. He would speak about the species and rivers that could be impacted by the mine, ending with a chant of "Loma Miranda Parque Nacional!" Their main demand is to declare Loma Miranda a national park. The tour always followed with a hike across the bridge through the mountain and a swim in la Llovedora. Generally, after the swim they would regroup at the community center and eat a meal made by the women of the community.

Throughout the seven-year long battle, anywhere between a couple of people to hundreds of participants have stayed at the camp. The women were usually the ones to cook large meals for those participants. During a march from Loma Miranda to Santo Domingo, 64 miles in distance, a woman by the name of Milagros told me how she had to cook for participants. "Yes, I marched. It was a very hard fight...but we walked. I was in charge of the meals. We would stop in certain sites [along the way]. We prepared bread, they gifted us a *cerdo* (pig) too, that we seasoned and cooked. We divided it among everyone in the group that walked with us." Milagros is also a volunteer teacher for the children of Loma Miranda. She has a home in the community but goes to Santo Domingo to work during the week. On the weekend, she travels back to Loma Miranda and teaches the kids math, ecology and the environment.

In one instance, fires were started inside Loma Miranda that began to burn down an immense portion of the forest, people speculated that they were ignited by Falcondo. Although women participated in taking buckets of water to put out the three-day long fire, the majority were at the encampment cooking all day. In an interview I conducted with two women, one of them recalls having to constantly cook because groups would frequently switch between resting and putting out the fire: "We had to cook for them. We had to cook for those that were in the mountain. The women cooked. There were some women that got desperate and went up the mountain. But there were a lot of us that stayed and cooked because one group would come and another would leave. They didn't get tired until they finished putting the fire out on the mountain." Cooking was an important female role as they maintained the sustenance of the men putting out the fire.

These women like many others in activist groups took on a more private role, one that is not necessarily visible to social media and news outlets, but are still vital to a movement. Without them, a fundamental component would be missing. In her book, "Black Feminist Thought," Patricia Hill Collins speaks about rethinking how we see Black Women activism. In which she states the need to see activism for its complexities, in order to break away with gender specific assumptions about which roles are most credible (i.e. public). The role that black women take on need to be seen as an act for the survival of the group, for the survival of the movement. Similar to other forms of activism and organizing, cooking for over a hundred people takes coordination, time and dedication. Although these women are not seen as leaders by those in the movement and the media. They are leaders in their own right as women born in the mountain or having a relation to it, defending the land and water through civil disobedience and other actions, that are seen as behind the scenes work. When I witnessed Doña Carmen and the other women preparing the meal for the tour group, I saw leaders. Everyone had to wake up early because they had a goal to

reach, each person had a role, the food had to be bought and cooked. Doña Carmen delegated tasks and made sure the goal was reached. These “invisible” private spheres are just as important as the public sphere. These roles are one of many that sustains a movement.

Figure 3: Covered cast Iron, 2017. Photography by author.

Figure 4: Moro, 2017. Photography by author.

Although, Doña Carmen has reduced her level of participation due to her age, she held many roles in the movement in addition to cooking, similar to other women. During our interview she told me of her experience throughout the movement: “I have seven years in this fight, I’m not around as much because I have to take it easy. But in [visiting] towns and participating in the caravan and being on camera, all of it, I was there. Because the truth was that I am proof of the Loma Miranda story, I lived it.” In the beginning of the movement, Doña Carmen along with five other women from her church were invited to a meeting at a school in the town of El Pino, about ten minutes from the mountain: “A priest introduced us to the idea of fighting...He told us ‘they are going to exploit the mountain, and if they exploit the mountain, no one is going to be able to live here, and even if they give the best house 50 thousand dollars, it won’t matter, because there won’t be water, it will be contaminated’...we met there, because we knew it would be dangerous [to meet at

the mountain], so we would meet over there. It was a lot of people that went, politicians, people of all types."

Although Falcondo was a Canadian company, some of their employees were Dominicans who would make an appearance at these regular meetings, trying to convince people that there is no danger to the water. As Doña Carmen said, "The priest would tell them [Falcondo employee], 'I have people, my group has people, among them there is an engineer, lawyer, everything.' Soon after, there was a man from El Pino that presented a map of all the plans and began to hike the mountain with it. From then on, we began saying that no one was going to fool us, because we are prepared, we have people that are prepared." After those initial meetings, Doña Carmen, became a spokesperson for Loma Miranda as the oldest member of the community. "Then I wasn't afraid anymore, I started to speak more openly wherever I went, they began to seek me out. There are books, magazines, stories [written] from all parts. I always tell them the same thing. Out of everything that I tell them, I say that Loma Miranda cannot be exploited." Doña Carmen along with other participants of the movement formed the Comite de Agua y Vida, a name that would encompass the narrative that these women embodied.

Figure 5: Doña Carmen/Mama Miranda, 2014. Courtesy of Book Loma Miranda: Un Paraíso por Descubrir.

VIOLENCIA Y OTRO CARGOS

Cooking was just one way that the women participated in the resistance. Oftentimes, they had multiple roles and levels of involvement, such as assisting meetings, canvassing their community, protesting and marching. But even the fact that they chose to stay in their homes in the community and not get paid off with briberies and job offerings by Falcondo is an act of resistance. In certain cases, participation has been met with violence from authorities such as from police to even people from their own community exhibiting violence towards them.

During the same period, I helped Doña Carmen prepare for the tour group, I also spent a day interviewing other women who had participated in the movement. The

majority of the women who I interviewed felt more comfortable having a group discussion. In the first group conversation I led with women from the community, we were sitting by the fence near the entrance. We were able to watch people swimming and playing in the river as we talked. There were five of us: Katy, Genaro's wife, and Isabel[4], the youngest out of the whole group, mostly observed and listened as they felt too shy to speak. The other two were Maribel and Lisbeth. Maribel was in her 50's and the oldest of the group, and Lisbeth was studying medicine and the most vocal. She and Maribel would often end up going back and forth, conversing. I began by asking them the same question I asked most people: what benefits do they gain from preserving the environment? The conversation quickly took off Lisbeth began:

> The benefits we have is that they don't destroy the mountain or destroy the river. Because we don't have personal benefits. Simply, the benefit is that the mountain stays intact, that they don't cut the trees and harm the river. That is the only benefit we have.
>
> We have another, you know which one? Maribel asked Lisbeth.
>
> Which? Lisbeth answered.
>
> Our health, Maribel said. Because if they take that down it's going to cost us. Our health above all else.

Health is one of the major fears for the women, an emotion that was exacerbated when they traveled to Cotuí, a town suffering from the effects of a gold mine, a topic I will develop later in this chapter. We continued the conversation; sitting beneath the shadows of palm trees we did not feel the tropical heat. I went on to my next question, asking how they participated in the movement. Lisbeth responded,

[4]Pseudo names for those that wish to keep their identity anonymous.

> We participated in the whole movement. We organized through different organizations to support that which is the movement to save Loma Miranda. We participated in the protest in the Capital, in Cotui, La Vega, Santiago. We visited towns we never even imagined we would ever go.
>
> Maribel added, also in assemblies and press conferences.
>
> Lisbeth nodded in agreement, we would end up going to two to three activities about Loma Miranda in one week. We would return from one then head off to another one. We would sometimes spend one or two days outside of our house busy because of the activities for Loma Miranda.

