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Cultivating Resistance: Haitian-Dominican Communities and the Dominican Sugar Industry, 1915-1990

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UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

CULTIVATING RESISTANCE: HAITIAN-DOMINICAN COMMUNITIES AND THE
DOMINICAN SUGAR INDUSTRY, 1915-1990

By

Amelia Hintzen

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty
of the University of Miami
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Coral Gables, Florida

May 2016

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CULTIVATING RESISTANCE: HAITIAN-DOMINICAN COMMUNITIES AND THE
DOMINICAN SUGAR INDUSTRY, 1915-1990

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This dissertation integrates archival, ethnographic, and oral-historical research to investigate the intertwined histories of the Dominican sugar industry and Haitian immigrant communities in the Dominican Republic. Over the first half of the twentieth century the Dominican economy became increasingly dependent on Haitian labor to cut sugarcane, and at the same time government policies became more anti-Haitian. During the thirty-year dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo, the Dominican state worked to recruit what they assumed would be a male and temporary Haitian workforce. Trujillo developed an extensive legal apparatus to surveil the country's population, enabling state officials to segregate Haitians on sugar plantations and treat *bateyes* as effectively denationalized spaces. However, this work examines how both male and female migrants built permanent Haitian-Dominican communities and asserted their right to citizenship by transforming the space of the plantation over generations. They appropriated company land and buildings to create homes, raise families, keep livestock, and cultivate food staples. In so doing they formed peasant settlements and demanded protections similar to those afforded to communities outside of the plantation. What is more, they used the very forms of documentation through which Trujillo sought to segregate Haitian migrants as legal avenues to claim Dominican citizenship. Imputing racial "otherness" to this population, Trujillo's successor Joaquín Balaguer worked to revoke the citizenship rights

of Haitian-Dominicans, leading to the growth of statelessness on plantations in the 1970s and 80s. Despite increasing isolation, residents used a spectrum of political tools to demand that those in power respect rights they deemed inalienable. In doing so they envisioned, and enacted, a reality that challenged the way company and state officials viewed the space of the plantation.

By combining situated ethnography with in-depth archival research, this work is able to closely analyze how translocal forces, like large-scale migration, corporate monoculture, and state-sanctioned racism, were negotiated locally. This dissertation contributes to scholarship on Latin America and the Caribbean by analyzing the complex intersections between plantation agriculture, migration, and citizenship. Across the region, elites used the isolated landscapes of export enclaves to segregate “racially undesirable” communities from full citizenship rights. Concurrently, plantation residents created alternative forms of citizenship that emphasized their own definitions of cultural and economic freedom. In addition, this dissertation investigates the growing global problem of statelessness, and how one community has contended with this condition over the course of the twentieth century. Finally, it provides important analysis of the fraught intersections between race and birthright citizenship in the Americas.

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory
of my father, John Hintzen

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List of Abbreviations

AGN	Archivo General de la Nación
CEA	Consejo Estatal del Azucar
C.I.A.	Central Intelligence Agency
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration
PRD	Partido Revolucionario Dominicano

Introduction

In 2013 Diego Castro, a resident of a sugar plantation in the eastern Dominican Republic, described to me the history of the community where he grew up. He explained,

Monte Coca is...known as a *batey*. They brought Haitian workers during the harvest season, and...the *batey* was really for them.... But that changed...because people stayed [and] formed families....Dominicans lived here too [and] they mixed [with each other]...and converted Monte Coca into what it is today: a community.¹

In his telling of Monte Coca's history, Castro distinguished between a *batey*, a label given to the settlement by the sugar company, and a community, something that was created through the effort of residents over the course of decades. Castro gives voice to how immigrant communities can confound the assumptions and goals of economic and political leaders. Nations across the globe have sought to bring in temporary workers to fulfill labor demands. Governments implemented policies designed to ensure that migrants would contribute to the economic success of the host country without becoming part of it. However, immigrants have defied state attempts to control and isolate them by forming permanent communities, claiming citizenship, and demanding rights.

This dissertation examines how over the course of the twentieth century the Dominican government encouraged immigration, making the country more reliant on Haitian labor, while concurrently state forces increasingly portrayed Haitians as a threat to the nation. Over time, the Dominican government attempted to denationalize sugar plantations, removing them from the nation while still relying upon their inhabitants to contribute to the country's wealth. As the sugar economy grew in importance the state worked to conflate Haitian identity with sugar labor, creating a racially-distinct and easily

¹ Anonymous interview, with author, Monte Coca, April 24, 2013.

exploitable workforce. At the same time, plantation residents asserted national belonging by grounding their communities on the Dominican land they cultivated and utilizing forms of documentation through which the government sought to surveil Haitian migrants as legal avenues to claim Dominican citizenship. Plantations, spaces occupying the periphery of the nation, therefore ended up fundamentally shaping definitions of citizenship and nationality.

When representatives of North American corporations arrived in the eastern Dominican Republic in the late nineteenth century they found sparsely-populated fertile plains, perfect for sugarcane cultivation. The peasant population of the area descended from escaped and freed slaves, and supported themselves through ranching on communally held land and small cultivation plots.² Company management hoped to transform this landscape into what they considered to be productive spaces. This entailed converting a patchwork of ranching land, forests, and individual farms into acre upon acre of sugarcane monoculture.³ Cutting sugarcane during the six-month harvest season required a large workforce, one that did not already exist in the area. Thus, sugar companies had to rely on immigrants, initially from the British West Indies but by the early decades of the twentieth century increasingly from Haiti. Migrants from around the Caribbean joined displaced Dominican peasants on the plantations, where they took up

² Carlos Larrazábal Blanco, *Los negros y la esclavitud en Santo Domingo* (Santo Domingo: Julio D. Postigo e Hijos, 1975); Frank Moya Pons, "The Land Question in Haiti and Santo Domingo: The Sociopolitical Context and the Transition from Slavery to Free Labor, 1801-1843" in *Between Slavery and Free Labor: The Spanish-Speaking Caribbean in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Manuel Moreno Franginal, Frank Moya Pons, and Stanley L. Engerman (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1985), 181-124; Richard Lee Turits, "Freedom in el monte," in *Foundations of Despotism: Peasant, the Trujillo Regime, and Modernity in Dominican History*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.)

³ Julie Franks, "Property Rights and the Commercialization of Land in the Dominican Sugar Zone, 1880-1924," *Latin American Perspectives* 26, no. 1 (1988): 106-128; José del Castillo, "The Formation of the Dominican Sugar Industry: From Competition to Monopoly, from National Semiproletariat to Foreign Proletariat," in *Between Slavery and Free Labor*, 125-234; Martin F. Murphy, *Dominican Sugar Plantations: Production and Foreign Labor Integration* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1991.)

residence in company-constructed *bateyes*. Wooden barracks consisting of single rooms intended to house up to ten workers were clustered together deep inside of the sugarcane fields and often far away from other towns and cities. These settlements were densely populated so as to take as little space away from cane cultivation as possible. Sugar company managers and many Dominican government officials considered *bateyes* temporary encampments where seasonal workers — presumed male — could reside during the six-month harvest before returning home, and again traveling to the Dominican Republic at the beginning of the next harvest. That design of *bateyes*, however, never completely aligned with the lived reality of these spaces. As Diego Castro elucidated, Haitian and Dominican men and women began forming permanent communities in these encampments. While temporary migrants would continue to make up a large portion of *batey* populations, each harvest season some remained on plantations. In doing so they transformed *bateyes* from company-designed and controlled spaces into peasant settlements that combined agrarian practices from across Hispaniola.

In this study I trace these transformations over the course of the twentieth century. Displaced Dominican peasants and Haitian migrants utilized company land and buildings to create homes, raise families, keep animals, and cultivate food staples. Homes, often portions of barracks claimed from the sugar company, and small gardens created on plantation land were passed down informally through ties of clientelism, kinship, and friendship. Sugar company management initially attempted to prevent *batey* residents from using their land for peasant production. They tried to block the use of territory for anything other than cane cultivation, and worked to force residents to purchase food from company stores. Yet, at the beginning of the twentieth century no single centralized

source of authority existed in the Dominican Republic. Because state power was limited, and *bateyes* were isolated within sugarcane fields, inhabitants were often able to employ violence against sugar plantation officials who attempted to bar their claims to plantation land.



Figure 1: Barracks (*barracones*) in Batey Monte Coca June, 2013. Photo by Rebecca Zilberstein

Even as the power of sugar companies and the state grew in the late 1920s, residents maintained their right to occupy plantation territory. *Batey* inhabitants were able to force company officials to recognize, at least informally, their claims to homes, provisions grounds, and ranching land. Individual claims to property became part of a local moral economy that supported certain resident uses of plantation space and at times opposed and even blocked the actions of company officials. Communities asserted that they had a moral “right to subsistence” on plantation land, and denying that right was

unjust.⁴ E.P. Thompson argues that such “grievances operated within a popular consensus as to what were legitimate and what were illegitimate practices....[A]n outrage to these moral assumptions, quite as much as actual deprivation, was the usual occasion for direct action.”⁵ Sugar company representatives who transgressed the boundaries of communal codes by denying inhabitants rights to use some plantation land for subsistence could face overt resistance from residents. *Batey* inhabitants of both Haitian and Dominican descent defined economic and cultural freedom, in part, through their ability to produce their own food staples, and they fought to protect their right to use land for peasant production. In doing so they resisted the denationalization of these spaces and asserted alternative definitions of national belonging based on their claims to Dominican territory.

As some residents gained greater rights to land inside plantations, I trace how Haitian immigrants’ freedom to reside and work outside of sugar plantations was curtailed. In 1930 Rafael Trujillo took over the presidency and ruled the country for the next thirty years. Under his dictatorship the government began for the first time in the country’s history to extend the state’s authority over rural residents. Trujillo formulated a new version of state-sanctioned Dominican nationalism that affirmed and incorporated aspects of peasant culture in order to increase the population’s loyalty to him and willingness to submit to increased government surveillance and control. Trujillo claimed to expand the citizenship rights of the Dominican peasantry, who had previously been ignored by the country’s elite. His conception of citizenship, however, did not include the thousands of Haitians and Haitian-Dominicans living within the country who he

⁴ James C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), 33.

⁵ E.P. Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” *Past and Present* 50, no. 1 (1971): 79.

considered to be racially distinct from Dominicans. He attempted to deport many Haitian immigrants after taking power, but his officials were continually frustrated by grassroots support for Haitian residents. Trujillo increasingly believed that growing Haitian-Dominican communities limited the local force of state-sanctioned nationalism and government authority over the border and sugar producing regions. These beliefs contributed to Trujillo's decision to order the massacre of an estimated twenty thousand Haitians living in the border region in 1937.⁶



Figure 2: A provision ground on the edge of a sugarcane field, June 2013. Photo by Rebecca Zilberstein.

⁶ Lauren Derby, "Haitians, Magic, and Money: Raza and Society in the Haitian-Dominican Borderlands, 1900-1937," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 36, no. 3 (July 1994): 488-526; Richard Turits, "A World Destroyed, A Nation Imposed: The 1937 Haitian Massacre in the Dominican Republic," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 82, no. 3 (2002): 589-635; Edward Paulino, "Birth of a boundary: Blood, cement, and prejudice and the making of the Dominican Haitian border, 1937-1961," (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 2001.)

Following the massacre, Trujillo worked to convince Dominicans of the supposed threat Haitians posed by making anti-Haitianism an important component of his nationalist ideology. Trujillo justified his dictatorship, in part, by claiming that he protected the country from the threat of what he termed a “passive” Haitian invasion. Yet, while Haitians were increasingly depicted as a menace to the nation, immigrants were still needed to work in the highly profitable sugar industry. In order to address this contradiction, his government began to isolate Haitians on sugar plantations. Officials utilized extra-legal coercion to force immigrants who owned land or businesses elsewhere to relocate to *bateyes*. In addition, Trujillo developed an extensive legal apparatus to surveil the country’s population, enabling state officials to further segregate the Haitian population. By limiting the space Haitians could occupy in the country, the Trujillo regime tried to erase the long history of Haitian-Dominican communities on the island of Hispaniola. Segregating Haitians on plantations allowed the Trujillo regime to impose a new understanding of ethnic difference that conflated Haitian identity with sugar labor. Anti-Haitianism therefore re-mapped the country, designating plantations as Haitian spaces and limiting the rights of immigrants and people of Haitian descent to reside and work in other areas.

As Trujillo extended his political dominance over the country, he and his family began to take control of the Dominican economy. By the 1940s Trujillo personally owned the vast majority of the country’s industries, and large swaths of land. The only sector of the economy beyond his grasp was the sugar industry, which was still controlled by North American corporations. Because sugar companies claimed absolute authority over their territories, Trujillo became fixated on ending foreign ownership of this industry. By

withholding immigration permits, charging exorbitant taxes, and demanding expensive renovations to bring plantations into line with new health codes, he forced most foreign owners to sell their plantations to him at deeply discounted prices. Thus, the power of sugar companies and the state began to merge.

After Trujillo's assassination in 1961, his twelve sugar plantations were formed into a state-run company. Within a few years his former right-hand man, and one of the key architects of official anti-Haitian ideology, Joaquín Balaguer, took over the presidency. Balaguer instituted policies that prevented Haitian immigrants from residing anywhere outside plantations and that permitted them only to work cutting sugarcane. Instead of employing extra-legal coercion as Trujillo had, he used outright force. At the beginning of each sugarcane harvest the Army and National Police would search the country for Haitians and relocate them to plantations involuntarily, even if they possessed legal documentation. In addition, the government was less likely to issue official identity documents to immigrants, and those transferred to plantations often did not receive any form of documentation while being required to remain in the country. The legality of Haitian immigrants therefore was untethered from documentation and instead became based only on location and occupation. The territory that Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent could occupy was further circumscribed.

Both Trujillo and Balaguer believed that if Haitians could be contained on plantations they could contribute to the wealth of the Dominican nation without ever becoming part of it. However, after Balaguer came to power he began to question some of Trujillo's policies towards Haitian immigrants. Trujillo's government worked to force residents to register their children and carry identification as a way to extend government

control and surveillance over the Dominican Republic. While these policies were used to isolate Haitian immigrants on plantations, their children were considered citizens under the constitution and therefore were required to obtain government documentation. Trujillo considered this expansion of documentation a key component of his dictatorial control. However, Haitian-Dominicans used the very forms of documentation through which Trujillo sought to segregate Haitian migrants as a legal avenue to claim Dominican citizenship. Balaguer came to see this as constituting a grave threat to the nation. Despite the fact that the majority of Dominicans were of African descent, he argued that, after the decimation of the island's indigenous population, white Spaniards repopulated the Dominican Republic. According to him, African characteristics in the Dominican population were a result of Haitian infiltration of the country. Because of his fear of racial "contamination," Balaguer instructed his officials to search for legal backing to revoke the long established legal citizenship rights of Haitian-Dominicans.

President Balaguer and his officials viewed Haitians as only eligible for sugar labor and only legal if they lived in *bateyes*, an ideology that negated the existence of a Haitian-Dominican identity. However, after decades of encouraging immigration hundreds of thousands of Haitian-Dominicans lived in the country. What is more, state ideology did not align with the citizenship laws of the country: children born to Haitians were legally citizens, and therefore could enjoy rights to mobility that their parents did not. Anxiety about this "fifth column" of Dominican citizens of Haitian descent grew among government officials during the 1970s and 80s. As the government limited access to documentation, Haitians, and even Haitian-Dominicans, faced the threat of police coercion, and even deportation, when they ventured outside the boundaries of the

plantation. These policies eventually led to the emergence of a large stateless population inside *bateyes* who possessed neither Haitian nor Dominican citizenship.⁷

As Trujillo and then Balaguer attempted to deterritorialize plantations, effectively removing them from the Dominican nation while still forcing their populations to contribute to the country's wealth, *batey* residents asserted their rights to move throughout the country, control their communities, and receive government protection. Despite government limitations on mobility, *batey* residents consistently found ways to maintain networks with other plantations, nearby peasant settlements, and communities in Haiti that helped them elude government surveillance and negotiate for better wages and working conditions. In addition, although Trujillo and Balaguer employed virulent anti-Haitian ideology, both presidents also routinely responded to complaints from *batey* residents when local moral codes had been violated. Unpopular *guarda campestres*, agents of plantation security forces, were frequently removed if they caused problems in *bateyes* by disregarding local land or housing rights. Therefore, plantation residents used their claims to space as a way to demand citizenship rights, even when they were legally denied them. By petitioning the government to support their rights to plantation land, they implicitly asserted that *bateyes* occupied Dominican territory and that they deserved state protection. Between 1915 and 1990, Haitians and Haitian-Dominicans lost much of their freedom to live, work, and enjoy government protection in areas outside of sugar plantations. At the same time, inhabitants vigorously defended the limited rights they had: defying attempts to isolate them, building permanent communities, and claiming

⁷ Andre Corten, Isis Duarte, Consuelo M. Soto and Viviana Fridman, "Five Hundred Thousand Haitians in the Dominican Republic," *Latin American Perspectives* 22, no. 3 (1995): 94-110; Human Rights Watch, *'Illegal People': Haitian and Dominico-Haitians in the Dominican Republic* New York: Human Rights Watch, 2002.

Dominican citizenship by forcing state officials to recognize their property rights and by finding legal avenues to obtain documentation.

The landscape of the plantation provides a framework for understanding the history of the *bateyes*, one marked by oppression, coercion, and resistance.⁸ The Dominican state, sugar companies, and plantation residents all attempted to control the space of the plantation in different ways. Plantations were therefore both corporate farms controlled by global capital, and peasant settlements. They were places of social exclusion and separation, as well as communities who defined themselves as both Haitian and Dominican and maintained local, national, and transnational connections that defied government segregation. Dominican political and economic elites attempted to enact their vision of economic productivity and ethnic purity on the plantation. At the same time, *batey* residents created their own geographies that deviated from these hegemonic ideals. Residents' reimaginings of the sugar plantation landscape did not focus on the land's capacity to produce sugarcane for export, but instead on its ability to provide food and housing to residents, and to provide space for leisure and religious ceremonies. Examining the tensions between these competing visions of space reveals how company and state power were negotiated locally, and how residents engaged with national and transnational forces, thus informing the development of individual plantations, and the course of twentieth-century Dominican history.

⁸ I am indebted to Cynthia Radding's use of the framework of landscape to examine historical processes. She writes "Understood as lived spaces created by human labor, landscapes emerge from ecological and cultural processes that have the power to transform deserts, savannas, forests, and streams through both human and natural agency... Contrasting meanings of constructed landscapes from an insiders' perspective have arisen from territorial claims advanced by socially and ethnically differentiated communities to particular spaces." *Landscapes of Power and Identity: Comparative Histories in the Sonoran Desert and the Forest of Amazonia from Colony to Republic* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 5-6.

Despite distinct histories of slavery and emancipation in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, the experience of enslavement influenced how peasant cultures developed on both sides of the island. Slave owners sought to control the labor, lives, and bodies of enslaved people, in part, through their domination over space.⁹ Those who escaped slavery therefore created definitions of freedom that emphasized independence through cultivation and unhindered mobility. During the nineteenth century, small-scale peasant cultivation was the dominant form of economic production on both sides of Hispaniola. Mimi Sheller writes, “peasant landholding is one of the most significant measures of peasants’ civil rights and personal liberties in former slave societies, for with landownership came control over everyday family decision making, as well as some degree of economic autonomy.”¹⁰ The right to mobility, violently denied during slavery, was also a constitutive component of freedom.¹¹ Mobility and land access helped peasants maintain some measure of autonomy from their nation’s urban elite.¹² Economically independent, peasants had more choice about engaging in wage work.

⁹ Clifton Ellis and Rebecca Ginsburg ed., *Cabin, Quarter, Plantation: Architecture and Landscapes of North American Slavery* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010); William C. Van Norman, *Shade Grown Slavery: The Lives of Slaves on Coffee Plantations in Cuba* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2013.)

¹⁰ Mimi Sheller, *Citizenship from Below: Erotic Agency and Caribbean Freedom* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 174.

¹¹ Richard Turits writes of nineteenth century residents of the Dominican Republic: “peasants may have taken particular solace in their freedom from the orders of superiors, control over their own production and time, and unconstrained geographic mobility.” Turits, *Foundations of Despotism*, 47 Miami Sheller makes a similar arguments about nineteenth century Haitian peasants, writing that the “notion of embodied action (freedom of movement)...is exemplary of what we might call subaltern tactics of resistance.” Miami Sheller, “‘You signed my name, but not my feet’: Paradoxes of Peasant Resistance and State Control in Post-Revolutionary Haiti,” *Journal of Haitian Studies* 10, no.1 (2005): 72.

¹² Julie Franks, “Property Rights and the Commercialization of Land in the Dominican Sugar Zone, 1880-1924,” 108; Michiel Baud, “The Struggle for Autonomy: Peasant Resistance to Capitalism in the Dominican Republic, 1870-1924” in *Labour in the Caribbean* ed. Malcolm Cross and Gad Heuman (London: Macmillan Caribbean, 1988), 126; Laurent Dubois, *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2012), 104.

Rural communities developed cross-border trading networks, easily avoiding attempts to collect customs revenue, and bypassing the urban centers of Santo Domingo and Port-au-Prince.¹³ When the political elite attempted to coerce residents into providing labor through enlistment in the military or other forms of conscription, many simply disappeared into the poorly surveilled interior of the island.¹⁴ By establishing their own definitions of freedom rooted in the experience of enslavement and emancipation, the masses of Hispaniola created different understandings of national belonging based, in part, on claims to space. Peasants asserted their right to utilize national territory to support their own cultural and economic independence, and to move around the island unhindered by state surveillance or forced labor.

During the twentieth century many Haitian and Dominican peasants were obliged to engage in wage work because of challenging economic circumstances. In Haiti population growth and environmental degradation made it increasingly difficult for peasant families to support all of their members on family land, and seasonal and permanent migration to the Dominican Republic became an important survival strategy. In the eastern Dominican Republic, the consolidation of the sugar industry pushed some peasants off their land, and they relocated to *bateyes*. While thousands of people left family land to engage in wage work for foreign corporations, this study argues that peasant ideologies of freedom described above did not disappear; rather, displaced peasants incorporated them into methods of resistance on the plantation.

¹³ Derby, "Haitians, Magic, and Money"; Jan Lundius and Mats Lundahl, *Peasants and Religion: A Socioeconomic Study of Dios Olivorio and the Palma Sola Movement in the Dominican Republic* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 404-408.

¹⁴ Pedro Luis San Miguel and Phillip Berryman, "Peasant Resistance to State Demands in the Cibao during the U.S. Occupation," *Latin American Perspectives* 22, no. 2 (1995): 44-46; Mimi Sheller, *Democracy After Slavery: Black Publics and Peasant Radicalism in Haiti and Jamaica* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 97.



Figure 3: Family home created in a barracks, June 2013. Photo by Rebecca Zilberstein.

Jean Casimir writes, “the thirst for justice and individual freedoms is inherent in the formation of Caribbean societies and nations.”¹⁵ The Dominican and Haitian peasants who relocated to *bateyes* in 1915 brought with them ideologies of freedom that had at their root the history of radical anti-slavery on Hispaniola. Justice and freedom, however, are not static or ahistorical concepts. In this study I explore what inhabitants considered to be important successes and failures in their struggles with company and state forces. I argue that residents’ peasant backgrounds influenced how they conceived of individual freedom and citizenship, and that independent cultivation and mobility continued to be important to them throughout the twentieth century. Yet, I also chart how meanings of such values varied and changed over time and space. I therefore study how *batey*

¹⁵ Casimir, *The Caribbean: One and Divisible*, 26.

residents defended and, in doing so, defined freedom, justice, and citizenship at given historical conjunctures. Residents' understandings of freedom could communicate the need for food or the desire for leisure time, while at the same time expanding to criticize foreign corporate interests or state racism.¹⁶ The act of creating a provision plot, and altering the landscape of the plantation, reverberated beyond the local impact it had on land use and food security. Through micro-practices of land use, *batey* residents interacted with national and global forces.¹⁷ By appropriating such spaces, residents formed peasant settlements and demanded similar protections as those afforded to communities outside of the plantation. They therefore used cultivation to oppose the isolation of *bateyes* and demand recognition of their right to belong in the Dominican Republic. When residents insisted that those in power respect rights they considered inalienable, they were envisioning, and attempting to enact, a reality that challenged the way company and state officials viewed the space of the plantation. The impact of their claims to company space was therefore both symbolic and material.

In this study I examine oppression and resistance geographically, precisely because the Dominican state, sugar companies, and *batey* residents all conceived of power and agency in spatial terms. I argue that over the course of the twentieth century sugar company management and the Dominican government attempted to use the spatial design of plantations and *bateyes* to control and coerce residents. At the same time,

¹⁶ Mimi Sheller writes “I seek to show how lived materiality of Caribbean freedom both embeds itself in small localities and expands into a transnational critique of European land possession and communal dispossession across the African diaspora and its subsequent Caribbean offspring.” *Citizenship from Below*, 14.

¹⁷ Moore writes, “I insist that *micropractices* matter, that the outcome of cultural struggles remains crucially dependent on the diverse ways land comes to be inhabited, labored on idiomatically expressed, and suffered for in specific moments and milieus.” Donald S. Moore, *Suffering for Territory: Race, Place, and Power in Zimbabwe* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 2.

authorities were forced to contend with, and often recognize, alternative uses of space. People created areas on plantations where they could continue to enjoy freedoms they valued, opposing company and state attempts to make plantations denationalized spaces purely for capitalist production. By demanding government support for their land claims residents implicitly argued that they occupied Dominican territory, and therefore had a claim to national belonging. Communities and individuals employed a spectrum of political tools that identified the rights they deemed most critical, and at the same time reflected the political and economic constraints on their behavior. *Batey* residents at times engaged in forms of resistance that threatened sugar production. When state power broke down, or when sugar companies committed egregious offences, like not paying wages, residents took part in large-scale mobilizations that could be destructive. Throughout the twentieth century inhabitants went on strike, set sugarcane fields on fire, sabotaged company equipment, and in rare instances enacted violence against company and state officials. Residents' ability to employ these strategies was limited by the power and violence of the state and sugar companies. However, when government authority deteriorated during episodes of political and economic upheaval, protests erupted on plantations.

Even when such open dissent was not possible, residents still fought company and state officials for rights to land and mobility. The ability to plant one's own food, and to move around the country, decreased residents' dependence on sugar companies, and strengthened their ability to negotiate for better pay and benefits.¹⁸ These individual acts

¹⁸ Haitian sugar workers in Cuba also struggled with sugar companies to acquire rights to provision grounds, and employed persistent mobility as a negotiation tactic. Barry Carr writes about how migrants would leave plantations if wages were deemed insufficient, potentially causing costly labor shortages. "'Omnipotent and Omnipresent'? Labor Shortages, Worker Mobility, and Employer Control in the Cuban

did not generally threaten the structure of the plantation, and their impact could be contradictory. For example, *batey* communities insisted on using certain areas of plantation land for cultivation and animal husbandry, but at the same time generally accepted that areas historically planted with cane could not be touched. Agriculture supported *batey* residents' economic and cultural independence, but also helped establish a more settled workforce who grew up learning about sugar production. In addition, acts of resistance were embedded in and shaped by local hierarchies of race, ethnicity, and gender.

As the influence of anti-Haitian ideology grew, *batey* residents with no discernible Haitian heritage were often able to procure better homes, provision plots, and jobs. Seasonal migrants from Haiti frequently had the most limited claims to space within *bateyes* and therefore were situated at the bottom of local hierarchies. Over the course of the mid-twentieth century, the possession of documentation increasingly divided access to resources inside *bateyes*, as those without legal documents were more vulnerable to coercion and isolation. Finally, since women were seldom recognized as employees of the sugar company they were only officially allowed access to company barracks and land through a male child or partner. Steve Pile writes, "While there are different forms of control that work through distinct geographies, geographies of resistance do not necessarily...mirror geographies of domination, as an upside-down or back-to-front or face-down map of the world."¹⁹ *Batey* residents did not simply react to oppressive geographies; they worked to create spaces where they could build communities and

Sugar Industry, 1910-1934" in *Identity and Struggle at the Margins of the Nation-State: The Laboring People of Central America and the Hispanic Caribbean* ed. Aviva Chomsky and Aldo Lauria-Santiago (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 265, 277-280.

¹⁹ Steve Pile and Michael Keith ed., *Geographies of Resistance* (London: Routledge, 1997), 2.

sustain forms of independence that were significant to them. In doing so, they at times opposed domination and at times were complicit in reproducing it.

The historiography on *bateyes* is fragmentary. As one of the most important industries in the Dominican Republic, sugar has attracted the attention of historians, some of whom have examined how labor was recruited and controlled.²⁰ Their studies have provided invaluable information about the structure of the industry at different historical conjunctures and how it recruited and attempted to control its workforce. Research into historical forms of worker resistance has generally focused on labor unions, which typically excluded Haitian cane cutters.²¹ The assumption, either implicit or explicit, is that because *batey* residents were unable to formally organize, their impact on the sugar industry was minimal. Martin Murphy writes, “The maintenance of the status quo in the sugar industry...necessitates the superexploitation of the Haitian workers and the restriction of their possibilities for effective, corporate organization to remedy their plight.”²²

While plantation workers did often face extreme forms of exploitation that prevented them from formally unionizing, my research reveals that they found others

²⁰ Murphy, *Dominican Sugar Plantations*; Michael R. Hall, *Sugar and Power in the Dominican Republic: Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the Trujillos* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000); Orlando Inoa, *Azúcar: árabes, cocolos y haitianos* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Editora Cole, 1999); César J. Ayala, *American Sugar Kingdom: The Plantation Economy of the Spanish Caribbean, 1898-1934* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999.)

²¹ Michiel Baud, “Sugar and Unfree Labour: Reflections on Labour Control in the Dominican Republic, 1870-1935,” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 19, no. 2 (1992): 301-325; Rosario Espinal, “The Dominican Working Class: Labour Control under Trujillo and After” in *Labour in the Caribbean* ed Malcolm Cross and Gad Heuman (London: Macmillan Caribbean, 1988); Roberto Cassá, *Movimiento Obrero y Lucha Socialista en la República Dominicana*. (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Fundación Cultural Dominicana, 1990.)

²² Murphy, *Dominican Sugar Plantations*, 155.

ways to mobilize and negotiate with sugar company officials. Therefore, focusing exclusively on unionization does little to illuminate the experiences of those who lived and worked on plantations. The power of sugar companies and the state has also often been taken for granted. Michiel Baud writes, “[during the harvest] no other rule existed than that of the *ingenio*, which functioned as an authoritarian state where executive power and jurisdiction were in the hands of a small group of managers.”²³ Yet, the power of sugar companies could not be absolutely enforced, and management had to rely on *batey* moral economies to keep relative calm on the plantation. This necessitated company authorities recognizing and respecting rights that residents perceived as inalienable. In addition, studies of the sugar industry have tended to focus on the early twentieth century or Trujillo’s domination over the industry, there has been very little written about immigration policy and worker control under the state sugar company. This period is critical for understanding the retraction of Haitian-Dominican citizenship in the twenty-first century.

Since human rights abuses in *bateyes* began to gain international notoriety beginning in the 1980s, a number of important anthropological and sociological studies of Haitians in the sugar industry have been published.²⁴ Some of these works have

²³ Michiel Baud, “Sugar and Unfree Labour”, 212.

²⁴ Franc Báez Evertsz, *Braceros haitianos en la República Dominicana* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Instituto Dominicano de Investigaciones Sociales, 1986); José Manuel Madruga, *Azúcar y haitianos en la República Dominicana* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Ediciones MSC, 1986); Frank Moya Pons, *El batey: estudio socioeconómico de los bateyes del consejo estatal del azúcar* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Fondo para el Avance de las Ciencias Sociales, 1986); Samuel Martínez, *Peripheral Migrants: Haitians and Dominican Republic Sugar Plantations* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995); Laurel Fletcher and Timothy Miller, “New perspectives on old patterns: forced migration of Haitians in the Dominican Republic,” *Journal Of Ethnic & Migration Studies* 30, no. 4 (July 2004): 659-679; Bridget Wooding, “Contesting Discrimination and Statelessness in the Dominican Republic,” *Forced Migration Review* 32 (2009): 23-5; David Simmons, “Structural Violence as Social Practice: Haitian Agricultural Workers, Anti-Haitianism, and Health in the Dominican Republic,” *Human Organization* 69, no. 1 (2010): 10-18.

explored elements of the history of *batey* communities in order to elucidate the roots of contemporary injustices. Importantly, this research details how both the Dominican and Haitian governments increasingly attempted to control and profit from immigration, and the negative impact this had on plantation residents. Samuel Martínez writes that over the course of the twentieth century, “processes of state formation in both [Haiti and the Dominican Republic] are perhaps equally to blame for launching a spiral of coercion against *braceros*.”²⁵ As discriminatory policies created a growing stateless population, especially following the 2013 ruling by the Dominican Constitutional Tribunal which stated that children born to workers employed in the sugar industry after 1929 were not eligible for citizenship, international organizations, non-profits, journalists, and human rights activists have taken increased interest in this issue.²⁶ Works dedicated to documenting human rights abuses in order to instigate policy changes have documented how the history of state immigration policy has contributed to the human rights abuses many Haitian-Dominicans experience today.

Yet, there has been no research that traces the interconnected histories of *batey* communities, the sugar industry, and anti-Haitian immigration policies over the course of the twentieth century. This is important for several reasons. First of all, many reports from journalists and advocacy organizations on Haitian-Dominican communities focus

²⁵ Samuel Martínez, “From Hidden Hand to Heavy Hand: Sugar, the State, and Migrant Labor in Haiti and the Dominican Republic,” *Latin American Research Review* 34, no. 1 (1999): 80.

²⁶ Sarah A. DeCosse, *Expulsions of Haitians and Dominico-Haitians from the Dominican Republic* (New York: Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, 1991); Human Rights Watch, *Illegal People*; Bridget Wooding and Richard Moseley-Williams, *Needed But Unwanted: Haitian Immigrants and their Descendants in the Dominican Republic* (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 2004); Human Rights Watch, *We Are Dominican: Arbitrary Deprivation of Nationality in the Dominican Republic* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2015); Jonathan M. Katz, “The Dominican Time Bomb,” *The New York Times*, July 2, 2015; Christopher Sabatini and Natasha Zaretsky, “Stateless in Santo Domingo: The Politics of Citizenship in the Dominican Republic,” *Foreign Affairs*, July 9, 2015.

on the poor living conditions and mistreatment suffered by their inhabitants. As this dissertation will illustrate, *bateyes* have always been difficult places to live, and their residents have experienced violence, coercion, and even captivity. Focusing on human rights abuses can be useful for mobilizing international observers to action. However, this emphasis on documenting hardships can flatten the experiences of Haitian-Dominicans. *Batey* communities, while oppressed, were not completely powerless. Residents worked hard to defend crucial freedoms, even if at times they did so with limited success. While immigrants and their children saw their access to documentation eroded over the course of the twentieth century, they found ways to assert their belonging in the Dominican Republic. By examining how residents struggled with sugar companies and the state for use of space, we can see how they actively participated in establishing rules of conduct within the *bateyes*, and were not simply acted upon by outside forces. In addition, residents used claims to space as a platform for demanding recognition in ways often overlooked by contemporary accounts of Haitian-Dominican communities.

Some reporting on the Dominican Republic implicitly treats anti-Haitianism and the experiences of Haitian workers in the sugar industry as exceptional, the product of an unprecedented blood feud between two antagonistic nations occupying a small island. However, *bateyes* are part of a larger regional history. During the early twentieth century migrants from Haiti, Puerto Rico, the Lesser Antilles, Jamaica, Barbados and other Caribbean islands circulated throughout the region in search of work in growing export enclaves. Imputing racial otherness onto these immigrant groups, local elites in Cuba, Honduras, Costa Rica, and Guatemala, among other places, worried both about the impact of immigrant populations and the growing power of North American owned

businesses that often employed these workers.²⁷ During this key moment in which Latin American elites were searching to define their national identity in relation to growing U.S. hegemony in the region, black migrants provided a foil for newly articulated national myths of whiteness or *mestizaje*.²⁸ Worried about racial contamination, governments attempted to limit the citizenship rights of immigrants and their children. Yet, by the latter half of the twentieth century the situation of Haitians in the Dominican Republic stood apart as one of the most extreme examples of racism and xenophobia in the region. This history is therefore an important case study for intra-regional migration in Latin America, investigating how immigration to an export enclave eventually led to a major statelessness crisis.

Beyond Latin America, many countries have attempted to exploit the labor of a migrant population identified as racially or ethnically “other” while attempting to find ways to isolate them and deny them citizenship. Following World War II, Turks in Germany, Indians in the Gulf States, and Mexicans in the United States were all part of similar state schemes. At the same time, immigrant communities have confounded

²⁷ Philippe Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work: Divided Labor on a Central American Banana Plantation* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989); Lara Putnam, *The Company They Kept: Migrants and the Politics of Gender in Caribbean Costa Rica* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Glenn Chambers, *Race, Nation, and West Indian Immigration to Honduras* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010); Darío A. Euraque, *Reinterpreting the Banana Republic: Region and State in Honduras, 1870-1972* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Frederick Douglass Opie, *Black Labor Migration in Caribbean Guatemala, 1882-1923* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2009); Aviva Chomsky, *West Indian Workers and the United Fruit Company in Costa Rica, 1870-1940* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996.)

²⁸ Darío A. Euraque writes, “the economic ascendancy of a region heavily reliant on the labor of mulatto and black populations... was viewed as a “menace” to the Indian/Spanish national identity promoted in the 1920s.” “The Threat of Blackness to the Mestizo Nation: Race and Ethnicity in the Honduran Banana Economy, 1920s and 1930s” in *Banana Wars: Power, Production, and History in the Americas* ed. Steve Striffler and Mark Moberg (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 247.

government plans to keep them separate from the nation while exploiting their labor.²⁹

My dissertation contributes to this literature by analyzing how the Dominican government sought to associate Haitians with particular spaces in the country, and in doing so changed definitions of citizenship. By isolating Haitians first through extra-legal coercion and later with military force, the Dominican government linked Haitian identity to sugar labor and thus limited Haitian-Dominicans' claims to national territory beyond the plantation. In addition, I provide important analysis of the fraught intersections between race and birthright citizenship. The Dominican state is not alone in its desire to retroactively change birthright citizenship to only apply to the children of certain "desirable" migrants. As I write this, a Texas judge has ruled that officials can legally deny birth certificates to the children of undocumented immigrants, mostly from Mexico.³⁰ Again, while the Dominican Republic is one of the more extreme examples of a nation attempting to roll back birthright citizenship for racially motivated reasons, it is unfortunately part of a larger trend.

Finally, this study is important because right-wing nationalists and their supporters in the Dominican government have attempted to rewrite history in order to justify their attempts to deny citizenship to the children of Haitian immigrants. They argue children born to Haitian laborers were never considered citizens, and the current government is only enforcing the law, not retroactively stripping citizenship rights. My dissertation proves that this is categorically not the case. Dominicans of Haitian descent

²⁹ Natalia Molina, "'In a Race All Their Own': The Quest to Make Mexicans Ineligible for U.S. Citizenship," *Pacific Historical Review* 79 no. 2 (May 2010):167-201; Neha Vora, *Impossible Citizens: Dubai's Indian Diaspora* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013); Zahra R. Babar, "The Cost of Belonging: Citizenship Construction in the State of Qatar" *The Middle East Journal* 68, no. 3 (Summer, 2014): 403-420.

³⁰ Molly Hennessy-Fiske, "Judge: Texas can deny birth certificates for U.S.-born children of some immigrants" *Los Angeles Times*, October 16, 2015.

were legally considered citizens until the late 1970s. However, the government's pursuit of anti-Haitian nationalism and the increased reliance on Haitian labor eventually led some officials to view Haitian-Dominican citizenship as a major threat. In addition, as the legality of Haitian immigrants has been increasingly determined only by residence on a plantation, immigrants were not provided with documents and therefore have had a difficult time proving their children were born in the country. This study therefore provides new and critical analysis explaining how the current crisis in the Dominican Republic developed.

Some supporters of recent attempts to deport Haitian-Dominicans argue that Dominicans and Haitians cannot coexist, and that this is born out by the island's history. This study builds upon other important works that have demonstrated that anti-Haitian nationalism only gained widespread acceptance under Rafael Trujillo, who used it as a tool to extend his control over the country.³¹ I illuminate the widespread cooperation between Haitians and Dominicans prior to the Trujillo dictatorship, and the grassroots resistance—including on the part of local officials in the 1930s and 1940s—to government attempts to isolate Haitians on plantations. The history of *batey* communities not only deepens our understanding of the lives of those who produced one of the Dominican Republic's most economically important commodities, but also elucidates the complicated connections between plantation agriculture, migration, and conceptions of identity and citizenship in Latin American and across the globe.

³¹ Derby, "Haitians, Magic, and Money"; Turits, "A World Destroyed, A Nation Imposed"; Anne Eller, "'All would be equal in the effort': Santo Domingo's 'Italian Revolution', Independence, and Haiti, 1809-1822," *Journal of Early American History* 1 (2011): 105-141.

This dissertation combines archival, ethnographic, and oral-historical research, enabling me both to chart larger political, social, and economic changes, and to investigate how individuals responded to and impacted these historical trajectories. I conducted most of my archival research in the Archivo General de la Nación in Santo Domingo, which has undergone a major reorganization within the past several years thanks to a significant increase in government funding. This meant that I had access to newly available collections. I was one of the first researchers to view the recently opened collection from the Office of the President, which spans 1950 to 2000 and includes material from the presidency of Rafael Trujillo and his protégée Joaquín Balaguer. Correspondence between the Office of the President and numerous government offices and agencies reveal changing policies towards Haitian immigrants, as well as information about relationships with sugar companies and the Haitian state. These communications also document the government's responses to conflicts on plantations, especially between *batey* residents and sugar company officials. In this collection I uncovered previously classified documents that reveal policies designed to isolate Haitian-Dominicans and deny them their legal citizenship rights, something that the Dominican government continues to deny. In addition, I located critical materials in collections from multiple national departments and provincial governments, which contain weekly police reports from plantations, letters from community members protesting plantation expansion and anti-Haitian policies, and reports from immigration officials. These documents provide invaluable information about daily life on plantations, the individual experiences of

migrants, how they advocated for certain protections and rights, and the interventions of local allies.

I also conducted research at the U.S. National Archives, which holds materials from the occupations of the Dominican Republic and Haiti, as well as information about conflicts between American sugar plantation management and the Dominican government. In addition, I examined the papers of the Canadian-owned Ozama sugar plantation. This collection contains correspondence between Canadian managers in the Dominican Republic and company headquarters during their operating period from 1944-1955. Finally, the cultural anthropologist Samuel Martínez conducted two years of fieldwork during the mid-1980s in the same *batey* where I carried out research and graciously shared some of his original field notes with me, which have proved invaluable for contextualizing the community's local history.

After conducting six months of archival research in the *Archivo General de la Nación* I left the capital of Santo Domingo for Batey Monte Coca, where I resided from January to June of 2013. Monte Coca is a “head” *batey* on the Consuelo sugar plantation in the region of San Pedro de Macorís. It is home to about 500 residents of Dominican and Haitian descent, and is surrounded by several smaller *bateyes* where I also conducted research. When I began living full-time in the *batey* I was forced to re-conceptualize the trajectory of my project. The state sugar company that previously owned Monte Coca was privatized in 1998, and during the harvest season when I lived there a Guatemalan company was renting the fields surrounding the *batey*. The topic on everyone's mind was the new company's abusive practices, especially their destruction of some provision plots. The people I spoke to differentiated between provision grounds that residents

sometimes created in sugar fields while they lay fallow, and areas “*donde nunca habia caña antes*,” or where there has never been sugarcane before. While they considered the destruction of plots created in sugarcane fields to be unfortunate, residents admitted it was morally acceptable for the company to replant these areas with sugarcane. However, many were incensed that the new company had destroyed larger provision grounds that had been in Monte Coca families for generations. Partially as a result, the plantation was plagued with unauthorized fires the entire time I resided there, which posed a significant threat to company equipment and capital investment.

At first I was confused during my initial conversations that many spoke nostalgically about the state sugar company, while often also describing abusive practices they had witnessed or experienced. However, I soon realized that residents were frustrated that their longstanding rights to space were no longer respected. Community historical memory distinguished between spaces that belonged to the company and spaces that belonged to residents. Under state ownership, these tenure rights could be defended through the many clientilistic ties that linked residents to the company. In the absence of these ties and without recourse to union representation, many residents feel angry and betrayed. My time living in Monte Coca allowed me to better understand how residents defined economic and cultural freedom, and how these definitions were closely tied to their ability to use the space of the *batey* and company and state recognition of those rights.

During the first three months of my stay in Monte Coca I worked on building my relationships with community members. I spent extensive time with residents in their *conucos*, or small provision grounds, learning about cultivation practices. After three

months I began conducting recorded interviews. During my initial stage of fieldwork I determined that a life history interview format helped to spark my informants' memories and allowed me to order those memories in historical time. My informal conversations during the first three months of my stay, and my initial archival research, helped me develop fruitful lines of questioning. In the course of these conversations I asked interviewees about their experiences working on the sugar plantation, their interactions with plantation management, their relationships with other community members and their shifting claims to homes and provision grounds. Finally, I asked them about their ethnic and national identifications, their immigration status, and their interactions with the Dominican state. The majority of my interviewees spoke both Spanish and Kreyòl and during most interviews we switched back and forth between the two languages. I found that some topics, like peasant agriculture in Haiti and Haitian religious practices, were better discussed in Kreyòl, often because of more precise terminology in that language. Because many interviewees did not possess documentation, and entered the country clandestinely, I have changed the names of all informants and have removed any potential identifying information.

The experience of living within a *batey*, combined with archival research that provided a national view of changing policies toward immigrants, were critical for my analysis of Haitian-Dominican communities. Working across disciplines has allowed me to chart larger historical changes, while at the same time carefully illuminating how residents understood oppression and resistance. Following the completion of my interviews I returned to Santo Domingo to conduct another nine months of archival research. I reentered the archives with new ideas about how *batey* residents viewed

freedom and justice, and this allowed me to better search for evidence of local moral economies, and how they impacted the policies and actions of sugar companies and the state.

My dissertation is comprised of five chronological chapters that track key changes in *batey* communities, the sugar industry, and state policies towards plantation residents. I examine the period between 1915 and 1990 because these dates roughly mark the rise and fall of large-scale Haitian migration to sugar plantations. During this span of time plantations transformed from areas subject to only limited company and state control to militarized zones in which the Army and National Police forced people to work and prevented them from leaving. However, during the same period residents expanded their rights to occupy sugar company homes and cultivate land within *bateyes*. These changes reflected major ideological shifts in the Dominican Republic during this period. As anti-Haitianism became an important component of Dominican nationalism, it also came to underwrite economic policy. Anti-Haitianism justified isolating Haitian immigrants on plantations and forcing them to cut sugarcane. As the Dominican Republic became more economically dependent on the sugar industry, Haitian identity was increasingly publicly linked to sugar labor.

The first chapter focuses on the time period from 1915 to 1930 and analyzes how the first generations of *batey* residents took advantage of tenuous state and plantation control to establish peasant institutions on plantation land. During the U.S. occupation, from 1916 to 1924, the eastern sugar producing provinces were the center of a large anti-occupation guerrilla movement that prevented the easy policing of *batey* residents. During this period Dominican and Haitian plantation residents were often able to employ

direct threats and violence against company officials if they felt their rights were violated. They used this power to claim space in which to continue peasant cultivation and engage in prohibited leisure and religious practices. While by the mid-1920s the guerrillas were for the most part defeated and state power in eastern rural regions began to grow, plantations were forced to continue to recognize some claims to space or face massive resistance from its workforce.

In 1930 Rafael Trujillo, head of the U.S.-organized *Guardia Nacional*, took over the presidency following a coup he helped engineer. Chapter two focuses on the period from his seizure of power until the mid-point of his dictatorship, 1945, during which time the sugar industry remained in North American hands. In order to expand his power and further integrate the Dominican Republic into the global economy, Trujillo began to abolish usufruct and communal land rights that had long predominated in peasant communities. Yet, in sugar producing areas there was not enough open land to allow for the distribution of formal titles. As a consequence, the regime was forced to support informal claims on the part of workers to plantation territory. The government also attempted to control people's mobility by forcing them to carry government documentation. As Trujillo worked to extend his authority over the Dominican Republic, he began to question whether the country's Haitian-Dominican communities would be loyal to him. The government struggled to surveil and deport Haitian immigrants while facing opposition from local officials. I argue that this may have contributed to his decision to order a massacre of Haitians living on the border in 1937. Because of the economic importance of sugar, the Trujillo regime could not employ state violence on plantations, and instead began to quietly employ extra-legal coercion to force Haitians in

the country onto *bateyes*, and to link Haitian identity inextricably with cutting sugarcane. However, in implementing such policies, government officials again faced resistance from local communities. In addition, the children of Haitian immigrants were able to use the state's legal apparatus — created to surveil residents by documenting them — as an avenue to claim citizenship.

The third chapter begins in 1945 when Trujillo started strong-arming plantation owners into selling their land to him. As sugar prices swelled following the disruption of sugar beet production due to World War II, the dictator became increasingly obsessed with taking control of the profitable sugar industry. By the time of his assassination in 1961, all but three of the sixteen sugar plantations in the Dominican Republic formed part of his personal agro-industrial empire. In order to force North American owners to sell, Trujillo established state control over worker recruitment, and beginning in 1952 the Haitian and Dominican heads of state oversaw the contracting of workers. In this chapter I also begin to incorporate the case study of Monte Coca, weaving its local history into the larger historical trends unearthed through my archival research. I analyze how *batey* residents' access to plantation land increased under Trujillo's ownership, and how their claims to space gained greater official recognition. The Trujillo government began responding directly to complaints from *bateyes* when local moral codes were violated, and often removed unpopular managers and *guarda campestre* agents. Residents therefore used local claims to land and homes as a way to demand government recognition of their communities. While the extension of land rights was important to *batey* residents, under Trujillo's ownership sugar company management also began incorporating informal land rights into strategies of labor control. By protecting residents'

cultivation plots, the company could better ensure a stable workforce tied to a particular plantation.

Chapter four examines the sugar industry following Trujillo's assassination in 1961, during which time his plantations were organized into a state company. Under state control, clientelistic ties increasingly ordered life in the *bateyes* and mediated how inhabitants could claim and transfer homes and provision grounds. Following the removal of Trujillo's strict and personalized power, many conservative government officials grew increasingly anxious about the Haitian and Haitian-descended population in the Dominican Republic. The government began employing military force to further segregate Haitian migrants and Haitian-Dominicans on plantations. At the beginning of each sugarcane harvest the Army and National Police would search the country for Haitians and relocate them to plantations involuntarily, regardless of their documentation status. Thus, the legality of Haitian immigrants increasingly became linked to location and occupation. As *batey* residents lost rights to territory outside the plantation, they responded by attempting to preserve control over their homes and cultivation plots. They continued to appeal to the government to protect their claim to land and property, thus establishing their communities as part of Dominican territory. However, established residents, and frequently Dominican residents, benefited the most from cultivation and ranching rights while seasonal migrants benefited the least and were the ones subject to government coercion and violence.

The last chapter begins in 1976 when Balaguer asked the heads of major government agencies to search for legal justification to deny citizenship to Dominicans of Haitian descent. By the mid-1980s the sugar industry began to fail as a result of

decreasing prices and widespread corruption in the state company, which paid wages irregularly and used military force to control workers. In response, residents turned to collective resistance strategies and strikes, sugarcane fires, and violent mobilizations plagued sugar plantations. As it became more difficult to isolate residents on plantations, the Dominican government became increasingly intent on denying citizenship rights to Haitian-Dominicans, eventually leading to the growth of a large stateless population. Haitian-Dominicans, however, articulated identities that challenged the government's conception of "Dominican-ness," and claimed citizenship rights even when legally denied them. Residents created a new category of "Haitian from here" to explain the identity of those born to Haitian parents, and in doing so expressed an alternative way of understanding birthright citizenship.

Most studies of Haitian immigrants in the Dominican sugar industry begin where this one ends. During the 1990s the state sugar company became less and less profitable, eventually leading to privatization and the closure of numerous plantations. There were fewer jobs for *batey* residents, but they also feared leaving plantations because they lacked documentation. The government began periodically staging mass deportations of Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent. In addition, children born to Haitian immigrants, or even to Haitian-Dominicans, not only struggled to obtain documentation in the first place, but when they went to renew their documents could also have them confiscated. The current crisis is rooted in a long history of isolation and oppression. Over the course of the twentieth century the Dominican government has attempted to utilize Haitian labor to produce enormous profits, while at the same time trying to segregate sugar plantations and their inhabitants outside the bounds of the nation's

imagined community. However, residents have responded with creativity and resourcefulness by cultivating their own definitions of freedom and citizenship and fundamentally shaping the history of the Dominican Republic.



Figure 4: Sugarcane leaving Batey Monte Coca, June 2013. Photo by Rebecca Zilberstein.

Chapter One

Shaping the Cane Fields: Community Formation and Spatial Politics, 1915-1930

In April 1928 the *guarda campestre*, or rural police, on the Santa Fé sugar plantation in the eastern Dominican Republic found one cow and two calves grazing in a sugarcane field. Later that same day they came across Pablo Maldonado, a local resident, in an adjacent field leading another cow and carrying bundles of cut cane. Maldonado was sent to the closest police station for stealing sugarcane and allowing his animal to damage the cane field. However, it was not only the human population of the plantation who were subject to this surveillance. The animals found on their own were also sent to the police station, where they would remain until their owners paid a fine to secure their release.³² Much of the *guarda campestre*'s days were spent like this: patrolling the plantation's vast sugarcane fields for human and animal interlopers. Although plantations were designed solely for commercial monoculture, displaced Dominican peasants and Haitian migrants utilized company land to raise animals, cultivate food staples, and create homes. By making and defending claims to plantation space, residents established alternative forms of land management that sugar companies were often forced to recognize. Through individual and at times collective acts of resistance, residents challenged companies' transformation of sugar producing regions and left an indelible physical impact on Dominican sugar plantations.

This chapter explores the transformation of sugar-producing regions in the Dominican Republic from sparsely populated peasant communities to commercial agriculture enclaves inhabited by large numbers of migrants from Haiti and their descendants. Prior to the ascendancy of sugar companies, Dominican peasants raised

³² Gobernación del Seibo, 1925 Legajo 52, AGN.

animals on communally held land and had usufruct rights to their cultivation plots. Many lost these long-standing rights after foreign plantation management, Dominican government officials, and U.S. occupation forces pushed to change property laws and made it easier for sugar companies to acquire large swaths of land. Some displaced Dominican peasants moved to *bateyes*, or plantation-built communities within the sugar fields, where they joined a newly arrived migrant population from Haiti. While residents relied on wage work for survival, both groups' strong Afro-Caribbean peasant roots shaped how the *bateyes* developed. Over the course of the 1920s these fledgling Haitian-Dominican communities drew on Afro-Caribbean peasant practices to assert their right to territory on the plantation and to oppose management and state attempts to control them.

In 1915 the Dominican Republic was a country divided between a small, European descendant elite and a large African descendant peasantry. Central state control did not extend far beyond the nation's few urban centers. During this period of tenuous oversight, sugar-producing regions could often be dangerous. Violence was common and rule of law was uncertain. However, this also meant that state surveillance and control over the *bateyes* was weak and residents were able to make and defend claims to plantation land. Residents utilized the physical space of the *batey* to create homes and cultivation plots. They also carved out areas where they would engage in leisure activities and religious practices discouraged or prohibited by authorities. In doing so, residents defied sugar company designs that sought to minimize any human presence and dedicate as much space as possible to sugarcane cultivation. During the U.S. occupation, lasting from 1916-1924, a counter-insurgency campaign helped bring this area under closer state control and by the final years of the occupation surveillance over workers and residents

increased, making *bateyes* more tightly controlled places. Residents could no longer defy state and plantation authorities as openly without risking legal repercussions. However, sugar company management could not simply repossess areas claimed by residents, who had already begun to convert *bateyes* into permanent communities in which they had customary rights to lands and homes. Company authorities therefore had to negotiate with *batey* residents, and often respect their established rights. Informal claims to space were the foundation for the development of multilingual, multicultural, peasant communities and an important tool for survival and resistance for residents of the *bateyes* throughout the twentieth century.

Reconstituted Peasantries and the Reemergence of Sugar on Hispaniola

At different points in their colonial histories both Santo Domingo and Saint-Domingue, which would later become the Dominican Republic and Haiti respectively, boasted profitable sugar industries. Colonial Santo Domingo was the first site of sugar production in the Americas and by 1527 there were twenty-five sugar plantations on the island.³³ Given the decimation of the local Amerindian population following conquest, the Spanish began bringing African slaves to the island a few years before the first sugar mills opened in 1520. Enslaved Africans became the most important source of labor and quickly outnumbered European colonists three to one. However, Santo Domingo's economic success was short lived. By the mid-sixteenth century the Spanish crown had shifted their focus and resources to their mining colonies in Mexico and Peru. While Santo Domingo was still an administrative center, most Spanish economic activity in the

³³ Frank Moya Pons, *The Dominican Republic: A National History* (New Rochell, NY: Hispaniola Books, 1995), 38.

Caribbean moved to Havana and Santo Domingo entered a long period of economic decline.

Facing rampant smuggling by the colony's inhabitants, the Spanish crown ordered the depopulation of contraband centers in the island's north and west. In the absence of Spanish colonists, French squatters began to settle the northwest portion of the Hispaniola and in 1697 the Treaty of Ryswick formally recognized France's possession of the area, known as Saint-Domingue. While the sugar economy disappeared in eastern Hispaniola, over the course of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the western half of the island grew into the most profitable plantation colony in the world. By the eighteenth century Saint-Domingue's brutal plantation system relied on hundreds of thousands of enslaved Africans to produce sugar and other tropical commodities for European consumers.

Although many Dominican intellectuals later lamented this period as one of misery and tragedy, it was not necessarily seen as such by the majority of the colony's population. As the sugar economy collapsed in Santo Domingo many slaves escaped to the interior where land was abundant. While in 1606 the colony contained 9,698 enslaved Africans out of a population of 10,817, by 1681 there were only 1,106 slaves out of a population of 6,312 people, and two-thirds of the colony's free population was of African descent.³⁴ The lack of centralized control in the colony, the ability of enslaved peoples to use extra-legal and legal means to escape enslavement, and the easy access to land gave

³⁴ See Pedro Luis San Miguel, *The Imagined Island: History, Identity, & Utopia in Hispaniola* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Sibylle Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004); Carlos Larrazábal Blanco, *Los negros y la esclavitud en Santo Domingo* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Julio D. Postigo e hijos Editores, 1975), 183-84.

birth to a large and enduring Afro-Caribbean peasantry long before legal emancipation in the nineteenth century.³⁵ Freed or escaped slaves could easily gain usufruct rights to land by creating cultivation plots beyond the reach of colonial authorities.³⁶ Beginning in the eighteenth century some peasants gained legal rights to land under colonial laws that recognized possession if a holder showed “continuous and peaceful occupation of it during a period of ten years.”³⁷ In addition, large tracts of land in the country’s interior were held as *terrenos comuneros*, or common lands, that were used to graze livestock. In the sparsely populated interior, claims to land were seldom challenged and a peasant economy based on free range ranching and small cultivation grew.

This relatively open access to land was a foundation for resistance against central authorities based in the capital city, especially for those who had escaped enslavement. The free population of color easily incorporated escaped slaves into their communities, and openly defied white elites’ racial vision for Dominican society.³⁸ The destruction of the sugar economy, and the fact that many were able to escape enslavement long before legal emancipation, led to fluid definitions of race.³⁹ Factors such as legal status, class, and type of employment intersected with color to form complex racial taxonomies during

³⁵ Richard Lee Turits, *Foundations of Despotism: Peasants, the Trujillo Regime, and Modernity in Dominican History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 33.

³⁶ Julie Franks, “Property Rights and the Commercialization of Land in the Dominican Sugar Zone, 1880-1924,” *Latin American Perspectives* 26, no. 1 (1999): 108.

³⁷ Franks, “Property Rights and the Commercialization of Land,” 109.

³⁸ Turits, *Foundations of Despotism*, 32.

³⁹ Harry Hoetink, “‘Race’ And Color in the Caribbean,” in *Caribbean Contours*, ed. Sidney Mintz and Salley Price (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 60.

the colonial period.⁴⁰ The flexibility of racial classifications in Santo Domingo did not mean that racism did not exist, or that elites were not anxious about the racial makeup of their nation. Pedro Luis San Miguel writes that the political elite viewed “the very racial composition of the country...as...limiting material progress and the advancement of ‘civilization.’”⁴¹

While colonial elites in Santo Domingo may have looked jealously at Saint-Domingue’s economic success, large-scale sugar production eventually came to an end in the western half of Hispaniola as well. In August 1791 slaves in what is now northern Haiti rose up against their masters, burning the cane fields surrounding the rich port city of Cap Français and helping spark a series of wars lasting over twelve years that would culminate first in emancipation, and later the colony’s independence. After the commissioners of the French National Assembly abolished slavery in 1793 the revolutionary general, and former slave, Toussaint Louverture joined the French forces in 1794. As he exerted more control on the colony he attempted to recuperate some of the former riches of Saint-Domingue’s plantation economy, believing that it was the only way to protect the long-term freedom of inhabitants.

In order to ensure the formerly enslaved returned to sugar plantations, Louverture and the French commissioners sought to limit their mobility and access to land. However, the aspirations of newly freed people clashed with these policies. Many had already claimed fallow lands during years of warfare and those laboring on plantations often

⁴⁰ Silvio Torres-Saillant, “The Tribulations of Blackness: Stages in Dominican Racial Identity,” *Latin American Perspectives* 25, no. 3 (1998): 135; Ginetta E. B. Candelario, *Black Behind the Ears: Dominican Racial Identity from Museums to Beauty Shops* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 6-8.

⁴¹ Pedro Luis San Miguel, *The Imagined Island: History, Identity, & Utopia in Hispaniola* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 23.

refused to work as much as they were ordered, preferring to spend their time cultivating their own garden plots.⁴² Following independence from France in 1804, several of Haiti's subsequent heads of state attempted to continue the French colonial government's policy of limiting rural inhabitants' mobility and right to own land. However, new Haitian citizens continued to enact what freedom meant for them: independence through self-sufficient agriculture. Rural residents were able to claim their own land in three main ways: they informally took possession of land through squatting, purchased their own land, or were awarded plots as payment for their military service.⁴³ Alexandre Pétion, who ruled the southern half of a divided Haiti from 1806 to 1818, changed previous laws to make land concessions easier and made distribution of small plots an important component of his political power, thus increasing the number of small-scale cultivators in that region.⁴⁴

By organizing social, spiritual, and family life around the cultivation and protection of land, Haitian peasants were able to resist the re-imposition of plantation agriculture, even in the face of continuing attempts to limit their economic freedom. Extended families worked land together and communities created mutual aid practices that supported an economy and culture based on independent cultivation. Members of extended and multi-generational families often lived together on a plot of communally

⁴² Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 186.

⁴³ Johnhenry Gonzalez, "The War on Sugar: Forced Labor, Commodity Production and the Origins of the Haitian Peasantry, 1791—1843," (Ph.D. diss, The University of Chicago, 2012), 121.

⁴⁴ For more on land tenure under Pétion see Drexel G. Woodson, *Tout Mounn Se Mounn, Men Tout Mounn Pa Menm: Micro-level Sociocultural Aspects of Land Tenure in a Northern Haitian Locality* (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1990.)

held land, and shared agricultural and domestic labor.⁴⁵ Haitian peasant families therefore organized space to serve their economic, social, and spiritual needs in ways that contrasted with their experience of slavery.⁴⁶ By the mid-nineteenth century any sugar produced in Haiti was for local consumption and the majority of citizens were small-scale farmers, producing coffee, dyewoods, and lumber for export, and food crops for their own consumption.⁴⁷

Before the turn of the twentieth century the Afro-Caribbean peasantries in both Haiti and the Dominican Republic were able to gain access to land and create economies based on self-sufficient agriculture. Limited roads and means of communication meant that communities in the center of the island had limited ties to the capitals of either country.⁴⁸ Most people made their living through independent agriculture and ranching, and small-scale trading. Cross-border networks that facilitated the sale of cattle, rum, and tobacco sustained many local economies in the Dominican Republic and Haitian gourdes circulated widely.⁴⁹ In a region defined by large plantations and enslaved labor, the peasants of Hispaniola built what Haitian sociologist Jean Casimir has termed a “counter

⁴⁵ This type of familial organization is known as a *lakou*, which means yard in Kreyòl. During its heyday in the nineteenth century a typical *lakou* was comprised of several nuclear families living and working together on around forty acres of land. In addition to sharing agricultural labor, members of the *lakou* also shared domestic duties, like cooking or caring for children. See Yanique M. Edmond, Suzanne M. Randolph and Guylaine L. Richard, “The *lakou* System: A Cultural, Ecological Analysis of Mothering in Rural Haiti,” *Journal of Pan African Studies* 2, no. 1 (2007): 19-31. Communal work practices like the *Konbit* allowed peasants to pool labor for difficult tasks, like clearing, planting or harvesting a field. Community members contribute labor to their neighbors’ farms with the understanding that they too will host the *konbit* when they are in need of workers. See Jennie M. Smith, *When the Hands Are Many* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001.)

⁴⁶ Rémy Bastien, *Le paysan haitien et sa famille: vallée de Marbial* (Paris: A.C.C.T., 1985), 180.

⁴⁷ González, “The War on Sugar,” 22.

⁴⁸ Pedro Luis San Miguel and Phillip Berryman, “Peasant Resistance to State Demands in the Cibao during the U.S. Occupation,” *Latin American Perspectives* 22, no. 3 (1995): 42.

⁴⁹ Jan Lundius and Mats Lundhal, *Peasants and Religion: a Socioeconomic Study of Dios Olivorio and the Palma Sola Movement in the Dominican Republic* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 459.

plantation.”⁵⁰ Former slaves and their descendants in Hispaniola resisted elite control by prioritizing cultural and economic independence over wage labor. Sidney Mintz writes that the actions of these “reconstituted” peasantries “represent *a mode of response* to the plantation system and its connotations, and *a mode of resistance* to imposed styles of life.”⁵¹ The peasants of Hispaniola created innovative strategies of land management that helped guarantee their economic and cultural freedom. Peasant practices therefore had political content: they demonstrated a world vision that rejected the plantation system and embraced independence through land holding and self-sufficient agriculture.

However, by the turn of the twentieth century sugar production began to grow again on Hispaniola and many Haitian and Dominican peasants were forced to turn to plantation wage labor for survival. During the 1870s sugar planters who fled during Cuba’s independence struggles arrived in the Dominican Republic bringing with them capital and expertise, and set about creating modern, steam-powered sugar mills.⁵² By the 1880s there were thirty sugar mills in the eastern region of the country. When a drop in sugar prices disrupted world markets in 1884, United States corporations used the economic crisis to purchase smaller plantations and consolidate their holdings.⁵³ This sudden growth of an export enclave brought about rapid changes in Dominican society.

When sugar entrepreneurs arrived in the eastern Dominican Republic in the nineteenth

⁵⁰ Jean Casimir, *The Caribbean: One and Divisible* (Santiago, Chile: United Nations, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 1992), 78.

⁵¹ (Emphasis original) Sidney Wilfred Mintz, *Caribbean Transformations* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 113.

⁵² Bruce Calder, *The Impact of Intervention: The Dominican Republic during the U.S. Occupation of 1916-1924* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984), 92.

⁵³ Michiel Baud, “The Struggle for Autonomy: Peasant Resistance to Capitalism in the Dominican Republic: 1870-1924,” in *Labour in the Caribbean: From Emancipation to Independence*, ed. Malcom Cross and Gad Heuman (London: Macmillan Caribbean, 1988), 128.

century they found wide swaths of fertile land that they believed was not being used productively. Small peasant communities dotted the landscape, producing subsistence food and little for export. Perhaps most damning in their eyes, private property rights were defined through use, not legal titles, and the government was unable, or unwilling, to protect property rights from peasant encroachment.⁵⁴ Demand for land increased markedly after World War I began in 1914, disrupting established commodity chains and driving up global sugar prices. As the power of U.S. sugar companies increased, they began to survey and partition peasants' *terrenos comuneros* so that they could easily usurp them.⁵⁵

The long-held tenet of local use rights to lands was threatened as sugar plantations and land speculators sought to quickly gain definitive ownership. Additionally, in order to create a more structured labor force the Dominican government passed laws attempting to police rural residents' behaviors, limit open ranching, and criminalize vagrancy.⁵⁶ For peasants who had long maintained usufruct rights to land and experienced little government interference in their lives, these changes came as a shock. While sugar companies saw their plantations as spaces for rational and efficient economic production, their tenuous control over territory made this difficult. The expansion of the sugar industry in part gave rise to groups of armed peasants in the sugar producing East, called *gavilleros*, that attacked and stole from plantations and declared themselves in revolution

⁵⁴ Martin F. Murphy writes, "terrenos comuneros were part of a socially recognized land title-and-ownership system which originated in distant colonial history and was antithetical to the modern capitalist expansion that the Dominican elite and foreign interests of this period wanted for the country." Martin. F. Murphy, *Dominican Sugar Plantations: Production and Foreign Labor Integration* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 20.

⁵⁵ Franks, "Property Rights and the Commercialization of Land," 114.

⁵⁶ April Mayes, *The Mulatto Republic: Class, Race, and Dominican National Identity* (Tallahassee: University Press of Florida, 2014), 39.

against the central government.⁵⁷ Sugar companies, therefore, created their own police forces, called the *guarda campestre*, to protect their holdings from outside threats.⁵⁸ Unable to find enough Dominican workers willing to work, sugar companies recruited immigrants first from the French, Dutch, Danish, and British Lesser Antilles and later from Haiti.

While in the decades following independence Haitian peasants had been able to support themselves through subsistence farming, by the end of the century their economic situations began to deteriorate. As the population of Haiti grew and erosion reduced arable land, traditional land holdings were increasingly subdivided.⁵⁹ By the early twentieth century peasants were increasingly forced to pursue wage labor to support their families, traveling to the Dominican Republic or Cuba to work on sugar plantations where wages were higher than in Haiti. The increasing numbers of dark-skinned immigrants from Haiti and the West Indies worried many Dominican elites and stoked their fears about the racial makeup of the Dominican Republic. In 1912 the government passed a law limiting the number of “non-Caucasian” immigrants who could enter the country, although it did little to impact plantation hiring practices.⁶⁰ In addition, the

⁵⁷ Franks, “Property Rights and the Commercialization of Land,” 116.

⁵⁸ Franks, “Property Rights and the Commercialization of Land,” 117. In 1907 the central government nominally incorporated privately employed *guarda campestre* members into the state apparatus by declaring that those nominated for each position had to be approved by the Secretary of Interior and Police. While each plantation’s *guarda campestre* units did collaborate with the Dominican state and local authorities, their primary interest remained protecting plantation land and resources from outside threats. *Gaceta Oficial* No. 1957, December 30, 1908, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

⁵⁹ In the 1820s there had been an estimated twenty people per square kilometer of cultivatable land in Haiti. One hundred years later this number had risen to around seventy. Mats Lundahl, *The Haitian Economy: Man, Land, and Markets* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 73; Franc Báez Evertsz, *Braceros haitianos en la República Dominicana* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Instituto Dominicano de Investigaciones Sociales, 1986), 43.

⁶⁰ Murphy, *Dominican Sugar Plantations*, 39.

unwillingness of Dominican peasants to form a docile labor force led some to conclude that the peasantry prevented the country from modernizing.⁶¹

Growing U.S. hegemony in the Caribbean influenced elite anxieties about the Dominican Republic's economic and political progress. As American business interests in the region expanded, the U.S. government grew increasingly nervous about political instability and growing external debt in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, and took escalating steps to control local politics. In 1905 the U.S. took over Dominican customs houses. American officials targeted what they considered to be symptoms of the country's underdevelopment, including an autonomous peasantry and fluid borderland. In an attempt to increase customs revenues, U.S. military units struggled to clamp down on trade and movement across the border with Haiti while facing widespread opposition from local communities.⁶² In 1915 the U.S. invaded Haiti under the guise of stabilizing the country and ensuring the repayment of foreign loans, beginning an occupation that would last until 1934. Although Haiti was still ruled by a series of local presidents during the occupation, the U.S. controlled much of the country's domestic policy and implemented many changes that accelerated impoverishment in the countryside.⁶³ During this period the government increased taxation on peasants making it even more difficult for them to produce enough agricultural products to support their family and also

⁶¹ Lauren Derby, *The Dictator's Seduction: Politics and Popular Imagination in the Era of Trujillo* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 30; Mayes, *The Mulatto Republic*, 50.

⁶² Ellen D. Tillman, "Militarizing Dollar Diplomacy in the Early Twentieth-Century Dominican Republic: Centralization and Resistance," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 95, no. 2 (2015): 269-297.

⁶³ See Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934* (Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1971.)

requiring them to acquire more cash to pay their tax burden.⁶⁴ In addition, the U.S. demanded the repeal of the long-standing constitutional ban on foreigners owning land in Haiti, leading to corporate land takeovers and the displacement of peasants.⁶⁵ These policies accelerated Haitian immigration to Dominican sugarcane plantations.

In 1916 the U.S. invaded the Dominican Republic, again arguing that political instability and economic mismanagement justified intervention. Unlike in Haiti, American military representatives would rule the country for the duration of the occupation, which lasted until 1924. American authorities worked to destroy peasant guerilla resistance in the East, enforce rural vagrancy laws, and better control the border. This led to resistance from rural residents across the country.⁶⁶ During this period the *gavilleros* that had fought against the growing power of U.S. sugar companies loosely organized to oppose the American occupation. Sugar plantations remained a favorite target of *gavilleros* as they were symbols of foreign control.⁶⁷ Since they were often isolated in the sugarcane fields and far from military outposts, the company stores within *bateyes* proved an excellent source of supplies. In addition, peasants displaced by the

⁶⁴ In their January 1925 intelligence report the Gendarmerie D'Haiti based in Crece la Source Haiti wrote, "Number of inhabitants of the Commune are leaving their land and going to Santo Domingo; it is rumored that the reason the most of them are going is that the prepose [sic] des contributions for this commune, is charging the people a tax higher than the legal rate for the kind of land that they possess, and that the land as a whole is so poor that after they paid their taxes there would be nothing left." Nineteen Company Crece la Source, Haiti "Intelligence Report for Jan 1925) Feb 1, 1925, NARA record group 127.

⁶⁵ In addition, U.S. military officials instituted a system of brutal forced labor. The so-called *corvé* system used for the construction of roads and public works quickly gave rise to a peasant guerrilla opposition force. Because guerrilla fighters were indistinguishable from regular peasants, and insurgents often received help and support from peasants, the U.S. Marine counter-insurgency cut a wide swath of destruction across the countryside disrupting existing social and spatial arrangements. Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti*, 83.

⁶⁶ San Miguel and Berryman, "Peasant Resistance to State Demands in the Cibao"; María Filomena González, *Los Gavilleros 1904-1916* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Archivo General de la Nación, 2008.)

⁶⁷ Julie Franks, "The *Gavilleros* of the East: Social Banditry as Political Practice in the Dominican Sugar Region, 1900–1924," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 8, no. 2 (1995): 161.

sugar industry and poorly paid workers were easy recruits to the *gavillero* forces.⁶⁸ A report from 1918 describes a group of *gavilleros* attacking one *batey*'s bodega and filling up their horses with goods before riding to the next *batey* where they threatened the manager of the company store until he opened it, allowing the group to steal 200 pesos and an assortment of clothes. They then chased down one of the plantation's *guarda campestre*, severely wounding him and killing another plantation employee.⁶⁹ These incidents demonstrate that plantations were hardly the tightly controlled, industrial farms their owners wanted them to be.

The threat posed by *gavilleros* to both the plantations and the U.S. occupation spurred intensified efforts to bring eastern peasants and migrants under the control of the state. The government, and Dominican elites, feared that both groups were a potential hindrance to the Dominican Republic's economic progress. The occupation government worked to better enforce vagrancy laws as they attempted to more closely surveil the "backward" population of the East and turn the region into a modern and productive space. Young men could be arrested if they could not prove they worked on or owned land.⁷⁰ Citizens were required to obtain government permits for simply carrying machetes or having dances.⁷¹ In order to make enforcement possible, the marines carried out a brutal counter-insurgency campaign in the East. Because *gavilleros*, peasants, and sugar workers were often indistinguishable, nearly anyone could be the target of military violence. Despite the initial success of the aforementioned group of *gavilleros*, they were

⁶⁸ Frank, "The Gavilleros of the East," 165.

⁶⁹ Gobernación del Seibo, 1917-1919 Legajo 30, AGN.

⁷⁰ Gobernación del Seibo, 1917-1921 Legajo 21, AGN.

⁷¹ Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís, 1922-1923 Legajo 12, AGN.

killed by a U.S. Marine a month later on the road between the same *bateyes* they had reportedly attacked.⁷²

U.S. occupying forces also saw the state's inability to define proprietorship as evidence of its backwardness and in 1920 issued an executive order to partition any remaining *terrenos comuneros*, effectively making it even easier for sugar companies to lay claim to land or to pressure small land holders into selling.⁷³ In addition, U.S. forces worked hard to stop open ranching, an important component of the peasant economy.⁷⁴ Peasants no longer had the legal right to let their animals graze openly and were often pressured into ceding their cultivation plots to sugar plantations in exchange for modest sums.⁷⁵ Through their military campaign against *gavilleros*, and changes enacted to land tenure laws, the U.S. drastically and fundamentally transformed sugar-producing regions. They imposed their own ideas about how space should be regulated. Despite these ruptures, peasant ideologies of land management and use did not completely disappear. Residents of the East continued to use land and cultivation as important touchstones for defining economic and cultural freedom.

Migration Paths

Displaced local peasants often worked in the sugar industry; yet, the eastern region of the country most affected by land expropriations was sparsely populated and a sufficient labor force never developed. Within a short period of time this area became

⁷² Gobernación del Seibo, 1917-1919 Legajo 30, AGN.

⁷³ Franks, "Property Rights and the Commercialization of Land," 119.

⁷⁴ Turits, *Foundations of Despotism*, 59.

⁷⁵ Gobernación del Seibo, 1917-1921 Legajo 21, AGN; Gobernación del Seibo, 1917-1919 Legajo 30, AGN.

home to a large Haitian population. Haitians began migrating to Dominican sugar plantations at the turn of the century along with West Indian migrants, but their numbers quickly increased following the U.S. invasion of Haiti in 1915.⁷⁶ As plantation management found that Haitian labor could be recruited more cheaply than labor from the Lesser Antilles, Haitian workers gradually became the largest ethnic group on the plantations.⁷⁷ These immigrants were part of larger currents of labor that circulated the Caribbean during this period, as migrants from Haiti and the West Indies searched for work in the growing agricultural export enclaves of the Caribbean and Central America. Like their fellow travelers, Haitians in the Dominican Republic followed diverse routes to sugar plantations, and attempted to find ways to avoid state surveillance that sought to control black immigrants.⁷⁸

During the 1920s the occupation government, and later the Dominican government, issued Haitian migrants temporary residence permits, generally lasting less than a year, and migrants were supposed to reapply if they wished to extend their stay.⁷⁹ However, Haitian migration proved more difficult to monitor than migration from the Lesser Antilles had been.⁸⁰ Migrants did not arrive from Haiti on large steam ships where

⁷⁶ Murphy, *Dominican Sugar Plantations*, 45.

⁷⁷ Murphy, *Dominican Sugar Plantations*, 47.

⁷⁸ Lara Putnam, *The Company They Kept: Migrants and the Politics of Gender in Caribbean Costa Rica, 1870-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Glenn A. Chambers, *Race, Nation, and West Indian Immigration to Honduras, 1890-1940* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010); Aviva Chomsky, *West Indian Workers and the United Fruit Company in Costa Rica, 1870-1940* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996); Frederick Douglass Opie, *Black Labor Migration in Caribbean Guatemala, 1882-1923*. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009); Robert Whitney and Graciela Chailoux Laffita, *Subjects or Citizens: British Caribbean Workers in Cuba, 1900-1960* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013.)

⁷⁹ Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís, 1927 Legajo 48, AGN.

⁸⁰ Murphy, *Dominican Sugar Plantations*, 39.

they could be easily registered as they disembarked. While later in the twentieth century plantations systematically recruited workers in Haiti, during this early period it appears that sugar companies recruited workers once they arrived in the Dominican Republic from Haiti.⁸¹ Haitian migrants entering the Dominican Republic could travel overland, crossing the border and making their way towards the east of the country. Because few roads existed in either country at this time, the overland journey could be difficult and slow and migrants from southern Haiti also traveled to the eastern Dominican Republic in small wooden boats.⁸²

While immigration officials were able to document some migrants when they crossed the border, most were only registered once they arrived on a plantation.⁸³ This worried U.S. occupation officials, as like the Dominican elite they closely associated the Dominican Republic's racial makeup with its potential for political and economic success. In comparison to Haiti, which U.S. officials viewed as decidedly black, the Dominican Republic appeared to hold more hope of becoming "civilized" because of its mixed ancestry.⁸⁴ As one marine stated in 1920, Dominicans were "generally of mixed

⁸¹ The U.S. marines in the Gendarmerie d'Haiti in their weekly intelligence reports often mentioned Cuban sugar companies recruiting in Haiti. However, in all of their discussions of migration to the Dominican Republic that I have read there is no mention of recruiters in Haiti. Gendarmerie d'Haiti 1915-1926 General Correspondence NARA Record Group 127. In addition, correspondence between the Secretary of Agriculture and Migration and sugar plantations also mentions recruiters in the Lesser Antilles but makes no mention of similar recruitment in Haiti. Secretario de Agricultura e Inmigracion, AGN. Beginning in the 1940s under the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo the national government sent naval ships to the Southern coast of Haiti to recruit workers Báez Evertsz, *Braceros Haitianos*, 67.

⁸² Samuel Martínez, *Peripheral Migrants: Haitians and Dominican Republic Sugar Plantations* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 45; Báez Evertsz, *Braceros Haitianos*, 67.

⁸³ Immigration documents were generally filled out on the plantation within the space of one of two days, indicating that most migrants were not registered until they arrived on the plantations. Secretario de Agricultura e Inmigracion, 1926-1928 Legajo 589, AGN.

⁸⁴ Lorgia García-Peña, "Translating *Blackness*: Dominicans Negotiating Race and Belonging," *The Black Scholar* 45, no. 2 (2015): 14.

blood, white blood predominating, as contrasted with Haiti where black predominates.”⁸⁵ Although the occupation government did not attempt to completely stop the entrance of Haitian immigrants working in the sugar industry, officials at times spoke out against the use of Haitian labor.⁸⁶ For example, in 1919 a U.S. Marine sergeant stationed near the border complained to his supervisor, “at present there are about 75 Haitian per day entering the Dominican Republic without passports...on their way to the sugarcane mills. No action is being taken by the Guardia.”⁸⁷ Across the circum-Caribbean elites, influenced by American hegemony in the region, worried that the unhindered entrance of immigrants perceived to be racially inferior would hinder their nation’s progress.⁸⁸

However, even with the help of U.S. forces, many parts of the Dominican Republic remained disconnected from the occupation government, and openly hostile to attempts to exert state control. Haitians could easily move through the bilingual, bicultural communities in border and sugar producing regions. While during this period some elites expressed anti-Haitian and anti-black sentiment, Richard Turits argues there exists little evidence “of such prejudices having any salient or political impact on peasant life.”⁸⁹ Informal migration routes made it easier for Haitian migrants to avoid immigration officials, and many entered the country illegally and stayed following the end of the harvest. Migrants and Dominican peasants defended their right to mobility free

⁸⁵ Quotes in Micah Wright, “An Epidemic of Negrophobia: Blackness and the Legacy of the U.S. Occupation of the Dominican Republic,” *The Black Scholar* 45, no. 2 (2015): 23.

⁸⁶ Calder, *The Impact of Intervention*, 99.

⁸⁷ Secretario de Estado de Agricultura, 1920 Legajo 1A, AGN.

⁸⁸ In his research on West Indian migrants on Honduran banana plantations, Glenn Chambers writes, “nonwhite immigration was considered dangerous and threatened to bring about the expedient degeneration of Honduran society.” *Race, Nation, and West Indian Immigration*, 63.

⁸⁹ Turits, *Foundations of Despotism*, 279 n. 44.

from government surveillance. Although Haitians faced attempts by the national government and local authorities to limit their entry to the Dominican Republic and their mobility once there, they were able to use migrant networks to subvert this control.

In 1920 an assistant to an immigration inspector in the southwestern city of Azua reported that a Haitian man had assembled fifty people, forty of whom were Haitian, to board a boat towards the La Romana plantation in the East. The author of the report claimed that while all of the migrants had been in the country for between one and six months none of them possessed passports or immigration documents. Reportedly unhappy with their earnings in Azua, these workers and their families were drawn by promises of higher wages.⁹⁰ Worker mobility posed a threat to plantations, since it could be used as a negotiation tool for better wages. It also posed a threat to the U.S. occupation government in the Dominican Republic, which was working to increase surveillance on all residents and especially on Haitian immigrants, whose residency in the country could negatively impact its racial makeup.⁹¹ However, relatively recent migrants found fellow countrymen and women with more experience in the Dominican Republic to help them move around the country after arrival. While these networks could help new arrivals find better wages, Haitians who facilitated this movement had a financial stake in persuading new migrants to move, and no doubt at times employed deception and coercion to do so. Plantations employed Haitians or people of Haitian descent to recruit workers elsewhere in the country for a fee. While the Haitian man in Azua promised those he was transporting better wages in La Romana than they were receiving, those promises may

⁹⁰ Secretario de Estado de Agricultura, 1920 Legajo 1A, AGN.

⁹¹ In 1920 the occupation government passed an executive order that demanded “any colored workmen show his permit to enter or remain in this country and if he cannot produce such permit he can be locked up, fined and deported.” Secretario de Estado de Agricultura, 1920 Legajo 1A, AGN.

have been deceptive. Networks helped migrants subvert state and plantation control, but were also not entirely egalitarian.

After entering the country, migrants utilized these transnational networks to obtain immigration documents. For example, in 1919 Haitian migrants were found with fake immigration papers that they had purchased from another Haitian man in an attempt to elude immigration officials.⁹² Entrepreneurial migrants with knowledge of Dominican immigration policies profited from providing fake migration permits: rumors of false permits persistently plagued the Ministry of Immigration and Agriculture during this period. These forged immigration documents could at times help fellow Haitians evade state surveillance, and allowed them to move around the country. Migrants also helped each other obtain legal documents. In 1921 an immigration official recounted to his superior tracking down three Haitian men found to be in violation of immigration law. Upon arriving at the house where they supposedly lived he found another Haitian man who claimed to have no knowledge of the other three. Further interrogation revealed, however, that the resident of the house had allowed these men to give his address to immigration officials in case their request to stay in the country was granted and the permits delivered. The address they gave was in the city of Barahona yet the men actually resided in different *bateyes* surrounding the city.⁹³ These cases demonstrate how Haitian immigrants created networks in the Dominican Republic to aid each other in the face of state limitations on their mobility.

⁹² Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís, 1918-1920 Legajo 16, AGN.

⁹³ Secretaría de Agricultura e Inmigración, 1920-1922 Legajo 1, AGN.

Despite the support of migrant networks, access to documentation was still inequitable. The fact that sugar companies were responsible for providing immigration documents served to isolate certain groups of people. Since companies recruited male laborers, and did not necessarily want to pay taxes for female residents whom they saw as superfluous, women on plantations were less likely to receive documents.⁹⁴ This process also discriminated against Haitians working in other industries besides sugar. Those without documents could face physical danger, and were more prone to coercion from company authorities, corrupt police or government officials, and even regular Dominican citizens. Immigration officials often entered plantations to check if workers were in the country legally and at times became violent with residents, raiding their homes and attacking them if they could not produce their papers.⁹⁵ In the eastern province of San Pedro de Macorís, there were several reported incidents involving Dominicans posing as immigration inspectors and forcing Haitians without documents to pay them “fines.” In 1930 the Secretary of State for the Interior and Police wrote to the governor of San Pedro de Macorís to complain, “Some individuals act as immigration inspectors [and] charge Haitians immigration fees.” As the Secretary pointed out, “this is a dangerous practice that lends itself to fraud and other abuses.”⁹⁶ Although the U.S. military government, and subsequently the Dominican government, made it fairly easy for plantations to obtain

⁹⁴ This is because the number of women who were issued temporary immigration permits on plantations seems to vastly undercount them. Seventeen percent of immigration documents filled out at plantations during the 1920s were for women. However, information about repatriation of Haitians reveals a ratio of forty percent women. Secretaria de Agricultura e Inmigración, 1920-22 Legajo 1, AGN; Eliades Acosta Matos, ed., *La dictadura de Trujillo Documentos 1930-1939, Tomo 1* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Archivo General de la Nación, 2012), 429.

⁹⁵ The city attorney for San Pedro de Macorís wrote the governor of the province in July of 1928 to complain about the actions of several immigration agents, stating that they “gave orders to make arrests, beat workers and enter homes at gunpoint.” Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís, 1926-1929 Legajo 55-59, AGN.

⁹⁶ Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís, 1930 Legajo 14, AGN.

immigration documents for their workers, and migrants found ways to evade government oversight, this still left some without access to documentation and more open to exploitation.

Spatial Politics in the *Batey*

The occupation government, and after 1924 the Dominican government, sought to discourage Haitian migrants from overstaying the harvest and forming communities. Many elite Dominicans viewed the entrance of thousands of Haitian laborers as a “pacific invasion” that could potentially dilute Dominicans’ white, Hispanic heritage.⁹⁷ Plantation administrators, while not discouraging the formation of permanent communities within the plantation, were ambivalent about their presence because of the seasonal nature of sugar labor. When sugarcane matures it has to be cut and processed quickly before it begins to lose sucrose and turn starchy. This requires a huge labor force to cut and haul cane for long periods every day during the four to six month harvest season lasting from fall until spring. Workers would rise before dawn to be transported to the cane field where they would work for up to twelve hours, supervised by company overseers. An insufficient labor force could mean over-mature cane, leading to a huge loss of investment for the company. While plantations required a large number of workers during the harvest, there was less need for them once it ended. Permanent employees, like the *guarda campestre*, overseers, managers, and employees of the sugar mill usually worked year round, and there was some seasonal work cleaning and planting the fields.

⁹⁷ Mayes, *The Mulatto Republic*, 21; Ernesto Sagás, *Race and Politics in the Dominican Republic* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 41.

For the most part, however, there were meager opportunities for employment during the so-called “dead” season.

The design of human settlements on the plantation reflected the sugar companies’ vision of ideal land use. Space was arranged to facilitate the cultivation of sugarcane and its easy transportation to the mill and therefore *bateyes* were organized to take as little space as possible away from sugar production. Haitian and Dominican migrants to the *bateyes* encountered spaces designed for commodity production and not family and community formation.⁹⁸ Prior to the ascendancy of the sugar industry in the East, grasslands where cattle grazed gave way to forested hills with tropical vegetation that produced important foods for peasants. Within communities homes were spread out close to cultivation plots, often requiring long walks to see neighbors.⁹⁹ Migrants from rural Haiti would have been accustomed to a similar landscape. The daily rhythm of life centered around cultivation and animal husbandry. Peasant homes were usually one or two room wooden structures, but much of daily life took place in the yard, where families cooked, washed clothes, and spent time together.