Reminding them they did not have to answer all my questions, I asked if they had to confront the police during any of these moments. I felt cautious asking about their interactions with the police due the knowing from my own experience of how authorities can inflict acts of violence during these kinds of movements. When I asked, they all just nodded their heads, I followed with, "(Estuvo) Era fuerte? [was it difficult?]" It was more of a rhetorical question, as I already knew the answer. Maribel spoke up, "Well, when we did the *cadena*," recalling the time they held each other's arms in a chain to block the major highway, Autopista Duarte, on their own accord without the influence of anyone else. "This is what happens," Lisbeth began, "when there is a march the police want to mob us so that we end up isolated, so that they can do whatever they want. What we really wanted was to take a pole, a huge pole and take a pipe to attach the Loma Miranda flag, the one that's at the door over here. So, we did that. The five of us." She pointed at the other women in the circle and then named a couple of other women not present, including her sister. "So we started, the strongest out of all of us is her, right here, she's like my sister," putting her hand on Isabel's arm, "and we began to hold each other like this," demonstrating a chain link of arms, "the police would start honking their horn threatening that they were going to hit us and there were some guys from the Capital, that were also in the march and we told

them to hold onto us so that we can shut down the street. The rest of the march walked in front of us, and we would go slow. How long were we walking for Maribel?" "Awhile it was far." One of the police vehicles accelerated and would stop inches from them, as a scare tactic, but without flinching they would hold on tighter, "There was a cop in a black car honking his horn and we would hit his *guagua* [bus/truck in the Canary Islands and certain Spanish Caribbean countries] and keep walking, when he noticed we weren't going to leave he stopped honking and accelerated." Isabel interrupted Lisbeth, finally talking 40 minutes into the conversation: "He assumed that we were just going to move and he accelerated right away, almost hitting us. We just stood there, right in front of them and he just stayed still." The cop did not do anything, just let them continue taking over the street.

Maribel remembered another occasion but I sensed she was hesitant to tell the story as her voice lowered to a whisper, looking down at her hands and then over to Lisbeth: "And also that time when it went off, the gunfire, the shooting." She was referring to the gunshots that were believed to be fired by the military during a protest in 2015. Out of all my interviewees, she was the first to speak about this event. The couple of people I asked either denied they knew anything about it or refused to speak about what had happened. The only reason I had any knowledge of this incident was due to my previous in which I came across several articles, from both local and international publications reporting on it.

The incident occurred in the spring of 2015. Initially after parts of the Loma were set on fire, supposedly by Falcondo, a group of defenders proceeded to the base of the mountain to help extinguish the fire. The military blockaded their entry into the mountain while at the same time, allowing Falcondo employees to go into the Loma. In response to this action, people took over the Autopista and began to march down the highway. Without warning, gunshots were fired into the crowd. At least three people were wounded, one of

whom was a professor at the UASD and another the president of the teacher association of San Francisco de Macoris a city, 40 minutes away. “That was…” Maribel continued as if she was transported back to that moment…” they closed down both streets. Then they started to fire gunshots and *bombas* (teargas canisters) and *bala de goma* (rubber bullets). So it became a *rebulu* (huge mess/mix up) but we maintained *en pie de lucha* (in the fight/struggle continued).” “Oh, I remember that day,” chimed in Lisbeth, “...they threw that bomba. I was in the back and my Tia hit one of the police with a stick.” Most local Dominican news outlets did not mention the teargas or shots fired at the protestors but instead spoke of the fire without identifying those at fault for starting it.

I briefly interjected to share with them my experience with land defense work in the U.S. and the similar violence I also witnessed. My intention was to not take over the conversation but to have an exchange of stories, to build a level of understanding. I wanted to let them know that in some capacity I can understand the intensity and trauma they had experienced. I cannot say that I fully understand, but with situations like these with this type of violence, there’s bound to be some similarities with how our spiritual and mental states are impacted. I’m not sure how much of a difference it made; regardless, they listened intently as I told them about how the police would also throw tear gas canisters and shoot rubber bullets at us, “Yes, that’s what they threw at us [referring to the tear gas],” exclaimed Lisbeth, “it burns your eyes and makes it hard for you to breathe.”

Police and military forces were ordered by certain authorities, be it the state or Falcondo, one can only assume, to use chemicals, bullets, and of course their mere presence can be a form of mental and physical violence. In addition, they also used the land to exhibit violence. When the fires were started inside the mountain of Loma Miranda, people speculated that they were ignited by Falconbridge:

> It was ten times (fires started), they would take one day and light a fire a different place and no one would notice from here (base of mountain). When you can see the smoke up there from here that's when you know the flames were very big. From here you could [see] everything red red from the flame, stated Lisbeth.
>
> They would put out the fire so it wouldn't start anywhere else. There were women there as if they were like the men, commented Maribel
>
> There were pregnant women up there. Majority of us women stayed, I didn't go. But there were a lot of women that went up, recounted Lisbeth.

Maribel's comment of the women acting like men caught my attention. It seemed that the situation was so dire that women felt they needed to step out of their typical domestic role and be willing to endure a potentially dangerous situation in order to help save the mountain. Despite Maribel's gendered comment, she was only one of many women who hiked up to the mountain, "In one occasion I went up, I put on a mask because there was a lot of smoke. I had to take it off because even with the mask I was choking. I needed pure air. He [a man there] started yelling at me to not take it off. But I told him that I was choking with the mask and that I would rather breathe in the smoke, so I took off the mask." Lisbeth continued to describe another moment when Falcondo inflicted violence on the land. There was a point in which the water stopped running and the fish started to die. "They saw how we continued the fight," therefore she thought they decided to take other measures to obstruct the movement. "They were using a device inside the water to dry up the river, there was almost no water," she said. Then once they noticed the fish started dying, one of the religious leaders Padre Rogelio took a sample of the water to a laboratory to get tested and that was when they noticed that the water was poisoned. "They made a brigade for men, because that is work for men to take out those tubes. Once they took those tubes out the river started running again. We found large fishes after that and the water was really good to drink and bathe in." They are utilizing the land to manipulate and control the

movement, it is a form of showing that people in the community do not have power over what happens to the land they are defending. Poisoning the water and setting the mountain on fire directly damages the source of sustenance they have to these resources, makes the local population sick, and strains their spiritual relationship to these spaces.

These stories are not meant to romanticize the physical, mental, and emotional violence that these women endure from the state and corporations. This is a reality women have experienced in environmental justice and land/water defense movements across Latin America. Women are organizing and enduring state violence, yet their roles are minimized due to their gender and lack of visibility within the public sphere. In Katy Jenkins article, "Unearthing Women's Anti-mining, activism in the Andes: Pachamama and the 'mad old woman,'" she describes the same invisibilization of women's activism in the anti-mining movement. Jenkins collects about 26 accounts from women in Huancabamba, Peru and Cuenca, Ecuador. Resembling that of the women of Loma Miranda, these women in Andes have been doing anti-mining activism for over seven years (Jenkins 2015, 443). This is only a small part to the land defense their ancestors have been doing since colonial extraction began in that area. They participated through protesting, coordinating petitions and giving out information about the negative effects of the mining. In doing this work they endured severe violence from the state, including being dragged, kicked and arrested. Due to society placing these women into feminized and domestic roles, as they fend for themselves and their families these women have a deeper understanding of the impacts mining or other extractive industries will have on their livelihood. In the region where Jenkins conducted her research, women could directly see the consequence of water contamination. In Jenkin's article there was one account, where a woman states that water is literally used for everything, for cleaning, cooking, cultivating the land (Jenkins 2015, 449). The women of the Andes in Jenkins' article represent just some of many stories in

which invisibilization within the public sphere does not impede on the roles and the extent of women's participation. Although the women are not seen as spokespeople or organizers, these stories show that they are leaders within this movement. They have a sense of empowerment and a deep connection to the land, enabling them to take action for themselves and their community. "That was a strong fight. Very strong," Maribel said. "Imagine what it takes to preserve that mountain. What the mountain generates as if it were a machine that generates water. The water from here, the water of El Cibao."