On the sugar plantation, however, space was much different. The sugar company, not the residents, owned all of the housing and land in the *bateyes*. Expansive fields of sugarcane dominated the landscape. Unfurnished wooden barracks, consisting of single rooms in a row, were built close together in small areas between cane fields. The barracks were designed to house male workers, and did not easily accommodate women or families. *Bateyes* seldom had plumbing or electricity, and water sources were usually

⁹⁸ Samuel Martínez, *Decency and Excess: Global Aspirations and Material Deprivation on a Caribbean Sugar Plantation* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2007), 96.

⁹⁹ Martínez, *Decency and Excess*, 100.

distant rivers. These settlements often housed hundreds of people during the harvest season in a compact space in the middle of the cane. This space was designed for a young, male workforce residing in the community temporarily during the harvest season before returning home.¹⁰⁰ Since sugar labor was seasonal, production did not require a stable labor force, and companies had little interest in promoting the formation of nuclear, or extended, families.¹⁰¹ Because women did not typically cut sugarcane in the Dominican Republic, they were excluded from the formal economy of the plantation. Female residents earned money by cooking, laundering, engaging in petty commerce or prostitution.¹⁰² Because they operated in the informal economy of the plantation, women were also excluded from its spatial design. Migrants arrived in an area that had no separate male and female spaces, no division between private and public space, no established space within which to carry out daily family life, and no designated space for cultivation or livestock.¹⁰³ They had to live in very close proximity to neighbors with no family yard, no farming plot, and no grazing land. However, residents immediately began claiming land on the plantation for their own uses and adapted Haitian and Dominican

¹⁰⁰ Calder, *The Impact of the Intervention*, 95.

¹⁰¹ Industries in Latin America like mining that require a large, stable labor force often encouraged the migration of women to the work site and facilitated the formation of families, even providing monetary incentives for workers living in nuclear families in an attempt to tie them to the mine. See Thomas Klubock, *Contested Communities: Class, Gender and Politics in Chile's El Teniente Copper Mine, 1904-1951* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 1998) In contrast, the sugar industry demanded a mobile labor force. Lara Putnam points to a similar process on banana plantations in Costa Rica. Banana cultivation also required a mobile work force because the crop quickly depleted the soil and needed to be rotated to new fields. As Putnam writes, "a second generation of banana workers tied to their homes and eager to step into their fathers' shoes was the last thing the United Fruit Company needed." Putnam, *The Company They Kept*, 79.

¹⁰² See Secretaría de Agricultura e Inmigración, 1920-1922 Legajo 1, AGN; Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís, 1926-1929 Legajo 55-59, AGN.

¹⁰³ Martínez, *Decency and Excess*, 96.

peasant practices in order to make the *batey* into a more hospitable place. This often put them into conflict with plantation and state authorities.

The frequently chaotic and violent nature of the East under U.S. occupation meant that plantation officials struggled to discipline residents, who at times openly resisted their control. While some authors have argued that the power of sugar companies over workers was nearly absolute, archival evidence from this period demonstrates that plantations struggled to control their territory and those who lived on it.¹⁰⁴ Not only were *guarda campestre* agents often the only representatives of plantation power in an area, they also regularly resided in the *batey* they were responsible for. Therefore, their actions did not perfectly mirror company policy, as they were not able to completely control the population they policed, had to consider their own personal safety when enforcing rules, and had personal relationships with residents. Without access to police backup, secure jails or a reliable justice system on plantations, *guarda campestre* agents frequently had little recourse against residents who broke laws or plantation rules. Because of their numerical superiority those on the *batey* could rely on violence to deter an agent of the *guarda campestre*, and many agents no doubt preferred to preserve their relationships with their neighbors rather than risk their safety. Residents were able to use these restrictions on plantation supervision to claim space within the plantation.

If the *guarda campestre* attempted to impose too many limits on *batey* residents they could quickly find themselves opposed with force. For example, in 1923 Raul Miese, a *guarda campestre* agent on the Santa Fé plantation, was called upon to help

¹⁰⁴ See Michiel Baud, "Sugar and Unfree Labour: Reflections on Labour Control in the Dominican Republic, 1870-1935," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 19, no. 2 (1992): 301-325; Rosario Espinal, "The Dominican Working Class: Labour Control under Trujillo and After," in *Labour in the Caribbean: From Emancipation to Independence*, ed. Malcom Cross and Gad Heuman (London: Macmillan Caribbean, 1988); Murphy, *Dominican Sugar Plantations*.

police a fight between two workers. When he tried to arrest the men a group of armed residents prevented him from leaving, and another scuffle broke out as the agent tried to depart with the prisoners.¹⁰⁵ In another incident that same year, a *guarda campestre* agent attempted to break up a party, only to be assaulted by three men who took away his gun. The chief of the plantation's *guarda campestre* did not seem too set on quickly punishing those assailants, stating in his report that "I am thinking of going today...to figure out the issue and see who is right in this matter."¹⁰⁶ The chief of the *guarda campestre* could not necessarily punish with impunity, as even more superior officials were at risk for worker retaliation. Two weeks later in a neighboring plantation, four men gathered to throw stones at the second in command of the entire *colonia*, or an area encompassing several *bateyes*.¹⁰⁷

Even if the *guarda campestre* were able to arrest alleged offenders without threat of violence, they often faced difficulties keeping them locked up. There were no formal jails in the *bateyes* and the municipal jails were far away and difficult to reach. A *guarda campestre* agent admitted in his weekly report that the four people he detained that week were able to "take advantage [of the fact] that I wasn't there, breaking the padlock and leaving." He explained that since "neither the police nor the guards know their names it has not been possible to capture them."¹⁰⁸ The uneven nature of company and state power during this period meant residents were able to employ collective mobilization to demand better wages. During the 1920s plantation officials regularly reported having to contend

¹⁰⁵ Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís, 1922-23 Legajo 12, AGN.

¹⁰⁶ Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís, 1922-23 Legajo 12, AGN.

¹⁰⁷ Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís, 1922-23 Legajo 12, AGN.

¹⁰⁸ Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís, 1922-23 Legajo 12, AGN.

with wildcat strikes. For example, in 1923 the *guarda campestre* on the Angelina plantation reported the arrest of a Dominican man for “promoting a strike among the workers and [causing] disorder.”¹⁰⁹ Haitian migrants were frequently reported fomenting dissent among workers.¹¹⁰

Residents also relied on fires to protest company behavior or demand better treatment. Plantation management sometimes used controlled burns to clean fields for planting or to make cane easier to harvest. However, after being burnt sugarcane needs to be cut and processed within a day or two. With just a small spark a worker could easily place a substantial part of plantation investment in jeopardy. For this reason, starting illegal cane fires was a powerful tool of resistance and preventing fires and catching those who started them was a major part of the *guarda campestre*'s job. This tactic was not new: burning sugarcane had long been a tool of resistance among laborers on sugar plantations. During the initial 1791 slave uprising in Cap Français in what would become Haiti, rebels set fire to cane fields, plantation buildings, and refineries. The use of fire became an important tactic of enslaved troops and, according to Graham Nessler, demonstrative of their hatred for sugar labor.¹¹¹ On twentieth century Dominican plantations fire continued to be a powerful tool of resistance, and a constant fear of plantation management.¹¹² Starting fires during a work stoppage made management even more inclined to negotiate since they needed workers to cut the burnt cane before it rotted to avoid losing the company's investment. Because of the limits on plantation authority

¹⁰⁹ Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís, 1923 Legajo 16, AGN.

¹¹⁰ Secretario de Estado de Agricultura, 1920 Legajo 1A, AGN.

¹¹¹ Graham Townsend Nessler, *A Failed Emancipation?: The Struggle for Freedom in Hispaniola During the Haitian Revolution, 1789-1809* (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2011), 42.

¹¹² Gobernación del Seibo, 1920 Legajo 28, AGN; Gobernación del Seibo, 1927 Legajo 0, AGN.

due to weak state control, plantations during this period cannot simply be considered enclaves wholly controlled by foreign capital. Residents of the *bateyes* openly resisted company and state attempts to police them.

Despite the fact that sugar companies formally owned all the land and buildings in the *bateyes*, the lack of sustained company surveillance and control at this time meant that residents still used space for their own purposes. As Henri Lefebvre argues, governmental entities reproduce dominance by constructing and regulating landscapes.¹¹³ Yet, in the Dominican Republic during this period there was no singular or cohesive source of control. State, business, and foreign government authorities created shifting alignments of power that attempted to enact their vision of “productive” space onto the landscape of sugar producing regions. These forces had to negotiate with local land use practices. The moral right to land for cultivation was deeply embedded in the political philosophy of Hispaniolan peasants and through micropractices of land use Haitian and Dominican residents of *bateyes* defended this right.¹¹⁴ Individual acts of cultivation and animal husbandry did not halt the fundamental, and for many traumatic, transformation to widespread monoculture. However, these actions demonstrate that Afro-Caribbean peasant practices and moral economies continued to order life within the *bateyes*. This meant that plantation land would not simply be used for monoculture, but also dedicated to peasant production.

¹¹³ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991.)

¹¹⁴ I am indebted to Donald Moor for the concept of micropractices of land use. Moor argues that micropractices allow us to look at actions as both material, and symbolic and as responding to local forces and translocal forces. He writes, “If landscapes are integrally entangled in power relations, then analysts need to take more seriously the environmental and site specific materialities enmeshed in rule.” Donald S. Moore, *Suffering for Territory: Race, Place, and Power in Zimbabwe* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 23.

While plantation management tried to limit significantly the holding of livestock, residents relied on animal ownership as an important survival strategy that could provide food and financial security. Livestock, and especially pigs, were an important part of the peasant economy in Haiti, often serving as a “savings account” for families who could sell or slaughter the animal in a time of need.¹¹⁵ Prior to the ascendancy of the sugar industry, free-range livestock had also been a central component of the Dominican peasant economy as well.¹¹⁶ By raising their own livestock on plantation land, workers ensured that they did not have to count solely on plantation wages to support themselves. Because roaming animals like pigs, goats, and cows could quickly eat up and trample large sections of sugarcane, a major part of the *guarda campestre*'s role was keeping the cane free of them. However, during the early period of the U.S. occupation, the *guarda campestre*'s control over the plantation was too tenuous to allow them to seize animals easily. In 1918 the Secretary of Agriculture wrote to the governor of El Seibo, an eastern, sugar-producing province, to complain that laws prohibiting the open grazing of animals were “not obeyed in any part of the country...and this is the cause of huge damages.”¹¹⁷ The first reports of animals seized by the *guarda campestre* began in the mid-1920s, after U.S. forces had helped impose more order in sugar zones.¹¹⁸ Sugar companies were unable to ban livestock from the plantation, and instead had to attempt to police animals while still respecting some grazing rights.

¹¹⁵ Jennie M. Smith, *When the Hands are Many*, 29.

¹¹⁶ Franks, “Property Rights and the Commercialization of Land in the Dominican Sugar Zone, 1880-1924,” 108.

¹¹⁷ Gobernación de del Seibo, 1917-19 Legajo 30, AGN.

¹¹⁸ The first report I found was in July of 1927. Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís, 1926-29 Legajo 55-59, AGN.

By the mid-1920s the *guarda campestre* frequently reported arresting *batey* residents for slaughtering animals, and often detained animals they found in the fields eating sugarcane.¹¹⁹ However, residents still saw strict limitation of their use of *batey* space to raise animals as unjust. In 1930 the head of the Santa Fé plantation's *guarda campestre* reported that one of the guards had been particularly vigilant in detaining animals and that "since then the owners of the animals have declared themselves his enemies." That same week a group of residents of the *batey* under the agent's control started a fire in a cane field. Most of those responsible for the fire fled before the *guarda campestre* agent arrived, but one stayed and attempted to fight him off with a machete to stop him from putting out the fire, guaranteeing that it spread further.¹²⁰ While *batey* residents were forced to contend with plantation surveillance that limited their ability to keep animals, the above incident demonstrates that they would still rise up to protect their right to use plantation land.

Despite the fact that sugarcane cultivation radically altered the physical environment, residents of the *bateyes* attempted to make use of the small areas not used for cane cultivation to grow their own food. Workers used their agricultural knowledge to cultivate whatever small area they could claim upon arrival in a new place. Even a small provision ground around a plantation barracks could provide some food security in the face of uncertain wages or help support workers and their families during the dead season when there was less work. Eventually some plantation officials recommended encouraging workers to cultivate small plots around their homes. In 1924 the administrator of the La Romana sugar plantation wrote to the president of the provincial

¹¹⁹ Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís, 1926-28 Legajo 477, AGN.

¹²⁰ Gobernación del Seibo, 1923 Legajo 0, AGN.

council of El Seibo that, “in almost all of the sugar estates the workers are located in areas where they are given houses and enough land around them. They could plant small plots around their houses and between them that would provide them with food.”¹²¹ It is likely that the administrator did not come up with this solution on his own; it was probably a practice he had seen used on his plantation. By this point it appears that the administrator had accepted that residents were going to cultivate and it benefited the plantation to informally cede them the land to do so.

Residents of *bateyes* used plantation land in many different ways not originally envisioned by sugar companies. Company officials were often forced to recognize these claims and even mediate competing ones. In 1924 a *guarda campestre* agent visited his *conuco*, or small provision ground, only to find a Haitian migrant making charcoal there without permission. Charcoal, which is produced by slowly burning wood underground for several days, was a major cooking fuel for peasants in Haiti and in the Dominican Republic. The *guarda campestre* agent arrested the Haitian man, but not before hitting him three times with the broad side of a machete. However, the next day the chief of the plantation’s *guarda campestre* passed through the *batey* and upon finding this man being held asked him what crime he had committed. Once the Haitian man related the story the chief freed him, saying he had done nothing wrong.¹²² The chief may have felt that making charcoal was a common land use right, as it had been for centuries. This incident demonstrates that Haitian migrants were able to utilize plantation land, and defend their claims to plantation administrators. However, we can also see that employees in a supervisory position were able to employ their power on the plantation to claim choice

¹²¹ Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís, 1924-25 Legajo 53, AGN.

¹²² Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís, 1922-23 Legajo 12, AGN.

land for their own cultivation plots. *Guarda campestre* agents could use their authority to gain the upper hand in local networks of exchange, but still had to contend with limitations from both their supervisors and those they were supposed to police.

Scholars writing about the Dominican sugar industry have used the lack of unionization among cane cutters as evidence of the sugar companies' near complete control over *batey* residents. In his seminal work *El Batey* Frank Moya Pons argues that, "the immigrant is an over-exploited worker, so [he] disappears as a person and emerges as a mere element of production, like a natural resource."¹²³ Viewed from this perspective the residents of the *bateyes* completely vanish and are consumed by the sugar mill, possessing no more agency than sugarcane during production.¹²⁴ However, this interpretation reveals only a "partial transcript," in the words of James Scott, of life in the *bateyes*.¹²⁵ Despite the apparent dominance of sugar companies, a closer analysis exposes diverse quotidian forms of resistance. By examining the sugar company's assertion of hegemonic control as a process, not simply an end point, it is possible to consider how power is, according to Florencia Mallon, "contested, legitimated and redefined."¹²⁶

¹²³ "El emigrante es un trabajador sobre-explotado, pues desaparece como persona y surge como mero elemento de producción, como un recurso natural." Frank Moya Pons, *El Batey: Estudio Socioeconómico de los Bateyes del Consejo Estatal del Azúcar* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Fondo para el Avance de la Ciencias Sociales, Inc., 1986), 33. For more works that portray the lack of unionization as evidence of a lack of resistance among workers see Lucas Vicens and Roberto Rodríguez Marchena, *Lucha obrera y burocracia* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Alfa y Omega, 1980); Roberto Cassá, *Movimiento obrero y lucha socialista en la República Dominicana: desde los orígenes hasta 1960* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Fundación Cultural Dominicana, 1990.)

¹²⁴ Thomas Rogers argues that sugar planters in Brazil during this period "saw their domains as 'laboring landscapes'—productive wholes in which human elements (workers) and natural ones were equally subject to patriarchal command." *Deepest Wounds: A Labor and Environmental History of Sugar in Northeast Brazil* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 72

¹²⁵ James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985.)

¹²⁶ Florencia E. Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 6.

Interactions between residents and plantation authorities were a constant theater for challenging and delineating limits to company control. The fact that all land belonged to the plantation, but was occupied by residents, meant that spatial politics took on special significance in these interactions. The territory of the plantation was a socially produced geography and examining the land use of residents can reveal otherwise overlooked patterns of resistance.

Thomas Rodgers argues that sugar planters in Brazil limited workers' uses of plantation territory because "prohibiting [them] from using land in any way they saw fit meant keeping them from any ownership over the land, a sense that would have implied that they had the power, or right, to command, associated with ownership."¹²⁷ By examining how residents negotiated with sugar companies for use of space we can see how they established, and protected, forms of ownership over space within the *bateyes*. Owning animals, cultivating land, or claiming a home may seem to some observers like "self-interested" actions of individual residents trying to improve their own material well-being, and not class-based acts of collective resistance. Indeed, Afro-Caribbean peasant culture within the *bateyes* should not be viewed as an ahistorical, autonomous, or internally coherent philosophy; instead, residents adapted practices and beliefs to the space of the plantation, at times resisting company control, at times being coopted by it, and often inhabiting the nebulous region between the two. Spatial politics also undeniably played out along lines of gender, nationality, and race, limiting access on the plantation even within communal ideals. However, individual claims were also frequently backed by a community moral code that supported certain uses of plantation space and restricted the actions of company officials.

¹²⁷ Rodgers, *Deepest Wounds*, 92.

As Alan Knight argues, material circumstances cannot completely explain subaltern behavior; instead it is imperative to look at how populations viewed their material situations within a larger moral economy.¹²⁸ While *batey* residents seldom engaged in large-scale mobilizations against the sugar companies, they also had strong opinions about what constituted legitimate, and illegitimate, actions by company representatives. Sugar company officials who transgressed the boundaries of this code could face problems. If members of the *guarda campestre* or other plantation authorities drew the ire of the local populations, by confiscating too many animals, removing people from their homes, or not respecting established cultivation rights, they at times would have to be relocated or dismissed by the sugar company in order to preserve good relations with *batey* residents. Examining power relationships spatially allows us to see how permanent communities created and enforced moral economies within the difficult environment of sugar plantations.

Bringing the *Bateyes* under Company Control

In 1922, after six years of waging a brutal counter-insurgency campaign in the East that targeted potential *gavillero* supporters along with militants, the U.S. military had begun to wear down the rebel fighting force. Officials in the military government had also accepted the idea, initially proposed by several sugar company administrators, of giving amnesty to *gavillero* fighters in exchange for their disarmament.¹²⁹ Eventually, after months of negotiation, a ceasefire was declared in May of 1922. Marine forces were

¹²⁸ Alan Knight, "Weapons and Arches in the Mexican Revolutionary Landscape," in *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* ed. G. M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), 65.

¹²⁹ Calder, *The Impact of the Intervention*, 174.

able to move into the East mostly unhindered. At the same time, Dominican nationalists pushed for a withdrawal of troops at the same time as opposition to the occupation was growing in the U.S. In 1921 the U.S. Senate launched an investigation into the occupations of both Haiti and the Dominican Republic. While this led to a plan for withdrawal in the Dominican Republic, the Wilson administration simply reorganized the occupation of Haiti because of fears that the country's population would immediately overthrow politicians friendly to the U.S.¹³⁰ In preparation for their departure, the U.S. installed a provisional Dominican government in 1922, headed by client president Juan Bautista Vincini Burgos, whose family owned several sugar estates. In March 1924 Horacio Vásquez won a national election and the final U.S. troops departed from the Dominican Republic in July. The military government left behind a U.S.-trained national police force, which under the rule of Vásquez persisted in bringing rural populations under the control of the central state. In 1925 a former member of the *guarda campestre* from the Boca Chica sugar plantation named Rafael Leonidas Trujillo was promoted to commander-in-chief of the National Police, and continued to assist the Vásquez regime with maintaining control over the nation.

As state policing increased, sugar companies were also better able to control their workers and residents of *bateyes* were unable to oppose state and plantation authorities and face few repercussions, as they were often able to do during the early years of the U.S. occupation. The *guarda campestre* no longer reported persistent violent threats to their safety, and those accused of defying plantation authorities were quickly arrested and charged. The *guarda campestre* mediated personal disputes, forced people to pay petty debts, and limited access to the plantation. For example, in June of 1929 a *guarda*

¹³⁰ Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti*, 123.

campestre agent reported arresting a man just for being on plantation land without permission.¹³¹ An incident from May of 1928 demonstrates well the intensification of plantation surveillance over the course of the decade. Bonigno Dulgencio was arrested after being found outside someone's house "for no reason and wasn't able to specify why he was there."¹³² This type of scrutiny and control over *batey* residents would have been difficult a decade earlier. Residents therefore had to carefully negotiate with company and local officials in order to use the plantation for cultivation, commerce, leisure, and religious practices.

Unable to employ overt opposition to plantation authorities as easily, residents relied on other tactics to establish their right to take ownership of plantation space. During the harvest workers had limited free time, and often labored twelve hour days six, at times seven, days a week. The restricted periods of freedom during the evenings or on Sundays were therefore especially important to workers. As the state and plantation management attempted to bring rural residents under central control, they sought to impose limits on activities they deemed "inappropriate." Cock fights, dice games, dances, and religious ceremonies were all surveilled more closely. Beginning under the U.S. occupation, peasants residing outside of the plantations found themselves pursued by local police for engaging in what had been common pastimes. Those living on the *bateyes* had to contend with both plantation management and local authorities. In a 1925 letter to the Secretary of the Interior explaining why it was necessary for the *guarda campestre* to carry guns, the governor of El Seibo wrote that the force had to "impose order on the multitude of people of all classes and customs who live in the *bateyes* [and]

¹³¹ Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís, 1922-1923 Legajo 12, AGN.

¹³² Gobernación del Seibo, 1927 Legajo 0, AGN.

meet the necessary moral conditions required by the administration.”¹³³ Residents continued to use plantation space for non-work activities; however, as surveillance was tightened on plantations over the course of the 1920s they had to be more creative about evading plantation officials.

Although plantation rules and local laws prohibited gambling, it was a popular pastime on the plantation. While *guarda campestre* were charged with stopping any illegal games, they were at times caught gambling with the workers they were supposed to supervise.¹³⁴ The *guarda campestre* agents were also accused of simply turning a blind eye towards games, perhaps not wanting to cause trouble with residents by imposing rules too harshly. In a 1921 letter to the head administrator of the La Romana sugar plantation the governor of El Seibo complained that the local police had surprised a dice game within the limits of the plantation, which should have been patrolled by the *guarda campestre*.¹³⁵ Given that violence against members of the *guarda campestre* was still fairly common during this period, it is perhaps not surprising that they would choose not to confront *batey* residents about a simple dice game. In a later incident from 1924 a chief *guarda campestre* was accused of extracting bribes from residents to “authorize” dice games, and threatening workers who refused to pay up.¹³⁶ By this point increased police and military presence meant that *batey* residents could no longer use the threat of violence against plantation employees without facing legal repercussions. The *guarda campestre* were the most frequent point of contact between *batey* populations and sugar

¹³³ Gobernación del Seibo, 1925 Legajo 52, AGN.

¹³⁴ Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís, 1922 Legajo 9, AGN.

¹³⁵ Gobernación del Seibo, 1917-1921 Legajo 21, AGN.

¹³⁶ Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís, 1921-1929 Legajo 76, AGN.

company management, but they were also embedded in local networks. Agents negotiated these roles in different ways and many were able to take advantage of conflicts between residents and plantation management to enrich themselves.

By the mid 1920s residents had to find different ways to navigate plantation power structures and claim space for leisure activities. Workers who wished to play dice or cards would secretly clear areas in the sugarcane fields in order to have a space on the plantation to gamble in peace.¹³⁷ While the compressed space of the *batey* was easily patrolled, the vast stretches of sugarcane fields were not. *Batey* residents took advantage of these large spaces to enjoy their time off from work together and temporarily converted the fields from sites of labor extraction to places of leisure. The games that were recorded in *guarda campestre* reports usually involved both Haitians and Dominicans. In his research on Haitian sugar workers in Cuba during the 1920s Matthew Casey writes, “The networks involving Haitians and individuals of other nationalities that emerged out of their extensive interactions dispel the notion that sugar companies were able to divide their workforces effectively or that Haitians were socially isolated.”¹³⁸ Haitians and Dominicans worked to subvert plantation authority during their limited free time. By working together and negotiating with plantations authorities, *batey* residents were able to reclaim plantation space to become “fleetingly sovereign” when not working.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís, 1922-1923 Legajo 12, AGN.

¹³⁸ Matthew Casey, “Haitians’ labor and leisure on Cuban sugar plantations: The limits of company control,” *New West Indian Guide* 85, no. 1 (2011): 20.

¹³⁹ Writing about life in the *bateyes* in the 1990s Samuel Martínez states, “Leisure—time when workers command their own activities—takes on an importance wholly beyond its utility as a time to recuperate the energy to work and becomes fleetingly ‘sovereign.’” *Decency and Excess*, 12.

While both Dominican and Haitian peasants engaged in popular religious practices that were policed by state officials, authorities appear to have been particularly focused on limiting religious gatherings of Haitian migrants. Dominicans elites opposed to immigration often claimed that Haitian popular religion would “contaminate” Dominican culture.¹⁴⁰ Local authorities did not explicitly arrest people for performing religious rites: instead Haitian religious practitioners were arrested for holding dances without a proper license. This policy was not limited to *bateyes*: peasants outside the plantation were increasingly forced to seek government licenses for parties or dances.¹⁴¹ It is impossible to know from archival documents how many gatherings of Dominicans were religious in nature, but some of them no doubt were. However, the *guarda campestre* specifically identified unlicensed dances of Haitians: reports described dances of *Judú* or *Budú*, Dominicanized versions of the word Vodou, or simply specified that it was a “Haitian” dance.¹⁴²

In Haitian Vodou practitioners “serve” a pantheon of spirits, or *lwa*. These *lwa* are distinct to each family and deeply tied to their own ancestral history and the land on which they reside. The *demanbre*, or piece of family land that spirits inhabit, is central to the religious rituals and spiritual heritage of a kinship group.¹⁴³ Karen Richman writes,

¹⁴⁰ Gobernación de Azua, 1918 Legajo 12-18, AGN.

¹⁴¹ Popular forms of Catholicism and Christianity are practiced all over the Dominican Republic, and include syncretic, Afro-Caribbean forms of worship. There is a set of practices and beliefs known as Dominican Vodou. Researchers argue that both forms of Vodou emerged from similar origins and adapted to local circumstances. Popular forms of religion in the Dominican Republic were prohibited, and the government did use limitations on certain types of dances to police Dominican popular religious practices. See Martha Ellen Davis, *La otra ciencia: el vodú dominicano como religión y medicina populares* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Editora Universitaria, UASD, 1987.)

¹⁴² Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís, 1922-1923 Legajo 12, AGN; Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís, 1927 Legajo 46-47, AGN.

¹⁴³ Joan Dayan, “Haiti, History, and the Gods” in *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements* ed. Gyan Prakash (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 83.

“serving as the point of connection between Africa and the [land]...the ‘first owner’ is hailed as the...one who ‘took’ African *lwa* to this land and installed them there.”¹⁴⁴ In the Dominican Republic migrants were far away from family land but were able to adapt religious practices and form new connections that enabled them to continue to serve the *lwa*. Navigating surveillance and repression of Vodou ceremonies was not necessarily a novel challenge for Haitian migrants. Kate Ramsey has argued that, while Haitian penal law technically criminalized Vodou practices, rural residents often leveraged personal relationships and paid fees to local officials for authorization to perform particular rituals.¹⁴⁵ *Batey* residents, therefore, often had experience negotiating with local authorities in order to protect their right to participate in religious ceremonies.

During the evening of the September 17, 1927 a group of Haitian workers gathered together in *batey* Bobadilla on the grounds of the Santa Fé sugar plantation. At about ten in the evening a group of men from the municipal police station in the nearby village of El Soco arrived and told a plantation administrator that they were looking for those participating in *Judú* dance. The plantation manager initially spoke with the policemen and tried to force them to leave, going to find his superior when they would not listen. Despite this hostility, the policemen raided the gathering and began arresting participants. In a later report, the local mayor estimated that while many participants fled, the police arrested thirty men that evening, indicating it was a large gathering. The police then forced the arrested men to walk to the local police station and attempted to elicit bribes from them. The men did not accept this treatment passively. Elias Calice, a thirty-

¹⁴⁴ Karen Richman, *Migration and Vodou*. (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2005), 90.

¹⁴⁵ Kate Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law: Vodou and Power in Haiti* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 191.

six-year-old Haitian laborer, described a police chief forcing him to keep his arms above his head while he searched his pockets. After the policeman removed all of his money, another policeman then accosted Calice and told him to leave the police station. Calice reported that he answered, “I am not leaving unless you give me my money.”¹⁴⁶

Calice was clearly outraged by his treatment and protested against the policemen’s actions. In doing so he also defended his right to perform Haitian religious ceremonies within the plantation. Workers had to be secretive, and often negotiate with plantation employees and local officials, if they wished to use plantation land for their own religious purposes. However, as this incident demonstrates, they were able to do so. This group had some support from a plantation official, who attempted to stop the local police from entering the *batey* and disrupting the religious ceremony. Perhaps they had already come to an agreement with the plantation manager about that night’s events and the intrusion by an outside, and obviously corrupt, police force was viewed as unjust.

While it appears from *guarda campestre* reports that Haitians at times acquiesced to attempts to break up religious ceremonies, this was not always the case.¹⁴⁷ When the police or *guarda campestre* interference broke informally accepted codes of conduct, residents would rebel. On Good Friday in 1923 a member of the *guarda campestre* reported that a group of Haitians armed with machetes violently resisted his attempt to break up what he described as a “masked dance.”¹⁴⁸ Given the day of this “dance” it is probable that this group was participating in the Haitian tradition of Rara, also know as

¹⁴⁶ Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís, 1927 Legajo 46-47, AGN.

¹⁴⁷ Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís, 1922 Legajo 12, AGN. Other *guarda campestre* reports that detail breaking up unlicensed dances of Haitians do not list any resistance or issues with arrestees. Since it appears to be standard practice to report any difficulties that did arise during arrests, this indicates that participants in religious ceremonies at times acquiesced to the *guarda campestre*.

¹⁴⁸ Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís, 1923 Legajo 16, AGN.

Gaga in Dominican Spanish. Rara celebrations began during the colonial period when Holy Week was a mandated rest period for slaves. Elizabeth McAlister describes Rara festivals as “Creole performances par excellence, imbued with historical memories so terrible and profound that they are transmitted not in everyday speech, but through the dancing body and in the cryptic texts of sounds and rituals.”¹⁴⁹ Performances can evoke “the Haitian Revolution, Hispaniolan maroon armies, and Central African sacred forest space.”¹⁵⁰ According to Joseph Roach, these types of “Circum-Atlantic” performances are adapted to local geo-historical circumstances.¹⁵¹ This particular attempt by authorities to shut down a performance of such ritual and symbolic importance was met with atypical overt violent resistance. The historical memory of opposition against plantation agriculture could have imbued this performance of Rara with resistant significance. Although Haitian migrants faced strict limits imposed by the state and sugar companies, they also established commonly accepted moral boundaries, and officials who transgressed them could still face open defiance.

While strengthened plantation surveillance meant that overt acts of resistance were not as common in the mid- to late 1920s as they were during the early part of the U.S. occupation, residents also used increased scrutiny to their advantage. *Bateyes* could be particularly dangerous places for children, and especially migrant children. There are numerous reports of male workers raping young Haitian girls. Female children were not

¹⁴⁹ Elizabeth A. McAlister, *Rara!: Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haiti and Its Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 4. She also claims that rivalries between Rara bands can at times lead to physical battles using “fists, rocks, clubs and machetes” which may explain why the participants of this dance were already armed with machetes when approached by the *guard campestre*, p. 148.

¹⁵⁰ Maurea E. Landies, *The Band Carries Medicine: Music, Healing and Community in Haitian/Dominican Rara/Gaga* (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2009), 174.

¹⁵¹ Joseph R. Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.)

the only ones at risk as male children were also assaulted or beaten by inhabitants of the *batey*.¹⁵² In a particularly disturbing example from 1928 a resident of the Santa Fé sugar plantation was accused of burning a child's face and then rubbing lemon and salt on his wounds.¹⁵³ Unlike other crimes reported by the *guarda campestre*, these usually did not take place in what would have been considered the public space of the plantation.¹⁵⁴ In the case of a rape or assault either the victim or their family would have had to denounce the alleged perpetrator. The reports on these incidents document that parents turned to representatives of plantation authority to protect their children. As residents in the community, some *guarda campestre* agents were no doubt friends or neighbors of victims, and could be called on to help serve justice. Given the fact that parents often had to be far away from their homes during working hours, and the dangers faced by unsupervised children, *batey* residents found ways to use increased plantation surveillance to protect their children and to make the plantation into a somewhat safer place, in this respect, for their families.

After each harvest some Haitian migrants stayed in the Dominican Republic and over the course of the 1920s greater numbers of families came to reside on *bateyes*. Children born to Haitian and Dominican parents were the first generations to grow up in

¹⁵² Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís, 1924 Legajo 11, AGN. We should also not assume that male children were not the victims of sexual abuse either. However, the *guarda campestre* appear to have only reported the rape of female children. In addition, since parents were often the ones reporting these crimes to the *guarda campestre* it is also possible that they were more likely to report the rape of a female child than a male child, or that they reported rapes of male children simply as assaults.

¹⁵³ Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís, 1926-1929 Legajo 55-59, AGN.

¹⁵⁴ When there was not a denunciation it was specially noted. The Santa Fé plantation *guarda campestre* arrested an English laborer for brutally beating a minor. They noted that "this incident was not denounced to the police headquarters." A lieutenant happened to be passing by when the incident occurred. Given the fact that this was deemed necessary to explain, we can assume that for the most part incidents involving abuses of minors were reported by migrants themselves. Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís, 1926-1929 Legajo 55-59, AGN.

the *bateyes* and would play an important role in transforming these plantation spaces into permanent communities. Because *bateyes* were created to house temporary workers, they were not built with children in mind. However, those who grew up on the plantation quickly appropriated this space to their own ends. During the workday children could be found playing together in and around the *batey*, often bringing them into contact with plantation authorities. The *guarda campestre* reported dealing with children who were hurt while playing or after getting into fights with each other.¹⁵⁵ For example, in 1927 a *guarda campestre* agent on the Santa Fé plantation reported that a young boy had been “entertaining himself [and] playing” when he “lit an explosive he had found on fire, which exploded, producing very serious injuries.” While this child’s actions may have been destructive, and dangerous on a fire prone sugar plantation, the agent reported, “he can be found receiving medical attention at the Hospital San Antonio in San Pedro de Macorís.”¹⁵⁶ While it is certainly possible that the child did face punishment upon his discharge from the hospital, the wording of the report indicates that the agent viewed this as a case of childhood amusement, inadvertently turned dangerous.

These kinds of incidents make clear that the *guarda campestre* were involved in the daily lives of children and it was an important enough part of their duties that they reported children’s injuries and fights in their weekly reports to the provincial governor. The *guarda campestre* could punish children for attempting to steal pieces of sugarcane or damaging the fields, thus reinforcing plantation authority. However, children also clearly used the space of the plantation for their own purposes and the *guarda campestre*

¹⁵⁵ Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís, 1924 Legajo 11, AGN; Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís, 1924 Legajo 17-18, AGN.

¹⁵⁶ Gobernación del Seibo, 1925 Legajo 52, AGN.

were forced to spend some of their time dealing with problems that faced children. In addition, children learned how plantation authorities placed limits on their behavior and how to negotiate with and push the boundaries of these limits. As the number of children of both Haitian and Dominican descent began to grow the *bateyes* became home to a bilingual, bicultural population that grew up within the space of the plantation and with an intimate knowledge of the power relations there.

While company and state authorities intended Haitians to be a temporary presence in the Dominican Republic, they were not. These growing Haitian-Dominican communities within export enclaves worried many Dominican elites.¹⁵⁷ Yet, the occupation had helped expand American corporate holdings in the sugar-producing East, and with it demand for workers. In 1924, the same year U.S. forces departed the country, a report sent to the president from the governor of Azua province worried that, “the Haitian is, slowly but surely, infiltrating [Dominican] habits, customs, religion, and language.”¹⁵⁸ As Haitian immigrant communities on plantations grew *batey* residents would face new forms of discrimination.

Conclusion

In 1927 Dominican President Horacio Vásquez successfully modified the constitution to extend his term until 1930. By that time, however, he was very ill and his government plagued by party divisions. After being named chief of the Army by Vásquez in 1927, Rafael Trujillo had been turning the military into a bastion of his own personal power. Trujillo and Rafael Estrela Ureña, Secretary of Foreign Relations under Vásquez,

¹⁵⁷ Wright, “An Epidemic of Negrophobia”, 30.

¹⁵⁸ Gobernación De Azua, 1918 Legajo 12-18, AGN.

worked together to organize a rebellion in Santiago de los Caballeros, the country's second largest city. Estrella Ureña then marched to Santo Domingo with armed men, where Vásquez resigned and agreed to negotiate with the rebel leaders. While Estrella Ureña briefly took control of the presidency, it became abundantly clear that Trujillo actually held the reins to power. During negotiations elections were set for the summer, and Trujillo used his political and military power to intimidate any opposition. Through the use of violence and coercion, Trujillo was able to easily secure his election as president and took office August 16, 1930. Although Trujillo did not have much support from either the Dominican elite or the popular classes, the backing of U.S. businessmen and politicians helped him seize power. Between 1915 and 1930 sugar plantations had increased their influence in the Dominican Republic and their control over land and workers. *Batey* residents did not have as much freedom to engage in overt and at times violent acts of rebellion as they had a decade earlier. However, even as rule of law and surveillance strengthened, Haitians and Dominicans continued to resist sugar company and state control and defended their use of plantation space and the communities they had begun to form.

While sugar plantations were not designed primarily with permanent residents in mind, their uses of this land fundamentally altered the landscape of the *bateyes*. Inhabitants drew on Afro-Caribbean peasant practices to help ensure their survival and to evade the surveillance of the state and sugar companies. By continuing peasant practices, residents established customary rights to use the plantation for cultivation and animal husbandry and converted *bateyes*, originally intended only for temporary habitation, into permanent communities. Residents used the plantation for their own leisure, and

subverted plantation surveillance to play cards or dice and to hold dances together. Haitian migrants also challenged plantation authorities for the right to practice religious rituals. However, hierarchies of gender, race and ethnicity also conditioned their success in claiming informal or customary rights. Haitian migrants without immigration documents were susceptible to coercion from plantation employees and immigration officials, and therefore their usage of space could be restricted. The *batey* was also a highly gendered zone. Plantation housing and labor was masculinized, and women therefore struggled to make informal claims to space in order to secure lodging and employment. After the ascendancy of Rafael Trujillo, discipline over those living and working in sugar-producing areas would only increase. However, during the early years of the U.S. occupation *batey* residents were able to take advantage of incomplete state and plantation surveillance to establish some form of ownerships over plantation space. These claims would become the basis for residents' demands that company and state officials recognize their rights as denizens of the Dominican Republic.

Chapter Two

Geographies of Power: The Trujillo Regime, Sugar, and Anti-Haitianism, 1930-1945

When Rafael Trujillo seized control of the government in 1930 the Dominican state's control over its territory was still fragmentary. Most rural communities had little interaction with the central government and numerous sub-national actors, like regional caudillos or foreign sugar companies, competed for control. The nation's Afro-Caribbean peasantry had for hundreds of years organized much of the country's territory to reflect their vision of productive and useful space: the majority of the population practiced slash and burn agriculture, and land use was determined by community established tenure practices. Once in control, Trujillo was determined to extend his hegemony over the nation's territory by controlling and modernizing peasant practices. During the early 1930s, the size and power of the central government dramatically expanded and Trujillo was able to bring more and more of the country under his control by constructing and regulating the landscapes of the Dominican Republic.

In order to "modernize" the Dominican Republic the Trujillo government worked to make space more economically productive and closely surveilled. In doing so it had to radically transform peasant culture that had long rejected government oversight and absolutist definitions of property. The Trujillo government's regulation of space, however, was inevitably unevenly and incompletely imposed. Government officials had to continually negotiate with local understanding of what constituted fair, right, and just uses of land. While Trujillo vowed to protect the private property of sugar companies, peasants living on the periphery of plantations drew on long established patterns of resistance and at the same time employed the language of the regime to defend their

usufruct and communal land rights to plantation territory. The regime was often forced to allow these land practices to continue, and even to defend them to sugar companies.

In addition to making national territory more economically productive, Trujillo attempted to make it more purely “Dominican.” Once in control, Trujillo implemented policies designed to limit the number of Haitian immigrants living in the country, in part to gain the support of anti-Haitian elite, but also in pursuit of his larger goal to bring rural areas more strictly under his control. His plans were frustrated, however, by local officials who opposed the imposition of central state power that threatened their own authority over rural communities. The government’s inability to carry out anti-Haitian initiatives influenced Trujillo’s decision in 1937 to order the massacre of an estimated ten to twenty thousand Haitians living on the border. Despite this act of state violence, Trujillo could not entirely remove the Haitian presence from the country because of the power of the sugar industry. This chapter examines for the first time how Trujillo sought to dismantle Haitian-Dominican communities in sugar-producing regions, just as he had attempted to do on the border. Following the massacre, the regime began to quietly employ extra-legal coercion to force Haitians in the country onto plantations, and to inextricably link Haitian identity with cutting sugarcane. Yet, residents of sugar producing regions did not blindly accept this policy of spatially limiting Haitians and orders to move Haitians to plantations were often met with initial confusion or resistance.

Within *batey* communities, sugar companies attempted to use their increased power to monitor residents’ use of space. Yet the power of sugar companies, like the power of the state, was never completely internally coherent because plantations had to rely on many diverse agents to enforce their rules. The *guarda campestre* were seldom

openly opposed to company ideas about how space should be organized and managed. However, they interpreted these rules through their own understandings of community spatial codes. Consequently, while they enforced company rules, they also honored customary rights to land and homes. In addition, the *guarda campestre*'s attempts to police residents' "undesirable" behavior reflected a company desire to control workers, but also community attitudes about disruptive conduct. While *batey* communities were further isolated during this period, and anti-Haitianism became an important component of Dominican nationalism, local beliefs about what constituted economic productivity or ethnic difference endured, shaping company and national policies.

The Trujillo Regime and Sugar Plantation Territory

Despite having the authority of the military behind him, Rafael Trujillo came to power without much support from either the elite or the popular classes. Valentina Peguero writes "Large parts of the elite rejected Trujillo because he was not one of them. The middle class scorned him because he lacked 'outstanding intellectual qualifications' ...[and] the majority of the lower class did not know who Trujillo was or were plainly indifferent to him."¹⁵⁹ In the absence of widespread loyalty, Trujillo acted quickly to construct new geographies of power that would allow him to better surveil and control the nation's territory and at the same time extract more wealth from it. The semi-nomadic nature of agriculture during the nineteenth and early twentieth century meant that land for grazing animals was generally held communally, and cultivation rights were established through sustained use, not individual titles. In order to transform rural areas

¹⁵⁹ Valentina Peguero, *The Militarization of Culture in the Dominican Republic, from the Captains General to General Trujillo* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 70.

and make peasants settled contributors to a modern Dominican economy, legally defined private property rights had to be established and recognized.

The power the state was not strong enough to simply impose these new policies on the masses, and Trujillo therefore had to gain support for this new understanding of land. The government began surveying and distributing any remaining *terrenos comuneros*, the communal ranching lands that had been a crucial part of the nineteenth century peasant economy. To avoid local opposition to the breakup of communal land, in most areas peasants received formal land titles for newly surveyed land, along with other material incentives, like seeds, plows, livestock, and improved irrigation infrastructure. Through the distribution of land and other goods, Trujillo was able to build a base of popular support for his regime among the peasants. In addition, while crafting his own version of Dominican nationalism to support his rule, Trujillo drew on longstanding peasant values, like the moral right to work land. In a 1935 speech Trujillo declared, “as long as there is a single peasant bent over the land, I will have faith in the nation...[and] in order to guarantee men of work what they deserve [we have to] double our efforts.”¹⁶⁰ During this early period of his presidency, many peasants supported Trujillo because he recognized their contributions to the Dominican nation in a way that his predecessors never had.

Lauren Derby has contended that Trujillo engaged in “authoritarian populism” by elevating the Dominican masses to the level of national discourse and recognizing them

¹⁶⁰ Joaquín Balaguer, *El Pensamiento Vivo de Trujillo* (Ciudad Trujillo, Dominican Republic: Impresora Dominicana, 1955), 69.

as equal citizens.¹⁶¹ As Brodwyn Fischer argues for Brazil under populist dictator Getúlio Vargas, “this was not a form of citizenship rooted in natural rights...it was, rather, a form of patronage.”¹⁶² While Trujillo conceived of citizenship in terms of privileges granted to loyal followers, citizens and denizens of the Dominican Republic used the new tools and language provided by populist rhetoric to demand protection for what they viewed as fundamental rights. Although Trujillo’s version of Dominican nationalism affirmed some aspects of the peasantry’s popular beliefs, its emphasis on private property and immobility decreased the prevalence of communally owned land and usufruct cultivation rights throughout most of the country.¹⁶³ How local residents understood and used the term “private property” often diverged from the goals of the regime. While many peasants accepted the existence of private property rights, they incorporated older understandings about how land should be used into their own definitions, which often competed with, and even shaped, the regime’s goals. Long-standing peasant ideologies about space and the Trujillo government’s land policy were therefore mutually constitutive.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Lauren Derby, *The Dictator’s Seduction: Politics and the Popular Imagination in the Era of Trujillo* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 258-59.

¹⁶² Brodwyn Fischer, *A Poverty of Rights: Citizenship and Inequality in Twentieth-Century Rio de Janeiro* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 126.

¹⁶³ Richard Lee Turits, *Foundations of Despotism: Peasants, the Trujillo Regime, and Modernity in Dominican History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 11.

¹⁶⁴ Despite a radically different political climate, Christopher Boyer points to a similar process in post-revolutionary Mexico under the presidency of populist leader Lázaro Cárdenas. Rural residents utilized the government’s ideology about the peasantry to pursue their own goals, and in doing so changed understandings of the *campesino*. He writes, “rural people found ways to collaborate in the construction of their own cultural identity by selecting those components of post-revolutionary ideology they found useful and ignoring those they found unattractive.” *Becoming Campesinos: Politics, Identity, and Agrarian Struggle in Postrevolutionary Michoacán, 1920-1935* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 44.

While communal land and usufruct rights became a less and less important part of rural values in much of the country, Trujillo was unable to enact the same changes to land tenure in the East where sugar companies had competing ideas about what constituted economically productive space. North American corporations already owned large portions of the available land and continued to expand their holdings, thus making peasant agriculture less feasible. In the decades prior to his presidency the sugar industry had displaced many peasants and there simply was not enough open territory for Trujillo to follow the same pattern of land distribution that he had elsewhere in the country. In order to rotate cultivation and mitigate the damaging impact of sugarcane horticulture, sugar companies owned much more land than they used at any given time. Displaced peasants continued squatting on unused land while company officials made periodic attempts to evict them. While the majority of large-scale expulsions happened prior to 1930, Trujillo was forced to deal with several major evictions during the first years of his presidency. This made it even more difficult for him to follow his national rural policy in the East. The Trujillo government attempted to prevent evictions, but usually could not convince companies to halt them. Despite his opposition to these land expulsions, the economic power of foreign companies and Trujillo's own campaign to cement rights to private property meant that he could not openly oppose company actions. In the East the supremacy of foreign capital trumped Trujillo's plan for rural transformation and his government could not as easily distribute land to gain peasants' support.¹⁶⁵

In other parts of the country Trujillo worked to change peasants' conceptions of land. However, in the East he was forced to continue to support unofficial, but locally recognized, rights to land. Unable to prevent peasant evictions, and without much land to

¹⁶⁵ Turits, *Foundations of Despotism*, 131.

distribute, Trujillo turned to other tactics to gain the support of peasants: he pressured companies to allow the continuation of peasant practices, like usufruct cultivation and open ranching, on company land. In 1933 the Secretary of State for the President wrote to the governor of El Seibo to ask him to work with representatives of the La Romana sugar company “with the objective of obtaining the free transfer of land [to] the inhabitants of Guaymante,” a larger town on the edge of the sugar fields, to be used for small gardens around their houses.¹⁶⁶ The next year the Secretary of State for Agriculture and Commerce asked the governor to convince the Santa Fé plantation to allow local residents to cultivate areas not being used for cane. The Secretary instructed the governor to, “appeal [to the] Santa Fé plantation in the interest of poor farmers [and] try to convince the managers of the company [to] accept their lands being cultivated (the ones they do not need for the cultivation of cane).”¹⁶⁷ The Trujillo administration did not advocate that sugar companies cede plantation land to farmers; they were well aware that such a solution would be impossible. Peasant cultivators on plantation land would not receive legal titles. Instead, government officials attempted to protect informally recognized squatting rights. Unlike in the rest of the country, where private property and formal land titles among peasants became paramount, in the East the regime was forced to rely on customary land tenure practices to mitigate the impact of expanding sugarcane cultivation. Peasants living in sugar producing regions of the Dominican Republic therefore continued to utilize nineteenth century peasant practices more so than peasants living in areas dedicated to other forms of cultivation.

¹⁶⁶ Fondo Gobernación Del Seibo, 1934 Legajo 12, AGN.

¹⁶⁷ Fondo Gobernación del Seibo, 1934 Legajo 12, AGN.

Throughout the 1930s residents of sugar producing areas still relied on unofficial, but locally recognized, land rights. They were therefore much more vulnerable than peasants elsewhere to eviction, and many peasants lost their land during the 1930s, often causing great hardship for families. Those evicted moved onto *bateyes* to work, or migrated elsewhere in the country. Yet, with some support from the government, residents around plantations also negotiated for alternative uses of land, drawing on the precedent of their longstanding usufruct and common land rights, as well as rhetoric emanating from the Trujillo regime.¹⁶⁸ Residents of the East and local officials utilized Trujillo's new nationalist language in order to challenge sugar plantations' land ownership and continue peasant practices on company land.

The belief that fallow land should be available to those who wished to make use of it continued to be an important concept in peasant culture in the East. Despite evictions, peasants still occupied the wide swaths of unused plantation land that abutted their shrinking communities. For example, in August of 1934 a member of the city council of Ramón Santana, an eastern municipality, reported that nine men had been tending *conucos* on the land of the Santa Fé sugar plantation for the last 18 months and had only recently been detected.¹⁶⁹ Communities in the East mobilized to defend individual cultivation and ranching rights. In 1932 the residents of the small community of Gato on the edge of the La Romana sugar plantation petitioned the government to allow for open ranching on plantation land. Those in favor of the petition employed the language of the Trujillo regime. A letter to the governor from a local judge argued that

¹⁶⁸ Richard Turits argues that, "the inclusive and populist discourse of the early Trujillo state opened up space for local authorities...and even peasants themselves to begin proposing concrete measures to benefit peasants." *Foundations of Despotism*, 87.

¹⁶⁹ Fondo Gobernación del Seibo, 1934 Legajo 4, AGN.

“all types of calamities” had befallen the residents of Gato after *crianza libre*, or open ranching, was made illegal. He claimed that in the past all residents worked hard and made money, but that since *crianza libre* had been abolished “[people] do not want to work.” He went on to argue that allowing peasants to ranch on plantation land would not only provide them income, but would also allow peasants to pay the government “a lot of taxes.”¹⁷⁰ Increased tax collection among peasants was a central goal of the Trujillo regime, and this writer clearly wanted to demonstrate that peasants could continue open ranching and also be tax paying, modern citizens of the Dominican state.

Over the next year residents of Gato continued to send letters to the governor debating what rights peasants had to plantation land. One citizen argued that the La Romana company already allowed residents of Gato to cultivate some of its fallow land, so they therefore did not need any extra land for grazing animals.¹⁷¹ Ranching was considered by some to be more destructive than cultivation, since roaming animals could cause unintended damage to sugarcane. The letter writer did not question that local peasants should have some rights to unused plantation land, but felt those rights should be limited to cultivation. Eduardo Guerrero, a shop-keeper in the area, argued the contrary: residents were not allowed to cultivate the plantation’s land and therefore needed to be allowed to graze their animals in order to guarantee their survival.¹⁷²

Unsurprisingly, the sugar company did not agree with either position. In a letter to the governor, the administrator of La Romana reminded him that allowing open ranching would be “a violation of private property,” and that “those lands are not *terrenos*

¹⁷⁰ Fondo Gobernación del Seibo, 1932 Legajo 0, AGN.

¹⁷¹ Fondo Gobernación del Seibo, 1932 Legajo 0, AGN.

¹⁷² Fondo Gobernación del Seibo, 1932 Legajo 0, AGN.

comuneros.”¹⁷³ However, the petitioners in Gato did not claim the land they wanted to use was legally designated common land: they accepted its status as private property. Instead, they questioned the definition of private property presented by the sugar company, and backed by the regime. Simply because land was “private property” did not mean that its proper use was not up for debate by the community. That designation did not, in the eyes of the community members, give the sugar company absolute control over their territory. To support their argument residents utilized the rhetoric of the Trujillo regime that emphasized hard work, civic duty and, most importantly, the payment of taxes to the government. As hard working peasants, they had some right to utilize “private property” that was not being put to proper use by its owner. They therefore incorporated their own ideas about morality and land use into new definitions of private property and used their new status as citizens to defend what they considered to be inalienable rights. While protecting what they saw as a moral right to land, the residents of sugar producing regions employed new tactics and language. In doing so they questioned the hegemonic definition of private property handed down by the government and through these negotiations ended up shaping it’s meaning.

In addition to mobilizing for peasants’ land rights, local authorities in the East attempted to use Trujillo’s new political rhetoric to challenge the growing power of the sugar plantations. As the footprint of monoculture grew so too did company dominance, and management often treated plantations as their own sovereign territory. Mayors and governors in sugar producing provinces constantly wrote plantation management to complain about limits placed on peasant actions and to question the legality of these restrictions. Enabled by Trujillo’s policies and his language of nationalism, they sought to

¹⁷³ Fondo Gobernación del Seibo, 1932 Legajo 0, AGN.

constrain the power of sugar plantations over the physical space of their provinces. In September of 1930, just a few months after Trujillo had taken over, the governor of the eastern province of San Pedro de Macorís wrote to the administrator of the Angelina plantation to complain that *guarda campestre* agents were imposing fines on the owners of animals found within sugar plantations. The governor argued, “the courts customarily act in these cases, as is mandated by the law....the plantation [should] refrain from performing the functions of the judiciary that have not been conferred upon them by law.”¹⁷⁴ Any limits on open ranching practices, the governor argued, were the purview of the courts, not of plantation officials. Sugar companies could not create policy about land use rights on their own, he contended. By maintaining the supremacy of government officials over plantation officials, the governor was attempting to ensure that the plantation did not take on the role of deciding what land use was appropriate and legal.

In 1935 the same frustrated governor of San Pedro de Macorís wrote to the Secretary of State for the Interior, Police, War and the Navy to remind him that the *acaldes pedáneos*, mayors of small communities, were above *guarda campestre* in government hierarchy because the *guarda campestre* could only wield power within the confines of the sugar plantations, while the *acaldes* had power over all national territory, including plantation land. The governor emphasized the power of local officials to oppose the plantations’ claims that defining an area as “private property” negated long standing spatial arrangements. The governor vehemently argued against, “the absolute sovereignty that... owners pretend to have over lands with the designation of Private

¹⁷⁴ Fondo Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís, 1930 Legajo 77, AGN.

Property.¹⁷⁵ The governor deeply questioned the sugar companies' definition of private property and provided an alternative understanding of it. In the letter to the Secretary of State for the Interior he explained that he had re-named a section of the province under his jurisdiction that had long ago been depopulated and taken over by the American owned Dominican Sugar Company. This was apparently an attempt by the governor, who was certainly resistant to ceding some of his political power to sugar companies, to reestablish control over this land.

After the governor wrote to the company referencing the new name, the *guarda campestre*, no doubt confused, replied, “[that] land...is property of the Consuelo sugar plantation and is completely planted with sugarcane...not a single vestige of the old section exists.”¹⁷⁶ It appears that the governor was well aware that the section of land he re-named was no longer inhabited and was covered in sugarcane. His re-naming can therefore be viewed as a performative act meant to question the narrow definition of private property promoted by sugar companies, and accepted by the Trujillo government. While utilizing language of the Trujillo regime that asserted the authority of government officials over national territory, the governor subverted national policy by questioning the regime, and the sugar companies', definition of private property rights. In doing so he affirmed his authority to rule over local communities. He also asserted that legal property rights, and even the fundamental transformation of the landscape through destructive monoculture, could not erase the history of peasant communities that had existed for hundreds of years. Steven Pile defines resistance as the struggle to “occupy, deploy, and

¹⁷⁵ (Emphasis original) Fondo Gobernación del Seibo, 1920 Legajo 28, AGN.

¹⁷⁶ Fondo Gobernación del Seibo, 1920 Legajo 28, AGN.

create alternative spatialities from those defined through oppression and exploitation.”¹⁷⁷

The governor of San Pedro de Macorís reimagined the land occupied by sugar companies, creating an alternative geography that opposed the sugar companies’ attempts to completely transform, define, and dominate the territory of the plantation.

Because Trujillo’s plan of rural transformation could not be implemented in sugar producing regions as it was elsewhere, residents fought to maintain usufruct and common use land rights. Many still faced eviction and were forced to leave the region or move onto sugar plantations. Those who survived the dramatic changes to the peasant economy were able to do so partially by deepening networks with nearby *bateyes*. Despite numerous conflicts with company officials, peasants in and around plantations managed to continue cultivating and were an important part of *batey* economies. Peasants from adjacent areas circulated through *bateyes* selling produce and meat to residents. These connections with nearby inhabitants were important for food security within the *bateyes* and for the economic survival of peasant communities. In March of 1932 the administrator of the Santa Fé sugar plantation wrote the governor of El Seibo to complain about nearby residents of Campiña who were selling meat on the plantation. He protested that the plantation’s own sale of meat to *batey* residents had decreased, writing, “in many cases we have found that outsiders have taken nearly complete possession of our *bateyes* for the sale of beef and pork.... [This] brings with it a decrease in [our] sale of meat.”¹⁷⁸

Sugar companies ran company stores that inflated prices and often trapped workers in a cycle of debt. These stores were a great source of profit for companies and they therefore

¹⁷⁷ Steve Pile and Michael Keith, *Geographies of Resistance* (London: Routledge, 1997), 3.

¹⁷⁸ Fondo Gobernación del Seibo, 1939 Legajo 5, AGN.

attempted to stop peasants from selling their goods on plantation land and undercutting company store prices.

Despite the political power of sugar companies, peasants and *batey* residents continued to engage in economic exchanges and even received support from local government officials. In 1939 the governor of El Seibo sent a letter to the administrator of the La Romana and Santa Fé plantations complaining about a *guarda campestre* agent who was not allowing peasants to enter the *bateyes* with food to sell. The governor asked the administrator to quickly resolve this issue. He also sent a letter to the Sub-Secretary of State for the Interior and Police informing him of the situation.¹⁷⁹ By the end of the 1930s, it appears that sugar companies were not able to maintain the exclusion of peasant vendors from their land and these networks of economic exchange became an important part of the local economy. In 1940 a weekly communiqué to the governor of El Seibo from a city council member on the economic state of the locality reported “because the majority of our farmers bring their goods to the plantations they return with cash in exchange for their provisions and other products they...sold.”¹⁸⁰ Other weekly reports from the 1940s often stated the economic benefit of selling food within the *bateyes*. Plantations were therefore not able to cut off the economic ties that bound *bateyes* to nearby peasant communities and numerous *batey* resident spoke about large, weekly peasant markets taking place in the *bateyes* unhindered in the late 1940s.¹⁸¹ Plantation management was clearly unable to completely isolate the *bateyes* and make them dependent on company-sold food. *Batey* residents helped support the peasant

¹⁷⁹ Fondo Gobernación del Seibo, 1930 Legajo 2, AGN.

¹⁸⁰ Fondo Gobernación del Seibo, 1940 Legajo 19, AGN.

¹⁸¹ Anonymous interviews, by author, Monte Coca, January, 2013.

communities that remained on the periphery of sugar plantations and peasant commerce helped ensure that *batey* residents did not have to rely solely on the company store to purchase food. The state would eventually attempt to further isolate *bateyes*, but these networks helped keep residents connected to surrounding communities.

Documentation and the Growth of Anti-Haitianism

Rafael Trujillo sought to create a stable, settled, and economically productive Dominican peasantry that contributed to the progress of the nation and was absolutely loyal to him. A key component of this policy was making government issued identification cards widespread. Under Trujillo, the government was able for the first time in Dominican history to force a large portion of the country's population to pay for, and carry, nationally issued identification documents called *cédulas*. Citizens were required to travel to their local government office once a year and pay to renew the document, which stated place of residence and skin color. Beginning in the early 1930s any citizen could be arrested simply for being caught without documents. New *cédula* laws therefore allowed the government to track people's movement and also fixed inhabitants' racial identities in novel ways. Because color was closely tied to social status, the *cédula* could "lighten" someone's standing, or, conversely, publically mark racial mixture. Lauren Derby writes, "this may explain why the *cédula* was called in popular parlance the *papel de camino* (the paper of the road) since it enabled movement in social status as well as territorial space."¹⁸² Despite the fact that the majority of the Dominican population was of African descent, very few citizens identified as black in their identity documents. They instead utilized classifications like *indio* or *mestizo* for

¹⁸² Derby, *The Dictators Seduction*, 159.

lighter skin or *moreno* for darker skin. Immigrants from Haiti and the British West Indies were usually the only people labeled *negro*, or black.¹⁸³

These immigrants were responsible for carrying both immigration permits and *cédulas*, which had to be renewed annually if they stayed in the country. Sugar companies that employed immigrants were responsible for paying for these documents.¹⁸⁴ Initially Trujillo attempted to halt immigration, responding to elite ideologies that blamed “Haitianization” for the Dominican Republic’s lack of progress.¹⁸⁵ In 1932 Trujillo tried to prevent sugar plantations from using Haitian labor by requiring that sugar workers be Dominican. However, he soon had to back down from this demand after pressure from the U.S. government and sugar companies. Again in 1933 he tried to establish a treaty with Haiti overseeing the recruitment of workers, but could not wrest control of the process from North American sugar companies.¹⁸⁶ Unable to stop migration, Trujillo attempted to use documentation to better surveil Haitian residents. However, increased enforcement of documentation laws caused conflicts and confusion: residents resisted

¹⁸³ Turits, *The Foundations of Despotism*, 311 n. 25.

¹⁸⁴ The central state also began demanding that sugar companies register and pay for female migrants, something previously unheard of. While sugar companies paid immigration taxes for their male workers, they resisted, or refused, to pay taxes for women, who they viewed as superfluous to the production of sugar. Beginning in the early 1930s the *guarda campestre* would nearly always disclose the *cédula* numbers of the men mentioned in their reports, and they would arrest men in the *bateyes* simply for not carrying their documents. On the other hand, they hardly ever mentioned the *cédula* number of women and there are no records of the *guarda campestre* detaining women for not having documentation. This lack of documentation no doubt impacted women’s mobility. See Dirección General de la Migración, 1936 Legajo 4, AGN.

¹⁸⁵ Richard Lee Turits, “A World Destroyed, a Nation Imposed: The 1937 Haitian Massacre in the Dominican Republic,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review*. 83, no. 3 (2002): 599. Trujillo may also have been eager to demonstrate his ability to address the “Haitian problem” because his own maternal grandmother was Haitian, and some elites openly expressed disdain for his mixed racial background. Yet, evidence suggests that his foremost concern at this point was exerting authority over the country; he did not necessarily hold the same fears of Haitian culture as some intellectuals in his government. Turits, “A World Destroyed, a Nation Imposed,” 608.

¹⁸⁶ Bernardo Vega, *Trujillo Y Haití: Volumen II (1937-1938)* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Fundación Cultural Dominicana, 1995), 24.

having to pay for, and carry, documentation, and local officials often supported their opposition.¹⁸⁷ In addition, rural authorities did not necessarily want to cede the role of policing their communities, including oversight of Haitian immigrants, to the central government.

In the early 1930s when Haitians were found without *cédulas* on or around sugar plantations, government officials usually chastised the sugar company, not the immigrants. While municipal and provincial authorities followed central state policies by arresting those without documents, they were often able to make their own decisions about punishment. For example, in July of 1936 the governor of El Seibo wrote to the head of the La Romana sugar plantation to inform him that several plantation employees has been arrested for not carrying their *cédulas*. The governor blamed the workers' lack of documentation on the fact that "some contractors, despite the memos that the company is aware of, withhold *cédulas* from their workers.... [It] seems advisable to me that the company take action with respect [to this issue.]"¹⁸⁸ A 1935 report from a district attorney in the province of Monte Cristi to a local judge described the predicament of eleven Haitian men who did not have documentation. The district attorney claimed that fault in the case lay with the nearby Monte Llano sugar company, which did not pay its workers in cash. Since workers received paper vouchers, good for purchases at the company store, they did not have enough cash on hand to pay their annual *cédula* fee.

The eleven men the district attorney described do not appear to have been simply seasonal laborers: he referred to them as farmers and as residents of the city of Monte

¹⁸⁷ Lauren Derby writes "The *cédula* or ID was the most despised symbol of everyday life under the regime." Derby, *The Dictator's Seduction*, 159.

¹⁸⁸ Fondo Gobernación del Seibo, 1936 Legajo 18, AGN.

Cristi, describing one man as “a citizen of Haiti and accidental resident of this city [who] declared that he does not have his *cédula* because [when] he came to work at Monte Llano he was told he would earn a lot of money and then they only paid him ten cents daily and only gave it to him in tokens to spend at the [company] store.”¹⁸⁹ Since all of the offenders were described as residing in the city, not on the plantation, it is probable that they no longer worked for Monte Llano and were engaged in other agricultural work. According to central government policy, the Monte Llano plantation was therefore not responsible for paying for their *cédulas*. Nevertheless, the district attorney still blamed the sugar company for not paying the men enough for them to acquire their own documentation. Even while local authorities followed state directives to require immigrants to carry documentation, they interpreted them in their own way. The Trujillo regime had to operate through local intermediates in order to enforce its policies. At this time, these officials did not worry about the mobility of Haitian migrants, and certainly did not see their presence in the country as a threat to the nation. They saw documentation as a way to extract tax revenue from foreign sugar companies, not as a way to control residents. Local officials already had ways of exerting authority through established networks of friendship, kinship, and economic exchange, and did not necessarily want to cede this control to a new central government surveillance scheme.¹⁹⁰

The independence of rural authorities limited the ability of the government to better control the country’s immigrant population. In addition, these incidents demonstrate that rural residents did not view the Haitian presence in the country in the

¹⁸⁹ Fondo Gobernación del Seibo, 1920 Legajo 28, AGN.

¹⁹⁰ See also Fondo Gobernación del Seibo, 1932 Legajo 0, AGN; Fondo Gobernación del Seibo, 1934 Legajo 4, AGN.

same way as the urban elite did. While Haitians on sugar plantations constituted a large portion of the migrant population, Haitian identity was not solely associated with sugar labor, as it would become later in the century. Despite elite racism towards immigrants, in most communities Haitians were not seen as occupying an inferior position compared to Dominicans.¹⁹¹ Much of the population saw mobility free from surveillance as a right, and local officials rebuffed government attempts to limit mobility for both Haitian and Dominican residents of their localities. In addition to protecting their authority, officials responded to public pressure that opposed new government rules imposing greater surveillance and control on rural communities.

Once taking office the Trujillo regime attempted to better control Haitian immigration, but obstruction from local officials stymied its endeavors to do so. In an effort to address these issues, the government introduced subtle changes to immigration oversight. In February of 1936 Reynaldo Valdés, the national Director of Immigration, wrote to the administrator of the Porvenir plantation about one of the latter's workers who, "has been detained here [and] is unable to justify his absence from the plantation. He will remain under arrest until the company sends [someone] to collect him."¹⁹² In the 1920s if Haitian immigrants were found in the country without documents they were usually arrested and then deported. In addition, immigrants with permits had the right to live and work anywhere in the Dominican Republic. In 1936 this policy began to quietly change. National authorities started apprehending immigrants found outside of plantations and forcing them to return. When immigration officials found undocumented

¹⁹¹ Lauren Derby, "Haitians, Magic, and Money: 'raza' and Society in the Haitian-Dominican Borderlands, 1900-1937," *Comparative Studies in Society and History: an International Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (1994): 513; Turits, "A World Destroyed, a Nation Imposed," 598.

¹⁹² Dirección General de la Migración, 1936 Legajo 4, AGN.

immigrants, they would also send them to whatever plantation would agree to pay their immigration taxes instead of deporting them. This was not a systematic, or even officially codified policy and coexisted with other tactics for several years. However, documents emanating from the national department of migration show the changes taking place in Trujillo's approach to the Haitian presence in the Dominican Republic.

In January of 1937 an Army Captain wrote his superior about how he resolved an issue with a group of Haitian immigrants detained near the border without immigration permits. He explained that he had contacted the Director of Immigration who told him "it is advisable for the government to force these laborers to pay immigration and *cédula* taxes." The Captain did not attempt to extract these fees from the migrants himself. Instead he "spoke with an...employee at the Barahona Company [sugar plantation], and [we]...agreed on turning over these immigrants [for]...the payment of immigration and *cédula* taxes."¹⁹³ These actions represent a laxness about immigration and an unwillingness to harshly punish offenders that was typical of policy during this period. Contacting plantations to find an employer willing to pay immigrants' taxes seemed like a pragmatic solution to many government officials. Yet, these documents also indicate that authorities were moving towards a system in which sugar plantations were the only legal spaces for Haitians.¹⁹⁴ These were the first official documents to indicate that Haitian immigrants were losing the right to mobility that they had long possessed in the Dominican Republic.

In the summer of 1937 these subtle changes gave way to a major shift in national immigration policy. Valdés wrote to local officials about a national, and secret, campaign

¹⁹³ Gobernación Del Seibo, 1941 Legajo 36, AGN.

¹⁹⁴ See Gobernación del Seibo, 1936 Legajo 17 and 18, AGN.

against Haitians living in the southwestern border provinces. In a June 15th letter to the immigration inspector in Barahona, Valdés explained that “the Secretary of Justice will be in charge of the Haitian question [and] will direct the campaign that will be waged against them. You should, confidentially, approach the commanding officer of the Army and speak to him about this matter.”¹⁹⁵ A few days later the nature of this clandestine campaign became clear. On June 20th Armando Mario Aybar, the immigration inspector for Barahona, sent a telegram to inspectors in neighboring municipalities instructing them to “gather as soon as possible every Haitian... who does not have their immigration permit or *cédula*.”¹⁹⁶

Given the rapid change in immigration policy Valdés demanded, the order to round up all Haitians living in the southern border regions undoubtedly came from the president. The central government also endeavored to keep this campaign against Haitians clandestine. Valdés’s frequent communications to Aybar mention the need for secrecy. In one of several telegrams sent to Aybar on June 21st, Valdés asserted the need for “absolute discretion.”¹⁹⁷ In another letter he explained why: “so as not to appear [as if] the campaign is against Haitians.” If the true goal of the government’s actions was known, “it may ruin the whole plan...and create so many difficulties and complaints that we will have to abandon the whole plan.” Valdés ended the letter by enumerating exactly what needed to remain secret. He wrote, “the public should not know from the beginning

¹⁹⁵ Inspección de Migración Barahona, 1937 Legajo 39, AGN.

¹⁹⁶ Inspección de Migración Barahona, 1937 Legajo 39, AGN.

¹⁹⁷ Inspección de Migración Barahona, 1937 Legajo 39, AGN.

that the offender will work on the highways nor that [we have] not included... foreigners who are not Haitian.”¹⁹⁸

Based on these letters, the secret “plan” handed down from the central government entailed arresting all Haitians in the southern border regions without proper documents and forcing them to work building road. Once localities had detained all Haitian residents without permits, they were ordered to send them to public works. Sugar plantations were to be targeted as well, but Valdés urged inspectors to first work with plantation administrators to document workers, not to detain plantation employees without notifying the company. Valdés warned Aybar “[do not] go directly to the plantation and provoke discussions with the employees...[instead] give prior notice [to] the administrator in person to deliver permits to all his employees within a week.”¹⁹⁹ This campaign therefore focused on Haitians living outside of plantations near the border. The Trujillo government still struggled to control the bilingual and bi-cultural communities in this area. Lack of infrastructure, and the often-open hostility of transnational communities to urban visions of Dominican nationalism that emphasized whiteness, meant that the border was a haven for anti-government rebel groups.²⁰⁰

Trujillo saw the central government’s inability to control the border and to incorporate border dwellers into the Dominican nation as a major threat to his plan to transform the country. It is therefore plausible that Trujillo thought that he could solve two problems at once by detaining Haitian residents near the border and using them as laborers to build roads, thus improving the state’s access to isolated communities. Trujillo

¹⁹⁸ Inspección de Migración Barahona, 1937 Legajo 39, AGN.

¹⁹⁹ Inspección de Migración Barahona, 1937 Legajo 39, AGN.

²⁰⁰ Turits, “A World Destroyed, a Nation Imposed,” 612.

undoubtedly hoped it would both help bring rural communities resistant to central control under the authority of the state, and help remove Haitian immigrants from the country. He clearly viewed both as crucial to his ability to extend his domination over the entire nation. This campaign appears to be a turning point in Trujillo's immigration policy. Haitians on sugar plantations were still an accepted presence, but Haitians living elsewhere were not. Immigration officials were instructed to break the law, albeit carefully, in order to segregate undocumented Haitians and use them to facilitate Trujillo's state building efforts.

However, Trujillo remained unable to implement this plan. Communication about detentions dropped off by July, until August 14th when Valdés wrote Aybar about the repatriation of just twenty-nine Haitians being held in the jail in Barahona. In addition, there are no records of large numbers of Haitians working on road construction in the south during this period. Why did this initial campaign against border dwellers fail? From the beginning, local government officials questioned the legality of these actions, thus necessitating the frequent calls for officials' silence about the details of this plan. In one of his final letters on this matter to an immigration inspector in Barahona, Valdés chastised Aybar for circulating requests to send Haitians to public works. He wrote, "the law does not authorize us to hand over [Haitians] to public works [and] put them to work."²⁰¹ Valdés represented the central government, but at the same time had to convince local officials to accept state directives. His letters demonstrate an awareness that rural communities would not look favorably on this level of government intervention. He continued, "we should title these lists... 'offenders of Law #739 to be deported' because it is necessary to keep up appearances, to protect all of our actions with

²⁰¹ (Emphasis original) Inspección de Migración Barahona, 1937 Legajo 39, AGN.

the veil of legality, even though we are perusing different...objectives.”²⁰² In this letter Valdés expressed, perhaps unwittingly, the fundamental logic behind Trujillo’s immigration policy. Trujillo would eventually publicly express a very anti-Haitian political ideology. While his violent acts and rhetoric aimed at Haitians are most well remembered, many of the mechanisms that served his anti-Haitian nationalism initially operated clandestinely. The Trujillo government still had to convince many Dominicans of the supposed threat Haitians posed to them, and convince local representatives to relinquish authority over the Haitian members of their communities. Maintaining a “veil of legality” allowed Trujillo to justify his actions to the Dominican population as necessary steps to protect the country.

In his copious instructions, Valdés often focused on the need to obscure the government’s targeting of Haitian immigrants, and not immigrants in general. While members of the Dominican elite saw Haitian immigration as a fundamental threat to Dominican culture, most residents of the Dominican Republic did not think this way in 1937. Official anti-Haitianism would have been unfamiliar to border dwellers, and while they viewed Haitians as ethnically different, an illegal campaign against all Haitians could have caused a backlash in an area where many people counted both Haitians and Dominicans in their families.²⁰³ It is clear that Valdés believed that the public would find this kind of blatant prejudice distasteful. This was certainly due in part to the fact that local leaders opposed state attempts to intervene in their communities and disrupt their authority. If the details of this plan became public the government would not be able to move forward, perhaps because those local representatives needed to assist in the arrest,

²⁰² Inspección de Migración Barahona, 1937 Legajo 39, AGN.

²⁰³ Derby, “Haitians, Magic, and Money,” 493; Turits, “A World Destroyed, a Nation Imposed,” 596.

transfer, and discipline of a conscripted Haitian workforce would refuse to help. Valdés also evidently thought that mandating forced labor for those found in violation of immigration laws, as opposed to deportation, was illegal and that border communities might not accept it. At this time central government officials assumed that much of the Dominican public was still opposed to blatant anti-Haitian government action. The lessons from this summer campaign would have been clear to Trujillo: even after seven years of brutal dictatorship he did not have absolute control over the nation. Local connections between Haitians and Dominicans had thwarted his ability to implement the policies he wanted to.

Soon after this plan against Haitian border residents proved to be unsuccessful, Trujillo moved towards more drastic action. Unable to secure the support of local authorities, Trujillo decided to utilize the sector of the country most loyal to him: the Army. In August of that year Trujillo embarked on an extensive tour of the border region, reflecting his concern about political control in the area. Evidently displeased with what he saw, at a dance in his honor in the border town of Dajabón Trujillo ominously spoke about the threat of Haitian depredation in the area, and promised to remedy the situation.²⁰⁴ A few days later soldiers began entering the region around Dajabón. Over the course of several days an estimated ten to twenty thousand Haitians and people of Haitian descent were killed. Thousands attempted to flee and were murdered while trying to escape the country over the portentously named Massacre River. The Army carried out most of the killings, utilizing machetes and not firearms, apparently to allow plausible deniability of central government involvement. This time there was no room for local objection: the brutality employed in this unprecedented act of state violence terrified most

²⁰⁴ Turits, "A World Destroyed, a Nation Imposed," 613.

border residents and even those who were not directly targeted spent the days of the massacre hiding from the Army.²⁰⁵

An estimated 6,000 to 10,000 of refugees from the massacre streamed over the border into Haiti. News spread quickly and public outcry mounted against this dramatic act of Dominican aggression. Haitian president Sténio Vincent attempted to repress news of the massacre, apparently afraid of sending troops to the border and leaving him unprotected against domestic enemies.²⁰⁶ However, as pressure mounted he began to call for an investigation by the international community. While Trujillo tried to portray the massacre as a purely local event, outside observers did not see it as such. Given the rise of fascism in Europe, the massacre elicited comparisons between Trujillo and Mussolini or Hitler. Concerned about maintaining allies in the region as tensions rose in Europe, Franklin Roosevelt concocted a diplomatic solution to the conflict. Over the course of U.S.-led arbitration, Trujillo would not agree to an investigation or accept any responsibility, but instead offered to pay an indemnity of \$750,000 to Haiti in order to bring a swift end to negotiations. Vincent quickly agreed, although only a portion of that money was ever delivered and little of it ever reached the victims.²⁰⁷ It is unknown why Vincent so quickly accepted this meager payment, a mere \$150 for each of the massacre's victims, rather than pushing for an international investigation. It is clear, though, that he had no desire to get involved in the details of or the fallout from the massacre.

²⁰⁵ Turits, "A World Destroyed, a Nation Imposed," 620.

²⁰⁶ Turits, "A World Destroyed, a Nation Imposed," 622.

²⁰⁷ Eric Roorda, *The Dictator Next Door: The Good Neighbor Policy and the Trujillo Regime in the Dominican Republic, 1930-1945* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 142.

Many authors have argued that it is impossible to know why Rafael Trujillo carried out such a horrifically violent event.²⁰⁸ Indeed, we may never know exactly why he decided mass murder was necessary and justified. Yet, the incidents preceding the event provide new insight into why Trujillo ordered a massacre. Archival evidence demonstrates that the regime was frustrated with the lack of support in rural communities for anti-Haitian policies. By demonstrating the power of the Trujillo government, the massacre attempted to compel obedience from local officials who had resisted central state involvement. Historical evidence indicates that Trujillo saw prevalent Dominican acceptance of the Haitian presence in the nation as a threat to his consolidation of political control, and he believed that a dramatic act of violence was needed to break down the long-standing networks between Haitians and Dominicans. The massacre therefore was not necessarily concerned with eliminating Haitians from the country, but with eradicating Haitian-Dominican communities and asserting the authority of the central government over local officials. Following the massacre, as Turits and other scholars have examined, anti-Haitianism became an increasingly important part of official Dominican nationalism.

Timothy Snyder writes that acts of ethnic cleansing in Europe at this time “can easily be seen as the culmination of ancient hatreds...[but] those who plan ethnic cleansing mean to obliterate...complex pasts.”²⁰⁹ After most Haitians in the border zone

²⁰⁸ Turits, “A World Destroyed, a Nation Imposed”; Derby, “Haitians, Magic, and Money”; Edward Paulino, “Erasing the Kreyòl from the Margins of the Dominican Republic: The Pre- and Post-Nationalization Project of the Border, 1930-1945,” *Wadabagei: A Journal of the Caribbean and Its Diasporas* 8, no. 2 (2005): 35-71.

²⁰⁹ Timothy Snyder, “The Causes of Ukrainian-Polish Ethnic Cleansing 1943,” *Past and Present* 179, no. 1 (2003): 234. While an ally of the U.S. for strategic reasons, Trujillo was undoubtedly influenced by fascist ideologies circulating in Europe. The anti-Haitianism of the Trujillo regime borrowed from fascist doctrines that advocated purging the nation of any alien elements that could weaken it. Pedro Luis San

had been killed or had fled to Haiti, the central government sent in priests, teachers, and agricultural colonists from elsewhere in the country to “Dominicanize” the border. Following the diplomatic resolution of the massacre, Trujillo was able to rewrite the incident as a necessary and measured response to the “passive” invasion of Haitian culture that threatened the Dominican nation. State-sponsored historians argued that fundamental conflict between the nations could be traced to the 1822-1844 Haitian occupation of the Dominican Republic, and some went even further, claiming that the divergence started with clashes between French buccaneers and Spanish colonial authorities.²¹⁰ These narratives sought to erase the long history of Haitian-Dominican communities on the island and justify government violence against Haitians and dictatorial control over Dominicans.

At the signing of an indemnity agreement with Haiti reached after the massacre, Trujillo released a statement to the foreign government representatives present reminding them that, “the only threat that hovers over the future of our children [is] that constituted by the penetration, pacific but permanent and stubborn, of the worst Haitian element into our territory.”²¹¹ Haitians were no longer simply ethnically different; they were an anathema to the Dominican Republic and a fundamental threat to its existence. As Turits writes, “difference had been transformed into otherness and marginality.”²¹² Because of

Miguel, *The Imagined Island: History, Identity, and Utopia in Hispaniola* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 58.

²¹⁰ Joaquín Balaguer, *La realidad dominicana: Semblaza de un país y de un régimen* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Imprenta Ferrari Hermanos, 1947); Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi, *Invasiones Haitiana de 1801, 1805 y 1822* (Ciudad Trujillo, Dominican Republic: Editora del Caribe, 1955.)

²¹¹ José Israel Cuello, *Documentos del conflicto dominico-haitiano de 1937* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Editora Taller, 1985), 466.

²¹² Turits, “A World Destroyed, A Nation Imposed,” 634.

the at times blatant anti-Haitianism of the Dominican government, some observers have portrayed Haitian-Dominican relations as a transhistorical conflict between two diametrically opposed nations.²¹³ This ignores the fact that Trujillo worked to drastically change the popular view of Haiti and Haitians in the Dominican Republic. In doing so he sought to undermine longstanding familial and economic networks between Dominicans and Haitians that limited the force of his state-sanctioned nationalism. Trujillo attempted to rewrite history and claim the massacre was the inevitable outcome of longstanding hatred between the two nations by erasing a long and complex history that had linked residents on both sides of Hispaniola.

Anti-Haitianism was not a natural fact of Dominican identity, but a political tactic used by the Trujillo government to engage a now subdued Dominican population in the official nationalism of the state by taking power away from local authorities and pitting Dominicans against an abstract other. At the time of the massacre most did not imagine Haitianness as antithetical to Dominican identity. Ethnic conflicts and prejudices certainly existed, but a cohesive political ideology of “Anti-Haitianism” that emphasized fundamental ethnic differences between Haitians and Dominicans would have been unfamiliar to the majority of the population during this period.²¹⁴ The letters between Valdés and Aybar reflect this fact. They both worried about the reaction if the public

²¹³ For more on this phenomenon see Samuel Martínez, "Not a Cockfight: Rethinking Haitian-Dominican Relations," *Latin American Perspectives: a Journal of Capitalism and Socialism* 30, no. 3 (2003): 80-101; Lauren Derby, "'Se Fue Pa' La Azúcar': Film Review of The Price of Sugar and The Sugar Babies," *Caribbean Studies (Puerto Rico)* 36, no. 2 (2008): 250-265.

²¹⁴ Ethnic divisions between Dominicans and Haitians, as well as local understandings of difference between the two groups, certainly existed prior to the massacre. As Lauren Derby writes about pre-1937 border communities, “Dominican border culture must be understood both as furnishing a common Haitian-Dominican identity in relation to centers of power and outsiders, and as containing fissures of separation, invisible internal indices of difference and differentiation that could become divisive when conflict arose.” A similar statement could be made about Haitian-Dominican communities within plantations. “Haitians, Magic, and Money,” 494.

discovered that the government only targeted Haitians, or that officials violated immigration laws to coerce Haitian migrants into performing labor. After rural authorities frustrated his attempts to isolate Haitian residents, Trujillo reached the conclusion that a violent rupture was the only way to fundamentally change Dominicans' perception of Haitians. Trujillo's intellectuals therefore fabricated an ethnic conflict in part to justify the imposition of national power over local authorities, and to unite citizens under the banner of a cohesive Dominican nationalism.

While the 1937 massacre often stands apart in Caribbean historiography as a uniquely brutal act of racist state violence, it was in fact part of a larger regional historical moment. Anxiety about black Haitian and West Indian immigrants grew in nations across the circum-Caribbean as global commodities prices dropped precipitously during this period. In 1934 Honduras passed immigration reform designed to halt West Indian immigration to banana plantations, and began to deport those immigrants in the country.²¹⁵ The same year Costa Rica passed a law forbidding the employment of "colored people" on the United Fruit Company's newly constructed plantations.²¹⁶ In September of 1937 Cuba expelled an estimated 25,000 Haitian workers from its sugar fields, and made moves to force companies to use Cuban labor.²¹⁷ The presence of immigrant groups perceived to be racially inferior raised questions for political elites about their national identity. Responding to both economic and racial anxieties,

²¹⁵ Glenn A. Chambers, *Race, Nation, and West Indian Immigration to Honduras, 1890-1940* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010), 135.

²¹⁶ Lara Putnam, *The Company They Kept: Migrants and the Politics of Gender in Caribbean Costa Rica, 1870-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 73.

²¹⁷ Marc C. McLeod, "Undesirable Aliens: Race, Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Comparison of Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant workers in Cuba, 1912-1939," *Journal of Social History* 31, no. 3 (Spring 1998): 599; Robert Whitney and Graciela Chailloux Laffita, *Subjects or Citizens: British Caribbean Workers in Cuba, 1900-1960* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013), 60.

governments attempted to remove immigrant populations and worked to construct national narratives that emphasized whiteness. The Dominican case does stand out within the region because of the extreme violence employed, and the fact that the state continued to encourage increased immigration even while employing anti-immigrant ideology and violence. Therefore, the legacy of this mid-1930s moment had a much greater historical impact in the Dominican Republic than elsewhere, but it should not be viewed as exceptional.

Anti-Haitianism and the Sugar Industry

The massacre was part of a larger plan to make anti-Haitianism a fundamental component of state-sanctioned Dominican nationalism. After Trujillo felt he had taken care of the problems he saw on the border, he turned his sights to the sugar plantations, and worked to dismantle the Haitian-Dominican networks that existed there. An estimated forty percent of the country's pre-massacre Haitian population lived on sugar plantations, and following the murder of tens of thousands of Haitian residents, and the subsequent displacement of border dwellers, the percentage was undoubtedly higher.²¹⁸ While there has been important work done about the impact of anti-Haitian policies on the border, there has not been any investigation into what happened on plantations following the massacre. In sugar producing areas Trujillo could not afford to employ overt state violence, or even to attempt to decrease the Haitian population. After his failed attempts to "Dominicanize" the sugar industry in the early 1930s, he understood that he could not simply remove Haitian immigrants from within Dominican borders. Following

²¹⁸ Vega, *Trujillo Y Haití: Volumen II*, 35.

the massacre, sugar companies began to recruit clandestinely inside Haiti almost immediately.²¹⁹ Sugar labor was an important part of the Haitian peasant economy in many places, and economic hardship continued to produce willing recruits even following such widespread anti-Haitian violence. The number of Haitians traveling to the Dominican Republic, therefore, did not decrease following the massacre. Most importantly, the Trujillo government did not attempt to limit or stop Haitian migration to sugar plantations, but rather even encouraged it.

While in the border region Trujillo attempted to expel any Haitian presence, in sugar producing areas he pursued a different strategy: he attempted to contain it. In order to do so officials worked to fundamentally change the public's perception about Haitians and their place in the Dominican Republic. This meant fixing Haitians' role in the Dominican nation and their physical location, closely associating identity and place. As the attempted campaign against undocumented Haitian immigrants preceding the massacre demonstrated, Haitians on sugar plantations were still an acceptable, and even increasingly indispensable, presence.²²⁰ Following the massacre Trujillo attempted to physically, economically, and culturally isolate Haitians by making sugar plantations the only available space for Haitians in the country and sugar labor the only available form of employment. However, the imposition of anti-Haitian ideology did not happen immediately or evenly across the country. This association between Haitian identity and sugar had to be officially imposed and negotiated locally. As in other parts of the country, local authorities in sugar producing areas struggled to interpret this new systematic treatment of migrants, and at times resisted the government's anti-Haitian policies.

²¹⁹ Martinez, *Peripheral Migrants*, 45.

²²⁰ Turits, "A World Destroyed, a Nation Imposed," 630.

The government's attempts to isolate Haitian immigrants and limit their mobility dramatically increased following the massacre.²²¹ The national government moved to force Haitians who owned their own land and businesses, or worked in other industries, onto sugar plantations. This emerging policy was not codified in law, but instead involved various levels of government officials using extra-legal tactics to pressure Haitians to relocate to sugar plantations. Unable to use violence as they had on the border, the central government instead had to induce local authorities to comply with this new policy. Over the next several years the governor of El Seibo, an eastern province home to several sugar plantations, worked to impose this new, clandestine government policy while at the same time attempting to explain and justify the strategy to sometimes confused local officials. In June of 1938 the governor of El Seibo, Antonio Ramírez, wrote to a resident named Pedro García to ask him to evict a Haitian man who had created a small provision plot on García's land. Confused, García wrote back to Ramírez to ask him why he had to evict such an "honest and hardworking" man, who he had given express permission to cultivate on his land. Although García did concede that, "if it is an order of the government, I will comply", he was clearly confused about why this Haitian man no longer had a right to cultivate and reside outside of a sugar plantation.²²²

This incident was part of a widespread policy, not codified in law, against allowing Haitians to work outside plantations in sugar-producing regions. In February of 1939 the Governor of El Seibo wrote to a local mayor about a Haitian migrant who had applied for a residency permit. While acknowledging that the applicant "fulfilled the

²²¹ In his 1953 book Haitian intellectual Jean Price Mars described the Dominican government's attempts to limit the mobility of Haitian workers. Jean Price-Mars, *La República de Haití y la República Dominicana* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Sociedad Dominicana de Bibliófilos, 1995), 792.