COMMUNITY DIVISION/INVOLVEMENT

"I was born and raised here. You'll have to kill me before I leave here," are the words of Erika, a younger woman in her late 20's from Loma Miranda. I sat in her small home that was situated a ten-minute walk from the community center past the bridge that suspended over the river. Her sister Miranda sat next her as she stood leaning forward on the back of a chair. Erika was about six months pregnant and complained of lower back pain from sitting all day. She was a mother of an 11-year old. By the open door sat Katy, Genaro's wife, who had sat in on most of the interviews and a participant in the movement but was too shy to speak into the recorder, except at certain times when she felt compelled. I could see the *platano* (plaintain) tree right outside her house. Occasionally a chicken walked past the door. Erika would tell me that the fruit trees was an intentional effort by the movement, "through the struggle we learned to sow. If you sow a *plátano* tree you know you are going to eat because you don't have to buy it. Before the Lucha, we only had weeds, after the lucha we now have *yautía* (taro) and plátano. I have a year that I don't know the cost of a platano, because we harvest it here. We also have a flock of chicken. All of that through the lucha that has taught us a lot of things."

That day I could hear the birds chirping more than usual through the occasional *aguacero* (a downpour that can last from several minutes to half an hour then suddenly stops and the sun appears) that would fill the room with the sound of raindrops hitting above our heads against the metal roof. Erika is known as one of the women who participated in almost every activity, except her participation lessened once she became pregnant. “When the movement came I was interested because it was about the environment, and it’s something we have to fight for ourselves and for those that are coming, for those that will be born, for the little ones, and all of that...When the resistance started [seven years ago], we didn’t have knowledge of that. We were young and weren’t interested. The majority of people said that they were never going to come over here to exploit. We started to really gain interest when they came and took those people out who lived in the mountain. They [Falcondo] filled their eyes with money. They wanted to go back because they couldn’t adapt to the world down here...The majority of them have spent the money and are now having a hard time.”

Throughout the interview there was a sense of frustration from the women about those in their community who did not care as much as they did. There was a sense of remorsefulness because these were their neighbors: people who used the river and the land, yet would get mad if you even mentioned the Loma Miranda movement. “There are people here that with *maldad* [wickedness] would tell me ‘they are going to exploit that mountain’ and I tell them that, even if I suffer they will suffer more because we all bathe and drink from that water. Then I leave because I know myself. As much as one wants to endure that, sometimes they can bring out the worst in you. Although some people don’t have the same patience.” They participated in the movement even if it meant they would be met with adverse reactions. Erika said that at one point she was fed up with it. “Sometimes I would have to go cook at home but he [movement member] would show up at the school I

substituted for, at the door with a packet of flyers for a meeting the next day. I would take the flyers because I didn't want to be in a bad place with him and with the rest of them. So I would work hard to spread the flyers. When I would leave a home after giving them a flyer, they would throw it at my back. They wouldn't come to the meeting, supposedly because they didn't know about it." Katy chimed in, "there were some people that would take the paper and rip it into pieces right in front of your face. They wouldn't even wait until you left." It came to the point that Erika had to be honest with the other members and explain that she couldn't canvass anymore. "After giving out flyers, I would sometimes overhear them calling me lazy. So, one day I told him [Movement member], look I am not going to be put like a *mojiganga [*masquerade/costume], that when there is a meeting I will only go, or my husband if he isn't working."

Out of Erika's neighbors in the area close to her home, only three families were supportive of the movement and would attend meetings. From the perspective of these women, the majority of the participants were people who lived outside of the community. Out of the handful of protesters from Loma Miranda, the majority are women. "The majority of those who participate are women," said Erika. "Yes, there are a lot of men, but the majority of those who participate from the community are women. The only men are her husband," pointing at Katy, "and like two more. But from here, from the community there are more women."

Many factors play into the division within communities, such as fear to act or participate, false promises from the company, and families given money and jobs. Commonly seen in other situations, certain expectations can come from receiving money or work. This type of offer can lead to people feeling invested in the project. Erika and the other women understood the intricacies and complexities of this kind of exchange, however. To them the money is never worth it, as Erika states:

> Because money has more power than nature. People are only interested in the money. There are a lot of people that are kind of ignorant, I'm not trying to offend anyone, if not in the sense that they say things like 'I don't care if they exploit that mountain,' then from where are they going to drink water if they destroy those trees...They say that in a pueblo there is a negative and a positive perspective. You can't ever agree on the same thing...We have to make them conscious even if it's only a little bit, even if they only change a little bit. Taking it step by step, the hope is that they'll understand, and everyday more people will join together.

Despite the negative and aggressive reactions to these women's canvassing efforts, there is still hope. In this situation, they understand that the gravity of the mine would impact everyone: those who agree with the project as well as those who are protesting it. Similar to the group conversation I had with the women at the encampment, I brought up my experience of organizing to Erika, Katy and Miranda, an experience that resembled theirs. I told them about how some police and people have their eyes filled with money and promises. Then Erika said, "They say that the will is weak, I bet you that over there is the same as here, waiting for money. That's the problem. A million pesos, they say that is money, but it's a lie, it's nothing. You'll quickly eat that money away sitting down, and then you'll be asking for more. Imagine, but that is the mentally here, one would like to change their mind and make them understand."

The story was that Falcondo used money and promises of jobs and profit to communities to get them on their side. They would hire community members as *Wachiman,* a term that is used in DR to describe a security guard of any kind. Falcondo supposedly contracted from a different company called Dominican Watchmen, hiring people but never paying them, eventually firing them all. In addition, the women described how Falcondo would also lure them with money to attend their company meetings. Katy said, "They came just picking up people. Then to organize meetings, they would give them 200 pesos and a *pica pollo* [fried food], to have them go to the meetings." Depending on one's occupation,

the average cost for someone below the poverty level to feed their family would be about 500 pesos. The 200 pesos would satisfy these families for the day at least. As Katy said:

> That was a major issue with those people, because they thought that *they* [emphasis added] were Falcondbridge, that Falcondbridge, that the gold from there, they were going to give it to them, that they would become rich. Yet, they are there, with no job, with nothing, and they are still surviving, because they live off this water and land. Nevertheless, I told them that they need to come down to the river, to *jartarse* [consume or drink too much until it hurts] from the water of the river, to bathe with the water of the river. Because if they don't protect this, if this does not interest them, then don't use what the other is trying to protest.

As she said these words rain roared from the sky, filling up the concrete home. I could feel the sounds of the water against my skin, swelling up my eardrums as Erika raised her voice to be heard through the rain. "For that we can't stop fighting. I've said this before, that even with me like this," rubbing her pregnant stomach, "anyone would have to kill me for that mountain."