²²² Gobernación Del Seibo, 1938 Legajo 10, AGN.

legal requirements to obtain a residency permit,” the Governor noted that because of the “official ideology on this matter, he cannot continue working in agriculture...he must reside in one of the [sugar company] *bateyes* located in this region.”²²³ The Governor’s allusion to “official ideology” no doubt referred to the instructions handed down from the national government. It appears Ramírez had been tasked with convincing local officials to enforce this new anti-Haitian ideology. While doing so, he acknowledged that his actions were not entirely legal: he admitted that the immigrant had a legal claim to immigration documents, but because of national policy he had to withhold them until the man moved to a sugar plantation. While Trujillo employed military violence to override the authority of local officials on the border, in sugar-producing regions his government attempted to recruit local officials to enforce anti-Haitian policies. Trujillo had been chastised by the international community for the massacre, and knew he had to maintain the support of the U.S. government and North American sugar companies. He therefore had to utilize different political tactics to impose anti-Haitianism in sugar producing regions. By removing Haitians from local communities, and associating them with sugar labor, the government attempted to disrupt established Haitian-Dominican networks.²²⁴

Despite following official national policy, Governor Ramírez attempted to mitigate the impact of this new anti-Haitianism on the residents of his province. On September 27, 1940 Ramírez wrote to another mayor about a Haitian resident. He explained, “after talking with said Haitian, and in agreement with the immigration inspector, we have agreed...upon his departure from this section, [and his relocation] to

²²³ Gobernación Del Seibo, 1930 Legajo 2, AGN.

²²⁴ There is also evidence of the government removing Haitians from positions as teachers in the East. Gobernación Del Seibo, 1940 Legajo 20, AGN.

Ingenio Consuelo.” Not only did the governor take the time to discuss this move with the Haitian man, he appears to have attempted to protect the man’s property despite his forced move. Ramírez continued, “since he has...a piece of land that he has bought he will leave [it] to a Dominican who is his wife. You should try [to ensure] that this Haitian citizen does not lose what he has worked for on the aforementioned land.”²²⁵ Ramírez clearly followed policy handed down from the national government, and used extra-legal tactics to do so. Yet, these letters reveal that at times he attempted to mitigate the impact of these actions on Haitians subject to those policies. Haitian migrants were deeply embedded in local networks of exchange, kinship, and friendship. The governor had to negotiate these ties in each individual case, attempting to appease community supporters while gradually erasing the Haitian presence outside sugar plantations. As this process was repeated throughout the region, eventually Haitian identity would be closely linked to sugar labor in the eastern Dominican Republic.

Cultivation clearly connected Haitians and Dominicans in the East. The governor appeared to respect the hard work that this Haitian man put into his own land, and did not want him to have to suffer its loss. In addition, public opinion in the region also supported cultivation rights and the governor had to be accountable to this as well. When Pedro García wrote the governor about the ordered eviction of a Haitian resident he referenced his friend’s hard work on his land. Dominicans and Haitian immigrants both came from Afro-Caribbean peasant backgrounds, which valued independence through cultivation. Many would have viewed the central government’s attempts to revoke cultivation rights as a violation of local autonomy. The governor demonstrated some respect for those rights, perhaps in an attempt to assuage the fears of local authorities. In

²²⁵ Gobernación Del Seibo, 1940 Legajo 13, AGN.

response, the Trujillo government worked to limit Haitians' right to land in the Dominican Republic. In 1940 the agricultural inspector for the East wrote to the Secretary of State for Agriculture, Industry and Work to report that he had visited the local community of Ramón Santana to "give instructions to the president of the community agricultural committee...to cancel the contracts issued by the committee [to] Haitians...in the lands ceded...by the Santa Fé plantation."²²⁶ This committee clearly believed that both Haitian and Dominican residents had a right to independent cultivation on sugar plantation land. Farming was after all viewed as a fundamental right for hard-working men and women in Hispaniolan peasant communities.²²⁷ However, the central government asserted that Haitians should labor on sugar plantations, not cultivate land available elsewhere. By slowly removing Haitian immigrants from peasant networks and isolating them on plantations, the government sought to persuade Dominicans that Haitians were fundamentally different from them.

Local residents and officials had to be convinced of this new guiding doctrine positing Haitians as an anathema to Dominican civilization and as synonymous with sugar labor. During the early years of his rule Trujillo enlarged the ranks of the *acalde pedáneos*, the state's lowest level officials who were in charge of small communities all over the country, and empowered them to carry out the regime's goals.²²⁸ The government attempted to use these newly appointed officials to further impose anti-Haitian ideology. A 1940 handbook for *acalde pedáneos* instructed them to be vigilante

²²⁶ Gobernación Del Seibo, 1940 Legajo 25, AGN.

²²⁷ See Turits, *Foundations of Despotism*; Miami Sheller, *Citizenship from Below: Erotic Agency and Caribbean Freedom*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Laurent Dubois, *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2012.)

²²⁸ Turits, *Foundations of Despotism*, 213.

of “Haitianizing influences whose consequences will always be extremely fatal for Dominican society.”²²⁹ The government instructed the local authorities about the supposed danger of Haitian immigrants in the hopes of gaining grassroots support for anti-Haitian policies.

The Trujillo regime had reason to believe that local officials would not immediately view Haitian cultural influences as dangerous. Community authorities did not fully support the government’s crackdown on Haitian popular culture that followed the 1937 massacre. The Dominican elite had long used the specter of Haitian culture, and particularly Haitian popular religion, as an argument for limiting immigration. Following the massacre, Vodou was used as an example of the cultural threat posed by Haitian contamination of Dominican culture. In a 1942 speech along the border, Manuel Arturo Peña Batlle, a noted anti-Haitian intellectual in Trujillo’s regime warned, “if we now consider the increasing acceptance...in our population of poor means of the practice of the monstrous, fetishist practice of voodoo, we will realize that if we do not act with a firm hand... the time will come when evil is irremediable between us.” He continued, “There is not a genuinely civilized and cultured government in the world that would not take decisive measures against such a serious threat.”²³⁰ The next year, in September of 1943, the Trujillo government passed a law that established a punishment of two months to one-year imprisonment for anyone found participating in Vodou ceremonies.²³¹

²²⁹ Ernesto Sagás, *Race and Politics in the Dominican Republic* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 62.

²³⁰ Manuel Arturo Peña Battle, “El Sentido de una política” in *Documentos del Conflicto Dominico-Haitiano de 1937* ed. José Israel Cuello (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Editora Taller, C. por A., 1985), 499.

²³¹ Martha Ellen Davies, *La Otra Ciencia: el vodú dominicano como religion y medicina populares* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Editora Universitaria, USAD, 1987), 41.

The Dominican government was not alone in its opposition to expressions of Haitian popular religion: diplomatic representatives of the Haitian government articulated similar sentiments. In November of 1939 the Haitian consul in San Pedro de Macorís, the provincial capital of an eastern sugar-producing region, wrote to the local detachment of the national police about “the ‘*Judú*’ dances”—a Dominicanized word for Vodou—that took place on sugar plantations in the region. Employing similar language to Peña Batlle, he argued, “these unhappy Haitians would not dare attempt...[such] a crime...in Haiti...and what is worse, [they] constitute a serious threat to public morals and the good name of my country.”²³² Four years earlier, the Haitian government had tightened the penal regime against Vodou, partially as a response to negative international press.²³³ Only a few years after the massacre, central government officials in Haiti and the Dominican Republic found common ground in their opposition to popular religious practices, and collaborated on the repression of Vodou.

At the same time, the leaders of Dominican peasant communities collaborated with their Haitian neighbors to defend their right to engage in religious ceremonies, and opposition to Vodou was not entrenched among the popular classes during this period. Just a month after the Haitian consul complained about the practice, in December of 1939, a representative from the town of El Seibo wrote the governor to complain about the actions of *guarda campestres* on the nearby plantations. He accused them of “not allowing Haitians to celebrate dances in the *bateyes*” and “mistakenly interpreting them for the so-called dances of ‘*Judú*.’” This tendency to “consider all [dances] as ‘*Judú*’

²³² Bernardo Vega, *La Vida Cotidiana Dominicana a Través del Archivo Particular del Generalísimo* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Fundación Cultural Dominicana, 1986), 126.

²³³ Kate Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law: Vodou and Power in Haiti* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 183-86.

dances” had financial repercussions for the municipality. The city council reminded the governor that, “[these] measures tend to hurt the interests of this municipality, since the income [from] dances is one of the [sources of] revenue that this council counts on.”²³⁴

The governor passed these complaints on to the *guarda campestre*. The chief of the plantation’s *guarda campestre* argued that his men had only targeted *Judú* dances and not “Dominican dances...celebrated by Haitians workers.”²³⁵

Following the massacre the central government constructed Vodou as an external threat to Dominicaness. However, this policy came into conflict with arrangements that had regulated Haitian religious practices for decades. As chapter one discussed, Haitian immigrants often came to agreements with local or plantation officials in order to secure safe spaces in which to perform religious ceremonies. By the late 1930s in El Seibo these arrangements had grown into an important source of revenue for municipal governments. This was far more important to the city council than a distant national policy against Haitian cultural expressions. The town representative ended his letter to the governor by stating “moreover [these actions] are unjust because...Haitians living within this jurisdiction cannot lawfully enjoy themselves.”²³⁶ Undoubtedly the fact that Dominicans profited from established economic networks with Haitians motivated opposition to outside intervention. However, it is also clear that some people were morally opposed to what they viewed as an overextension of government authority. The author of this letter believed that the law should not prevent residents, be they Dominican or Haitian, from engaging in important and fulfilling religious ceremonies.

²³⁴ Gobernación Del Seibo, 1939 Legajo 5, AGN.

²³⁵ Gobernación Del Seibo, 1939 Legajo 5, AGN.

²³⁶ Gobernación Del Seibo, 1939 Legajo 5, AGN.

These conflicts between local officials and the Trujillo government demonstrate that, for the majority of the population, anti-Haitianism was not constitutive of Dominican identity in the years following the massacre. While ethnic stereotypes and prejudices did exist, local networks between Haitians and Dominicans were far more important than nationalist ideology. The idea that Haitian culture was antithetical to Dominican culture, or that Haitians were only equipped for sugar labor, were not familiar concepts to residents of sugar-producing regions at this time. However, the regime proved adept at encouraging or pressuring governors, mayors, and plantation officials to enforce changes in national policy. In this way, the central government began isolating Haitians on sugar plantations and changing the public perception of them. This now meant that Haitian identity was associated only with certain spaces within the country: they could not be part of the peasant landscape anymore; they were only part of the landscape of sugarcane.

Isolation and Community Development in *Bateyes*

As the government worked to isolate *bateyes*, and at the same time continued to encourage Haitian migration to sugar plantations, the permanent communities within *bateyes* grew. Sugar companies had their own ideas about how these communities should occupy and use space. The presence of more permanent populations eased some of the companies' labor needs. Large numbers of seasonal workers were needed for the harvest, and those living in the *bateyes* provided a buffer against labor shortages and often worked in the numerous, low-level company positions above cane-cutters that made the harvest run smoothly. Those in charge of day-to-day policing of *bateyes* were also often

community members. Although sugar companies imposed more rules on land use during this period, as members of the community the *guarda campestre* often recognized, and even defended, long-established, informal property claims. However, as stable settlements grew, low-level plantation authorities also increasingly policed residents' behavior in both public and private spaces of the *bateyes* in order to maintain some compliance with residents' community norms. Rules of conduct were based on a company desire for a stable and compliant workforce, but also on residents' opinions about what was disruptive and what was not. Policing of the *bateyes* cannot therefore be seen as a simple top down relationship. Company opinions about what constituted appropriate behavior for a workforce certainly drove attempts to control *batey* residents. However, plantation residents carried out the day-to-day surveillance in the *bateyes*, and their actions also reflected community opinions about unacceptable behavior.

As permanent communities grew, plantation authorities came into conflict with residents about the "appropriate" use of plantation space. People were not allowed to simply wander around plantation land if they were not working. Beginning in the 1940s the *guarda campestre* reported arresting people for vagrancy on the plantation. Nationally the Trujillo regime strengthened the enforcement of vagrancy laws, and frequently arrested men if they did not own land or hold a job. On sugar plantations these laws could be used to limit access to those who worked for the sugar company. For example, in 1940 the La Romana *guarda campestre* turned over Carlos Sánchez to the local police for "vagrancy and [acting] suspiciously, [we] find him frequently sleeping in the wagons and [in] hidden parts of this *batey*."²³⁷ Since Sánchez did not apparently work on the plantation, he was punished for trying to use its public spaces to find a sheltered place to

²³⁷ Gobernación Del Seibo, 1940 Legajo 25, AGN.

sleep. He was also clearly not an established member of the community, as he was described as a suspicious vagrant. A year later the La Romana *guarda campestre* arrested a man for bathing in one of the plantation's water tanks.²³⁸ In neither of these two cases were the men explicitly obstructing sugar production. Because of their increased control over the territory of the plantation, company officials enforced more stringent regulations of plantation residents' behavior in order to ensure control over workers. This meant more restrictions on how people moved through and utilized space. On the other hand, the actions of these men also disrupted community uses of space. An unknown man sleeping in public areas, or someone bathing in the *batey*'s water supply would have no doubt annoyed residents. The *guarda campestre*'s arrests therefore reflected a company desire to limit access to its land, and community attitudes about disruptive conduct.

Sugar companies' increased power over their territory meant they were able to impose new restrictions on land use. Luis González, who was born on the Las Pajas plantation in 1930, recalled that during his childhood the areas of the plantation that were permissible to cultivate were limited. Residents could cultivate small gardens behind their barracks and in the fallow areas between the railway tracks (used for transporting cut sugarcane) and the fields. However, they were not allowed to claim larger provision plots abutting the sugarcane. Residents also had to be careful with their animals, as González explained: “[everyone] always had their cows, they would take them to the areas where there wasn't cane and at night they would put them here in the *batey*.”²³⁹ Company management could not abolish all cultivation or grazing rights, those rights had been well

²³⁸ Gobernación Del Seibo, 1941 Legajo 7, AGN.

²³⁹ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 3, 2013.

established during the 1920s, but they could use their power to limit their spatial impact. By the early 1940s the majority of *guarda campestre* reports were dedicated to dealing with the animals seized during the week. Animal ownership was apparently widespread and at the same time closely policed.

Residents were forced to navigate increasing limits placed on their use of space and find ways to defend their claims to land. They maintained networks with peasant communities in order to purchase food for much cheaper than it was sold in the company store. In addition, despite company limitations, *batey* dwellers continued to cultivate their own food, practice animal husbandry, and collect wild foods. These practices remained important to food security, and helped residents bridge the gap between the foods they could afford and the food they needed to feed their families. The plantation recognized, and even protected, some of these production rights. For example, in November of 1941 a *guarda campestre* agent surprised Albetro Padua while he was stealing sweet potatoes from the cultivation plot of another *batey* resident. The “owner” of the plot later submitted a formal complaint to the local police.²⁴⁰ Although we do not know the outcome of the dispute, this incident demonstrates that the *guarda campestre* were well versed in individual cultivation rights and helped protect them. While drastically limiting the areas animals could occupy on the plantation, the *guarda campestre* also protected property rights over animals. When animals were stolen from residents the *guarda campestre* often reported apprehending the perpetrators. For example in 1941 the *guarda campestre* on the La Romana plantation caught a Dominican resident in the act of

²⁴⁰ Gobernación Del Seibo, 1941 Legajo 7, AGN.

robbing a horse belonging to a Haitian man and promptly arrested him.²⁴¹ This policing, however, could favor the needs of permanent or semi-permanent residents over seasonal workers. Those with established connections to the *guarda campestre* could receive better treatment and favors. The growth of communities both increased the ability of *bateyes* to negotiate with sugar companies, and began to create distance between circular migrants and those who created permanent homes on plantations.

In contrast to cultivation plots and owning animals, which were frequently only accessible to established residents, raw sugarcane, and the easy calories it provides, was available to all, including temporary migrants. Consuming company sugarcane was not allowed, but nevertheless widely practiced since company surveillance could never patrol all of the extensive cane fields. When the *guarda campestre* did attempt to prevent cane consumption workers resisted. For example, when a *guarda campestre* agent on the Santa Fé plantation tried to stop a Haitian man from eating a piece of sugarcane the Haitian man attacked him with a machete. When the agent tried to pull a gun, the man knocked it out of his hand and continued the fight. Eventually the agent recovered his weapon and shot the man.²⁴² Risking one's life to defend the right to eat sugarcane may seem extreme, but in the face of abysmal wages sugarcane could provide necessary relief from hunger. It appears that many considered eating sugarcane a right, despite plantation attempts to stop them. In September of 1939, towards the end of the non-harvest season,

²⁴¹ Gobernación Del Seibo, 1941 Legajo 7, AGN.

²⁴² Gobernación Del Seibo, 1931 Legajo 0, AGN.

Eusebio González and his son were arrested after being found with twenty-five pieces of cut cane.²⁴³ They may have sought sugarcane to supplement the family's food supply.

Such consumption was an important survival strategy, and also a stand against the absolutist property rights of the plantation. Writing about peasant theft from landowners James Scott argues: "Here the political and class meaning of poaching was perfectly evident, since the peasantry had never fully accepted the property rights of those who claimed ownership of the forests, streams, 'wastes,' and commons that had previously been the joint property of the community. Poaching was not simply a necessary subsistence option but an enactment of what was seen as a natural right."²⁴⁴ In an area where hunger was prevalent and at the same time acres and acres of easily accessible calories dominated the landscape, it was simply not acceptable to local populations to deny hungry people access to sugarcane. While inhabitants accepted some plantation rules about use of space, they did not unilaterally align with company ideas about land use and regulations on eating sugarcane were never accepted. Stealing cane from the company when one was hungry was not viewed as morally wrong, and the practice would continue throughout the twentieth century.²⁴⁵ For residents the legal land titles sugar companies held did not mean they had a right to control everything that the land produced.

²⁴³ Gobernación Del Seibo, 1939 Legajo 10, AGN.

²⁴⁴ James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, 265. While Scott discusses sharecropping peasants, I believe this statement can also be useful for understanding the wage workers on plantations that also engaged in peasant practices.

²⁴⁵ Reports of cane theft continued throughout the twentieth century. In addition, informants often spoke about taking sugarcane to eat and defended their right to do so.

Residents also defended their right to occupy company housing, and their claims appear to have been acknowledged by the plantation representatives who resided in the *bateyes*. *Guarda campestre* reports often named the “owners” of homes. For example, a 1940 report from La Romana related that two residents were arrested for fighting and exchanging “obscene” words. Their crime seems to have been more egregious because it happened “in front of the family home of Moisés Romero and W. Valdés...at one thirty in the morning.”²⁴⁶ In another incident the *guarda campestre* reported that Willy Pérez, a Dominican, hit a Haitian resident with a piece of sugarcane while he was simply “sitting next to his home.”²⁴⁷ The *guarda campestre* were clearly knowledgeable about local claims to homes, and accepted informal rights along with the community. They even protected residents’ “private property” rights within plantation housing: in 1940 the *guarda campestre* on the La Romana plantation arrested a Dominican man for breaking into a Haitian man’s home.²⁴⁸

While the *guarda campestre* did protect the housing claims of Haitian residents, this did not mean that Haitians and Dominicans had equal access to choice housing. Because rights were informal — that is, community-recognized but not legally based — access to housing was inequitable and could easily change. Women especially faced immense challenges to finding safe housing because they could not occupy company barracks on their own. Those in abusive relationships were especially in danger, since it could be hard for them to find alternative housing. In a typical incident in 1939 the La Romana *guarda campestre* reported arresting a man who tried to kill his ex-wife when

²⁴⁶ Gobernación Del Seibo, 1940 Legajo 25, AGN.

²⁴⁷ Gobernación Del Seibo, 1941 Legajo 36, AGN.

²⁴⁸ Gobernación Del Seibo, 1940 Legajo 25, AGN.

she found a place to live without him.²⁴⁹ Since women were normally not employees on the plantation they did not have the same rights to housing that men did and the *guarda campestre* reported attempting to remove women from company housing if they lived there alone.

Facing limited housing options, women at times resisted eviction. When the Santa Fé *guarda campestre* tried to remove a woman they accused of prostitution from her barracks room they reported that the guard, “ [ordered] Susana to vacate the house. She pushed the agent in an aggressive manner, telling him to enter so she could throw cooking utensils [at him.] Robinson, who is the *guarda campestre*, entered the house and Susan seized a stick that she had in the house and she grabbed the agent by the neck, hitting him in the face.”²⁵⁰ Susan, evidently, was not about to give up her home without a fight. While during the 1920s prostitution was prohibited and Haitian women accused of engaging in sex work were often deported, under the Trujillo regime prostitution was legalized and there are no reports of women being arrested or deported for prostitution within the *bateyes* during this period. While her profession may have been legally accepted, the *guarda campestre* still punished Susan for occupying a company home as a single woman and utilizing the space to run her own reputed business.

The *guarda campestre* increasingly policed women’s behavior as well, punishing what seemed to be “improper” or “indecent” conduct. As Trujillo worked to transform Dominican culture and its economy his regime became preoccupied with “improving” Dominican women in order to help raise a modern generation of Dominican citizens. Drawing heavily from eugenics debates circulating in Latin America at this time, the new

²⁴⁹ Gobernación Del Seibo, 1939 Legajo 10, AGN.

²⁵⁰ Gobernación Del Seibo, 1930 Legajo 69, AGN.

official ideal of Dominican motherhood was still deeply steeped in traditional patriarchy.²⁵¹ If women worked to be modern and hygienic mothers they could help improve the Dominican “race.” Policies and campaigns aimed at policing women’s behavior and bodies politicized the private, domestic sphere.²⁵² Rural, uneducated, and lower class women were seen as a particular threat to gendered standards of decency.²⁵³ The residents of *bateyes* were not the main targets of the regime’s educational and public health campaigns geared towards mothers, and there is no evidence that the milk banks, mothers’ groups, and networks of social workers that existed elsewhere in the country were present on sugar plantations. Due perhaps to the fact that *batey* residents were not recognized as truly Dominican by the central state, the government was less concerned with “improving” the bilingual, bicultural communities on *bateyes*. They were not subject to the same government attempts to “modernize” the domestic sphere. However, as rhetoric about “proper” gender roles diffused across the country, plantation authorities in the *bateyes* incorporated these ideas into their policing.

The *guarda campestre* patrolled both the private and public spaces of the plantation to monitor residents’ behavior. The *bateyes* were crowded places where residents competed for limited resources and faced the threat of hunger and poverty. The *guarda campestre* recorded spending a large portion of their time breaking up domestic disputes within the cramped and poverty-stressed *bateyes*. The congested nature of the

²⁵¹ For more about debates surrounding women’s role as modernizing mothers elsewhere in Latin America see Susan K. Besse, *Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil, 1914-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Nancy Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991.)

²⁵² Melissa Madera, “‘Zones of Scandal’: Gender, Public Health, and Social Hygiene in the Dominican Republic, 1916-1961” (PhD diss., State University of New York at Binghamton, 2011), 117.

²⁵³ Madera, “Zones of Scandal,” 148.

bateyes, and the fact that the *guarda campestre* resided there, meant that domestic disturbances were hard to keep private. For example, in 1939 Samuel Gil, an immigrant from the British West Indies, was arrested after “constantly bothering [his wife] and ultimately hitting her.”²⁵⁴ Another man on a neighboring plantation was arrested for “threatening [a woman] with a weapon”²⁵⁵ While these incidents were a weekly occurrence, the way the *guarda campestre* punished the parties involved differed based on how they viewed the conflict. When the *guarda campestre* reported couples fighting with each other, they transferred both parties to the local police. However, when reports stated that a man had hurt, beaten, or threatened a woman he alone was arrested. Arrests therefore reflected how the *guarda campestre* viewed “acceptable” male and female behavior, women who were seen as victims were supported during disputes, while women who were seen as aggressors were not.

While the Trujillo’s regime’s rhetoric about families mostly focused on women, public health officials and the popular media also blamed men for not fulfilling their proscribed roles and mistreating women.²⁵⁶ Trujillo’s presidential decree on the role of the *guarda campestre* stated first that agents were supposed to “take care of the property [under]... their supervision” and after that “arrest wrongdoers.”²⁵⁷ The *guarda campestre* interpreted these broad instructions based on their own relationships with and opinions of other residents. They often made the day-to-day decisions about who constituted a threat to community life and who did not. When women were see as victims of men’s violence

²⁵⁴ Gobernación Del Seibo, 1939 Legajo 10 AGN.

²⁵⁵ Gobernación Del Seibo, 1940 Legajo 19, AGN.

²⁵⁶ Madera, “Zones of Scandal,” 138.

²⁵⁷ Decreto Presidencial Numero 45 Sep 30, 1930, Gaceta Oficial #4289.

or vices they were apparently deemed worthy of some protection by plantation authorities. Women who the *guarda campestre* viewed as taking an active role in a dispute did not receive the same protection.

Women who engaged in a fight with a man or defended themselves were considered suspect. In one 1941 incident the *guarda campestre* entered the barracks after Taly Davis, an immigrant from the British West Indies, got into a fight with his Dominican wife, eventually injuring her hand with a tool. After the injury her sister, who appears to have lived with them, grabbed the tool and hit Davis over the head before the *guarda campestre* finally arrived.²⁵⁸ In the above incident Davis, his wife, and her sister were all sent to the nearest police station. Despite the fact that the women were attempting to defend themselves against a violent outburst, they were also deemed guilty. As the domestic sphere was increasingly politicized across the Dominican Republic, both men and women in the *bateyes* could find their private lives subject to greater policing. While men who blatantly mistreated women could be punished, the company also needed male workers' labor and often re-affirmed their power within relationships by punishing women who fought back against abusive partners. Women who did not conform to passive models of femininity could be arrested and even charged.

The difference between victim and aggressor to the *guarda campestre* no doubt varied extensively based on which agents responded to an incident and their relationships with the people involved. The *guarda campestre* drew on their own opinions of women to decide whose behavior was a threat to *batey* life. They frequently reported breaking up fights between women, and usually stated that women were arrested for “provoking a scandal in the public streets” and “saying obscene words.” One morning on the La

²⁵⁸ Gobernación Del Seibo, 1941 Legajo 36, AGN.

Romana plantation María Vicioso Pichón and Clarita Estein, both Dominican women who resided in the same *batey*, got into a fight during which Pichón managed to bite Estein's cheek. A clearly exasperated chief of the *guarda campestre* reported to the senior lieutenant at the closest police station and the supervising judge for the mayoralty that Pichón was, "an insufferable woman" and should therefore bear the brunt of the punishment in the case.²⁵⁹ Pichón did have a prior record: three years early she had been arrested on a different plantation for "rebellng against the authority of the *guarda campestres* Aquilino Ramírez and Juan Grullón, [and] ripping both [of their] shirts."²⁶⁰ Pichón's behavior in public was clearly unacceptable to plantation officials. Her defiance of plantation authority and her willingness to use physical violence made her an "insufferable" presence in the *batey*.

Contemporary discussions of women's roles in the Dominican Republic placed them inside the home, working on raising the next generation of Dominican citizens. Even in the *bateyes* where government policies towards women were less pronounced, women who fought, swore, and caused problems in public were seen as a threat. No doubt influenced by national rhetoric, plantation authorities also began passing judgment on *batey* women's abilities as mothers. Beginning in the 1940s the *guarda campestre* started punishing women for the actions of their children. For example, in 1941 María Padua was arrested after her son cut the wire surrounding the company animal corral.²⁶¹ However, while in some company towns increased policing of women's behavior was accompanied by a simultaneous promotion of nuclear families, in *bateyes* this was not the

²⁵⁹ Gobernación Del Seibo, 1941 Legajo 36, AGN.

²⁶⁰ Gobernación Del Seibo, 1938 Legajo 0, AGN.

²⁶¹ Gobernación Del Seibo, 1941 Legajo 36, AGN.

case.²⁶² Therefore women did not necessarily receive financial security in exchange for surveillance over their behavior.²⁶³ At the same time, some women were able to utilize changing rhetoric about gender roles to provide temporary protection from violence.

Conclusion

Understanding how Rafael Trujillo managed to quickly extend his control over a country that had never been subjugated by one political entity necessitates examining how he deployed geographies of power. Trujillo not only manipulated how people moved through space, he changed how they conceived of the land around them. Territory became defined by its legal owner and by its potential for economic productivity. The right to cultivatable land, long a foundational concept of peasant political ideology, was now a privilege granted by Trujillo to loyal, Dominican citizens, and could easily be revoked. The ability to move through space unhindered was also converted from a right into a privilege. The most drastic change to mobility rights came following the 1937 massacre of Haitians living on the border. Trujillo faced a contradiction between his anti-Haitian nationalism and his immigration policy that encouraged the entrance of tens of thousands of Haitians every year. Quarantining the Haitian presence in the country on sugar plantations allowed him to reconcile these inconsistencies. Trujillo actions were part of larger attempts to denationalize sugar plantations, making them spaces that were

²⁶² See Ann Farnsworth-Alvear, *Dulcinea in the Factory: Myths, Morals, Men and Women in Colombia's Industrial Experiment, 1905-1960* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000.)

²⁶³ In his book about the El Teniente copper mine in Chile, Thomas Klubock writes “The company regulations requiring men and women to formalize their sexual arrangements in marriage provided women a certain protection and security...In exchange for this security, married women sacrificed their economic and social independence.” *Contested Communities: Class, Gender, and Politics in Chile's El Tenient Copper Mine, 1904-1951* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 199.

not part of the Dominican nation, but enriched it. Sugar companies contributed to this tendency by arguing for absolute sovereignty over their territory.

However, as Edward Soja argues, “the inscription of oppressive geographies can also create potential spaces of resistance and enablement.”²⁶⁴ Older conceptions of land, which were closely tied to peasant moral economies, did not disappear. Peasants who lost their land to sugar plantations employed the language of the Trujillo regime to demand continued recognition of long-standing informal cultivation and ranching rights on plantation owned land. These insurgent geographies resisted the domination and denationalization of plantation territory by making it the site of continued peasant production. The government and sugar companies were forced to still recognize and cater to peasant conceptions of land. Peasant communities on the edges of sugar plantations also deepened networks with *bateyes* in order to sell their surplus produce. This not only buoyed peasant economies and improved food security within the *bateyes*, it also reinforced Haitian-Dominican connections. As the Trujillo government worked to spread anti-Haitian sentiment among the population, many citizens balked at this new ideology that went against established ways of understanding and dealing with ethnic difference. By resisting attempts to isolate and regulate the landscapes of sugar plantations, *batey* residents and their neighbors adapted inveterate Afro-Caribbean forms of resistance to challenge new geographies of power.

²⁶⁴ Edward W. Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 42.

Chapter Three **Sugar and the Entrenchment of Dictatorship, 1945-1961**

In the 1930s and 40s, the residents of Batey Monte Coca in the eastern Dominican Republic lived and worked on the land of the American-owned West Indies Sugar Company. Batey Monte Coca was established in the nineteenth century as part of the Consuelo plantation and, according to local history, was named after the Coca family that owned the land before it was converted into sugarcane fields and workers barracks. The “head” *batey* for the *Esperanza colonia*, an area encompassing several settlements, Monte Coca was home to a company administrator in charge of the section. Five smaller *bateyes* surrounded the community, at a walking distance along narrow paths through the dense walls of sugarcane. Four miles away was Batey Las Pajas, which was larger than Monte Coca and home to a sugar mill where cane from a neighboring plantation was processed. Still farther into the hills were small peasant communities like Mata Palacio, which lay nine miles away and bordered the sugarcane fields. Residents from these communities sold their produce in the *bateyes*, and often worked there during the harvest for extra cash. People, animals, and food flowed constantly among all these settlements as laborers went to work, children went to school, women sold bread, sweets, and midday provisions, and residents visited the Saturday night parties that took place in Monte Coca and Las Pajas.

In 1956, Rafael Trujillo negotiated the purchase of the three sugar mills and adjacent plantations belonging to the West Indies Sugar Company, including the Las Pajas and Consuelo mills. The sale of the company’s Dominican holdings was not entirely voluntary: during the 1940s and 50s Trujillo coerced numerous foreign owners to

sell their sugar plantations to him. He did so in part by controlling the movement of labor from Haiti. In 1952 he signed a bi-lateral labor contract with the Haitian government, and similar contracts would regulate immigration between Haiti and the Dominican Republic until 1986. This agreement effected a major shift in immigration policy because the two heads of state were now in charge of how labor was recruited and transported, instead of private businesses. It also established direct payments from sugar companies to the Haitian government for each individual worker recruited.²⁶⁵ Despite their nationalist rhetoric Trujillo and, after 1957, Haitian dictator François Duvalier collaborated to control the mobility of migrants and to profit off of their exploitation. Bilateral contracts allowed Trujillo to more effectively direct migrants to his own sugar plantations, and further dominate the sugar industry. By 1961 Trujillo personally owned the vast majority of the Dominican sugar plantations.

Following the sale of the West Indies Sugar Company's plantations, those in Monte Coca and the surrounding bateyes lived on land and in homes personally belonging to the dictator. This switch in ownership brought numerous changes. Trujillo saw plantation space differently than former North American sugar company owners had, and he held divergent views about how land should be organized and used. Unlike many North American company officials, Trujillo supported *batey* residents' cultivation and ranching rights on plantation territory. Instead of strictly limiting the land available for cultivation, under Trujillo's ownership plantation authorities began granting informal rights to larger provision grounds that lay between the *bateyes* and the sugarcane fields. These *conucos* could be passed down to children, relatives, or friends. Now that they

²⁶⁵ Eugenio Matibag, *Haitian-Dominican Counterpoint: Nation, State, and Race on Hispaniola* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 153.

lived on his land, and not on foreign-owned private property, residents could more easily appeal to the Trujillo government to protect their rights to farm land and own animals. While their property rights were never legally recognized or absolute, when *batey* residents called on the government for protection, they often received support for their informal claims. *Batey* residents therefore engaged with the populist apparatus of the state, and defended rights similar to those granted to peasants outside of plantations. At the same time, the Trujillo government continued to limit *batey* residents' ability to acquire or work on land beyond the boundaries of the plantation. As Trujillo's domination of the sugar industry increased, he was able to further isolate *batey* communities. Daily surveillance intensified and residents could be arrested if they attempted to leave plantation territory. Thus, during the second half of Trujillo's increasingly despotic dictatorship *batey* residents were able to find openings to establish and defend their rights to work plantation land, but their mobility beyond the boundaries of plantations was curtailed.

Geopolitics and the Sugar Industry

During the first half of his rule, Rafael Trujillo used persuasion, coercion, and violence to bring the Dominican population under his control. As one resident of Monte Coca explained, "we were afraid, you had to be afraid...[because] he was a strict president, a harsh president...you couldn't speak as you wanted to because [soldiers] walked around with machetes looking for you."²⁶⁶ For those who lived on plantation avenues for resistance were limited: sugar companies could count on the support of a strong and often brutal central state to help them maintain control over their workers.

²⁶⁶ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 16, 2013.

When this domination faltered, however, plantation residents quickly took advantage to openly demonstrate their opposition to low wages and difficult living conditions. Such an opportunity presented itself in the mid 1940s, when shifting geopolitics created a brief political opening in the Dominican Republic. Trujillo came to power at a moment when Washington was reconsidering its policies towards the Caribbean and Latin America, which since 1898 had been marked by military interventions and occupations. U.S. diplomacy increasingly focused on cordial relations and cultural exchange over military action. As tensions escalated in Europe and Asia, President Franklin Roosevelt wanted to guarantee reliable allies in the strategically important Caribbean. Trujillo proved to be a staunchly loyal ally during the Second World War, quickly declaring war on the Axis powers after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. By publically supporting regional friendship, he escaped punishment by the international community for his often despotic and violent actions, even after ordering the 1937 massacre of Haitian border residents.²⁶⁷

Following the end of World War II, however, Trujillo began to face U.S. backlash. After fighting a global war to make the world safe for democracy, the dictatorial politics of an ally and regional neighbor were seen as a liability and an embarrassment. In 1944 a new U.S. Ambassador, Elias Briggs, arrived in the Dominican Republic. Briggs was part of a group of diplomats working in the region who hoped to force out dictators like Trujillo, and support democratic leaders. He therefore had a much more hostile relationship with Trujillo than had the previous ambassador, and pressured

²⁶⁷ Eric Roorda, *The Dictator Next Door: The Good Neighbor Policy and the Trujillo Regime in the Dominican Republic, 1930-1945* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 220.

him to make democratic reforms.²⁶⁸ Trujillo had allowed elections to take place in 1938, in order to maintain a pretension of democracy. However, he hand picked the candidate, rigged the elections, and continued to rule behind the scenes. In 1942 Trujillo once again ascended to the presidency, and even as early as 1944 he began to campaign for the 1947 elections. The State Department questioned the legality of Trujillo's presidency, and desperate to retain U.S. support that was crucial to his maintenance of power, he briefly allowed for the formation of opposition parties and labor unions. Workers in the sugar sector quickly picked up on this political opening, and with new avenues of resistance available the eastern sugar producing regions exploded in a general strike in 1946.

The strike began in November of 1945 as a work stoppage by mostly Dominican unionized workers who piloted the railcars of sugarcane in the city of San Pedro de Macorís. By January of 1946 labor unrest had spread throughout the region and into the *bateyes*. Around the Consuelo mill, only three and a half miles away from Monte Coca, workers armed themselves with clubs and machetes and held daily meetings to reiterate their demands for higher wages and shorter workdays.²⁶⁹ Even after the union that had initially declared the strike announced that their demands had been met and everyone should return to work, Haitian workers in the *bateyes* refused to acquiesce.²⁷⁰ Eventually North American owners prevailed upon Trujillo to send in troops to quell unrest, and under threat of military violence the strike petered out. Roberto Cassá argues that the strikers “confronted foreign companies based on claims authorized by the sense of justice

²⁶⁸ Bernardo Vega, *Los Estados Unidos y Trujillo: Año 1945* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Fundación Cultural Dominicana, 1982), 17.

²⁶⁹ Roberto Cassá, *Movimiento Obrero y Lucha Socialista en la Republica Dominicana*. (Santo Domingo: Fundación Cultural Dominicana, 1990), 446.

²⁷⁰ Cassá, *Movimiento Obrero y Lucha Socialista en la Republica Dominicana*, 447.

that was at the center of Trujillo's social program."²⁷¹ Access to land and fair wages in exchange for hard work and political loyalty was a key part of Trujillo's populist rhetoric. While the regime may have conceived of material gains for the poor as privileges granted by the dictator, during this period of political opening sugar workers, in the words of Brodwyn Fischer, stepped "firmly over the line between supplication and demand....articulating a rights-based argument."²⁷² Such open acts of defiance demonstrate that *batey* residents employed many different forms of resistance depending on the situation they faced. Day-to-day they often relied on individual acts that allowed them to claim homes and provision grounds to support their families, but when the power of sugar companies or the state ebbed many collectively mobilized to take advantage of weakened authority and fight for larger structural changes in the industry.

Following this strike, there would not be a similar political opening that would allow for public labor organization for the remainder of Trujillo's rule. His democratic reforms lasted only a short period of time. By 1947 the U.S. was once again less concerned about fostering democracy and social change in Latin America than they were about regional security.²⁷³ As Cold War tensions escalated, the unequal, agrarian economies of Latin America began to look like potential battlegrounds for communist struggles. The U.S. government became much more focused on maintaining loyal, anti-Communist allies in the region. As before, Trujillo demonstrated his ability to manipulate

²⁷¹ Cassá, *Movimiento Obrero y Lucha Socialista en la República Dominicana*, 429.

²⁷² Brodwyn Fisher, *A Poverty of Rights: Citizenship and Inequality in Twentieth Century Rio de Janeiro*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 268. Brazilian president Getúlio Vargas, who Fischer writes about, also employed rhetoric that emphasized "virtuous poverty and work as a source of entitlement."

²⁷³ Bernardo Vega, *Los Estado Unidos y Trujillo: Año 1947* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Fundación Cultural Dominicana, 1984.)

U.S. geopolitical goals in order to maintain Washington's support. The Dominican Republic's position as a dependable ally in the region meant that a U.S. intervention was much less likely. Trujillo attempted to inflame fears of communist influence on sugar plantations, and then assure U.S. State Department officials that "he would never permit communism to get the upper hand in this country."²⁷⁴ While seemingly distant from the daily lives of residents in a *batey* like Monte Coca, these changes in international diplomacy would impact how migrants arrived in the Dominican Republic, their mobility once there, and residents' informal rights on the plantations.

Now free from overt U.S. opposition to his rule, Trujillo was once again able to further cement his dictatorship. Having governed the Dominican Republic for over fifteen years, he saw little distinction between himself and the Dominican nation. He had inscribed his name and image across the landscape of the country, renaming the capital city Ciudad Trujillo, erecting monuments and busts of himself everywhere, and distributing portraits of himself to be hung in every home. By frequently employing violence against those who appeared to oppose him, he demanded absolute loyalty and continual demonstrations of gratitude from the Dominican people. In addition to using brutal repression to control the population, he also gradually took ownership of much of the Dominican economy. During the first decade of his rule Trujillo sought to refill the nearly empty Dominican treasury by modernizing the economy and transforming the nation's food production. Once agricultural exports grew, Trujillo began to develop the country's industrial sector. He built processing plants for meat, dairy products, rice, oil, cement, and beer, among other items, and established personal monopolies over these industries. Thereafter, new economic production and growth always contributed to

²⁷⁴ Scherer to Secretary of State, 19 Nov, 1945, 839.00, NARA Record Group 59.

Trujillo's own personal businesses. The creation of sea salt was illegal, because Trujillo owned the only salt mine in the country, and cutting down trees without a permit was also illegal, because Trujillo had a monopoly on lumber.²⁷⁵ A Dominican citizen could not light their stove and cook rice and beans for their mid-day meal without enriching the dictator. As Lauren Derby writes, "the implicit logic was that Trujillo represented the very embodiment of the nation, so his personal enrichment somehow aggrandized the republic."²⁷⁶ By the 1950s, national economic policy could not be separated from the wealth of the Trujillo family.

Despite Trujillo's personal enrichment, state policy and discourse still focused on peasant-driven development. According to the regime, Dominican economic modernity would be achieved through an increasingly productive independent peasantry, not through corporate agriculture enclaves as in many other nations in the region.²⁷⁷ Because of these goals, during the first half of his rule Trujillo seemed ambivalent about the sugar industry. Foreign companies provided valuable taxes to his government, but also ran afoul of his nationalist-populist goals and made it very difficult for him to implement his policy of rural transformation in sugar producing regions. This is why he assisted peasants living around plantations in maintaining informal rights to sugar company land during the first half of his rule. However, by the mid- 1940s Trujillo's views on sugar had changed. This shift was no doubt partially due to financial considerations: demand for

²⁷⁵ Mark Oliver Zweifler, "Land use Evolution Along the Dominican Republic's Agricultural Frontier: A Comparative Analysis of Two Hill Land Regions" (MA Thesis, Michigan State University, 1990), 20; Lauren Derby, *The Dictator's Seduction: Politics and the Popular Imagination in the Era of Trujillo* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 3.

²⁷⁶ Derby, *The Dictator's Seduction*, 3.

²⁷⁷ Richard Lee Turits, *Foundations of Despotism: Peasants, the Trujillo Regime, and Modernity in Dominican History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 233.

Dominican sugar grew because the European sugar beet industry had been devastated by World War II.²⁷⁸ Trujillo's quest over the next decade and a half to become the sole owner of the Dominican sugar industry was also driven by his desire to be the only source of power in the Dominican Republic. To Trujillo this meant absolute control over the Dominican landscape. As Thomas Klubock writes, states establish "hegemony by remaking not just society and culture, but also natural landscapes."²⁷⁹ The fact that foreign companies owned large portions of the country's land, and claimed absolute sovereignty over that land, challenged Trujillo's dominance over national territory.

Trujillo began his foray into sugar production by building his own plantation. In 1948 he bought a used mill from Puerto Rico and had it disassembled and shipped to the Dominican Republic, northwest of Santo Domingo. In 1952, he opened Ingenio Rio Haina, near his birthplace of San Cristobal, just south of the capital. He claimed that Haina was the largest sugar mill in the world, although there is no evidence that this was true.²⁸⁰ Trujillo publicly linked his image with economic progress and portrayed his increasing control over the sugar industry as a source of greatness for the Dominican Republic. The Dominican ambassador in Haiti reported to Trujillo that news of his acquisition of Rio Haina made the front page of a major Port-au-Prince newspaper, *Le Matin*. The ambassador recounted that he told Haitians curious about the purchase that, "the prosperity of the Dominican people is exclusively owed to a man of genius and

²⁷⁸ Turits, *Foundations of Despotism*, 237.

²⁷⁹ Thomas Klubock, "The Nature of the Frontier: Forests and Peasant Uprisings in Southern Chile," *Social History* 36, no. 2 (2011): 122.

²⁸⁰ Michael R. Hall, *Sugar and Power in the Dominican Republic: Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the Trujillos* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), 22

action whose patriotism has made our nation...rich, industrious, and disciplined.”²⁸¹ As Trujillo became more closely associated with sugar production, he looked jealously at the majority of the industry still controlled by American companies.²⁸² In 1952 the Dominican Republic produced a record-breaking sugar harvest, but Trujillo-owned plantations were still only responsible for ten percent of that output.²⁸³ That year the nation’s press, no doubt under instruction from Trujillo, began to routinely accuse foreign-owned companies of harming the Dominican economy and its people. Official nationalist rhetoric now depicted foreign domination of the sugar industry as a fundamental threat to the country that only Trujillo could solve.²⁸⁴

Immediately following the opening of the Haina plantation, Trujillo was able to purchase two of the country’s smaller American-owned mills, reportedly for well under market value.²⁸⁵ Forcing the sale of the plantations belonging to the more powerful South Porto Rico Sugar Company (sic) and the West Indies Sugar Company, which owned six and three mills respectively, took longer. In addition to public pressure, Trujillo made it more difficult for sugar companies to do business in the Dominican Republic. The government raised taxes to nearly fifty percent of annual profits and demanded a wage hike for workers.²⁸⁶ In 1952 American sugar producers complain that the “increased rate of taxes, together with labor costs which...remain at [the] highest levels yet reached”

²⁸¹ Turits, *Foundations of Despotism*, 237.

²⁸² Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Embajada Dominicana en Haití, 1953, AGN.

²⁸³ Turits, *Foundations of Despotism*, 237.

²⁸⁴ Hall, *Sugar and Power in the Dominican Republic*, 23.

²⁸⁵ Turits, *Foundations of Despotism*, 238.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

would significantly hurt their profits.²⁸⁷ That same year Trujillo negotiated the first bilateral labor contract with Haiti that dictated the terms of labor recruitment, payment, and repatriation. Because the government now had to approve any requests to recruit workers in Haiti, they could easily withhold labor from foreign plantations by delaying approval. This made production even more difficult for North American companies.²⁸⁸ The U.S. embassy in Santo Domingo reported “the American-controlled sugar estates in the Republic had by year end experienced press attacks and practically confiscatory taxation, and the advent of 1954 witnesses a further crescendo of aggression against them.”²⁸⁹

Finally, when the West Indies and South Porto Rico sugar companies still seemed unwilling to sell, the government declared their plantations unfit for worker habitation, and demanded they invest millions in improving infrastructure or face judicial action. In a 1956 letter to the Secretary of Public Health Trujillo’s personal assistant wrote, “the houses on the Boca Chica plantation are in a disastrous state because they are dirty and in terrible conditions.”²⁹⁰ It is certainly probable that housing at Boca Chica was poor; outside observers had long commented on the difficult living conditions in *bateyes*.²⁹¹ However, the government had not made the state of housing an issue before, and

²⁸⁷ “Comments on Dominican Sugar Taxes,” 9 Jan. 1953, 839.11, NARA Record Group 59.

²⁸⁸ Samuel Martínez, "From Hidden Hand to Heavy Hand: Sugar, the State, and Migrant Labor in Haiti and the Dominican Republic," *Latin American Research Review* 34, no. 1 (1999): 75.

²⁸⁹ “Annual Agricultural Report, Dominican Republic, 1953,” 5 Feb. 1954, 839.20, NARA Record Group 59.

²⁹⁰ Fondo Presidencia, Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Prostitución, 1953, AGN.

²⁹¹ Bruce J. Calder, *The Impact of the Intervention: The Dominican Republic during the U.S. Occupation of 1916-1924* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1988), 95-96.

Trujillo's plantations were not ordered to make similar changes. The involvement of Trujillo's personal assistant also indicates the political nature of this investigation.

The fact that Trujillo was able to drive out North American corporations, and essentially nationalize the sugar industry under his control, was a remarkable feat. In other Latin American countries during this period the U.S. government intervened at the mere threat of nationalization or the expulsion of U.S. businesses. In 1954 the C.I.A. had employed covert operations in Guatemala to help depose the democratically elected president Jacobo Árbenz. The leftist Árbenz instituted land reform that threatened some of the U.S.-owned United Fruit Company's vast land holdings with compensated expropriation. Representatives from the company appealed directly to the State Department requesting intervention in Guatemala, and within a short period of time Árbenz was overthrown with the help of C.I.A. operatives. Sugar companies based in the Dominican Republic also appealed to the U.S. State Department, and argued that Trujillo was attempting to expropriate privately held lands in order to nationalize the industry, but they received no such support.²⁹² Árbenz's land reform was part of a larger social program to dramatically transform Guatemala and upend its traditional hierarchies, and the C.I.A. therefore feared land reform foreshadowed communist rule.²⁹³ Trujillo's acquisition of sugar companies reflected no such agenda: his goal was not to address inequality, but to enrich himself.

Because Trujillo was a rightwing, vocal anti-communist who was pursuing profits for himself, Washington overlooked his virtual nationalization of the country's most

²⁹² 839.2351, NARA Record Group 59; Turits, *Foundations of Despotism*, 238.

²⁹³ See Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Cindy Forster, *The Time of Freedom: Campesino Workers in Guatemala's October Revolution* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001.)

profitable industry at the expense of North American corporations. In 1953 Edwin Kilbourne, head of the West Indies company in the Dominican Republic, implored the U.S. government to stop “giving Trujillo the impression that he is indispensable to our defense plans and that he can get by with anything so long as he cooperates militarily with the United States.”²⁹⁴ However, this is exactly what happened. For his support in a region that Washington saw as vulnerable to the influence of communism, Trujillo not only got away with bullying North American businesses, but was rewarded with a preferential sugar quota.²⁹⁵

By 1957 two of the three remaining American firms in the country had sold their holdings to Trujillo. Two small plantations remained under the ownership of the Dominican Vincini family, allies of the Trujillo regime. Only the La Romana plantation remained in American hands, and its owners were in negotiations to sell when Trujillo was assassinated in 1961. While the Dominican government vigorously denied that any coercion took place during these sales, numerous sugar company officials frequently complained about government officials’ tactics.²⁹⁶ In 1955 the president of the British Columbia Sugar Refining Company, which had recently sold its Ozama plantation, wrote to a Dominican employee, “you must realize that our company sustained considerable loss as a result of our operations in the Dominican Republic...[W]e sold the company for much less than it is worth intrinsically, and had it not been for the exorbitant taxes with which we were burdened, would not have sold at such a loss.”²⁹⁷ While other heads of

²⁹⁴ Richard A. Johnson to Department of State, 24 March 1953, 839.2351, NARA Record Group 59.

²⁹⁵ Hall, *Sugar and Power in the Dominican Republic*, 50.

²⁹⁶ Turits, *Foundations of Despotism*, 238.

²⁹⁷ Ozama [Sugar Plantation and Factory], 1955-1963 City of Vancouver Archives.

state in the region had to tread carefully around U.S. corporate interests for fear of being labeled communist, Trujillo succeeded in coercing numerous North American companies into selling their plantations to him for well under market value.

Labor Contracts and Migrant Mobility

As Trujillo increased his authority over sugar plantations, he became concerned with closely controlling labor recruitment. While histories of Haiti and the Dominican Republic have generally considered their governments separately, a transnational perspective elucidates how ruling elites across the island have often collaborated, even while claiming Haitians and Dominicans could not coexist. Haitian rulers were complicit in the exploitation of Haitian labor on Dominican sugar plantations, and leaders in both nations benefited from migration. While Trujillo and the anti-Haitian intellectuals in his administration spoke publicly about the threat posed by any Haitian presence in the Dominican Republic, the government at the same time worked to guarantee the reliable flow of Haitian labor to sugar plantations. Until the 1950s labor recruitment was informal, and often haphazard. Individual plantations were free to recruit their own workers as long as they paid immigration taxes for them. Companies employed Haitian, or Dominicans of Haitian descent, to informally recruit in Haiti, on the border, or even on plantations owned by competing companies. José Israel Cuello argues that soldiers stationed on the border often had friendly relationships with sugar companies, and would send migrants who crossed to certain plantations.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁸ José Israel Cuello, *Documentos del conflicto dominico-haitiano de 1937*, (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Editora Taller, 1985), 16.

As Trujillo strengthened security on the border and surveillance of immigrants following the 1937 massacre, he moved to monitor more closely the movement of people between the two nations. In 1952 he signed a labor agreement with Haitian president Paul Magloire. The 1940s in Haiti had been a period of social upheaval that saw politics influenced by leftist ideals and growing criticism of Haiti's traditional ruling class. Magloire's 1950 takeover of the government signaled a return to conservative political rule that favored the elite. Trujillo had worked hard to defeat Haiti's previous president, Dumarsais Estimé, who had initially enjoyed strong support from Haiti's black middle and popular classes. During Estimé's presidency, Trujillo supported opposition candidates and even flew Dominican warplanes over Port-au-Prince to drop leaflets encouraging a popular overthrow of Estimé. Trujillo also complained to the U.S. State Department that Estimé was attempting to officially replace Christianity with the "barbarous and primitive voodoo cult."²⁹⁹ After coming to power following Estimé's ouster, Magloire improved relations with the Dominican Republic by signing an anti-communist pact with the Dominican government in 1951.³⁰⁰ By this time, Trujillo was in the process of taking over sugar plantations and he moved quickly to take advantage of what he viewed as a much-improved political climate in Haiti in order to lock down control of labor.

The 1952 treaty established how laborers would be recruited, transported, and at the end of the harvest season, repatriated. Plantations' requests for workers had to be approved by the Dominican government, and then go through official recruitment centers

²⁹⁹ Quoted in Matthew J. Smith, *Red & Black in Haiti: Radicalism, Conflict, and Political Change, 1934-1957* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 139.

³⁰⁰ Smith, *Red and Black in Haiti*, 152.

in Haiti.³⁰¹ Immigrants were transported on government trucks and even naval ships to the Río Haina plantation, Trujillo's largest and about 175 miles from the border. There, officials registered immigrants, photographed them, and distributed *cedulás*, or government identification cards. Jowasen Cheval, who arrived in the country in 1957 recalled, "when I arrived in Haina they took my photo, and then gave me a...*cedulá*...everybody got *cedulás*."³⁰² Another resident added, "at Haina they would dispatch us, when you arrived in Haina they gave you food...[and] then they would put you in a truck."³⁰³ Workers were sent off to plantations throughout the country, where they were required to stay until the termination of their contracts. At the end of the harvest season, trucks or, on coastal plantations, ships, would arrive to return workers to Haiti. Labor recruitment and movement were now the concern of government, and not of private businesses. The first agreement contracted 16,500 workers for the 1952-53 season, and established that these terms would be renegotiated every five years. The sugar companies paid the Haitian government a sum to recruit each worker.³⁰⁴ In theory the agreement also protected migrants, guaranteeing them the same wages as Dominican employees, adequate housing, and proper sanitation. In practice, Trujillo's own plantations seldom had to adhere to these regulations. Instead, he utilized control over labor flows and new rules about worker treatment as another way to force foreign companies into selling their plantations to him. By placing government officials in charge

³⁰¹ José Israel Cuello, *Contratación de mano de obra haitiana destinada a la industria azucarera dominicana, 1952-1986* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Editora Taller, 1997), 154.

³⁰² Anonymous, interview by author, Monte Coca, March 19, 2013.

³⁰³ Anonymous, interview by author, Monte Coca, March 3, 2013.

³⁰⁴ Matibag, *Haitian Dominican Counterpoint*, 153.

of labor recruitment and movement, Trujillo worked to vertically integrate the country's major agricultural industries under his domination.

Labor agreements also proved extremely valuable to Haitian officials who used them as a stopgap for the country's underlying problems. Haiti's economic structure had changed little since the nineteenth century and agricultural exports, primarily coffee, constituted the bulk of the country's output. This meant that the peasantry drove the Haitian economy, and the majority of government revenues came from taxes levied on the peasants.³⁰⁵ The Haitian elite owned the country's export infrastructure, and derived their own wealth as intermediaries exporting peasant products. Despite their economic importance, the peasantry was almost completely excluded from political participation: elite urbanites held the vast majority of political positions, and government business was carried out in French, which the majority of the peasantry did not speak. During the twentieth century, population growth and environmental degradation in the countryside meant decreased productivity and a rise in rural poverty. As the population grew and erosion reduced arable land, traditional family land holdings were increasingly subdivided, making it difficult to support a family on them. Writing on peasant life in the late 1940s, the Haitian sociologist Rémy Bastien noted, "in less than forty years the standard of living...passed from a state of comfort to one of misery."³⁰⁶ By the 1950s it was clear that for much of the country economic pressures were becoming unbearable, and Haiti's economic system was in crisis.³⁰⁷ Despite gestures by different presidents to

³⁰⁵ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Haiti, State against Nation: The Origins and Legacy of Duvalierism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990), 16.

³⁰⁶ Rémy Bastien, *Le paysan haïtien et sa famille: vallée de Marbial* (Paris: A.C.C.T., 1985), 180.

³⁰⁷ Smith, *Red and Black in Haiti*, 164.

diversify the economy, Haiti's GDP grew even more dependent on agriculture during the 1950s.³⁰⁸ However, harvests in the countryside declined during this period. Coffee production plummeted, and in 1955 exports of this commodity per capita were a quarter of what they had been in 1843.³⁰⁹

There was little move on the part of national politicians to address the fundamental problems in Haiti's economic and political structures. The presidency of Paul Magloire, which lasted from 1950 to 1956, was marred by state violence against citizens, and this trend continued in the run up to the 1957 election. François Duvalier, a well-known politician, intellectual, and doctor, soon became the front-runner. Duvalier had emerged from the *noirisme* movement of the 1940s, whose followers believed that Haiti's majority black population should be politically represented by the black middle class, who they believed to be the nation's rightful leaders. While this ideology was vaguely populist because of its inclusion of the masses into the Haitian nation, it also argued for the imposition of a dictatorship. Liberal democracy, supporters maintained, was imported from France and Haiti's black population would be better served by a more "African" political structure, which they argued was an authoritarian state.³¹⁰

Nevertheless, the somewhat inclusive nature of his rhetoric, in comparison to more traditional Haitian politicians, gained Duvalier support throughout the country.³¹¹ After mobilizing his allies in the military and sympathetic paramilitary groups to terrorize

³⁰⁸ Trouillot, *State Against Nation*, 141.

³⁰⁹ Trouillot, *State Against Nation*, 142.

³¹⁰ Smith, *Red and Black in Haiti*, 26.

³¹¹ Smith, *Red and Black in Haiti*, 177.

supporters of his opponents, Duvalier launched a countrywide campaign to increase support for his candidacy, and on September 22, 1957 he was elected president.

The violence seen during the campaign became a part of daily life in Duvalier's Haiti. In order to extend his control over the country the Duvalier regime recruited peasants and the urban poor into his paramilitary force, known as the Tonton Makout. Membership was one of the few avenues of economic improvement available to the poor. In addition, by recruiting them into his government Duvalier recognized the citizenship of the Haitian peasants in a way that previous governments had not. Like Trujillo, Duvalier employed this dictatorial form of populism to increase his power over the nation's people. However, unlike Trujillo, who instituted major structural transformations, under Duvalier the economic foundations of the country underwent minimal change and for the majority of the country living conditions worsened. Michel-Rolph Trouillot argues that Duvalier formalized the economic crisis already emerging in Haiti when he seized power. Duvalier had no desire to remodel Haiti's flawed economic system. Trouillot writes, "Duvalierism had no program other than power for power's sake, and any challenge to the *status quo* might signal its demise."³¹²

At the top of the social structure corruption significantly increased and government officials enriched themselves to astonishing levels. In short, taxes paid by the peasants continued to bankroll the lives of the country's elite, and instead of addressing the roots of the economic crisis in Haiti, Duvalier created a system that would instill fear in the population and allow him to continue to hold absolute power in the country. Immigration to the Dominican Republic was therefore an important safety valve for the Duvalier regime. It offset the impact of a collapsing peasant economy. Migrants returned

³¹² Trouillot, *State Against Nation*, 159.

from the Dominican Republic with cash to supplement their agricultural production, and relocation to the Dominican Republic meant that starvation and misery in the countryside did not reach a point that might explode in revolution. Haitians also fled to the Dominican Republic to escape the pervasive violence of the Duvalier dictatorship.³¹³ Jowasen Cheval returned to Haiti after years in the Dominican Republic to take over a plot of land he had inherited from his mother, saying “I built a house there, but when I saw the Tontón Makout, how they were mistreating people, I did not return ever again.”³¹⁴

François Duvalier proved adept at using the Dominican Republic’s need for labor to benefit himself. The original 1952 labor agreement was scheduled to be renegotiated in 1957, the year that Duvalier came to power. In advance of the 1958-1959 harvest period, the Dominican government pushed for a new agreement to guarantee a stable workforce. The Duvalier regime, however, delayed negotiations. While during the previous harvest the Haitian government had accepted requests to recruit workers even in the absence of a formal agreement, this time they refused.³¹⁵ It appears that Duvalier sought changes to the original agreement, but undoubtedly he also wanted to demonstrate to Trujillo that he could not be easily manipulated. The Dominican ambassador in Port-au-Prince wrote that, since the harvest was slated to begin in a few months, and the sugar industry had an

³¹³ When asked why they had never returned to Haiti, many of those who left in the 1950s stated they did not want to return after Duvalier took over. Anonymous interviews, by author, Monte Coca, 2013.

³¹⁴ Anonymous, interview by author, Monte Coca, March, 19 2013.

³¹⁵ Cuello, *Contratacion de mano de obra haitiana*, 65; Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Subjeto: Bracero Haitianos, 1958-1978, AGN.

urgent need for workers, the Haitian government wanted to “exploit these circumstances...to pressure us.”³¹⁶

Duvalier waited until December 1959 to sign a new agreement, leaving sugar plantations in limbo for two years. The only change to the contract stated that sugar companies had to hire Haitian drivers to transport recruits out of the country.³¹⁷ While the concessions he gained were small, he made clear that he could imperil the sugar harvest if he wished. This kind of negotiation tactic would become typical for Duvalier; he would often delay signing an agreement, or cause other problems during negotiations, in order to take advantage of the time sensitivity of sugar labor to gain the upper hand. His stated concern was almost always the safety and treatment of workers, and he skillfully used complaints about workers’ treatment as leverage during contract talks.³¹⁸ Duvalier’s actual concern for the rights of Haitian workers is highly dubious, especially given the brutality of his regime. What is more, he depended heavily on Haitian migration to the Dominican Republic. As the Dominican ambassador in Port-au-Prince pointed out during negotiations in 1958, Duvalier would no doubt eventually sign the agreement because not doing so could cause major problems for the Haitian economy.³¹⁹ In addition, sugar

³¹⁶ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Subjeto: Bracero Haitianos, 1958-1978, AGN.

³¹⁷ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Subjeto: Bracero Haitianos, 1958-1978. AGN.

³¹⁸ In 1958 François Duvalier waited to sign the contract because of stated concern about its protections for workers. Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Subjeto: Bracero Haitianos, 1958-1978, AGN. Again in 1978 Jean Claude asked for a meeting with the Dominican president to discuss economic cooperation but immediately followed the request with an accusation that the Dominican Republic was violating the terms of the labor contract by not providing adequate housing and beds for workers. Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Subjeto: Bracero Haitianos, 1978-1980, AGN.

³¹⁹ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Subjeto: Bracero Haitianos, 1958-1978, AGN.

companies paid the Haitian government directly for each worker contracted, money that the Duvalier government could easily embezzle.³²⁰

Despite these diplomatic conflicts, and the fact that Trujillo's anti-Haitianism and Duvalier's *noirisme* were in direct ideological opposition, both dictators recognized that the movement of labor across Hispaniola was mutually beneficial and needed to be defended against outside critics. Trujillo and Duvalier relied on nearly-always cordial relations to maintain a stranglehold on power in their respective countries and enrich themselves. When confronted by international opposition to this trade they collaborated to protect an economic relationship that was important to both of them. Outsider observers did criticize the agreements between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, accusing the two leaders of engaging in human trafficking and Trujillo of treating Haitian workers like slaves.³²¹

On October 31st, 1960 Duvalier personally called Dominican troops stationed on the border to tell them that a group of workers was headed their way, but to be careful to keep the exchange secret from the Venezuelan ambassador, who had been attempting to gain access to the border a few days earlier.³²² On the 21st of that month the Venezuelan ambassador had met with Duvalier to urge him to end bi-lateral labor contracts with the Dominican Republic.³²³ The president of Venezuela at the time was Rómulo Betancourt, a liberal, democratic voice in Latin America who publicly opposed the Trujillo and Duvalier dictatorships. Trujillo's hatred of Betancourt had reached new heights of

³²⁰ Matibag, *Haitian Dominican Counterpoint*, 153.

³²¹ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Subjeto: Bracero Haitianos, 1953-1990, AGN; Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Subjeto: Bracero Haitianos, 1958-1978, AGN.

³²² Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Subjeto: Bracero Haitianos, 1958-1978, AGN.

³²³ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Subjeto: Bracero Haitianos, 1953-1990, AGN.

paranoia just a few months earlier when in June of 1960 he had sent agents to attempt to assassinate the Venezuelan president, drawing international ire. The Venezuelan ambassador in Haiti was trying to investigate the movement of workers, undoubtedly under the suspicion that Trujillo internationally infamous regime was violating human rights. Even though opposition to Trujillo was growing in the hemisphere, Duvalier made the decision to ignore Venezuela and collude with the Dominican government. Despite power struggles between them, both leaders saw the necessity of working together to maintain a mutually beneficial trade. They both reaped economic and political benefits from the movement of people across Hispaniola and they would therefore ignore their differences when threatened by outside forces.

Labor agreements, and the subsequent changes to recruitment practices, shaped how people traveled to the Dominican Republic, their experiences upon arrival, and if and when they decided to return to Haiti. While bi-lateral labor contracts increased Trujillo's control over the movement of labor, this power was never absolute and undocumented migration was common. Andre Libien, who traveled to the Dominican Republic for the first time in 1956 from southern Haiti, explained "Every year during the harvest... [they] would look for people in Haiti... They would talk with the president in Haiti and then... come and gather people and afterwards bring them to cut cane." However, he continued, "there were also a lot of people who came... 'anba fil.'"³²⁴ "Anba fil" means "under the wire" in Haitian Kreyòl and is used with reference to undocumented Haitian migration. Beyond the recruitment efforts of official government agents in some parts of Haiti, many men and women were convinced to travel by community members who had returned, or who traveled annually to the Dominican

³²⁴ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, March 20, 2013.

Republic for the harvest season. Many migrants who arrived during the Trujillo era remembered making their first trip with people from their natal community who had traveled before. Jowasen Cheval, who arrived in 1957, recalled, “There were many [in my community] who had traveled here...[They said] there was good work here and one could find money, so I left with them.”³²⁵ Another man who arrived around the same time said, “a friend of mine had traveled before and then gave me the advice, ‘go to Santo Domingo.’”³²⁶ Despite changes in recruitment policies, long established migrant networks and travel routes still brought people to the Dominican Republic.

Immigrants often initially traveled with friends, family members, or acquaintances who had worked in the Dominican Republic before. Migrants with whom I spoke remembered packing a few belongings and some food and traveling on foot to the Dominican border. These trips could be dangerous, making migrants vulnerable to abuse, coercion, and life-threatening conditions. Luis Yambate described a particularly harrowing first journey to the Dominican Republic. Traveling with several friends and a cousin he crossed the border in the Southwest, a particularly dry area of the country. He recalled, “I came down from the hills...and I was thirsty...I was dying of thirst [and there] was only bad water where animals walked...I was digging in the dirt to find water, to find a pool to drink.”³²⁷ Those with an experienced guide knew where to cross to find Dominican government recruiters waiting. Once across the border, “there were trucks [waiting]...[T]hey came to pick us up and to send us here.”³²⁸ Immigrants were then

³²⁵ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, March 19, 2013.

³²⁶ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, March 22, 2013.

³²⁷ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, March 22, 2013.

³²⁸ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, March 26, 2013.

transported to the center of the Trujillo sugar empire, the Haina plantation, to be documented and sent to other sugar plantations throughout the country.

Whether migrants arrived in the country with government recruiters, or on their own, the Trujillo regime worked to funnel them into his plantation system. Since those traveling informally shared advice about where to find government trucks on the Dominican side of the border, plantation recruiters were able to direct already established migrant networks into this new system. Haitian officials even complained about this practice. If migrants were recruited informally once they crossed the border, the Haitian government would not receive any payment for the workers and this could mean lost revenue. In 1955 the Haitian Secretary of Foreign Affairs wrote to the Dominican embassy in Port-au-Prince to protest that, “during the final months of last year many Haitians have irregularly crossed the border to work on Dominican sugar plantations.” The secretary claimed he had evidence of hundreds of informally recruited workers being moved to plantations in military trucks.³²⁹ The U.S. embassy also claimed to have evidence of such recruitment practices, stating that representatives from Trujillo’s plantations “send trucks to point on the Dominican side of the Haitian border, and after dark...dispatch Dominicans of Haitian appearance...across the border to recruit workers whom they bring back.”³³⁰ By incorporating existing migration networks into new systems of worker control, Trujillo was able to ensure large recruitment numbers and also avoid paying the Haitian government fees for those arriving outside of official channels.

Other government officials also attempted to profit from the informal movement of people. In November of 1960 the head of an Army Brigade stationed in San Juan de la

³²⁹ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Subjeto: Bracero Haitianos, 1953-1990, AGN.

³³⁰ Allen H. Lester to Department of State, 18 Feb 1954, 839.2351, NARA Record Group 59.

Maguana, a major town close to the border, wrote directly to Trujillo to tell him that the Haitian consul in his town offered to help recruit workers. The brigadier reported that the consul offered to locate 2,000 men in exchange for “five pesos for each [man] and 2,000 pesos for the consul [himself.]” The consul made clear that he did this “not only for the money, but because he is willing to work with [Trujillo]...even though he knows it is against the law.”³³¹ It is unclear how much sugar companies were paying the Haitian government per head at this time, since those numbers were not made public, but in 1966 the going rate was around fourteen U.S. dollars per worker.³³² It is therefore certainly possible that this consul was offering to provide workers more cheaply than the Haitian government. The profitability of the sugar industry, and its need for labor on an exact schedule, meant that many different government actors on both sides of Hispaniola attempted to profit from long established informal migration networks.

The 1952 agreement established that “workers and their families will remain within the fields of the company that employed them during the entirety of their employment contract. Any abandonment by an employee...will lead to their immediate repatriation.” However, it also stated that sugar plantations were responsible for acquiring and paying for immigration documents, and Dominican *cedulás*, for both workers and their family members, affirming that “the company promises to follow all the necessary steps...to obtain temporary residency permits in the Dominican Republic and Dominican identity cards on behalf of [the worker], and his wife and children.”³³³ Therefore, labor

³³¹ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Subjeto: Bracero Haitianos, 1958-1978, AGN.

³³² Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Subjeto: CEA, 1955-66, AGN.

³³³ Acuerdo Suscrito entre la República Dominicana y la República de Haití sobre jornaleros emporaros haitianos, el 5 de enero de 1952.

contracts on the one hand guaranteed the legal residence of immigrants in the Dominican Republic, but on the other hand limited immigrants' right to mobility in the country. This agreement, which would be the most important document guiding immigration policy between Haiti and the Dominican Republic until 1986, officially and openly linked the Haitian population in the country to sugar labor. A migrant's legality in the country was tied to their physical location, and their type of employment. What the Trujillo regime had begun in secret during the 1930s, segregating Haitians on plantations, it now codified in law.

Labor contracts legally restricted workers' right to mobility in the Dominican Republic and isolated them on plantations. They also attempted to prevent workers from leaving their plantation in search of better wages elsewhere. The Trujillo regime was especially concerned with barring workers from moving to the few foreign-owned plantations that survived in the country. These plantations were known to pay better wages than those owned by Trujillo. Nevertheless, Haitian migrants found ways to circulate between plantations in search of improved living and working situations. When Luis Yambate arrived in the Dominican Republic in 1958 he was initially sent to a *batey* on a Trujillo-owned plantation. He recalled, "When I arrived in Sabana Grande de Boya my friends talked to me about La Romana and I at once grabbed my bag, without knowing anything, and I [left]...[W]hen I got to the bridge I asked 'where is La Romana' and they told me 'over there.' I took a bus to La Romana and...when I arrived...I went to a *batey* where... I had family; I found my cousin and I stayed there cutting cane."³³⁴ La Romana was the only plantation in the Dominican Republic that

³³⁴ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, March 22, 2013.

remained in U.S. corporate hands throughout the twentieth century. Migrants heard about better opportunities through networks that connected different plantations and *bateyes*. These networks were reinforced by the constant movement of men and women in search of work, better housing, or more available land. Yet such circulation involved considerable risks as Haitian migrants could be arrested if they left the plantation. When he traveled to the La Romana plantation Yambate left “hidden, very early in the morning...because they were not going to let me leave, and I wanted to leave because my cousin was in La Romana.”³³⁵ With the help of strangers, acquaintances, family, and friends, movement between plantations continued and the government was not able to completely shut down networks that linked *bateyes*.

Space and Citizenship under Trujillo’s Ownership

As Trujillo increasingly isolated Haitians and Haitian-Dominicans on sugar plantations, he also seemingly became more tolerant of permanent communities in the *bateyes*. As long as Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent remained on sugar plantations their communities did not threaten Trujillo’s anti-Haitian nationalism, and permanent communities could guarantee a stable, skilled, and often loyal workforce. Sugar was so profitable and important to the Dominican economy in the early 1950s that Trujillo knew he could not remove Haitians from the Dominican Republic, despite his statements that any Haitian presence constituted a threat. He instead worked to contain Haitians on plantations and profit off of a Haitian and Haitian-descendent workforce while keeping the rest of the country free from Haitian influence. After two decades in power, Trujillo believed in his absolute domination over the Dominican Republic. He

³³⁵ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, March 22, 2013.

controlled the majority of the economy and owned an estimated nine percent of the country's land.³³⁶ It seemed he did believe he could both expand his sugar empire and quarantine a growing Haitian population.

While anti-Haitianism was novel and unfamiliar to most Dominicans in 1937, by the 1950s it was a pervasive national ideology. The Trujillo regime continued to use a combination of state violence and ideological cooption to enforce a new historical narrative that blamed Haitian racial "contamination" for any national weakness. By positing Haitianness as the marker of blackness, Trujillo asserted that whiteness was accessible to all Dominicans. As Samuel Martinez writes, "He rejected the old elite opinion that the Dominican masses were too Africanized to be capable of democracy or higher learning, thus holding forth hope that Dominicans could be redeemed from Haitian influence simply by removing the Haitians from their midst."³³⁷ With this political philosophy Trujillo attempted to control the Dominican population by uniting them against a threatening other, and position himself as the only capable defender against Haitian defilement of the nation. This ideology came to serve his commercial goals as well.

Prior research on anti-Haitianism in the Dominican Republic has not analyzed how the Trujillo regime linked Haitian identity to sugar labor.³³⁸ Through segregation on

³³⁶ Turits, *Foundations of Despotism*, 5.

³³⁷ Martinez, "From Hidden Hand to Heavy Hand," 71.

³³⁸ Richard Turits and Robin Derby have both written about how anti-Haitian ideology was implemented in the border region. Turis, "A Nation Imposed, A World Destroyed"; Derby, "Haitians, Magic, and Money." Authors such as Luis San Miguel and Silvio Torres-Saillant have examined the intellectual history of anti-Haitian ideology. Pedro Luis San Miguel, *The Imagined Island: History, Identity, & Utopia in Hispaniola* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Silvio Torres-Saillant, *Introduction to Dominican Blackness* (New York: CUNY Dominican Studies Institute, City College of New York, 1999.) In addition, important work has been done about the impact of anti-Haitianism on contemporary Haitian immigrant and

plantations the state worked to erase the manifold roles Haitians had historically held in Dominican society by writing a new history in which Haitians' only function was to produce the country's most important export. Anti-Haitian ideology was therefore deeply embedded in Trujillo's economic project. Over the course of his dictatorship, Trujillo unabashedly used state power to seize "total control of every economic enterprise existing in the country."³³⁹ Anti-Haitianism not only helped him exert political authority over the nation, it was also a powerful tool of labor control. The increasing isolation of the *bateyes* allowed Trujillo to recruit and maintain a convenient labor supply, while still claiming to quarantine the Haitian influence in the Dominican Republic. Therefore, the state's apparently contradictory pursuit of increased Haitian immigration and anti-Haitian nationalism was internally coherent in the context of Trujillo state-building program.

In another seeming contradiction, as Trujillo isolated *bateyes* he offered greater informal rights to residents. North American owners of sugar companies had generally attempted to limit *batey* residents' ability to claim land for cultivation. Prior to Trujillo's ownership, residents were able to create small gardens around their homes, interplant quickly growing foods between rows of sugar, and cultivate in the small areas between rail tracks and sugar fields.³⁴⁰ When Trujillo took over sugar plantations, this policy towards land use began to change. As the government isolated Haitian-Dominican

Haitian Dominican populations. Lesley Bartlett, Kiran Jayaram, and Gulin Bonhomme, "State literacies and inequality: Managing Haitian immigrants in the Dominican Republic," *International Journal of Educational Development* 31, no. 6 (2011): 587-595; David Simmons, "Structural Violence as Social Practice: Haitian Agricultural Workers, Anti-Haitianism, and Health in the Dominican Republic" *Human Organization* 69, no. 1 (2010): 10-18. These works do not address how Trujillo implemented anti-Haitianism in sugar producing regions and how this shaped the lives of plantation residents.

³³⁹ Fank Moya Pons, *The Dominican Republic: A National History* (New Rochelle, NY: Hispaniola Books Corporation, 1995), 359.

³⁴⁰ Anonymous interviews, by author, Monte Coca, 2013.

populations it also acquiesced to community desire for larger, more permanent provision grounds. Leonardo Martinez Ramos, who was born in Monte Coca in 1936, remembered that “when Trujillo came there was more possibility for cultivation...[T]hey gave plots to the people, there was more opportunity.”³⁴¹

The process of laying claim to a *conuco* was not established in any official rules or laws, and sugar companies did not formally distribute territory. Rather, residents had to navigate *batey* and company networks in order to gain recognition of their customary right to cultivate land. According to Monte Coca resident Sove Durand, “[the company] said that there were no [titled] lands, but in...areas where cane wouldn’t grow and there was nothing...you could make a *conuco*...[If] it was empty, they wouldn’t say anything.”³⁴² Within a few harvest seasons, relocated Haitian migrants who decided to stay in the Dominican Republic could establish their own plots.³⁴³ However, the *guarda campestre* mediated competing claims, and those with more power in the *batey* often acquired more choice pieces of land. This also meant that seasonal Haitian migrants did not have the same access to these forms of resistance as long-term residents.

Conucos were an important part of residents’ identities, who speak about rights to cultivation during the Trujillo era in very emotive terms. *Viveres*, the local word for starchy food staples like yucca, sweet potatoes, and plantains, are a key part of *batey* residents’ descriptions of economic independence during this period. As one informant explained, “everyone lived off their *conuco*, because the *conuco* helps you raise your children. You can get your plantains, sweet potatoes, yucca. Then if you have the money

³⁴¹ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 16, 2013.

³⁴² Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, March 21, 2013.

³⁴³ Multiple interviewees remember creating *conucos* within a year or two of arriving.

to buy salami, you already have your *viveres*.”³⁴⁴ Long time residents of Monte Coca share images of food that represent for them the economic security they remember under Trujillo. Informants repeated again and again that if someone had a *conuco* they only had to earn a tiny bit of money to purchase occasional meat; everything else could be harvested from the land. Many returned often to the image of bunches of plantains. Plantains are eaten both green and ripe in the Dominican Republic, and remembering the Trujillo era residents would repeat that food was so plentiful that plantains would turn yellow on the tree. That is to say, there were so many that they could not be harvested fast enough to eat. Residents use important food staples to understand and explain the role of cultivation in their lives and this image of trees hanging with huge bunches of yellow plantains is a touchstone for historical memory in the *batey*.

These memories should not be taken as an indication that malnutrition was not an issue during Trujillo’s reign. Especially during the later years of his rule, many people went hungry. There are residents who remember periods of hardship, even while saying that food was always plentiful during the Trujillo era. This seemingly contradictory view of plenty and scarcity can be explained by examining foodstuffs as more than simple caloric inputs and instead as a constitutive part of identity.³⁴⁵ Memories of food convey and interpret an ideology that emphasizes economic and cultural independence. The ability to cultivate ones own *vivires*, instead of having to use limited cash to buy them from the company store, was clearly a key marker of this independence for residents of

³⁴⁴ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 16, 2013.

³⁴⁵ Hanna Garth, *Food and Identity in the Caribbean* (London: Berg, 2012), 1-14.

Monte Coca.³⁴⁶ Some form of *vivire* is consumed with nearly every meal in the *batey*. Even when there isn't enough money to buy cooking oil, boiled plantains make a serviceable dinner. When I conducted fieldwork in 2013 the sugar fields around Monte Coca were rented by a foreign company that had destroyed *conucos* in order to plant more sugarcane. Long established land rights were not being recognized, and many interviewees contrasted this to the respect for cultivation they remember experiencing during the Trujillo era, leading them to insist that food was always plentiful during that period.

Under Trujillo, informally accepted rules of land use became well established and recognized, and when those rights were violated residents had some opportunity for redress. For example, in 1955 Severiano Ventura, a *guarda campestre* agent on the Quisqueya plantation was accused by multiple parties of seizing residents' animals and then charging illegal fines to have them returned. The accusations were serious enough that the National Police launched an investigation, interviewing many of the accusers. This case sheds light on the local norms and politics of land use on the plantation at this time.

The National Police interviewed residents who had paid fines to Ventura. The interviewees explained how their behavior conformed to local codes, and therefore asserted that Ventura was wrong to detain their animals. Lico Ramon, a Haitian man who

³⁴⁶ Food sovereignty movements have been discussed as a relatively recent form of resistance to globalization and corporate agribusiness. The importance of cultivation and food to *batey* residents demonstrates that, while not framing their struggle within the paradigm of "food sovereignty", mobilizations to protect the right to produce food have long been an important resistance strategy to corporate agriculture and the globalization of food systems throughout the twentieth century. See Ivette Perfecto, John Vandermeer, and Angus Wright, *Nature's Matrix Linking Agriculture, Conservation and Food Sovereignty* (London: Earthscan, 2009); Jeffrey Ayres and Michael Bosia, "Beyond Global Summitry: Food Sovereignty as Localized Resistance to Globalization," *Globalizations* 8, no. 1 (2011): 47-63; Faustino Torrez, "La Via Campesina: Peasant-led Agrarian Reform and Food Sovereignty," *Development* 54, no. 1 (2011): 49-54.

had been in the country since 1929 explained to investigators, “I had my horse tied up [near] a railway used by the fire brigade, [it] was tied to a stake that it couldn’t pull out and my horse never ate cane.” By keeping his horse in an area not planted with cane, and making sure it was tied up at all times, Ramon had followed locally accepted rules of animal husbandry. Residents of *bateyes* had long ago won the right to keep animals on plantations, providing that they caused no damage to the sugarcane. Despite the fact that Ramon had closely followed local codes of conduct, one morning as he left for work in the fields at 5am he found his horse had disappeared. He sent his daughter to the *guarda campestre* office to inquire about the animal and Severiano Ventura told her that she would have to pay a fine to secure its release.³⁴⁷

Detaining loose animals was a large part of the *guarda campestre*’s job: they spent much of their workdays patrolling the sugarcane to find loose animals, which they would hold in a company pen until the owner paid a fine. Ventura drew the ire of the population he was supposed to police because he had been seizing animals in a way they deemed unjust. Delia Cornelio Crecencio, an older Dominican woman who was widowed and worked as a domestic, also testified against Ventura. She stated that one of her cows got away from her one evening and she was unable to tie it up because “it was nighttime, and [because] of the state of my health.” The next morning it had been taken by the *guarda campestre* and Crecencio went to ask for its return because “it was the first time I had an animal arrested.” Ventura categorically refused, and told her that she had to hand over her *cedulá* so he could file a report with the police. However, if she wanted to avoid

³⁴⁷ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Subjeto: Guarda Campestre, 1953-1966, AGN.

having to go to the nearest police station in Los Llanos, over eight miles away, she could pay him a fine.³⁴⁸

Batey residents demanded some understanding from the *guarda campestre*; a first time offense with an animal, or a simple accident did not merit punishment. Residents viewed carelessness with one's animals— not tying them up and allowing them to eat sugarcane — as wrong. By 1955 many seem to have accepted sugar company limits on their grazing rights. However, when a plantation official tried to take away their established customary rights to keep animals they resisted. After a month of Ventura unfairly seizing animals and demanding bribes from residents, the mayor of a neighboring peasant community stepped in. Miguel Guzmán Sánchez, a farmer living on the edge of the plantation, related that he confronted Ventura and “in my capacity as mayor [told him]...these fine were illegal.” He testified that Ventura had “never tried to verify any damages caused by the animals...he had fined. So this doesn't have to do with damages, it has to do with [money.]”³⁴⁹ Sánchez asserted that if an animal had damaged the sugarcane a resident could legitimately be reported and fined. However, since Ventura was not at all concerned with investigating if there had been actual damages to sugar company property his actions were obviously unjust. Sánchez's involvement also demonstrates that, despite attempts to completely isolate *bateyes*, extensive networks still linked residents to nearby peasant communities. Ventura's limitations on residents' animal husbandry rights were clearly seen as morally unjust by the neighboring village.

Interviewees made clear their indignation at the time of these incidents, and reported that they knew immediately that the *guarda campestre*'s actions were improper.

³⁴⁸ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Subjeto: Guarda Campestre, 1953-1966, AGN.

³⁴⁹ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Subjeto: Guarda Campestre, 1953-1966, AGN.

One interviewee, a Dominican woman, had several of her animals seized by Ventura. She stated, “I had my animals tied up, grazing...[A]ll [those] who live on this plantation are accustomed to leaving our animals [there] because the company cedes us [this area] to maintain our animals.”³⁵⁰ While these established rules were obvious to long-time residents, outsiders did not necessarily know what land could be used and what could not. Maximo Duque, who had recently moved to the plantation, had his animals seized by Ventura. In his interview with investigators he stated, “since I am new here...I paid the fine, and not just once.”³⁵¹ This incident allows a brief glimpse into the communal codes that structured life within sugar plantations during the 1950s. Residents accepted some sugar company rules: they acknowledged that areas that had long been planted with cane were off limits, and that damaging those areas could warrant legitimate punishment. Areas that were not planted with cane, however, were community lands and subject to communal codes of conduct. A violation of residents’ rights to own animals, live in long-claimed houses, or plant uncultivated areas was viewed as morally wrong.

After numerous interviews had been conducted, the Secretary of the Interior for Police and Communications sent a report about the accusations directly to President Rafael Trujillo. The final report about this incident stated that, although only one *guarda campestre* agent perpetrated these violations, the residents considered the chief of the *guarda campestre* “morally responsible” for what had happened.³⁵² Given the community’s opinion of both the agent who had unjustly detained animals, and his superior who had not done enough to prevent his actions, the Secretary recommended

³⁵⁰ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Subjeto: Guarda Campestre, 1953-1966, AGN.

³⁵¹ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Subjeto: Guarda Campestre, 1953-1966, AGN.

³⁵² Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Subjeto: Guarda Campestre, 1953-1966, AGN.

removing both of them from their posts. It is clear that representatives of the central government felt that they had to respond to complaints from *batey* residents, and that it was better to remove authority figures who had violated community land codes than face resistance from workers. While sugar plantation inhabitants have not been considered as part of Trujillo populist project, *batey* residents used similar language and tools to make appeals to the government as those living outside of plantations.³⁵³ Although they did not possess legal titles for the land they occupied, residents utilized state channels to protest violations of their claims to territory. The ability to petition the government, however, was limited to those with some literacy in Spanish, and thus community complaints had to be filtered through local hierarchies.

During this period Trujillo became more focused on sugar production, and began to abandon the programs that had made him popular amongst the peasants.³⁵⁴ As he evicted peasants elsewhere to grow his sugar empire, Trujillo may have been more responsive to plantation residents' complaints because he needed their labor. By maintaining their right to receive government protection, inhabitants also opposed the denationalization of *bateyes* and grounded their communities in Dominican territory. However, by protecting some rights to land for residents, Trujillo also reinforced his view of how plantation space should be used. Residents' policed their own land use, limiting

³⁵³ Some works have begun to look at populist movements outside of urban areas in Latin America, and examine their appeal among peasant farmers. See Turits, *Foundations of Despotism*; Christopher R. Boyer, *Becoming Campesinos: Politics, Identity, and Agrarian Struggle in Postrevolutionary Michoacán, 1920-1935* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003); Catherine LeGrand, *Frontier Expansion and Peasant Protest in Colombia, 1830-1936* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986.) Yet there has been limited research on how rural proletariats fit into state populist projects. While plantation communities have not been viewed as part of Trujillo's populist state building efforts, residents did appeal to the government and did receive responses.

³⁵⁴ See Turits, "The Birth of a Dominican Sugar Empire and the Decline of the Trujillo Regime," *Foundations of Despotism*.

animal husbandry and cultivation to areas not planted with sugarcane. Knowing that they could appeal to the government about violations of community moral codes also potentially increased loyalty to the Trujillo regime.

The expansion of cultivation under Trujillo cannot be seen simply as a triumph for *batey* residents. Increasing land use rights was also a tactic of labor control. Agriculture supplemented sugar labor for workers, meaning that wages did not have to be high enough to support an entire family. As one *batey* resident explained about his childhood, “[we] cultivated in the morning and we weren’t hungry, [even though] we had little money.”³⁵⁵ Even when wages were low, the informal agricultural economy protected many against starvation, lessening the chance of labor unrest or wildcat strikes that were common in the 1920s and 30s, and completely absent from the records in the 1950s.³⁵⁶ In addition, individual cultivation was incorporated into plantations’ land management strategies. By allowing cultivation plots between sugarcane fields and human settlements, company management protected the sugarcane against the spread of fire, a serious threat to profits. One long time Monte Coca resident explained, “the fire wardens [would]...break up the soil...[and] make a fire guard...[and] they would give it to people to plant sweet potatoes, yucca, and fruit.”³⁵⁷ Individual cultivation plots provided a useful firebreak to that flames would not jump from one field to another, causing expensive damage. By giving this land to *batey* residents to cultivate, the sugar company outsourced the labor of creating firebreaks, without having to pay extra wages.