DOÑA JOSEFINA Y COTUI

After I finished my first interview with Doña Carmen on the noisy holiday, I sat with Doña Josefina. She was younger than Doña Carmen by about ten years. She wore a white rosary around her neck with a lavender purple sleeveless blouse, a skirt that went down past her knees with black leather sandals. She had participated since the beginning. Although she was smiling during the entire interview, I first sensed her caution talking to me. Even though I am of Dominican descent, my family is from the Cibao, I still have an accent that is not quite Dominican, let alone *cibaeño.* The cibaeño accent is different from the rest of the country due to the mix of African/Indigenous and Spanish, where some letters are said very differently and other letters are cut out of the word altogether. Several claims exist for the origins of Cibaeño Spanish, with some scholars stating traits are

traceable from the Canary Islanders who settled there in the 18th century, from African or Taino, or from contact with Haitian Creole (Bullock & Toribio 2009). I remember my mom telling me that she and my dad lost the cibaeño accent when they moved to Santo Domingo to go to school. At the time of our first meeting, I did my best to not let her judgements co-mingle with my insecurities and later I would earn her trust.

Figure 6: Doña Josefina, 2017. Photography by author.

Doña Josefina was born in the mountain and has lived there most of her life. She was a participant in the movement since the beginning, one of the first group of women who attended the meetings in Pino seven years ago. Despite injuries and age, she

participated no matter what. “Till death, till death I’ll march in this fight. I’ll tell you that I have a *clavo* [nail],” pointing to the bottom of her foot, “and if I have to go to the Capital on foot I’ll go. I love it when I’m in this fight, I feel totally full of life and happiness. I feel shut down when there isn’t movement.” When I asked her what this mountain means to her, our conversation quickly turned to her fear of what the mine could do to her community’s health. She mentioned “Cotuí” as an example of what she hopes won’t happen in Loma Miranda. Throughout my interviews with the women, any notion of potential health issues relating to the mine, Cotuí would be the first example to be mentioned.

The Pueblo Viejo mine in Cotuí is located one hour from Loma Miranda (Happel, 2016). It is a gold mine perpetuating similar interests from the colonial era. The two major differences from the colonial era are that gold mining is now a large-scale production and that genocide is now assuming a different form. There are large machines that can tear up the earth in minutes, making extraction of minerals a quicker process. The company that owns this mine is Barrick Gold. This company is not directly murdering people; rather, it is a form of slow genocide through pollution and water contaminations. The river in Cotuí was used as drinking water, to bathe, to cook. The water was used to cultivate residents’ cacao that they would sell to make a living. The river runs red like blood from the contamination as community members, the plants of the earth and their animals get sick. The women of Loma Miranda went to visit Cotui to witness the future that could be their mountain. In a conversation I had with Erika, she told me that when she visited Cotui, she fell in the river because she slipped on rock. When she arrived home, she had rashes all over her body. Her sister Miranda went on the same visit and recalled, “There are people dying for an answer and arguing with each other for the little water that they have, fighting because they spend three or four days without bathing. They drink the water from there

(because some families can't afford bottled water). When someone is thirsty, they'll drink water from wherever. In addition, we saw the truck that unloaded materials, it's chemicals. That is what we don't want to happen here." Similar to Miranda, Doña Josefina didn't want to see this happen to Loma Miranda. She recalled her experience when she visited, "There's a lot of people with cancer, people sick. We felt a great sadness. There were people and children with rashes on their skin." Rhetorically, because the answer was obvious, I asked her "and all of you don't want that here," to which she responded, "No, no. I'm better off with a bullet through my forehead," as she pressed her finger against the middle of her forehead.

EL AGUA ES VIDA: LA TIERRA ES VIDA: SPIRITUALITY

When speaking about spirituality practices during this movement, one cannot ignore the major influence and support from the Catholic Church. The movement to save Loma Miranda is deeply entrenched in the Catholic institution, a common religion that is very present within the Dominican Republic. Many of the women, including Doña Carmen, learned about the organizing through the church. The church was used as shelter during the long marches to Santo Domingo. While my visit to the community, I had an impromptu interview with a woman, Jahara, at Doña Carmen's home. We sat at the kitchen table, a huge picture of a Jesus on the wall next to the T.V. where we watched the news at night. Jahara was born in the mountain but now lived in La Vega. Most of her family was from Loma Miranda, including her parents and grandparents. She had a business by the river where she would sell fruit. Jahara was part of the church choir that created motivational religious songs and prayers about Loma Miranda for the protestors as a show of support. Jahara said, "we do a lot of prayers, I belong to the choir here in the community, we do a

celebration of the word, we support them by singing, we sing a song called Loma Miranda No Se Negocia" (Loma Miranda is Non-negotiable).

The church has a significant presence within the community, many priests from the surrounding areas served as leaders and key spokespeople for the movement. They facilitated meetings, led marches and participated in direct action. During the time of the fire when people took over the Autopista, Lisbeth recalls singing a hymn with the priests as they laid down in the middle of the street. The police wanted them to get up but they couldn't put their hands on them because of the presence of the priests. Due to their influence on Dominican society, the participation of priests was an important strategy for the movement, as police were less likely to hurt or arrest them and other people during protests. "There was a confrontation once, where many guys from La Capital came...15 of them were arrested. It was a bigger group and they told the police they would have to release them or arrest all of them. But there was a priest on the march when this happened, and because of him they freed all of them."

In addition, I believe there are other forms of spirituality that do not have labels or fit within a specific category. Especially within diasporic communities who may not adhere to mainstream religion, there's a yearning to recreate the connection that was stolen from us. The diasporic spirituality is a puzzle that we try to put together. Some of us spend years scavenging to find the pieces that fit while accepting that there could be gaps we may never fill. As diasporic beings on this life-long journey, we see spirituality in parts of ourselves, we seek it in our dreams, we find it in the plants we harvest from the land, in the cold rivers where we wash our hair. Spirituality as a diasporic being flowing through this earth embodies so much, it is the way the platano flower opens up, steaming, to take in the hot morning sun. Spirituality is the use of *guanábana* leaf tea after a family member has passed to release the *grito* (scream) of grief held inside your tightened fists (Genaro, personal

communication June 2017). This perception of spirituality seeks to show how these black women can embody and become the resistance.

In defending the land, there is a need to personify the nature around them in order to show that they are living organisms as well. Maribel said, "that mountain is the lung of el Cibao. That is a lung. Imagine when someone has a lung injury, how can they live? For us that is a lung." The elder Doña Josefina articulated the intimate relationship between the mountain and water: "We depend on that river and the mountain, our head. The mountain is the head and the river are the body." This personification of land and water shows the interdependent relationship that these women have to this landscape. A relationship where, if one portion of the mountain is destroyed it completely shuts down the community and the functions of the land. The water and land offer nourishment and protection. They are important to these women in practical ways that let them live their lives. "[I use the river] for everything, for everything. So much that when I would go to any mobilization, I fill my water bottle with the water, I can't drink bottled water, it makes me sick. It's my water, that I drink," stated Doña Josefina.