³⁵⁵ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, March, 21, 2013.

³⁵⁶ For information on strikes in the 1930s see Gobernación Del Seibo, Legajo 7 1934, AGN; Gobernación Del Seibo, Legajo 2 1930, AGN; Inspector de Migración Barahona, Legajo 39 1937, AGN. See first chapter for information on strikes during the 1920s.

³⁵⁷ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 16, 2013.

Residents also had a stake in not allowing fires to start that might impact their own *conucos*. In cultivating their own crops, residents did not have to rely solely on wages and successfully challenged company and government dominance over plantation space. Yet, expanded cultivation rights also reinforced existing power structures. After five decades of sugar production in the Dominican Republic, and innumerable local struggles over land use, *batey* residents on Trujillo-owned plantations had won land rights for which they had long fought. However, Trujillo proved adept at using these rights to increase his control over the *bateyes*.

Established rights to *conucos* that were recognized by plantation authorities tied people to the *bateyes*. Beginning under Trujillo's ownership, informal rights to plots could be passed down to children, relatives, or friends.³⁵⁸ This meant a more secure workforce since individuals were more likely to stay on a plantation where they possessed land. The political tactics that Trujillo used to control Haitian-Dominican residents of *bateyes* were thus similar to those that he used to control Dominican peasants elsewhere in the country. Granting access to plots of land in exchange for a stable and loyal peasantry was a key component of Trujillo's strategy for controlling the Dominican population. Although the Trujillo regime sought to isolate the nation's Haitian-Dominicans on sugar plantations, he pursued similar political strategies to gain local allegiance and make it easier to surveil this population.

During this period the Trujillo administration also became less ambivalent about family formation on plantations and began to openly encourage it. In a 1960 report, Trujillo's Director of Immigration, Felix Rosa Uribe, admitted that "independent of

³⁵⁸ When I conducted fieldwork in Monte Coca in 2013 several informants described provision plots that had been in their family since the Trujillo era.

seasonal workers who are imported annually, there [is] a large contingent of Haitian nationals [who] have resided in the country for many years.” These long time residents, he claimed, benefited from Dominican labor laws as well as from “the influence of [the Dominican Republic’s] growing spiritual and material progress.” Uribe therefore argued that living in the Dominican Republic helped “civilize” Haitian residents. He continued, “likewise, the considerable investment made in the construction of housing intended to comfortably accommodate these Haitian nationals and their families...merits special mention.”³⁵⁹

By the end of Trujillo’s dictatorship it appears that some government officials began to see the advantages of allowing Haitian families, and by extension communities, to grow within the confines of sugar plantations. Families helped provide a steady workforce that grew up learning about sugar production. Relatives and friends taught children how to cut and haul cane efficiently. According to Edouard Robert, “before you [began] cutting cane you would go and see others doing it. I had a brother who was older than me who cut [cane] so sometimes I would take them breakfast [and while] they were cutting I would sometimes grab a machete and cut with them, [and] I learned.”³⁶⁰

Officials seemed to think it beneficial to allow the existence of a stable Haitian population within Dominican borders on the condition that their presence remained isolated within one industry. However, because of the birthright citizenship laws of the country, and the Trujillo government’s strict enforcement of documentation requirements, those born to Haitian immigrants were able to claim Dominican

³⁵⁹ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Subjeto: Bracero Haitianos, 1958-1978. AGN.

³⁶⁰ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 17, 2013.

citizenship. Thus during this period the number of Dominican citizens of Haitian descent grew, despite the anti-Haitian rhetoric of the regime.

Conclusion

According to Richard Turits, Trujillo's "romance" with sugar and his quest to dominate the industry contributed to his eventual downfall. By taking over plantations he dramatically expanded sugar production, doubling the amount of land in the country dedicated to its cultivation.³⁶¹ In so doing, Trujillo reversed his earlier policies that had benefited an economically independent peasantry in much of the country. As production expanded, increasing numbers of peasants were evicted from their land. Trujillo's pursuit of sugar also came to have dire consequence for the Dominican economy. He emptied government coffers to purchase new plantations and to fund the expansion of the industry. The elevated sugar prices that had drawn Trujillo to the industry in the mid-1940s were a temporary anomaly caused by World War II's destruction of Europe's sugar beet industry. Once the region recovered and production was able to resume, prices dropped and the Dominican Republic found itself with tons of sugar to unload at greatly reduced prices.

While the first two decades of Trujillo's rule had been characterized by a significant growth in incomes, by the 1950s the economy faltered and the country's poor workers and peasants increasingly went hungry. A lifelong resident of the Consuelo plantation, Isabella Sosa recalled the hardship of this period: "I remember [when] food was scarce during the Trujillo era...I remember one time a group of women and girls got together to go [gather] sugarcane. You couldn't take cane, you had to sneak around." The

³⁶¹ Turits, *The Foundations of Despotism*, 240.

women were caught in the act by a *guarda campestre*, who was charged by the company with stopping any theft of sugarcane by *batey* residents. According to Sosa, “[we were] desperate to eat cane, we asked him permission and he said ‘well [make sure] you hide [the cane] inside....[T]ake it to your house so the bigger bosses won’t see it.’ He saw the deprivation. Because sometimes people come to eat [cane] not because they have a full stomach, no, it is because of hunger.”³⁶² Another man remembered the *guarda campestre* themselves going hungry since their salaries were not paid on time by the late 1950s.³⁶³ While *batey* residents had always lived in substandard conditions, the economic problems facing the regime eroded the small gains made during the early Trujillo years. Increased cultivation rights could not completely compensate for falling wages.

Middle class opposition groups had been operating clandestinely for decades in the Dominican Republic. However, decreasing support from the rural poor, long the regime’s base, helped to tip the balance against the dictator. As dissent grew the dictatorship employed increasing levels of violence and terror to control the population. This repression, combined with growing economic hardship across the country, destroyed the regime’s legitimacy. Finally, Trujillo lost the support of the United States government, which had long helped maintain him in power. After the success of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, Washington began to worry that Trujillo was similar to Fulgencio Batista, the despotic Cuban dictator who was defeated by Fidel Castro’s forces. They feared that Trujillo’s violent rule could lead to the rise of another communist government in the Caribbean. Trujillo arranged for a staged election in 1960, and his political advisor Joaquín Balaguer was elected president. This democratic performance

³⁶² Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, March 19, 2013.

³⁶³ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, March 22, 2013.

was not convincing, and John Kennedy personally worked to prohibit the sale of arms to the Dominican Republic and to dramatically cut its preferential sugar quota. The U.S. also began to secretly support opposition forces within the country. People inside the government and military turned against the dictator and on May 30, 1961 a group of fourteen conspirators, with the support of the U.S. Embassy, ambushed Trujillo's car along an isolated stretch of road next to the ocean in Santo Domingo and assassinated the dictator.

By the late 1950s brutal dictators ruled both sides of Hispaniola and worked together to more efficiently exploit some of the island's poorest and most vulnerable citizens. Trujillo had become intent on dominating the sugar production, and in order to do so he attempted to vertically integrate the industry under his authority. He established government control over labor recruitment and movement, and made most of the nation's sugar plantations part of his vast economic empire. While during the first half of his regime Trujillo worked to establish legal private property rights in the Dominican Republic, during the second half of his rule the importance of this designation dissipated. As far as Trujillo was concerned, he controlled all national territory. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the sugar industry, where he was owner of the land and homes residents lived on and in. Trujillo's ownership altered the landscapes of sugar plantations. While Haitians and Haitian-Dominicans were increasingly isolated on plantations, sugar company management under Trujillo's ownership also made concessions to permanent communities by allowing larger provision grounds that could be inherited or gifted. The government also employed legal resources to protect *batey* residents' land use rights, while at the same time using the expansion of these rights as a tool of labor control. The

impact of Trujillo's control on *bateyes* is therefore ambiguous. Residents had long fought for larger provision plots and better protection for animal husbandry, and more widely recognized rights to land contributed to a sense of economic and cultural independence. It is important to take seriously how important the expansion of land rights was to *batey* residents. However, informal land rights were also incorporated into strategies of labor control and land management on the plantation. Moreover, as Trujillo increased *batey* residents' rights within plantation borders, he constricted their freedom to move through the rest of Dominican territory.

Trujillo's obsession with expanding the sugar industry had a long-lasting impact on the Dominican Republic. Sugar would continue to play a crucial role in the Dominican economy, especially during the volatile period following Trujillo's assassination. As the government came to depend increasingly on sugar exports, the Dominican Republic became particularly vulnerable to price fluctuations in the commodity market. Turits writes that if Trujillo had left office, been removed from power, or died in the early 1940s before he became deeply involved in the sugar industry, "sugar might never have become king...and a rural economy formed largely by small and medium farmers might actually have been consolidated."³⁶⁴ Instead, the Dominican Republic became dependent on monoculture, like many of its neighbors in the region. The sugar economy relied on a Haitian-Dominican workforce to produce the country's most important commodity. At the same time, Trujillo promoted a Dominican nationalism that denied the possibility of a Haitian-Dominican identity even as he oversaw the growth of the Haitian population in the Dominican Republic. The simultaneous expansion of permanent Haitian-Dominican

³⁶⁴ Turits, *Foundations of Despotism*, 236.

settlements, and the entrenchment of anti-Haitianism, would create enormous challenges for these communities later in the twentieth century.

Chapter Four

“A Sugarcane Immigration Status”: Anti-Haitianism and Sugar under Joaquín Balaguer, 1961-1976

“At night my father would put on the broadcasts from Cuba to listen to, but very quietly. If the bosses had found out, he would have been sent [away].... Fidel and Trujillo were enemies....That’s how we heard. I was sleeping and he said ‘listen, listen, listen...they killed *el jefe*.’ The next day there were lots of police, and they began to take people away. They sent me to a place...next to the ocean. [Everyone] was eating bitter oranges because there was no food...[Even] the police were eating raw yucca...[and everyone] was looking for who killed Trujillo.”³⁶⁵

On May 30, 1961 a group of soldiers in the Dominican military supported by the U.S. government assassinated Rafael Trujillo on an isolated stretch of highway next to the Caribbean Sea. Following the assassination, opposition groups staged a coup against Trujillo’s puppet president, Joaquín Balaguer, who had come to power after a rigged election in August of 1960. The coup failed, and while Trujillo’s supporters were in still in power, they had lost their figurehead who had kept dissent in check for thirty years. Over the next few months the political system underwent a dramatic transformation as Dominicans demanded rights that had long been denied to them. Balaguer eventually capitulated to pressures to step down and allow elections, but this period of liberal democracy would prove short lived, and he would ultimately return to power. Following the sudden disappearance of Trujillo’s personalist control, pent-up resistance to authority emerged across the country, including on sugar plantations. Without the authority of a powerful dictator, the Dominican political elite grew more anxious about the large

³⁶⁵ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, March 26, 2013.

Haitian and Haitian descendant population residing in the country. The economic and political chaos of the 1960s highlighted for many the failure of the Dominican Republic's contract labor immigration scheme: temporary migrants did not remain temporary, and found ways to assert belonging and citizenship.

For decades Trujillo had encouraged Haitian migration, while attempting to quarantine migrants on plantations. Many Trujillo-appointed officials who remained in the government and the military after 1961 now viewed this containment plan as ineffectual, and they worried that the government had no control over the resident Haitian population. Yet, during this period of political and economic turmoil, sugar made up an ever-increasing percentage of the Dominican Republic's exports, and Haitian immigrants were still needed to produce this vital cash crop. Balaguer and officials allied with him identified Haitians who did not reside on plantations or did not work as cane cutters as a major threat to Dominican progress. Residents of the *bateyes* had always resisted attempted to isolate them, and continued to do so after Trujillo's assassination. Yet, former Trujillo supporters saw movement beyond the confines of plantations as an ever-expanding threat, not just to the productivity of the sugar industry, but to the stability and future of the Dominican nation.³⁶⁶

The eventual nationalization of Trujillo's former plantations would give the Balaguer government increased control over the industry, and under the direction of

³⁶⁶ Like many states that attempted to utilize the labor of immigrant workers while maintaining them separate from the nation, the Dominican government found its plans frustrated by the actions of immigrants. Writing about the Turkish guest worker program in Germany Ruth Mandel states, "initially the West German government had recruited manpower...but discovered instead that the [people] who came as short term [workers] were increasingly remaining for the long term. Furthermore, as [people], these incomers began claiming the same political and social rights enjoyed by German citizens." *Cosmopolitan Anxieties: Turkish Challenges to Citizenship and Belonging in Germany* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 51. While in places like Germany this eventually led to the expansion of citizenship rights to include the children born to immigrants, in the Dominican Republic the opposite happened and citizenship rights would eventually shrink.

former Trujillo officials, the state sugar company began using the Army and National Police to identify Haitian residents in the country and force them onto sugar plantations. Following Trujillo's assassination, the legality of immigrants was untethered from documentation and became defined only by location and occupation. In the eyes of the Balaguer government, Haitians could only claim to be in the country legally if they were cutting cane, regardless of immigration status. During his thirty-year rule, Trujillo had worked to extend documentation in order to better surveil the country's population, enabling state officials to segregate Haitians on sugar plantations. However, Haitian residents used the very forms of documentation through which Trujillo sought to isolate *batey* residents as legal avenues to claim Dominican citizenship. In his absence, the political elite viewed Trujillo's expansion of documentation distrustfully, since it had led not only to the growth of a legal Haitian resident population, but also to the growth of a Haitian-Dominican population with Dominican citizenship rights. As citizens, the children of Haitian immigrants could not be quarantined on plantations as easily as their parents were. By the 1970s the government began to search for ways to retroactively revoke these rights and alter the long-standing birthright citizenship laws of the country.³⁶⁷

As *batey* residents saw their rights to territory outside the plantation further constricted during this period, they reinforced their claims to space on the plantation. The removal of Trujillo's dictatorship meant that residents were again able to employ strikes, work stoppages, and overt violence to protest injustices. Residents maintained the practice of petitioning the president directly when local moral codes were violated, thus

³⁶⁷ For more on birthright, or *jus soli*, citizenship see Shaina Aber and Mary Small, "Citizenship or Subordinate: Permutations of Belonging in the United States and the Dominican Republic," *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 1, no. 3 (2013): 76-96.

demanding some recognition of their rights as denizens of the nation. They also retained some control over those who policed them, and plantation officials who faced opposition from local communities often had to be removed. At the same time, community hierarchies mediated access to these forms of redress and to resources within *bateyes*. In particular, many women could no longer count on plantation officials to provide minimal protection against violence, and faced overwhelming challenges in finding safe and secure housing. In addition, while Haitian immigrants were most impacted by the increase use of force to isolate *bateyes*, Dominican residents frequently benefited the most from cultivation rights. Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent confronted growing oppression and coercion during this period as the Balaguer government attempted to revoke the limited rights that had survived even the anti-Haitian nationalism of the Trujillo era. *Batey* residents continued to maintain control over their territory, but as the sugar industry was nationalized Haitian-Dominican communities faced an increasing threat of denationalization.

Political Turmoil and the Sugar Industry

As the remaining members of Trujillo's family were forced into exile, Joaquín Balaguer maneuvered to stay in power. Within a few months of Trujillo's assassination, however, internal and external opposition to Balaguer's rule mounted. The Dominican population responded to the continuation of Trujillista power with widespread public mobilizations. New avenues for protest opened and sugar plantations across the Dominican Republic erupted with strikes and work stoppages as residents demanded

better wages and greater rights.³⁶⁸ Labor unrest was so rampant that the Dominican Republic was almost unable to mill enough sugar to meet the quota the U.S. had awarded it in 1962.³⁶⁹ In the U.S. the newly elected John F. Kennedy administration refused to support Balaguer's presidency, and threatened to suspend the Dominican Republic's preferential sugar quota if he failed to allow fair and free elections.³⁷⁰ Unable to produce enough sugar, and now potentially unable to sell it to the U.S., the sugar industry teetered on the brink of collapse. Facing a crumbling economy, Balaguer's maintenance of power became untenable. Amid widespread protests, he finally stepped down and went into exile, leaving the country in the hands of an interim government that held a democratic election. On December 20, 1962 Juan Bosch, long a leader of the anti-Trujillo movement in exile, was elected president. It seemed as if the Dominican people had momentarily succeeded in removing any remnant of the Trujillo regime.

Bosch had spent most of his adult life in exile, and he came to power ready to implement socially progressive policies that he had studied during his travels throughout the Caribbean and Latin America. Immediately he began carrying out widespread social reforms to aid the poor, including land reform to break up the *latifundias* that had grown during the second half of Trujillo's rule. These sweeping social reforms elicited a backlash from the traditional Dominican elite. Bosch also declared war on the extensive corruption that had become a part of life during the Trujillo regime. He slashed government salaries, including his own, and began to root out corruption in the military.

³⁶⁸ Fondo Secretaria Interior y Policia, 1962 Legajo 5481, AGN.

³⁶⁹ Following the Cuban Revolution the U.S. government revoked Cuba's sugar quota, and redistributed it among its allies, including the Dominican Republic. Michael R. Hall, *Sugar and Power in the Dominican Republic: Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the Trujillos* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), 111.

³⁷⁰ Hall, *Sugar and Power in the Dominican Republic*, 129.

This angered Trujillo supporters in the armed forces, who for decades had relied on graft to supplement their salaries, and meant that Bosch could no longer count on their protection from domestic enemies. Finally, while the U.S. had supported his election, Washington soon grew wary of his nationalism, his opposition to U.S. government and corporate involvement in his country, and his permissiveness towards leftist groups operating in the Dominican Republic.³⁷¹ Bosch refused to crack down on communists and even lifted a ban on travel to Cuba, arguing that such freedoms were a necessary part of a democratic society.³⁷²

During this period of social and political turmoil, the fate of the sugar industry remained uncertain. Trujillo's heirs had eventually relinquished their claims to his plantations, and they were donated to an autonomous foundation.³⁷³ How they would be administered, and who would reap the profits, remained to be seen. This uncertainty meant that workers at former Trujillo-owned plantations were often paid irregularly, or only a portion of their promised wages, and following Bosch's election extensive labor mobilizations continued on sugar plantations as pent-up frustrations from the Trujillo era exploded.³⁷⁴ The economic importance of sugar during this volatile time, and the time-sensitive need for labor in order to meet U.S. quotas, gave plantation workers newfound

³⁷¹ Cold War tensions led U.S. leaders to worry that the mostly agricultural societies of Latin America could potentially become a breeding ground for communism, especially following the Cuban Revolution. Greg Grandin writes that American influence in Latin America during the Cold War led to the "politicization and internationalization of every-day life." Despite the fact that Bosch was anti-communist, his unwillingness to closely follow U.S. directions quickly lost him favor in Washington. *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 17.

³⁷² Piero Gleijeses, *The Dominican Crisis: The 1965 Constitutionalist Revolt and American Intervention* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), 88-90.

³⁷³ Michael R. Hall, *Sugar and Power in The Dominican Republic: Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the Trujillos* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), 125.

³⁷⁴ Fondo Secretaria Interior y Policía. 1962 Legajo 5481, AGN.

leverage. In a new and uncertain economic and political system, sugar workers quickly moved to make their voices heard. While open labor resistance had been rare during the Trujillo era, organized forms of protest had not disappeared. When the centralized power of the state and sugar plantations broke down, even for a brief time, residents engaged in overt resistance. Leonardo Martínez Ramos, a life long resident of the sugar producing East, stated: “during the Trujillo era there weren’t strikes, but [afterwards] strikes started [happening] because people had more freedom...when something happened that [workers] didn’t agree with...they would unite to initiate a work stoppage.”³⁷⁵ These periodic group mobilizations demonstrate that long periods of government repression could not completely dominate or divide *batey* residents, as some authors claim.³⁷⁶ Workers made informed choices about when to employ certain tactics in their political arsenal.

Strikes and work stoppages threatened to paralyze the harvest at certain points, and some mills were unable to grind sugar because of a lack of cane.³⁷⁷ In addition to strikes, sugarcane fires were rampant as cane cutters attempted to force sugar companies to capitulate to their demands.³⁷⁸ Some plantation officials recommended paying workers less to cut burnt cane in hopes that this would decrease the incidence of arson.³⁷⁹ While in some places Dominican and Haitian workers mobilized together, as economic hardship

³⁷⁵ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 16, 2013.

³⁷⁶ Martin F Murphy writes, “Haitians on Dominican sugar plantations or elsewhere in the country have not and cannot organize corporately. The strategies and tactics that they use to protect themselves are individual.” *Dominican Sugar Plantations: Production and Foreign Labor Integration* (New York, Praeger: 1991), 154.

³⁷⁷ Fondo Secretaria Interior y Policía, 1962 Legajo 5481, AGN.

³⁷⁸ For example, during the 1964-1965 harvest the government recorded 136 fires that destroyed an estimated 50,503 tons of sugarcane. Fondo CEA, 1965 Legajo 36, AGN.

³⁷⁹ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA. 1960-2001 Caja 15,986. AGN.

continued to grip most *bateyes*, and some descended into chaos, tensions between residents escalated and ethnic violence broke out. A group of Haitian workers who were arrested for attempting to leave the Río Haina plantation, formerly the center of the Trujillo sugar empire, told police they did so partially because they felt threatened by Dominican residents. The administrator of Río Haina reported to the government that rumors were circulating among cane cutters that “the Dominicans are going to harm them and try to kill Haitians because [it is] their fault that our citizens do not...[earn] better salaries.”³⁸⁰ A few months later, violence broke out in another *batey*. According to reports, some Haitian men got into a fight with a group of Dominicans and killed three of them. In retaliation a crowd “of around forty [Dominicans] formed, and stabbed to death four Haitians and [then] burned thirty shacks and two barracks [where] the foreigners lived.”³⁸¹ Just a week later a group of eleven Haitian workers at a plantation on the other side of the country wrote directly to President Juan Bosch to tell him “we find ourselves threatened by the inhabitants of this areas...[and] we ask for your protection.”³⁸² After 31 years of dictatorship, the political and economic confusion that followed the Trujillo regime’s ouster allowed for overt resistance against authority, but also exacerbated anti-immigrant sentiment in some locations.³⁸³

³⁸⁰ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1958–1978 Caja 14,453, AGN.

³⁸¹ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1958–1978 Caja 14,453, AGN.

³⁸² Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1958–1978 Caja 14,453, AGN.

³⁸³ Writing about xenophobic violence in South Africa against migrants from elsewhere in Africa Mohamed Seedat, Umesh Bawa and Kpano Ratele argue, “in the context of extreme competition for scarce resources and opportunities [the poor]...are strained by the stressors of systematic disadvantage and so turn their aggression inwards against those who are in closest proximity to them...in the instance of xenophobia, foreigners are cast as the “other”, unworthy of the rights and opportunities that national are entitled to.” Mohamed Seedat, Umesh Bawa and Kpano Ratele, “Why the Wretched Kill in Democratic South Africa: Reflections on Rejuvenation and Reconstruction,” *Social Change* 40, no. 1 (2010): 21.

Bosch responded to these incidents by ordering an inquiry into their causes. His investigators reported “the Dominicans in these locations [are] resentful of Haitians because they think the administrators favor the Haitians by giving them easier work.”³⁸⁴ In his response Bosch pointed out that the difficulty of life within *bateyes* no doubt contributed to ethnic tensions.³⁸⁵ Bosch’s brand of Dominican nationalism did not rely on the same anti-Haitian ideology that Trujillo and Balaguer had promoted. He was more inclined to see poor Haitians and Dominicans as united in a struggle against the anti-democratic and repressive regimes that ruled their respective countries. In a 1943 letter to several fellow Dominican writers he explained, “there are those, in Santo Domingo as well as in Haiti, who exploit the people [and] accumulate millions.... They trick both countries with the illusion of an intransigent nationalism that is not a love of one’s own country, but a hatred of outsiders.” He argued, in no uncertain terms, “there is no fundamental difference between the Dominican and Haitian masses. There is no fundamental difference between the Dominican and Haitian elite.”³⁸⁶ Bosch also saw the sugar industry as exploitative. In 1943 he published a short story entitled “Luis Pie” that described the struggles of a Haitian cane cutter who has been badly injured by a machete accident. In this story Bosch gives voice to a Haitian-Dominican experience, and even writes dialogue combining Haitian Kreyòl and Spanish.³⁸⁷ It is conceivable that, given

³⁸⁴ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1958–1978 Caja 14,453, AGN.

³⁸⁵ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1958–1978 Caja 14,453, AGN.

³⁸⁶ Juan Bosch, “Carta de Juan Bosch a Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi, Héctor Incháustegui y Ramón Marrero Aristy,” in *República Dominicana y Haití: El Derecho a Vivir* ed. Matias Bosch (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Fundación Juan Bosch, 2014), 132.

³⁸⁷ Lorgia Garcia-Peña, “Dominicanidad in Contra (Diction): Marginality, Migration and the Narration of a Dominican National Identity” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2008); Margarita Fernández Olmos, *La*

time, Bosch would have abandoned the national policy of isolating the *bateyes* and formed a definition of Dominican citizenship that could include Haitian identity.

We will never know how Bosch's presidency would have impacted Haitian-Dominican communities on plantations as, within months of his becoming president, the Dominican elite and certain sectors of the military began to plot his overthrow. Throughout September 1963 attacks against Bosch escalated, and on the 23rd of that month the military mobilized against him. Tanks arrived at the National Palace demanding Bosch's immediate resignation, and without any protection within the military he was forced into exile yet again. A military junta took over the government and dissolved the Congress. Over the next few weeks prominent allies of Bosch were deported, and a curfew was imposed throughout the country. Despite its public support of the democratic process in the Dominican Republic, the United States did not intervene.

The economic importance of sugar, and the fact that plantation residents were often not seen as truly Dominican, led some in the new military government to suspect the *bateyes* of harboring potential threats to the nation. Representatives of the government feared that the plantations were filled with Bosch supporters, including among the *guarda campestre*, who might turn residents against them. A memo from October 1963, shortly after the coup had taken place, worried that "in the sugar plantations there are...people most easily fooled...[who] always trust what is taught to them by authorities."³⁸⁸ While the government refused to see Haitian residents as capable of forming their own ideologies, they still viewed them as a potential internal menace.

cuentística de Juan Bosch: un análisis crítico-cultural (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Ed. Alfa y Omega, 1982.)

³⁸⁸ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Guarda Campestre, 1963–19 Caja 14,453, AGN.

However, the foremost threat to the military government did not come from within the *bateyes*: much of the Dominican population, especially the urban poor, opposed their rule. The economy, which had been floundering for years, further declined. Annual sugar profits in 1964 were \$2.6 million lower than they had been in 1962, which itself had been a meager harvest year.³⁸⁹ Corruption and mismanagement, which Bosch had actively fought, expanded once again, and with it the Dominican public debt. The country's poor faced increasing hardship and scarcity.

Juan Bosch supporters, and other groups that opposed the military government, began organizing to overthrow the junta. On the 24 of April, 1965 the government arrested several conspirators, forcing the rebels to begin their plan several days early. In the capital of Santo Domingo protesters streamed into the streets to demand the return of Bosch and the reinstatement of the liberal constitution he had helped craft. Initially, the junta and the U.S. government underestimated the rebels' strength and thought they could easily be defeated. However, the army was quickly beaten back to their base outside the city as urban guerrillas claimed control over parts of Santo Domingo, eventually storming the National Palace. For three days the capital of Santo Domingo was torn apart by civil war. President Lyndon Johnson was concerned that the chaos might enable a communist government to come to power, and the Dominican Republic would become another Cuba. On the evening of April 28th Marines landed in the Dominican Republic, the first overt U.S. military intervention in the Caribbean and Latin America since the occupation of Haiti ended in 1934.

U.S. soldiers helped the Dominican military defeat remaining rebel forces. Armed with American equipment, the army assaulted urban neighborhoods where pro-Bosch

³⁸⁹ Gleijeses, *The Dominican Crisis*, 118.

forces still held sway.³⁹⁰ Elections were again scheduled, and Bosch was allowed to return and run. However, due to threats on his life he was barely able to leave his home to campaign, and the months of violence against Bosch supporters sent a clear signal to the electorate. Despite these odds, thirty-nine percent of the population still voted for Bosch.³⁹¹ Running against him was Joaquín Balaguer, who had been drumming up support while in exile. After four difficult years, a civil war, and a U.S. military intervention, many believed that Trujillo's former right hand man was the only person who could bring stability and economic progress. Balaguer would control the country for the next twelve years.

Repression and Coercion under Balaguer

Balaguer, who had been forced into exile partially because of his inability to control the sugar industry, knew he had to immediately reestablish state control over plantations in order to maintain power. In addition, Balaguer had been one of the intellectual drivers of state anti-Haitianism under Trujillo. Balaguer believed that the existence of two nations on the island of Hispaniola was an unnatural phenomenon, and that Haitian and Dominican identities were antithetical.³⁹² His ideology was steeped in biological understandings of race, and in order to prove the fundamental whiteness of the Dominican Republic, and the blackness of Haiti, Balaguer reimagined the island's history. To support his claims, he argued that after the decimation of the indigenous

³⁹⁰ Gleijeses, *The Dominican Crisis*, 264.

³⁹¹ Gleijeses, *The Dominican Crisis*, 280.

³⁹² Pedro Luis San Miguel, *The Imagined Island: History, Identity, and Utopia in Hispaniola* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 54.

population, pious, Catholic Spaniards repopulated the eastern half of the island.³⁹³ He downplayed the history of the slave trade to colonial Santo Domingo, and instead blamed any “African” presence in the Dominican Republic on Haiti. While the Dominican population stagnated in the nineteenth century, Balaguer contended that Haiti’s “increased rapidly, not only because of how easily the African race reproduces, but also [because of] the primitive conditions in which... the lower classes [live.]”³⁹⁴ African characteristics in the Dominican population were therefore, according to Balaguer, a result of Haitian infiltration of the Dominican Republic, first during the 1821-1844 Haitian occupation of the Dominican Republic and since then through clandestine immigration.

By applying what he claimed to be a scientific racial analysis to the island’s history, Balaguer sought to prove the whiteness of Dominicans and the threat that Haiti posed. Balaguer believed culture was biologically derived from race, and racial mixing between Haitians and Dominicans could therefore degrade Dominican culture, and the Dominican nation. He wrote that Haitian immigrants “have children who increase the black population of the country and contribute to [its] ethnic decay.”³⁹⁵ While Haiti no longer had the power to launch a military invasion into the Dominican Republic, Balaguer argued that a Haitian menace still existed, warning that if “the clandestine penetration... [of] a Haitian workforce... is not stopped in time it will... facilitate the

³⁹³ Joaquín Balaguer, *La Isla Al Revés: Haití y el Destino Dominicano* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Fundación José Antonio Caro, 1994), 59-62.

³⁹⁴ Balaguer, *La Isla Al Revés*, 129.

³⁹⁵ Balaguer, *La Isla Al Revés*, 41.

absorption of the Dominican Republic by Haiti.”³⁹⁶ In Balaguer’s eyes the annual immigration of Haitian workers posed an immediate danger to Dominican culture and national security.

It is possible that Balaguer never really believed that Trujillo’s immigration policy could work. His writings make clear that he was deeply troubled by the existence of any Haitian spaces within the country. Whereas Trujillo had seen plantations as deterritorialized from the Dominican nation, and therefore able to contain any threat, Balaguer saw them as an internal enemy. During the brief period in which he continued to hold the presidency after Trujillo’s death in 1961, he began working on changing the makeup of plantation labor forces. Despite the fact that he faced a volatile political situation, he made eliminating any Haitian presence in the country a major priority. Balaguer almost immediately implemented a plan to Dominicanize sugar labor. This, he felt, could help address the rampant unemployment problem in the country and, once and for all, remove any Haitian presence.³⁹⁷

Balaguer commissioned several reports on how to end the importation of Haitian workers and utilize only Dominicans in the sugar industry. In 1961 Porfirio Dantes Castillo, a member of Congress, circulated a report detailing the potential economic advantages of switching to a Dominican labor force. He wrote “every Haitian eats around

³⁹⁶ Balaguer, *La Isla Al Revés*, 156.

³⁹⁷ Fears that Haitian “surplus labor” would contribute to the poverty of Dominicans converged with Balaguer’s anti-Haitianism in this plan to “Dominicanize” the industry. Other states have also touted the deportation of certain ethnic groups as a solution for economic woes. For example, following independence Sri Lanka sought to repatriate the Indian and Indian-descent population that provided most of the labor on tea plantations. Later the state nationalized the plantations, and succeeded in deporting many of the workers. Valli Kanapthipillai writes “The linking of repatriation of Indian Tamil labor as a solution to the economic problems of unemployment, poverty and economic stagnation, was the political ploy of many populist politicians. By drawing attention to the socioeconomic achievements and advantages enjoyed by the minority communities, they detracted attention from their inability and failure to pursue policies that could lift the country out of its economic slump.” Valli Kanapthipillai, *Citizenship and Statelessness in Sri Lanka: The Case of the Tamil Estate Workers* (London: Anthem Press, 2009), 93.

ten [pieces] of cane while cutting, and steals [another] ten daily. They don't peel the cane like we do, but twist [it] and drink the juice." He estimated that "25,000 Haitian eat 1,000,000 pounds [of cane] every day. During 100 days of harvest...that is 50,000 tons of cane."³⁹⁸ These numbers were no doubt fabricated, but may have been loosely based on elite Dominican understandings of the difference between Haitian and Dominican workers. The report's pseudoscientific approach is reminiscent of Balaguer's own "research" into the topic. Haitians were often portrayed as more capable of enduring hardship in the sugarcane fields and able to survive on limited food during periods of hunger. Another similar report stated, "Haitian workers can survive the day on one plantain and a herring, but Dominicans will not withstand [that.]"³⁹⁹ This ability to survive sugar work made Haitians fundamentally different from Dominicans. These beliefs reflected decades of government propaganda that portrayed Haitians as only suited for working on plantations. Several other investigators also explained that while the conditions in the *bateyes* were acceptable for Haitian families, low salaries and poor living conditions kept many Dominicans from working in sugar, and the working conditions had to be improved if Dominicans were going to join the industry.⁴⁰⁰

Based on this information, Balaguer implemented a plan that he titled "Natives to Cut Sugarcane." After calling for an increase in salaries and improvements in housing for Dominicans in the *bateyes*, Balaguer then ordered the deportation of some Haitians, in order to "pave the way for the use of Dominican workers."⁴⁰¹ However, Balaguer's initial

³⁹⁸ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1958–1978 Caja 14,453, AGN.

³⁹⁹ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1955-1966 Caja 16,009, AGN.

⁴⁰⁰ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1958–1978 Caja 14,453, AGN.

⁴⁰¹ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1958–1978 Caja 14,453, AGN.

attempt to “fix” the country’s Haitian problem did not work as he expected. Limited numbers of Dominican workers were willing to work in sugarcane, and those who did relocate to the *bateyes* complained bitterly about the conditions—crowded barracks, no running water, limited sanitation—and often returned home quickly.⁴⁰² The Trujillo regime’s efforts to link Haitian identity and sugar labor also no doubt played a role in Balaguer’s failure to Dominicanize the sugar industry: many Dominicans now viewed cutting cane as a purely Haitian occupation. Decades of anti-Haitian propaganda had made Haitians indispensable to the Dominican economy, while at the same time painting them as antithetical to Dominican progress. The Haitian Immigrant was therefore, in the words of Mae M. Ngai, “an impossible subject: a person who cannot be and a problem that cannot be solved.”⁴⁰³

Balaguer’s efforts to remove Haitian workers from the country did not induce Dominicans to cut cane, and instead decreased the labor supply. Sugar companies were desperate for workers, giving strikers on plantations more power to disrupt the harvest, since replacements could not be easily found. Sugarcane was left rotting in the fields with no one to cut it during the 1962 harvest season. By the spring plantations begged the government to allow them to recruit additional Haitian workers. The La Romana plantation wrote to Secretary of Labor to tell him “we now have 4,467 fewer agricultural workers than we did on this date last year.” This labor shortage meant that “on the first of May our milled cane amounts to 1,056,210 tons, which [is] a decrease of 878,575 tons in relation to ...the first of May, 1961.” La Romana then requested permission to recruit

⁴⁰² Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1960-2001 Caja 15,986, AGN.

⁴⁰³ Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 5.

additional Haitian workers.⁴⁰⁴ A similar letter from the Haina plantation stated, “we have spent a lot to recruit Dominicans...but the costs have not [brought] results....The Haitians are the one who really [helped us] avoid disaster during the second part of the harvest.”⁴⁰⁵

Despite the failure of Balaguer’s initial plan to Dominicanize the industry in 1961, his brand of anti-Haitianism grew in influence among the country’s ruling class during the period between his first presidency and his second. The idea that the Dominican Republic’s economic and immigration policy problems could be solved by forcing Haitian residents to move to sugar plantations, and deporting those who resisted, began to take root in the years before Balaguer took over the presidency again, as his influence on national politics was increasing. In the absence of Trujillo’s iron-fisted rule, anxiety about the country’s Haitian population, and their mobility in the country rose among the remaining members of Trujillo’s government. Many officials doubted the state’s ability to keep migrants and their descendants quarantined on plantations, and began to demand a redoubling of anti-Haitian policies.

In 1964 the Labor Secretary wrote to the ruling military junta to alert them to the fact that in sugar producing regions, “Haitians, whose only and exclusive task...in our territory [is]...to be used as cane cutters...[are working as] tailors, drivers, [or] peddlers.” The Secretary continued that immediate action should be taken “to eradicate [this problem] that, at an alarming rate, is becoming a true social scourge.”⁴⁰⁶ It was not only Haitians living in sugar regions who were seen this way: Haitian residents on the border

⁴⁰⁴ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1958–1978 Caja 14,453, AGN.

⁴⁰⁵ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1958–1978 Caja 14,453, AGN.

⁴⁰⁶ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1953-1991 Caja 14,456, AGN.

were now viewed as sugar workers who had left their designated jobs. The next year an immigration inspector wrote to the Director of Immigration to inform him that “hundreds of Haitians are residing on the border, and the majority of said Haitians are employees of the state sugar plantation [who] have abandoned [the] area that they had been assigned by the government and come to the border to pursue different work than they had been assigned.”⁴⁰⁷ Shortly after the 1937 massacre, the bicultural and transnational communities of the border region had begun to quietly reestablish themselves. While some residents may have originally entered the country to work on sugar plantations, the majority undoubtedly had their roots in the historical Haitian-Dominican communities of this region.⁴⁰⁸ However, to the immigration inspector any Haitian who had entered the country could only have done so to work in the sugarcane fields.

During this period of uncertainty and social upheaval, many in the conservative military government saw the Haitian presence in the country as a danger to the Dominican nation. As the Director of Immigration explained, the 250,000 Haitians he estimated to live in the country “constitute a real threat to our nationality, and even to the security of our country.”⁴⁰⁹ To these people Haitian residents could only be sugar workers; any other profession was incompatible with their presence in the Dominican Republic. Writing about the American *bracero* contract labor program, Ngai argues “the construction of Mexicans as migratory agricultural laborers (both legal and illegal)...gave powerful sway to the notion that Mexicans had no rightful presence on United States

⁴⁰⁷ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1953-1991 Caja 14,456, AGN.

⁴⁰⁸ Edward Paulino, “Erasing the Kreyol from the Margins of the Dominican Republic: The Pre- and Post-Nationalization Project of the Border, 1930-1945,” *Wadabagei: A Journal of the Caribbean and Its Diasporas* 8, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 66.

⁴⁰⁹ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1967-1989 Caja 14,455, AGN.

territory, no rightful claim of belonging.”⁴¹⁰ In the Dominican Republic Haitians were not only associated with agricultural labor, but with one industry that occupied spaces distinct from the rest of the national landscape. The only Haitian identity accepted by the Dominican state at this time was circumscribed by employment and location, and the government sought to remove any Haitians who did not adhere to these constraints. In 1965 the Secretary of Labor wrote another strongly worded letter to the military junta recommending that they “issu[e] a decree whereby...all of the Haitians found in our territory, legally or illegally, [are required to] immediately report to the state sugar plantations....[I]f they refuse...[we] would order their deportation, pure and simple.”⁴¹¹

With plans already circulating to deport any Haitians unwilling to cut sugarcane, Balaguer quickly took steps to officially adopt such a policy when he returned to the presidency in 1966. While he would continue to implement policies intended to increase the number of Dominicans working in sugar, he seemed to accept that Haitian workers were necessary for ensuring that the industry ran smoothly. He of course remained concerned with their presence in the country, and continued to see the specter of passive invasion all around him, but he gave up on plans to completely remove Haitians from the sugar industry. Within a month and a half of returning to power, he consolidated the former Trujillo plantations, in limbo since the assassination, into a state company. The *Consejo Estatal del Azucar*, or CEA, would administer the twelve plantations formerly owned by the Trujillo family. This meant that the vast majority of the country’s sugar

⁴¹⁰ Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 89.

⁴¹¹ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1953-1991 Caja 14,456, AGN.

industry became the “direct property of the state.”⁴¹² While Balaguer had to operate within a system that was ostensibly more democratic than it had been under Trujillo, this still meant that he had enormous control over the country’s sugar industry. Balaguer centralized power in the executive, and he used the state’s mandate over much of the sugar industry to attempt to control the Haitian population.

Within a month of forming, the CEA, with the president present, passed a resolution to “try to recruit those Haitians who are in the country engaged in other work....” It further stipulated that, “those who don’t go work on the sugar plantations, [we will] return ... to their country.”⁴¹³ In the same resolution the CEA allowed for the recruitment of workers in Haiti, and two months later Balaguer renewed the bilateral labor contract with Haitian president François Duvalier. This agreement further increased direct government involvement in the sugar industry. Instead of private companies paying the Haitian government to recruit workers, now the CEA, part of the Dominican state, paid for the right to recruit workers. That year the Dominican government paid François Duvalier approximately thirteen dollars for each worker.⁴¹⁴ In 1966 the Dominican economy was still fragile, and sugar accounted for about half of the country’s exports.⁴¹⁵ Balaguer could not risk another disastrous production season, like that of 1962 after he attempted to Dominicanize the sugar labor force.

Throughout his rule, from 1966 to 1978, Balaguer would work to make sure that sugar labor was the only livelihood available to Haitians in the Dominican Republic. For

⁴¹² Ley Numero 7 Gaceta oficial Numero 9000, del 20 de Agosto de 1966.

⁴¹³ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1955-1966 Caja 16,009, AGN.

⁴¹⁴ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1955-1966 Caja 16,009, AGN.

⁴¹⁵ Thomas E. Weil, *Area Handbook for the Dominican Republic* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973), 195.

example, in early 1968 the Director of Immigration informed the president that he had instructed “the Army Chief of Staff and the Chief of the National Police to order their respective teams to deliver all Haitian nationals not located on a sugar estate... to the Department of Immigration in order to be... used to cut cane in the harvest that will begin next month.”⁴¹⁶ This order did not make any mention of the legal status of the Haitians being forcibly moved to sugar plantations, and previous correspondence stipulated that both undocumented and documented Haitians could be subject to these policies. It is clear that even Haitians with *cédulas* could be forced to leave their established professions and relocate to plantations. Legal documentation, which many immigrants held, no longer allowed Haitians mobility within the Dominican Republic. Instead, their ethnicity marked where in the country they could reside.

While documented migrants could not move about the country at will, undocumented migrants were not systematically repatriated when found. In 1968 a group of Haitian workers was sent to the Angelia plantations because “military authorities, under orders from the [Immigration] Department, found them in our territory without documentation.”⁴¹⁷ These undocumented migrants were not detained and then deported. The Department of Immigration claimed that undocumented Haitians “constitute, due to their numbers, a burden for the state to maintain them in prison.” Instead of initiating deportation proceedings, military officials instead “relocated [undocumented immigrants] to....sugar estates.”⁴¹⁸ In this memo there was no mention of regularizing the status of

⁴¹⁶ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1967-1989 Caja 14,455, AGN.

⁴¹⁷ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1967-1989 Caja 14,455, AGN.

⁴¹⁸ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1967-1989 Caja 14,455, AGN.

those transferred to sugar plantations, and it is safe to assume that most remained undocumented after being required to stay in the country to cut sugarcane.

Cutting sugarcane, therefore, became a stand in for legal immigration status during this period. For example, when a commander of a military detachment in the East arrested a group of Haitians for “wandering” (*deambulando*) without documents, a word commonly used to describe Haitians found outside plantations, he first called a representative from the nearby sugar plantation to determine which of the men worked for him. Those the sugar company official recognized were returned to the plantation, again without regularizing their status, while the Haitian men who had established other professions were deported.⁴¹⁹ A former company administrator for the Consuelo sugar plantation explained, “if I needed fifty men to work...and I only had thirty and I saw there were five or six who weren’t legal, I would take them and I would use them.”⁴²⁰ During Balaguer’s presidency documentation became less important for determining the status of Haitian immigrants and physical location became paramount. Sove Durand, a life-long plantation resident of Dominican and Haitian descent, elucidated the nature of documentation within the *bateyes*: “[Haitians] came [to the country] with a sugarcane immigration status. It wasn’t a visa, it wasn’t anything like that.”⁴²¹

Residing in the country without documentation was acceptable, as long as one worked in sugarcane. Moreover, increasingly even Haitian immigrants with legal documentation were considered suspect if they worked outside the confines of the sugar plantations. As the executive director of the CEA wrote to President Balaguer in 1968,

⁴¹⁹ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1958–1978 Caja 14,453, AGN.

⁴²⁰ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 4, 2013.

⁴²¹ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, March 21, 2013.