The water is always very cold, it's as if you're drinking water from the fridge or sink. The land provides sustenance as medicine and food, "In the mountain you find pineapple, oranges, you find fruit. If you get hungry you can just head up to the mountain...you eat a mango and a *jaltura* of water and there, you already ate." The physical landscape also offers protection: the fresh air and water that cools you down when it is too hot outside, the protective barrier of the mountain against natural elements. "The mountain is life for us in so many forms," said Erika, "When cyclones come one the things that protects us, is that mountain. She is the front and we are below in this hole and she protects us. If that mountain wasn't there we wouldn't be either. During hurricane season, we can

hear everything getting destroyed over there [other side of mountain], but thank God nothing happens to us."

During my conversation with Doña Carmen in the community center, the home of the seven-year long struggle to save Loma Miranda, I asked her the same question I asked all the other women, "What does it mean to fight for the water and the land?" Although each person had their own distinct response, their answers always came back to the same theme, "water is life." Without the water or the land, their community and lives would no longer exist. "To fight for the land and water is the most sacred, because it's for life," Doña Carmen responded. "God gave us the land for us to step on, for us to also cultivate and to see what it cultivates and the water, the truth is that without water there is no life, that is the medicine, that is the food." For the women of Loma Miranda, there is a deep connection that embodies both the practical and the spiritual.

The spiritual and physical connections to the land and water of this region has contributed to the leadership and dedication of these women within the land defense and environmental justice movement. When speaking on spirituality within Loma Miranda, I am bringing in different understandings of that notion. There is the spirituality that is related to religious institutions, such as Catholicism and Christianity, which is very much present within Loma Miranda. There are also the Afro/Taino-Caribbean spiritualist influences and practices that is rarely spoken of but that are very much present in diasporic spaces. The Afro/Taino-Caribbean is a mixture that is as complex as Doña Carmen listening to voices in the river or Maribel's daily morning ritual with the water. "I wake up, for example, around 6 in the morning and I am there bathing, that is the first thing I do when I get out of bed. I have water in my house, but I miss the river, it's not the same."

We need to account for the generational and ancestral relationship that we have with water. As common of a slogan it has become, "water *is* life," it is true, water is

powerful. For diasporic beings, water is a bittersweet reality of the middle passage, one that simultaneously holds trauma and healing. Water has the energy and power to heal us, to give us life and at the same time to drown us, to take away life. Water can help us find common ground; it can build movements. Water connects us to each other. Water connects are worlds, realities, and struggles even if we're thousands of miles apart from each other.

After we put the food and coffee in the Community Center, we waited for the tour to come down from swimming in La Llovedora. They trickled down the mountain and ate the *moro* with *chivo* (goat). This was my last day at Loma Miranda. After the tour group finished eating their lunch they climbed into their passenger bus. I didn't have a ride to Santiago, so I went with them. I gave hugs to everyone, Doña Josefina saying she will miss me and telling me to come back to visit. As we drove down the road past the chicharrón stands onto the Autopista, I thought about the women I spoke to, their hopes and fears, the violence they saw and endured, and their self-determination to save Loma Miranda no matter the consequences. As Maribel said, "we have to defend the water the mountain because right now we have this but for our grandkids and kids, for tomorrow, we need to care for it for tomorrow. For the generations that come, so that they may enjoy the water like we did."

Chapter 5: Mujeres Unidas, Los Platanitos, Santo Domingo Norte

In the summer I spent doing my fieldwork at Loma Miranda I had been staying in Santiago de los Caballeros due to its close proximity to the mountain. I decided to go to Santo Domingo to visit my family and interview other participants of the Loma Miranda movement. While in Santo Domingo, I had the opportunity to visit Los Platanitos in the Guaricanos. Since I was going to the take the Dominican Practicum course in the fall I felt it was good to meet the people and women I would be working with. Travelling on the metro the train stopped at the "Los Tainos" station just a couple of stops from the station to get to Los Platanitos. My grandmother and family lived close to this station in Cristo Rey. For as long as I could remember I would stay in her apartment during summer breaks; hearing the calls of vendedores in the early morning and a strong breeze slipping through the open metal window screen, as I stared at homes made of zinc roof and leaves of palm trees dancing with the wind. Arriving in Los Platanitos that day I was able to briefly see the community and meet members of Mujeres Unidas. I came at a point when some of the canñada (ravine) had been covered, developing a new road that ended up at higher a higher elevation than most homes, essentially burying them and thus exacerbating the flooding problem.

This was just a brief introduction to working with the community for the next year with the Practicum and with my own research. My original research was only going to focus on Loma Miranda, with adding Los Platanitos I needed to figure out how to incorporate this community into my thesis in a way that feels empowering for them. Since I had done the workshops about Loma Miranda with other communities in the so called U.S., I thought it would be useful to follow the same trajectory but with a different

intention. For this workshop, I wanted a focus on Mujeres Unidas experience defending their land and how these stories are similar to their struggle and resistance.

LAND DEFENSE DISCUSSION

About a year later from when I first came to visit, I got off the metro at the Peña Gómez station as a member of Los Platanitos picked us up to walk to the community; crossing the street of non-stop traffic of cars, motorcycles and guaguas, down a hill on a narrow sidewalk, past a large billboard displaying the sponsorship of the new developed staircase by the Mayor of Santo Domingo Norte. As we walked down the stairs I saw kites cleverly made of plastic bags and sticks flying over the tops of homes with roofs of zinc. At the bottom of the stairs is the colmado of longtime residents: Fany Moisés Cueva and Aquilino Cueva. We gathered together with a group of women from Mujeres Unidas and a sprinkling of men beneath the shade of a bare fruit tree. Evelyn Hernandez, leader of Mujeres Unidas, began a discussion regarding the families whose homes were destroyed and were displaced with the covering of the cañada. "Raise your hand if you've been displaced and renting," she asked. Two people raised their hand. "There are more than 70 people affected," Evelyn continued.

Recently, Evelyn had a meeting with engineers of the CAASD, those responsible for the infrastructure project, where she presented the results of a survey conducted in March 2018 by students from the Practicum on impacted women displaced from their homes. Out of the 65 women displaced at the time, 25 completed the surveys. In handing over these results at the meeting, she was met with aversion as the engineers' faces turned red. "Listen, I found the strength to volunteer and speak because men are *machista.* Men do not want women to talk and express themselves. Therefore, one has to fill themselves and grasp courage and speak in whatever space. They don't want us to speak and evidently

more so when you have the numbers, statistics, qualitative and quantitative methods," Evelyn passionately stated, pulling out a poster of facts from the survey to show to me. This was in the middle of my workshop after I presented a photo of a woman experiencing distress at the sight of her home almost being destroyed in the community of Gamboa de Baixo, Brasil.

When I developed this workshop with Mujeres Unidas in Los Platanitos, I felt that it had to be different than my meetings in Loma Miranda. I felt the workshop needed to foster an exchange of stories to empower the women of Mujeres Unidas, which is a group that faces a struggle over land rights, displacement, flooding of their homes but in an urban setting quite different from Loma Miranda.

The workshop, held in June 2018, had about 10 participants, including women from the community as well as members of MU. The workshop was more of a conversation where we discussed the Loma Miranda movement and a community of Gamboa de Baixo, Salvador de Bahia, Brasil, in which scholar Keisha Khan Perry has done her research, where women are also organizing to defend their lands and against displacement. Although the context of these women in Brazil compared to those in Los Platanitos is very different, the experience of black women organizing and dealing with the various people and organizations that come with an urban development project are similar. Many of the women resonated with the experiences of these other women because of the similarities. To share the story about the community in Brazil, I had brought photos from Perry's book that showed the land, the development of luxury homes, the protests, and of course the photo of Telma Sueli dos Santos, crying as they are close to destroying her house. However, the home of the woman did not get destroyed at the moment because the women of the community were organized and prepared for such event. After stating this account, the women of MU started speaking up about how the situation in Brazil is very similar to theirs.

In that moment a shift occurred with the women, words started buzzing around: "So brave," "warriors," "they can speak." Some stated that the emotional impact that they saw in the photo was similar to how some of the women reacted in Los Platanitos when in seeing their homes destroyed. They shared how there was one woman that stayed in an emotionally distressed daze for hours. There were also passing thoughts that the same might happen to their community, speculation that their houses may be destroyed for commercial purposes and buildings built for people outside of the community.

Figure 7: Evelyn Hernandez at Land Defense Workshop, 2018. Photography by author.

The leader of MU, Evelyn Hernandez, strategically took the opportunity of the women expressing their outrage to pull out a poster containing facts about the women displaced from the community, declaring that the women need to know these facts in order defend and empower themselves against any developers [Figure #7]. In a reflection on the workshop, Moreto Ramírez, member and treasurer of Mujeres Unidas states:

> It's part of the same problem that those women of Loma Miranda and Brazil have as much as us. Many times, we women work a little bit outside the house, but we have to flee to solve problems at our house. There the water comes and we get flooded and the woman are always there. That's why women are the ones who come out the most in the struggle for the well-being of our house.

For many of the women it seemed that the exchange of stories was useful for showing them that they are not alone in their struggle; there are other women of color across their country and the world that fighting for their community. There was a mutual feeling that they need to all unite around a similar vision and message in order to defend their land.

However, there were challenges that could come with speaking up as Marianela states, her home sitting halfway buried by the road. “We have very little power...the homeowners can’t speak because they won’t listen when we have a meeting with the leaders of the CAASD, the job isn’t well done, look at my house.” In the past the water would only fill her yard but with the new infrastructure project the water goes into her home. Days after the workshop I conducted an interview with Marianela, where she was staying with her daughter since her home was inhospitable, “I moved in 1995, my daughter was only 6 months...I told my husband I wanted to work in order to build a bigger home. The water of the cañada goes into my home with bugs and everything. Sometimes I get depressed a little because my home is abandoned...I would wake up certain mornings where I wasn’t sure where I would put my feet, because it was filled with water, there is a saying

‘you must fight for your needs because if you don’t fight who will you leave it for’ no one will fight for you, you have to fight for yourself.”

Although Loma Miranda was different in the sense that it was a rural movement fighting against mining, the women were still able to relate as most of them had moved from the campo before migrating to Los Platanitos. In addition, the Loma Miranda movement had become a national movement around the need to preserve sacred and valuable land and water, which the women could see as important. Looking at the trees and plants sprinkled around the community, Evelyn reflected, “from an ecological perspective we must preserve it (the land) and teach other people and children to preserve it because it’s not by chance that God put this here, we are part of the environment and the protectors.” I showed them pictures of the various flora and fauna that co-existed in the mountain, the rivers that flowed and enveloped the mountain. For Romelia García, an elder that has lived there for the past 30 years, the pictures of the plants reminded her of the herbal medicine she makes: “My yard is full of leaves and there are a lot of people being healed by those leaves...I know there are leaves that help with a stomach ache, so when I go to the *campo* (countryside) I bring some and plant them. The plant that comes from the earth knows. I sow *ajito con pelo, tuatua, rompe saraguey,* I plant everything because it is all useful.”

Upon reflecting on the stories of struggle from the workshop, many of the women felt that they are not alone in the struggle for their land. They realize there are other people in similar situations also organizing. “The two movements are like ours. Although those of Loma Miranda are fighting to be a national park and in Brasil the women are fighting for their part so they can enjoy themselves and their home,” stated Evelyn, “They also look alike in the emotional part, because they want to better their community. Although it is a different type of fight, it’s the same, the resilience in that barrio, in that region is the same as here and also in that they are women.”

LOS PLATANITOS: PARTE DE MI CORAZÓN

After the land defense workshop, I wanted to do more personal interviews. Oftentimes in facilitated group settings people who are timid, do not feel comfortable in fully expressing themselves. Due to limited time I was only able to conduct a couple of shorter interviews. During the interviews I wanted to ask them what the community of Los Platanitos means for them and it what it means to fight for the land and water as women. These were questions that I had asked the women of Loma Miranda when I went the previous year. Therefore, I wanted to be consistent to see if there were similarities between answers. In addition, I believe it's important to have space to express these personal sentiments about one's home. In an interview with Romelia in her home, where her medicinal plants and fruit trees live in her yard, she expressed the importance to protect and fight for the land and water. "Firstly, water is life, where there is no water there is no life. Where there is water there is peace and love. When one finds a little bit of water to bathe, cook, to wash your clothes, to water your plants, that is the grace of God. For the land, God gave us land to walk on, a roof to cover us from the sun and water, to sow what nourishes us, because everything comes from the land...first we are here but then comes another and another and the land stays here in the same place. Therefore, we must fight for the small piece that we have."

I interviewed, Fany, who had the same resilient courage who has been living in Los Platanitos for the past 24 years. In moving there, she was able to buy her home and start a *colmado* and *relleno* business (corner store and empanada) with her husband Aquilino. During intense storms, her home is usually free from flooding due to its higher location, but the colmado floods. During the time I spent in Los Platanitos, workers with the CAASD raised the street in front of their store and added drainage pipes in an effort to decrease flooding. However, during this time there was an unexpected storm when people's homes

flooded, including Fany's colmado. Fany and Aquilino had to wake up at 3 in the morning to attempt to drain the water. Despite these difficult conditions, as for many of the women of Mujeres Unidas, Los Platanitos still has a deep place in Fany's heart:

> This community for me means a heart, because we live here, we have our family, we have our church. I feel community of the Los Platanitos as the center of my heart. Even like this it is still part of my heart. If it is the will of God to take me out of here, God can take me to New York or any country, but the people of Los Platanitos I will not forget, the center of my heart.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Discussion

When I began my land defense journey in the so-called United States I never imagined I would have the opportunity to go to the Dominican Republic and work with communities organizing to protect their land and water. Through my research and work I witnessed and collected stories of women and people fighting for their land in Loma Miranda and Los Platanitos. For over 7 years people have been protecting Loma Miranda from the mining company Falcondo. They have organized a national movement through an encampment, educational tours, informational pamphlets demanding that President Danilo Medina declare Loma Miranda a National Park. In the past 7 years, they have endured different types of violence from mental, physical to spiritual. The women of the movement take on multiple roles from cooking for the movement, participating in meetings, protests, and marches. In Los Platanitos, people have to deal with intense flooding from the cañada and the new poorly engineered road project that covers the cañada and the displacement from their homes that happened after the project was implemented. I was able to work with Mujeres Unidas a group of resilient women organizing to improve their community through building leadership through entrepreneurship initiatives and reclaiming spaces to speak on the issues in their community. Although, Loma Miranda and Los Platanitos are two different movements they are similar in that they are movements defending their land. Both communities have a deep commitment and love for their land that they are willing to organize themselves and sacrifice their time and resources in order to protect their community.

My research methods and decolonial methodology that involves several qualitative components. I am using a decolonial methodology in my research and with the methods I've used to collect and represent the stories and my data. This methodology tries to break

with the academic norms based on colonialism. Academic research has a long white European colonial history in which researchers speak of communities as foreign, and where they believe that their knowledge is the only and universal. I also want to get away from the use of the exclusionary language that is so often used in academic research. This language can be alienating and cannot even be understood by the community that the academic is investigating. In addition, my positionality plays an important role when I practice my methods. Although, I am not from these specific communities, my family is from this country and I am constantly reflecting on the work I am doing and the responsibility I have with the people and community with which I am working. I have a much deeper connection with this work because of my positionality. Therefore, part of my methods is being in a constant space of reflection about how I'm collecting information, how I'm choosing to work with people and the ways in which I am representing their stories.

PARTICIPANT-OBSERVATION

The method of participant-observation, essentially entailed me staying at the encampment of Loma Miranda with permission from the community. Last summer, I stayed several days at Loma Miranda in the house of Dona Carmen. Through this experience I was able to have more consistent conservations and share space and meals with people beyond an interview. During my stay I was also able to lend a hand to the women as they prepared for tours coming to visit the camp. Similarly, during my time working with Mujeres Unidas in the Los Platanitos where we would sit with each other and have conversations before going into formal workshops or meetings. These types of interactions were important to me, for relationship building outside of my thesis as I want these connections to continue after I've finished my Masters.

INTERVIEWS

Lastly, I conducted semi-structured interviews with women that are resisting Loma Miranda last summer. I had individual interviews with certain women. For those that felt more comfortable in a group, I conducted 2 group interviews, with about 3 women in each group. The group interviews were a little difficult to navigate due to some of the women interrupting or talking over each other, but generally the conversation was fruitful. In the interviews we spoke about how they entered into the movement, the importance of fighting for their land and water, the strategies and tactics they've utilized. In addition, I conducted 4 individual interviews with members of Mujeres Unidas, where I asked them about what it means for them to defend their land and what they community means to them.

WORKSHOPS/KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

As previously explained one of the methods I have used is an exchange of knowledge, where I hold workshops with resistance groups where we discuss and learn from other stories and movements. This includes the organization of a community meeting to exchange stories and build solidarity between the communities and both struggles. Another method that I am using is alternative forms of representation, which means representing my data in a non-traditional way as seen in the academy. As part of this, I want to create a Zine to share with other organizations and communities that fight for their land and alternative libraries. The Zine is a future production that I will create after submitting my thesis. As part of creating the Zine, I will have a content making workshop with the women of Mujeres Unidas. In which they will write poetry or talk out their poetry as I record, in addition, the women will have the option of drawing. The poetry and writing will reflect their relationship and connection to their community and their land. I will include their poetry and drawings into the Zine. Outside of the Zine and within my thesis,

I am also using their poetry and pieces I've written as a creative way to describe these struggles, for example, a verse from a poem that I wrote that begins as:

> I dreamt I was water last night.
> I dreamt that we were water.
> Flowing through the arteries of this earth freely,
> Together.

In addition to poetry I used a mix of ethnography with personal reflections, memoir and narration in the first person. The narration will be like a story where I use the quotes from the women speaking of their experiences to describe key elements of the movement and the landscape. From time to time I'll insert memories that may arise with my own personal family experience.

Following on the trajectory of knowledge sharing, I have conducted 3 "Land defense Workshops" to disseminate knowledge and information to other "activist" land defense and social justice groups. During these workshops I told the story of Loma Miranda, using quotes and narratives from interviews I conducted. The structure for each workshop was geared to the location and the demographic of the participants, given these differences, the responses from each group was unique. The first workshop was near Rhode Island at the Pokonoket Action Camp in August of 2017. The camp was organized through a collaboration of several organizations working in solidarity with the Pokonoket Nation, a non-federally recognized Indigenous nation. The action camp was organized to prepare non-tribal participants allies and those in the Nation to reclaim land from Brown University. I was asked to give a workshop on Loma Miranda to tribal members and non-tribal members, some that are indigenous to other parts. The action camp took place in a rural area. I gave my workshop underneath a canopy where I didn't have pictures of the movement or the ability to utilize technology such as a powerpoint presentation. The participants were mostly women of color and bilingual in Spanish-English and only one

monolingual Spanish-speaking indigenous elder from the Global south. Therefore, I conducted the workshop in Spanish, which felt easier since all the data and stories I had a collected in Loma Miranda were in Spanish. By not translating to English, I felt I was better able to relate the essence of the stories. The workshop took the style of storytelling as I spoke of the Loma Miranda movement. At the end of the workshop, the participants felt impacted by the story, some were able to relate to their own struggles of land defense in their homelands and shared stories from their community. Many of the participants asked about solidarity actions they can do in order to support Loma Miranda. At the moment, I was not sure but I hope to include a list of certain actions in the Zine. Lastly, the Indigenous elder reflected that part of my duty of knowledge sharing is to take these stories to Caribbean and Dominican communities in the U.S. or in the DR. At the time, this was something I hoped to do at some point in the future.

The second workshop that I conducted was in September 2017 in Houston, Texas. This workshop was different due to the event and demographic of the participants. The event was an Anarchist Book Fair, where several people and groups were giving workshops on various topics, from police violence to book on radical parenting. Obviously, the book fair included people selling books and zines on topics related to social/food/environmental justice and political ideologies. I conducted this workshop in a different way compared to the first one, as I was able to use a PowerPoint presentation with images of Loma Miranda. In this workshop, I brought up the history of colonization with land grab and resource extraction within the island, explaining that Dominican Republic was the location of the first colonial gold mine. Most of the 15 participants were mixed gender and race and English speakers. The outcomes from this workshop were similar to those of the first, and people wanted to know how they could work in solidarity with the community. I asked a member of the Loma Miranda movement about how people can help; his response was for

people to visit. However, it could be difficult for most people to find the time and resources to visit, therefore, I hope to figure out other avenues people can take to help and include these into the zine.

Finally, as part of my decolonial methodology I will organize an Encuentro in Loma Miranda between the organizers there and the members of Mujeres Unidas after finishing my thesis, most likely in August 2018. The purpose is to bring both groups, Loma Miranda and Los Platanitos to meet and share their experiences, learn from each other and build solidarity across struggles and social movements. I will like to ask the members of Mujeres Unidas what they feel they will get out of a trip to Loma Miranda, and how people in Loma Miranda may benefit from meeting with them. I will also give them a list of things to bring, such as comfortable shoes and umbrella for the sun. The tentative plan is to bring at least 20 residents of Los Platanitos, mostly active members in Mujeres Unidas. Once arriving at the mountain, we will have a meeting at the community center, where spokespeople from both communities will introduce themselves and briefly talk about their respective struggles. In addition, we will get a brief tour of the rivers and community by one of the guides from Loma Miranda. We will eat and then head back to Santo Domingo. After allowing the women a couple of days to process, I hope to have a follow-up meeting with some of them to discuss reactions, impressions, and lessons learned from the Encuentro.

INSIDER/OUTSIDER

E'toy atrapada en medio del mar

Tendida
En una canoa
Fabricated of

Fish

coral

Scarred and graffitied Bones

Of those that came before

Waves of hearts beating drums

Against my

body swaying

between islands

I began this experience of doing this research in a place where I had spent my life traversing back and forth from the island of Manhattan to DR. As my poem indicates, for a diaspora person there are these constant waves that take us back and forth between physical places/homes and the homes that live within our bones and hearts, while never fully reaching either place. This place feels like a limbo that is both painful and beautiful. Having the opportunity to enter these spaces outside my immediate and extended biological family helped settle some of those diaspora feelings. However, they will always exist and be present. In addition to the fact that the majority of my land defense and community organizing experience had been in the so-called United States, this had been my first time engaging with communities doing this kind of work in this country.

Experiencing the world as a person of the diaspora I've had the issue of romanticizing this country, I still tend to do that. As people navigate these in-between spaces there is a need and deep ancestral eagerness to grasp onto something, anything that could make us feel whole. Through that eagerness there is a loss of patience, there can be an erasure of the realities that people are dealing with in the very country where we are

supposedly from. As someone who is from this very place and outside of it, there's a responsibility to be in a constant reflexive state, by grounding myself in order to respect and fully see the community I am working with. Although, I have the tendency to easily romanticize this country - in which I see many diasporic beings fall so often into - the experience was difficult in a number of ways, but mostly mentally and spiritually. I remember having to navigate my way using a form of Spanish that didn't quite fit the accent and tongues of those here, despite having the physical appearance as someone who belonged here. Existing in a queer body and having to navigate heavily religious, modest and traditional spaces was difficult, due to the fact that I felt I had to conform to the norms of those I'm working with; perhaps to not stand out as much, to be able to fit in more, to make data collecting easier. In addition, I felt that being a woman in the field was difficult to navigate. Although my work focused on interviewing and collecting data from women in these movements, there is a reality that male leadership is very much present. During my fieldwork, especially in Loma Miranda, there were moments when I was the only woman in the space. Within these spaces I dealt with typical machismo that tried to undermine the experience and important work that I was doing. The reality of machismo within the field as a non-white man is so often experienced and felt, yet not talked about. Within all these moments the complexities of identity, interlocking systems of oppression, community, diasporic feelings, being an inside/outsider researcher, began to surface.

Traditional forms of academic writing can make it difficult to share the knowledge and experiences of the people in a form that is rooted within the community and the complexities that come with it. I've tried to reproduce the stories I've received in the alternative representations actively manifested through workshops and gatherings, the pending zine, poetry and first-person narratives/memoir. Through these representations my goal was to have people's words and experiences transmit through the pages in a dignified

and deeply recognizing the struggles and fight of the community. The implications of sharing across borders is about "truth speaking and storytelling," which is an act of resistance. As people of color, we are often not given the space to tell our stories. Truth speaking and storytelling is about reclaiming spaces of knowledge that have existed to push or ignore these stories; it is about the act of expressing ourselves in the special ways that come naturally to us; it is about vocalization when large media outlets fail to see the importance of our stories; finally, it is for future generations to have the opportunity to witness and learn, so that we do not continue to lose ourselves, to not be forgotten. In this way, the stories of our people and land, of our struggle and resilience, will transcend time and space.

Throughout this process and research, the principal findings show how the women are fighting for the fundamental environmental justice rights social, economic, cultural, environmental and self-determination of their people; despite the environmental racism that comes with infrastructure and resource extractive projects. For Loma Miranda they witness the implications of what a future mining project can mean for their community. For Los Platanitos, Mujeres Unidas are making strides to reclaims spaces and figure out solutions and proposals to deal with the displacement and flooding of their homes. The resilience energy of Mamá Tingó, a black Dominican land defender, emits from the hearts of these women. Although not exclusively stated by all women, Mamá Tingó's influences are seen within their organizing and what grounds their message. As Romelia García from Mujeres Unidas states: "The land gives fruit, the land is the life of humans and animals too...we also have rights, we are also made of bones and blood...what we want is to stay here because we already have our roots planted...the land is who works it, no one owns land, all that are born are part of the land, one cannot just take it for themselves."

Appendix

HERBS/PLANTS OF LOMA MIRANDA AND DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Ruda-Rue:

Maribel: They say Ruda drys up really fast. It is a plant that is very ñoña [sensitive]

Genaro: Ruda is good for tightening of the chest

Katy: The only thing that Ruda has is that it stinks.

Limoncillo De La Playa:

Maribel: Limoncillo de Playa is for a high fever.

Genaro: It is good for nervous breakdowns or insomnia.

Oregano Poleo:

Lisbeth: Oregano is from here, I have two kinds in my house. One of which is Oregano Poleo. You boil the oregano and when you have indigestion, you can drink it in a tea.

Genaro: The tea can also help to control cancerous tumors.

Noni:

Lisbeth: I have a tree in my house. It helps get rid of cancerous tumors.

Tayote:

Lisbeth: In my house, I also have tayote, but I don't really like it. There are some people that eat it plain. Supposedly eating it plain helps to clean your system out.

Genaro: You take out the water of the Tayote and it helps with stabilizing your blood sugar.

Algarrobo:

Maribel: There are a lot of medicinal plants, including Algarrobo.

Lisbeth: Yes, Algarrobo is very good.

Genaro: You take out the insides of the Algarrobo, the insides smell really bad. That's why they also call it la Mierda en Cajeta, you make a juice and it helps with your immune system.

Mango:

Lisbeth: You take the ripe leaf of the Mango and it's good for a cold. You crush it into a tea and then drink it.

Guanabana:

Genaro: The Guanabana leaf is for nerves. If a family member passes away, sometimes we won't cry or scream out because of the nerves. When your fist is so tight and you can't open it because of nerves, then you take a branch of Guanabana.

Granada/Pomegranate:

Maribel: Granada is good for your vision. I eat all of it, for my sight, and I also eat it for my throat.

Lisbeth: Granada is good for when you have problems with your throat. When you have Bronchitis. You gargle with it and it goes away really fast.

Bejuco de Indio/Bejuco de Chino:

Genaro: That plant grows abundantly here. If you look at the tree, there's a knot around it. You cut that knot, put it in a bucket of water with sugar. You cover the bucket with plastic and a rubber band so nothing gets in. After 9 days you open it.

Lisbeth: When you open it. You move and it goes 'paaahh' like when you shake a soda bottle and it explodes. It tastes really good. That cleans you out and it's good for the kidneys. It cleans all of your organisms inside. Before, people would drink that instead of soda.

Katy: It's the best when you drink it cold.

Genaro: Here there is Bejuco de Indio and Bejuco de Chino. The Bejuco de Chino, looks like a ball, like a kidney underneath the earth. You can make it into a tea. You take all the roots from the ground and put it under the sun to dry. Once it's dry, you peel it, chop it, and put it in a bottle. You put other liquids in the bottle and leave it for 9 days. The drink is called Mama Juana.

Bija:

Lisbeth: Majority of people that live in the mountain, use the plant Bija to give color to their food. They didn't use that vaina [word that means 'that crap/thing'] of rotten tomatoes [tomato paste]. They would take from the tree and cook with that. You open it and it has red granites. You take the granites and put in your food to give you that red color. There were some people that would put that in their hair to dye it a red color. When [names family member] had itchy skin, she took the plant and would bathe with it.

Genaro: This is the significance of Bija, if you fall or get hurt, and have bruising from the inside, you take the Bija, put it in milk and drink it and it breaks up that injury. If you also have stomach ulcers, you also drink it and it gets rid of your ulcers.

Maribel: They said that indigenous people would put the Bija on their skin so the insects wouldn't bite them.

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Vita

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This thesis was typed by Crysbel Tejada.