“Haitians... will only be tolerated in sugarcane areas where they dedicate themselves to cutting [cane.]”⁴²² Haitian workers also did not have the right to return to Haiti if they no longer wanted to work cutting cane. When 153 Haitians requested exit permits so they could return home, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs refused, saying “those Haitians are not indigent, but are workers who want to return to their country for personal reasons, and the Haina Sugar Company has informed me that they have work for them until the end of the harvest.”⁴²³ Conversely, residents who were unable to work could quickly be deported. For example, in 1967 the Haina plantation repatriated 114 workers to Haiti because they suffered from “ill health.”⁴²⁴ Mobility was no longer an accepted right, and the legality of Haitian residents was tethered to location and ability to work cutting sugarcane. Legal residents could be forced to move to sugar plantations and stay there, and immigrants found without documentation could be kept in the country without regularizing their status.⁴²⁵

Balaguer’s government viewed Haitians as only capable of hard manual labor. As forcible labor conscriptions became more common, Dominican civilians began to employ

⁴²² Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1967-1989 Caja 14,455, AGN.

⁴²³ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1958–1978 Caja 14,453, AGN.

⁴²⁴ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1967-1974 Caja 16,006, AGN; Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Deportación, 1953-1986, AGN.

⁴²⁵ Writing about the isolation of Mexican contract workers on citrus farms, Matthew Garcia states “agribusiness firms such as the citrus associations did not create the distinguishing statuses of citizenship, gender, or race, but rather seized upon them and transformed those characteristics to the organization’s advantage.” In comparison, the sugar industry in the Dominican Republic played a much more direct role in creating exclusionary forms of citizenship. This is due to the importance of one industry in the economy, and the close relationship between the state and sugar, first as the direct property of the dictator and then later as a state run company. The association between Haitians and sugar that allowed the CEA to isolate Haitians and exploit their labor was driven by the government’s anti-Haitian policies that linked Haitians to sugar as a mechanism to erase the long history of Haitian-Dominican collaborations. Matthew Garcia, *World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 161.

this ideology to their benefit. At the end of the 1974 harvest a truck driver approach a group of sixty Haitian workers and told them he was transporting workers back to Haiti. Instead, he took them to his farm and threatened them with a shotgun to force them to work. According to the *guarda campestre* agent from the plantation they had left, who investigated the incident, when “they told him that they wanted to return to their country...[he] said ‘I’m not an idiot, you came here to work.’” Eventually he shot two men before the group managed to escape.⁴²⁶ The landowner’s statement indicates that he saw all Haitian residents as a ready workforce always available for conscription to Dominicans. A similar incident was reported two years earlier in which a local landowner was accused of forcing a group of about eighty Haitians to work on his farm.⁴²⁷

Following the 1937 massacre, Trujillo’s government employed extra-legal coercion to force Haitians residing in sugar-producing regions into sugar labor. Balaguer took this immigration policy even further and ordered the police and military to actively search the country for Haitian residents. In the late 1930s and early 1940s the Trujillo government had to convince government representatives and local officials that Haitian residents were required to reside on sugar plantations. Twenty-five years later most government officials automatically assumed that any Haitian who had been admitted into the country had been contracted to cut sugarcane. To them there was no other role a Haitian immigrant could play, and Haitians engaging in other work posed an obvious threat to Dominican culture and economic progress. A foundational goal of the *Consejo Estatal del Azucar* was the forced segregation of the country’s Haitian population, and under this regime Haitians and people of Haitian decent would suffer innumerable human

⁴²⁶ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1958–1978 Caja 14,453, AGN.

⁴²⁷ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1967-1989 Caja 14,455, AGN.

rights abuses. Balaguer's brand of anti-Haitianism therefore further isolated and marginalized the *bateyes*.

The association between Haitians and commodity production that the government had worked to establish changed how Haitian identity was understood in the Dominican Republic. Writing about *braceros* in the American Southwest Ngai argues, "the construction of 'Mexican' into a one-dimensional 'commodity function and utility' devalued nearly everything that held meaning to Mexicans—the individual self, the family, culture, and political experience... The injection of foreignness into the commodity-identity rendered Mexican labor *disposable* in addition to being cheap."⁴²⁸ Ruth Madel makes a similar argument about Turkish guest workers in Germany, writing "Their identity... defined by the German term reduces migrants to their function... it marginalized and objectifies migrants, leaving limited conceptual, social, or linguistic space for meaningful incorporation into the society."⁴²⁹ Anti-Haitianism therefore both led to the isolation of Haitian immigrants on plantations, and at the same time this isolation fed anti-Haitian ideologies. As Haitians were associated with only one form of labor, a difficult and dirty form of labor at that, many viewed them as distinct from Dominicans and incapable of joining the nation.

During this period the role of the *guarda campestre* on the plantations also changed. They were tasked with making sure that once Haitian migrants arrived in the *bateyes* they actually worked cutting cane. Workers were paid for the weight of cane they cut, but this did not always mean that they could decide when they wanted to work and when they did not. The *guarda campestre* would often use the threat of violence to force

⁴²⁸ Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 132.

⁴²⁹ Mandel, *Cosmopolitan Anxieties*, 55.

residents to work longer hours, or to work on Sundays, which were traditionally a day of rest. Jowasen Cheval explained, “when there were people who didn’t want to cut cane [they would say] ‘come on, go pick cane’...[if] you didn’t, they would arrest you [or] even beat you.”⁴³⁰ Manuel Thomas was more direct; when asked what the *guarda campestre* did he responded: “They were assholes. During the harvest you couldn’t be idle in the *batey*....[If] the *campestre* saw you [they would] call the police to take you.”⁴³¹ Legality was therefore linked not only to location; it was also contingent on the ability and willingness to work. A Haitian man living on a plantation with proper documentation could still face arrest for refusing to cut sugarcane.

The *guarda campestre* used this new power over workers to their advantage. In 1969 Bienvenido Almonte Pacheco, a *guarda campestre* agent on the Rio Haina plantation, was fired after “devoting himself to the task of taking workers from our cane fields and selling them to other plantations.”⁴³² Andre Libien explained this practice, saying “when a worker is under their control...if there is another place that doesn’t have workers...[they can] take them there.”⁴³³ Workers during this period therefore experienced growing coercion, and even at times captivity. Immigrants still made choices about work and migration: they employed long-standing resistance strategies, adapting them to confront evolving threats to their autonomy. Yet, it is important to recognize how poverty, racism, and legal exclusion constrained the freedom of Haitian immigrants

⁴³⁰ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, March 19, 2013.

⁴³¹ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, March 26, 2013.

⁴³² Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Guarda Campestre, 1963-1969 Caja 6,623, AGN.

⁴³³ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, March 20, 2013.

during these years. The increasingly restrictive “immigration regime” in the Dominican Republic shaped possibilities for resistance while not entirely destroying them.⁴³⁴

Batey Resistance under Balaguer

The use of force within the *bateyes* did not mean residents had lost the power to negotiate with government and company officials. The *guarda campestre* still had to maintain their relationships with community members, and given the threat of worker shortages plantation administrators continued to remove agents if they caused too many problems in a *batey*. A very unpopular agent could face violence from the community as well. In 1968 fifteen men attempted to assault the chief of the *guarda campestre* for the Consuelo plantation in his home, and were only stopped by the quick arrival of members of the military stationed near by.⁴³⁵ Because the *guarda campestre* were the plantation representatives with whom residents interacted most frequently, company administrators worried that dislike for *guarda campestre* agents could lead to debilitating strikes.

In 1968 the administrator of the Santa Fé plantation wrote to the assistant director of the CEA to complain about the recently named Deputy Chief *guarda campestre*, who “has caused problems with the residents in the *batey*.”⁴³⁶ Later that year, when the CEA appointed a new chief *guarda campestre* for the Catarey plantation, Dimas Morilla Lara, they had to quickly reconsider their decision because the “workers and employee of said plantation reacted unfavorably [to the announcement], threatening to violently

⁴³⁴ Blair Rutherford, “The Politics of Boundaries: The Shifting Terrain of Belonging for Zimbabweans in a South African Border Zone,” *African Diaspora* 4, no. 2 (2011): 209.

⁴³⁵ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1966-1981 Caja 16,015, AGN.

⁴³⁶ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Guarda Campestre, 1963-1969 Caja 6,623, AGN.

remove... Mr. Morillo Lara, because he does not have the support of the workers due to [his] lack of the necessary moral qualities to carry out the job.”⁴³⁷ While that charge may seem vague, communities often invoked morality to justify the removal of officials. For example, in 1969 residents on the Catarey plantation demanded that the CEA fire a *guarda campestre* agent because he was “drunk, [and] shot several times into the air... leaving everyone in the *batey* terrorized. [I]n addition... [he is] cruel to the cane cutters... causing serious problems because many of them have preferred to leave the *batey*.”⁴³⁸ Plantation officials who blatantly ignored community codes could eventually lose their jobs. This could include punishing people unnecessarily harshly for offences. It also could mean using their position of power to openly enrich themselves. The fact that community moral codes were tacitly accepted by company and state officials demonstrates the existence of a “larger social contract” that provided some “order and limits” to conflicts between *batey* residents and authorities.⁴³⁹

This willingness to remove unpopular officials reflected the fact that community members did have limited power within the plantation to determine who policed them. The company and state had to rely on intermediaries to carry out their directives, and those tasked with day-to-day policing frequently sought to preserve their relationships with community members. *Guarda campestre* agents often were reprimanded for representing community desires instead of those of the company. Tomás Acosta, a *guarda campestre* agent on the Barahona plantation, was caught allowing cane cutters to leave the fields at four in the afternoon when “they should still be working.” Thirty cane cutters

⁴³⁷ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Guarda Campestre, 1967-1969 Caja 7,621, AGN.

⁴³⁸ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Guarda Campestre, 1963-1969 Caja 6,623, AGN.

⁴³⁹ Uday Chandra, “Rethinking Subaltern Resistance,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 45, no. 4 (2015): 568.

under his supervision, “weren’t working...[and] instead were playing soccer.”⁴⁴⁰ Agents at times attempted to help those working under them, even seasonal Haitian workers. In 1967 company authorities disciplined a *guarda campestre* agent on the Ozama plantation for trying to protect a Haitian resident from arrest. A detachment from the National Police that was on patrol in the *batey* came across a Haitian man carrying a cane knife in a billiard hall and arrested him because he allegedly had “aggressive intentions.” Acosta, however, let the man go, and defended his actions by saying “I am the one who has to act because I am the head of this *batey*.”⁴⁴¹

In a similar case two years later, Belarminio Jiménez was investigated after telling a superior who attempted to detain residents for gambling, “to leave those people alone....[A]s *guarda campestre* I don’t see any reason...to arrest them.”⁴⁴² A resident of Monte Coca described the favors the *guarda campestre* could provide: “sometimes if the *guarda campestre* was your friend and they caught your animals [eating cane] they would watch out for your animals [so] no one could take them [and] fine you.”⁴⁴³ Another former cane cutter explained, “if we were cutting cane to eat and we were hungry [the *guarda campestre*] wouldn’t say anything; you could talk to them.”⁴⁴⁴ The power of the CEA could not be perfectly enforced, because administrators had to rely on agents who were deeply embedded in *batey* communities. Therefore, community moral economies still shaped how residents were policed.

⁴⁴⁰ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Guarda Campestre, 1969-1987 Caja 7,619, AGN.

⁴⁴¹ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Guarda Campestre, 1967-1969 Caja 7,621, AGN.

⁴⁴² Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Guarda Campestre, 1969-1987 Caja 7,619, AGN.

⁴⁴³ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 16, 2013.

⁴⁴⁴ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, March 26, 2013.

On the other hand, the favors that representatives of plantation power performed for residents also served to control workers by linking them more closely to company officials. The superintendents of *bateyes*, and the head overseers who worked under them, provided assistance to loyal workers and cultivated relationships with them. When asked how he coped when food and money were scarce, Luis Abraham explained, “you would go and [the superintendent] was seated outside his house...[and he would say]...what are you looking for? Money?” [And] you pleaded, with all the respect you had... ‘Ay Don Pepe I don’t have food to give my children.’”⁴⁴⁵ Another resident recalled, “you had to respect [the superintendent], he was good...If you were hungry you talked to him.”⁴⁴⁶ These ties reinforced a *batey* hierarchy that positioned Haitian seasonal workers at the bottom and Dominicans employees at the top. Residents, especially cane cutters, had to act with the upmost deference towards authorities in order to obtain financial help.

Just as residents fought to retain the right to remove unpopular officials, they also fought to maintain control over the physical space of the *batey*. Despite his opposition to permanent Haitian communities, Balaguer continued to support plantation residents’ rights to establish, and maintain informal ownership over provision plots. His government even went so far as to pressure La Romana, the remaining American-owned plantation in the country, to expand cultivation rights. While under Trujillo’s ownership *batey* residents finally gained recognized rights to larger provision grounds, the La Romana plantation never allowed for such changes. As one Monte Coca resident who grew up in La Romana explained, “there you can’t have a *conuco*, there all the land is

⁴⁴⁵ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 16, 2013.

⁴⁴⁶ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 17, 2013.

used to cultivate sugarcane, not like here.”⁴⁴⁷ In 1967 the president requested that the management of La Romana “allocate five *tareas* [of land] for each family residing on the *batey* [where they can] plant small crops to reduce the cost of living, and on a worker’s wages they can achieve better purchasing power for food products.”⁴⁴⁸ Another report from that same year sent to Balaguer stated that, “the company has prohibited [residents from using] the sugarcane detritus to feed their animals. This does not cause any loss for the company and means a lot for the farmer.”⁴⁴⁹

Joaquín Balaguer was personally involved in these attempts to convince the La Romana plantation to increase cultivation and ranching rights. When his personal agriculture advisor visited La Romana he reinforced the president’s position that *batey* residents should have access to land, writing to Balaguer, “on your behalf I requested [that] the senior administrator put into practice the suggestion that you made a few weeks ago Mr. President.”⁴⁵⁰ These documents make clear that Balaguer supported *batey* residents’ right to well-defined plots of land. This is perhaps surprising given his opposition to permanent Haitian communities within the Dominican Republic. However, as his instructions to the La Romana administrators indicated, cultivation rights could help appease workers by giving them better food security without increasing their wages. In the period since Trujillo’s assassination, strikes had been a constant threat in the sugar industry, and sugar company officials and the state often had to face the threat of worker unrest, something with which they were unaccustomed. During a period of economic

⁴⁴⁷ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, March 26, 2013.

⁴⁴⁸ A *tarea* is equal to around .16 acres. Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional. Sujeto: CEA, 1966-2002 Caja 15,959, AGN.

⁴⁴⁹ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1966-1975 Caja 16,003, AGN.

⁴⁵⁰ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1966-2002 Caja 15,959, AGN.

upheaval, when many people went hungry, allowing residents to cultivate plantation land was an easy way to improve food security, and thus decreased the likelihood of debilitating work stoppages. However, Dominican residents frequently benefited the most from access to *batey* land and seasonal Haitian workers benefited the least.

Cultivation rights were further entrenched under the CEA, but also incorporated into clientelistic networks on the plantation. Space for new *conucos* was readily available to new residents. When asked if it was difficult to find land to cultivate, Diego Castro responded, “there was a lot of space, [there was] all of the [land] next to the road.”⁴⁵¹ Jowasen Cheval explained that he found land, “in the hills. You would take it, clean it, and plant it.”⁴⁵² Land farther away from the *batey*, next to the roads between communities, or in the hills that could not be planted with sugarcane, remained available in the 1960s and 1970s. Even temporary migrants from Haiti could take advantage of these areas. According to Castro, “those [Haitians] who were here for a short time would make their little *conuco*, plant corn and [other] things that [grow] fast.”⁴⁵³ Thus cultivation remained an important survival strategy during this period. However, creating a new *conuco* entailed breaking up and plowing the land, which could mean exhausting work, as often this land was full of brush, or uneven. Luis Abraham explained, “anywhere where there was a piece of land [people] would move in and make a *conuco*...[then] you had to plow it. There were so many people [claiming land.]”⁴⁵⁴ By this point in time the choice *conucos* that bordered the *batey* had already been claimed, and while land

⁴⁵¹ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 24, 2013.

⁴⁵² Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, March 19, 2013.

⁴⁵³ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 24, 2013.

⁴⁵⁴ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 16, 2013.

remained available to new residents, it was not as desirable. Access to the most desirable land therefore was mediated by *batey* hierarchies.

Those who acquired these plots of land did so through *batey* networks. Immigrants from Haiti who initially cleared their own plots sometimes were able to claim better *conucos* after they had lived in the community for years. Paul Canno explained how he acquired a *conuco* close to his home: “there was an old man who had a *conuco* there, and [he let me] take a piece. I planted it...and [produced] a lot of food for my family.”⁴⁵⁵ Manuel Thomas obtained his *conuco* from “a man who weighed [sugarcane] here...[H]e [left] for Consuelo and told me ‘come work here and collect your plantains.’”⁴⁵⁶ This system of obtaining land meant that those with the most power and connections in the *batey* were often able to claim the largest and most productive plots. The administrator of the *batey*, and the head overseer, often worked the best pieces of land. Those with power in the *batey* used their *conucos* to produce food to sell, and these provision plots were not used simply for basic survival, as they were by some residents. A large *conuco* could therefore add to the financial status of established families in the community, who were most likely Dominican with at least no acknowledged Haitian heritage. Victoria Pascua, whose husband owned a dry goods store in the *batey*, a considerable source of income, recalled how they expanded their holdings in the community: “All of this was ours...[A] friend of ours worked that part there and when he left he sold the *conuco* to my husband and we harvested...a lot of plantains, bananas, a

⁴⁵⁵ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, March 21, 2013.

⁴⁵⁶ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, March 26, 2013.

lot of things.”⁴⁵⁷ Although all the land still belonged to the CEA, residents did exchange money or favors in order to take over desirable plots.

Those with resources could pay other residents to work their land for them. This type of informal labor was an important source of income during the dead season, but also potentially opened up workers to abuses. Manuel Thomas described working on others’ land before he gained his own *conuco* : “[they paid] one peso, a peso and half....For a peso and a half you could eat a lot...[but] I don’t like working in some people’s *conuco*, because the person can pay you if they want, [and] they like to abuse you.”⁴⁵⁸ By the 1960s access to cultivation plots was still important to the food security and survival of many residents, but the informal systems through which land was allocated also reinforced *batey* power structures. Control over space within *bateyes* frequently reflected and also shaped local hierarchies. Those with the most established claims to land and homes sat at the top and seasonal migrants, who might only have a claim to a space to sleep within a barrack and little else, were at the bottom.

Housing and Hierarchies

Beyond cultivation plots, access to housing was also an important form of informal property holding that residents worked to protect. The short-lived attempts to Dominicanize the sugar workforce in the early 1960s led to small improvements in *batey* housing. Workers used this opening to voice their desire for homes that better accommodated families. In a petition to President Balaguer from the Union of Employees and Workers of the Santa Fé Plantation, leaders demanded the “elimination of the

⁴⁵⁷ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 4, 2013.

⁴⁵⁸ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, March 26, 2013.

traditional barracks, [and the construction] of houses.”⁴⁵⁹ Residents also personally complained about having to raise families in barracks. In 1968 Cristino Martínez García, a resident of the Barahona plantation and mother to five children, wrote to President Joaquín Balaguer to request that “my house...be [one] of the single family [homes],” continuing, “I don’t want a barrack.”⁴⁶⁰ It was clearly very important to residents to have housing that was designed for their needs and recognized the presence of permanent families in the *bateyes*. Residents took advantage of this brief government initiative to improve conditions within plantations to assert what they valued.

Access to housing was still mediated by *batey* hierarchies of ethnicity, race, and gender, and the efforts of the government and sugar company to construct adequate and appropriate housing did not benefit all residents equally. Even attempts to claim a room in the barracks, and have that claim acknowledged by the community, could be difficult. Acquiring family housing depended on one’s personal networks within the *batey*. Victoria Pascua recalled “we lived in a house for ourselves and no one else. It wasn’t a barrack,...There was a man who was friends with my husband, and he got it for us.”⁴⁶¹ Angélica Ramírez explained how she was finally able to claim her own home: “there was a woman who lived in the barracks...whose husband was a *guarda campestre*...and she was sick...I would come every day...and wash the dishes,...mop,...[and] she told me ‘when I leave...be on the lookout so you can rush over here and put in two or three pots.’” Vacated homes were often claimed very quickly, and in order to make sure the house did not go to someone else Ramírez had to place a few of her belongings inside immediately

⁴⁵⁹ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1968-1973 Caja 15,921, AGN.

⁴⁶⁰ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1968-1983 Caja 15,930, AGN.

⁴⁶¹ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 4, 2013.

to claim it. Eventually the woman's husband was transferred to another *batey*: "they left and I came carrying my pots...I didn't have problems with the *guarda campestre* because her husband [had worked with them.]"⁴⁶² Personal relationships and networks of exchange allowed residents to gain permanent claims to homes. A complicated code of conduct, created through decades of negotiations between community members and the sugar company, guided how residents could establish claims to homes and pass them on to other residents.

While houses belonged to the CEA, residents did sometimes exchange money for them, and described this as purchasing the home, even while acknowledging that it remained the property of the sugar company. Isabella Sosa stated that she and her husband bought their home during the 1960s for twenty pesos, approximately twenty U.S. dollars. While certainly a significant amount, this did not represent an impossible investment. A worker could make one peso working a half-day in someone else's *conuco* on their day off. Personal exchanges of homes still had to be approved by the *guarda campestre*, and even if someone paid for a house, they could not live in it if they were not working for the company. As one Monte Coca resident explained, "no one could take a house without talking to the *campestre* and if someone left their home [they] would lock the house...[You] always had to talk with the *campestre* first."⁴⁶³ During the dead season, the *guarda campestre*, would sometimes lock the barracks meant for seasonal laborers to ensure that permanent families did not move into them. As residents made claims to barracks, the company had to construct additional units for seasonal laborers,

⁴⁶² Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 2, 2013.

⁴⁶³ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 4, 2013.

costing them money. Company representatives therefore held ultimate power over who lived in plantation-owned homes.

Because housing rights were not officially codified, they could be easily revoked or violated by company authorities. However, if community members felt that residents were being removed from their homes unfairly, they protested. Under Trujillo's ownership, *batey* residents could appeal directly to the Trujillo government if they felt they suffered an injustice, and this practice continued under the CEA. *Batey* residents petitioned Joaquín Balaguer directly if they felt their rights had been violated. In 1968 a resident of the Consuelo plantation sent a telegram to Balaguer stating that, "the head of the *guarda campestre*...kicked [my] family out of our home, [even though] the house belongs to [us]....[W]e ask you to please intervene in this case."⁴⁶⁴ That same year a union representative wrote to the president to complain that the administrator of the Ozama plantation "ordered the unjust and arbitrary eviction of people who occupied houses [that are] company property...something that no government administration has done."⁴⁶⁵

The government did at times intervene. When Raúl Tavarez González, a long time resident of the Barahona plantation, wrote to Balaguer claiming that the plantation administrator directed a gang of armed men to remove him from his house, Balaguer sent in an investigator. González admitted that the "house is property of the Barahona plantation" and that he had been fired from his job several weeks prior. In his interview he stated, "I worked for the Barahona Plantation for ten years and I was fired...without committing any offense....I want the government to be benevolent to me since I am a

⁴⁶⁴ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1966-1981 Caja 16,015, AGN.

⁴⁶⁵ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1967-1978 Caja 15,995, AGN.

family man...and in this *batey* there are many people who live in houses without being bothered....[T]he *guarda campestre* has two houses...[one] with his mistress and another with his wife.”⁴⁶⁶ Residents continued to believe that if long-established moral codes in the *bateyes* were violated, the central government should provide redress. These appeals also reinforced residents’ ties to the president, and therefore increased his personal control over the space of sugar plantations. While Joaquín Balaguer was arguably the most anti-Haitian president the Dominican Republic had even seen, his direct involvement on sugar plantations also connected *batey* residents to him through clientelistic ties.

The involvement of the president, however, only supported some people’s rights to housing: women’s claims to homes were seldom recognized, meaning they faced great challenges in finding safe and secure housing. With the government’s renewed emphasis on defining Haitians by the labor they could perform, new questions arose about the role of Haitian women on plantations. A 1967 memo addressed to the Army’s Chief of Staff stated that after all Haitians living in the country were identified, “[we] can purge them, to determine which [among them] are capable of working.” The author continued, “we must proceed to deport the surplus [Haitians], including the women and children found in the country.”⁴⁶⁷ Since the government viewed the country’s Haitian population purely in terms of their ability to work, and women were generally seen as too weak to cut sugarcane, they could not even achieve the conditional legality granted to men. In a study of migrant women living on tea plantations in Sri Lanka, Amali Philips writes “women’s wage work and housework in the plantations are ideologically and spatially linked in

⁴⁶⁶ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1966-2002 Caja 15,959, AGN.

⁴⁶⁷ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1967-1989 Caja 14,455, AGN.

ways that define women's subordinate positions in both."⁴⁶⁸ In the Dominican Republic women's rights to space within the sugar plantations were limited by gender ideology, and often defined by their relationships to male workers.

Despite statements made by government officials, sugar company management realized that they could not completely ban Haitian women from plantations. For one, such a policy would have been nearly impossible to implement, and would elicit massive resistance from *batey* communities. In addition, without female residents the company would have had to find a way to provide services like cooking and laundering for workers. Women drove the *bateyes'* informal economies, and provided invaluable labor, even if plantation management did not formally recognize it. Most importantly, women helped feed cane cutters at midday, traveling the often long distances to the worksite and cooking over small fires next to the fields.⁴⁶⁹ A 1962 memo to the Labor Secretary about recruitment practices at the La Romana plantation stated, "every ten men can bring a family member; this is to ensure that one woman comes with each group of ten to....cook."⁴⁷⁰ The plantation therefore both recognized the utility of the labor women performed, and at the same time sought to limit their numbers.

In 1968 President Balaguer named Lidia González, who resided on the Monte Llano plantation, as the "Best Female Cane Cutter" in the country. As a prize González was to be "assigned one of the homes on the plantation to live in with her family."⁴⁷¹

Some women did cut sugarcane, especially during periods of need, even though this labor

⁴⁶⁸ Amali Philips, "The Kinship, Marriage and Gender Experiences of Tamil Women in Sri Lanka's Tea Plantations," *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 39, no. 1 (2005): 114.

⁴⁶⁹ Anonymous interviews, by author, Montes Coca, 2013.

⁴⁷⁰ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1960-2001 Caja 15,986, AGN.

⁴⁷¹ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1966-1975 Caja 16,003, AGN.

was generally invisible to administrators. Angélica Ramírez stated “I only [cut] when I needed it, I would work a little to eat....[T]he men I picked with helped me carry the cane. [I]t didn’t look good, but women used to cut a lot of cane.”⁴⁷² As Ramírez implied, cutting sugarcane was deemed inappropriate for women, and it was usually considered too difficult for them.⁴⁷³ This award from the president himself is therefore somewhat mysterious; there is no evidence of a similar conferral before or since. The momentary government acknowledgement of the labor women provided on sugar plantations does showcase the importance of housing to women. In exchange for being named the best female cane cutter in the Dominican Republic, Lidia González was granted a house to live in with her family. It was exceedingly difficult for a woman to secure her own housing within a *batey* and this was therefore a significant gift.

When single women from Haiti arrived on sugar plantations they immediately had to try to find a place to stay. In practice this often meant beginning a relationship with a man that very first day. Jowasen Cheval recalled, “as soon [as they] arrived they had to find [a man] because there weren’t individual houses. If you saw a woman you liked you spoke the overseer.”⁴⁷⁴ This arrangement also gave overseers the power to choose the arriving women they liked the best to form relationships with. As another resident

⁴⁷² Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 2, 2013.

⁴⁷³ In his research on women workers in Argentina’s meat packing plants, also assumed to be male spaces, Daniel James writes “the story of the meatpacking plant leaves women only a marginal space within which to express themselves....I wish to emphasize that this story is not unusable...but rather that it is inherently limiting, and that its limits have to do with the dissonance between the parameters found in such stories and their representative figures, and the meaning and richness of an individual life that bursts the parameters and violates the stereotypes.” A similar statement could be made for Angélica Ramírez, and other women who took on roles not part of the well-known narratives of sugar labor. “‘Tales Told Out on the Borderlands’: Doña María’s Story, Oral History, and Issues of Gender” in *The Gendered Worlds of Latin American Women Workers: from Household and Factory to the Union Hall and Ballot Box* ed. John D. French and Daniel James (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 46.

⁴⁷⁴ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, March 19, 2013.

explained, “[the overseers] would sometimes see a women who was attractive and as the boss they would help them get a house, and then come [visit] them at night.”⁴⁷⁵ A relationship with a company administrator was one of the few ways for women to secure housing. In 1967 a resident of the Quisqueya plantation wrote directly to President Balaguer to complain that a company administrator was “using his power to remove a family man [from his house] and give it to a [woman]...because he wants to have [an] affair...with that woman.”⁴⁷⁶ If she needed to find housing, a woman in this situation had few options. As Lucía Torres, a resident of Monte Coca, stated, “you had to give them something so you could get a house. That is abuse.”⁴⁷⁷

Even for women born in the *bateyes*, the stress of finding safe housing was often inescapable. During the 1960s women often married for the first time between the ages of twelve and seventeen, many times because there were not enough resources to support them at home. If they did not move in with a partner, some left the *batey* for several years to work as live-in domestics in neighboring towns. Isabella Sosa, who moved to the regional capital at the age of eleven to become a domestic, recalled, “My mother beat me, so I decided to leave. I told the daughter of my godmother that I was looking for work...so she found me [a job].”⁴⁷⁸ The decision to marry was also often made under duress. When asked if she wanted to get married at the age of fifteen, Lucía Torres replied, “No I didn’t want to, but that’s the way the situation was. My mother was sick

⁴⁷⁵ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 24, 2013.

⁴⁷⁶ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1966-1975 Caja 16,003, AGN.

⁴⁷⁷ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 17, 2013.

⁴⁷⁸ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, March 19, 2013.

and I didn't have [money]...I didn't have support [so] I got married."⁴⁷⁹ If their husbands became unfaithful or abusive, women did not necessarily have the option to leave.

Domestic abuse was common in the *bateyes*; one woman complained, "some nights you couldn't even sleep because of the fights...and the *guarda campestre* didn't intervene in any of them."⁴⁸⁰ It appears that policing of domestic abuse decreased under the CEA's ownership. Under Trujillo's leadership there had been more surveillance of people's everyday behaviors, and in the absence of that strong scrutiny, women in the *bateyes* could not rely on the *guarda campestre* to provide protection against partner violence.⁴⁸¹

Many women spoke about the trauma of being forced to continue living with an abusive partner because they were unable to find another place to live within the *batey*. Torres explained, "during the CEA...you have to live with a man you didn't want to...to get a house. During the dead season it was okay, one could live in the houses, but when [seasonal workers]... arrived they would send people to throw the women out...During that time you had to live with a man against your will."⁴⁸² Another woman spoke about her violent husband: "if I could have made my own home I would have moved, [because] to live with someone who is threatening to kill you.... I have three children, and I was sleeping with one eye open."⁴⁸³ Women who did manage to leave their homes often relied on networks with other women. Angélica Ramírez explained that when she left an abusive husband, "I left him with the house, because he was going to keep bothering me

⁴⁷⁹ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 17, 2013.

⁴⁸⁰ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 4, 2013.

⁴⁸¹ I uncovered no police reports about domestic disturbances during the 1960s and 70s.

⁴⁸² Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 17, 2013.

⁴⁸³ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 4, 2013.

and I didn't want to live with him any more....I went to live with my godmother, and my littler brother who was a tractor operator [for the company] helped support my children.”⁴⁸⁴

Since there was little work for women in the formal economy of the plantation, women had to support themselves in the informal economy. After leaving her husband and moving in with her godmother, Ramírez then “found a little work washing laundry....I would leave my children with my godmother and go to work, then I'd come back with food to give my children.”⁴⁸⁵ Both single and married women worked in the informal economy, providing important services to the *batey*, and important income to households. In addition to being cut off from formal employment, women also did not have land rights in the *batey*. One female resident explained, “it was difficult, because if you didn't have a husband, they wouldn't give you a *conuco*.”⁴⁸⁶ Customary rights to land and housing in *bateyes* were therefore highly gendered. These geographies impacted women's daily lives, and their safety and survival depended on their ability to navigate repressive spatial politics. Access to land and homes was further stratified by ethnicity and race: Haitian women, and especially newly arrived migrants without established networks, were vulnerable to coercion because they had limited rights to the territory of the *batey*. Without access to cultivation plots, women engaged in wild food collection, walking the long distances to the remaining stands of forest to collect fruit. One woman from Monte Coca explained, “when I didn't have anything to eat, sometimes I would go

⁴⁸⁴ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 2, 2013.

⁴⁸⁵ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 2, 2013.

⁴⁸⁶ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 4, 2013.

and pick oranges in the forest and sell them to [passing] trucks.”⁴⁸⁷ Although women in the *bateyes* did not have cultivation rights, they created other survival strategies, and still used plantation land to help support themselves and their families.

The Problem of Citizenship

While official anxiety grew about the presence of Haitians living and working outside of sugar plantations, government authorities became concerned about what they considered to be an even larger threat. As officials investigated the groups of Haitians living outside the confines of sugar plantations they realized that the children of Haitian migrants had long been obtaining birth certificates and *cédulas* that listed them as Dominican. As a result of the Trujillo government’s policies obliging all residents to carry documentation, a large population of Dominican citizens with Haitian heritage had grown over the previous decades. In 1965 the government launched several investigations into this issue, sending agents to interview Haitian-Dominicans and the local officials who had supplied them with government documents. A report from one such investigation described a typical interview: “upon being interrogated Samuel Santil...stated that his mother told him he was born in Batey 6...[W]hen asked how he obtained a *cédula de identificación* with Dominican nationality, he answered that he appeared before the [local] registrar... and this functionary issued him a copy of his birth certificate, with which he could obtain his *cédula*.”⁴⁸⁸

What was perhaps most disturbing to the authors of the report was that local residents and officials seemed to see no problem with the children of Haitian migrants

⁴⁸⁷ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 2, 2013.

⁴⁸⁸ Junta Central Electoral, 1995 Legajo 4873, AGN.

being considered Dominican citizens. To government officials, this presented a grave danger to the nation. A representative from the Central Electoral Commission, responsible for issuing *cédulas*, wrote that, “although these people seem harmless, they think like Haitians, they live like Haitians, and they act like Haitians....[If] any disagreement takes place between the two countries, they will favor their relatives and countrymen, to the detriment of our territorial integrity and the Dominican people.”⁴⁸⁹ Dominicans of Haitian descent were seen as a veritable fifth column inside the Dominican Republic. While local officials apparently believed that someone could have Haitian parents and still be a Dominican citizen, members of the central government completely negated that possibility.

During the Trujillo years it was relatively easy for Haitian immigrants to obtain identity documents. As one migrant who arrived in Monte Coca during the 1950s explained “they gave us *cédulas* just like the Dominican [ones], the only difference was they said ‘Haitian’”⁴⁹⁰ In addition to requiring everyone to carry identity documents, the Trujillo government also pressured the population to obtain birth certificates, so their children would be registered with the state as soon as possible. Isabella Sosa recalled, “during the Trujillo era you were required to declare your children. If you didn’t you could go to prison.”⁴⁹¹ Children born to Haitian parents in the Dominican Republic were eligible for Dominican citizenship according to the constitution, which established that “all people born in Dominican territory [are Dominicans], with the exception of the

⁴⁸⁹ Junta Central Electoral, 1995 Legajo 4873, AGN.

⁴⁹⁰ Anonymous interviews, by author, Monte Coca, 2013.

⁴⁹¹ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, March 19, 2013.

legitimate children of diplomats and those in transit.”⁴⁹² At this point in time, only temporary visitors were considered “in transit”, and since Haitian immigrants resided in the country their children were citizens. After carrying out dozens of interviews with Dominicans of Haitian descent, and warning about the grave danger their presence represented to the republic, the 1965 report ended by stating “they are of Dominican nationality [because] they were born on Dominican territory.”⁴⁹³

While there was a great deal of official outcry upon the “discovery” that many people in the country of Haitian descent carried Dominican documents, the constitution limited the ability of anti-Haitian officials to act. In 1967 the Director of Migration wrote to the Secretary of the Armed Forces about the recent detention and planned repatriation of 200 Haitians. He reminded the secretary that he needed to be careful not to “dismiss the possibility that Haitian nationals qualify to obtain permanent residence in the country for either their activities or for . . . having children born in the country.”⁴⁹⁴ Several years after panicked government investigations into the citizenship rights of people of Haitian descent, parents still retained the right to obtain permanent residence if their children were citizens. Two years later in 1969 the Deputy Secretary of Migration wrote to then-president Joaquín Balaguer to complain that “on multiple occasions this department is going to repatriate [a] Haitian who has violated the law of migration but . . . their wife or concubine comes with the children and, in light of this, we are required to revoke the deportation order and order the release of the Haitian.” In the same letter the Deputy Secretary also expressed his worries about the “grave problem the country confronts in

⁴⁹² Constitución de la Republica Dominicana Revisión de 20 de Junio de 1929.

⁴⁹³ Junta Central Electoral, 1995 Legajo 4873, AGN.

⁴⁹⁴ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Repatriaciones, 1966–1986 Caja 14,441, AGN.

the face of the large number of Haitian nationals who have invaded our territory in a passive and massive manner and, even worse, have children . . . who, due to the fact that they were born here, are Dominicans.”⁴⁹⁵

Balaguer’s anti-Haitian ideology clearly influenced the Department of Migration, and the Deputy Secretary’s statements demonstrate his discomfort with the existence of Haitian-Dominicans. However, even a government official who obviously opposed the Haitian presence in the Dominican Republic was forced to allow migrants with children to stay in the country. The Deputy Secretary of Migration also explicitly stated that the children of Haitian migrants were Dominican citizens because they were born on Dominican soil. While many officials under the government of Joaquín Balaguer wished to revoke citizenship for children born to Haitian parents, often for blatantly racist reasons, they were unable to do so because these children were born in the Dominican Republic. Despite authoritarian tendencies, Balaguer operated in a democratic system, and he did not have the power to blatantly violate the constitution, or retroactively change constitutional law. In addition, many children of Haitian parents still resided on *bateyes*, and having grown up learning about sugar production provided an important labor source.

When Trujillo took control over the Dominican state in 1930 he faced the difficult task of attempting to surveil and control a dispersed peasantry that for centuries had little contact with a central government. Obligating all residents to carry identity documents and to register their children with the state helped him accomplish this. However, those from his government who took over after him saw the expansion of documentation that took place under his regime as a menace. Who received documentation and citizenship

⁴⁹⁵ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1967–1989 Caja 14,455, AGN.

rights had not been restrictive enough for them. The lesson from these government investigations was clear: carefully documenting immigrants, and encouraging residents to register their children, only led to the growth of an “enemy” population that possessed citizenship rights. While Trujillo attempted to extend Dominican citizenship as a way to control the population, the government of Balaguer increasingly worked to limit it. Balaguer feared the potential contamination of Dominican culture by a Haitian presence. Children of Haitians who were Dominican citizens, and presumably had the same right to mobility as any other citizens, thus posed a grave threat to the nation. They could not be controlled and quarantined as easily as their parents. Neha Vora writes, “those who constitute exceptions to citizenship...are, by virtue of their exclusion, necessary to defining the parameters of citizenship and the legitimacy of the state.”⁴⁹⁶ In Balaguer’s political ideology, Dominicans of Haitian descent represented such an exception. Membership in the Dominican nation was defined against Haiti: to be Dominican was to not be Haitian. Yet, the laws of the country did not align with this view of citizenship. Although his hands were tied by the constitution, Balaguer would spend the rest of his time in power attempting to change this.

Conclusion

While the assassination of Trujillo brought great hope to people across the Dominican Republic, by the mid-seventies many of the promises of democracy remained unfulfilled. Despite the election of Juan Bosch, who pledged to decrease poverty, ethnic conflict, and reliance on sugar exports, the country soon returned to Trujillista rule.

⁴⁹⁶ Neha Vora, *Impossible Citizens: Dubai’s Indian Diaspora* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 5.

Trujillo's former right hand man, Joaquín Balaguer, guaranteed stability and economic growth and resumed many of the former dictator's policies. During this period the sugar industry became even more important to the Dominican economy, making the country further reliant on its Haitian population. Without the labor of Haitian migrants and people of Haitian descent, the economy may well have collapsed during this period. While Balaguer saw the Haitian population as necessary for the economic progress of the nation, at the same time he felt they posed a fundamental threat to Dominican society and culture, and could destroy the country's future. Repressive government policies towards Haitian residents therefore did not decrease following the end of dictatorship, but in fact expanded.

During this period the legality of Haitian immigrants became further spatially defined. While documentation was a crucial component of Trujillo's efforts to surveil immigrants, under Balaguer the government increasingly focused on a migrant's location and their job, not on their documents. Whether or not a Haitian migrant possessed legal documentation, they could be detained and sent to a sugar plantation to work. If their labor was needed they could not return home, and they could be thrown in jail if they refused to cut cane. In response to these threats, *batey* residents attempted to preserve their control over land and homes. They managed to maintain the right to petition the government if their rights were violated, and still had some control over who policed them. Nevertheless, the long established legal and customary rights of Haitian-Dominicans were under attack. Balaguer grew increasingly concerned about the growing population of Dominican citizens of Haitian descent, a product of Trujillo's expansion of documentation and the country's citizenship laws. While this large group of people were

legally citizens, Balaguer did not view them as Dominican nationals, but as a dangerous internal enemy. In the decades to come *bateyes* would face increasing government coercion and violence, and residents would adapt longstanding forms of resistance to oppose new forms of repression.

Chapter Five

“Haitian from Here”: Claiming Citizenship during Sugar’s Decline, 1976-1990

On February 2, 1976 representatives of the Central Electoral Commission, the Department of Personal Identification, the Department of Immigration, and the Secretary of the Armed Forces met to discuss documentation provided to Haitian workers. The group hoped to resolve “the problem caused by illegal Haitians in our country who, after the harvest they have been contracted for, are supplied with documents (*cédulas*...residency permits, etc.)” The officials present acknowledged that immigrants were often able to legally obtain documentation because “the laws of personal identification and immigration...establish that after a stay of sixty days in the country foreigners in transit can obtain these documents.” In order to prevent this from happening, the group proposed, “preparing a bill that would declare people brought to the country through collective bargaining agreements as in transit.”⁴⁹⁷ In practice, this change would only impact Haitian sugar workers whose recruitment and entrance into the country was technically overseen by a bilateral labor contract between the Dominican and Haitian governments.

Labeling migrant workers as “in transit” was not an arbitrary act; it was rather a way for the government to bypass their children’s right to *jus soli* citizenship established in the Dominican constitution. As numerous government investigations during the 1960s and 70s concluded, children born to Haitian immigrants were legally Dominican citizens because the constitution established “all people born in Dominican territory [are Dominicans].” However, from 1929 onward constitutions had made an exception for “the

⁴⁹⁷ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1958–1978 Caja 14,453, AGN.

legitimate children of diplomats and those in transit.”⁴⁹⁸ The article in question referred to children born to travelers or representatives of foreign governments in the Dominican Republic; it had never before been understood to refer to the children of Haitian workers who lived in the country. In 1976 authorities in Joaquín Balaguer’s government attempted to change the longstanding legal interpretation of “in transit” in order to address the “problem” of Haitian-Dominican citizenship. If the children of Haitian immigrants were not considered citizens, they too could be isolated on sugar plantations along with their parents, and potentially deported if their labor was no longer needed.

Over the course of the twentieth century the sugar industry had become indispensable to the Dominican Republic. Sugar had made Rafael Trujillo rich and amplified his direct authority over Dominican territory. Controlling the country’s most profitable export gave Balaguer increased authoritarian powers over the Dominican economy, and by extension the nation. The Dominican landscape had become a patchwork of “Dominican” spaces and deterritorialized export enclaves used to isolate a non-Dominican population. This attempt to eliminate Haitian-Dominicans’ right to citizenship was the latest act in a campaign to exploit a Haitian workforce but keep a Haitian-descendent population out of the “authentic” Dominican Republic that existed beyond the boundaries of the plantation. However, the government’s reliance on Haitian workers and simultaneous promotion of anti-Haitian nationalism depended on the continued profitability of sugar. As long as the industry remained lucrative, and plantations demanded labor, the government could continue to isolate Haitians there.

⁴⁹⁸ Articuló 8 de la Constitución de la República Dominicana Revisión de 20 de Junio de 1929. This language was retained in ten subsequent constitutions. The constitution was revised in 2010 to add an exemption for those who “reside illegally in Dominican territory.”

During the 1980s a changing global economy led to the precipitous decline of the Dominican sugar industry. The CEA faced dire fiscal problems, and struggled to pay workers' wages. Established tactics for redress, like petitioning company or government officials, could no longer be relied upon to resolve conflicts between residents and management. Moral economies that had mediated disputes between the company and *bateyes* began to break down. Facing situations in which they felt their fundamental rights had been violated, residents collectively mobilized. At the same time, the CEA depended on the Army and National Police as they attempted to maintain a compliant workforce. The relationship between residents and the company grew increasingly violent. The militarization of plantations led to international outcry about the treatment of Haitian immigrants in the sugar industry, with observers arguing that workers were enslaved on plantations. While many experienced coercion, oppression, and violence, residents still defended important freedoms during this period. By mobilizing en masse they vocally opposed actions they viewed as unjust. *Batey* residents and nearby peasant communities also continued to defend their cultivation rights against encroachment. Finally, Haitian-Dominicans articulated identities that challenged the government's conception of "Dominican-ness," and claimed citizenship rights even when legally denied them. By creating the category of "Haitian from here" to explain the identity of those born to Haitian parents, *batey* residents expressed an alternative way of understanding birthright citizenship and argued for the inclusion of their communities in the Dominican nation.

Neoliberalism and a Changing Sugar Economy

The law proposed in February of 1976 was never passed. As a representative from the Armed Forces who was present at the meeting pointed out, changing the definition of “in transit” “would substantially alter the laws of identification and migration.”⁴⁹⁹ It is possible that such a dramatic policy change did not have popular support outside of Balaguer’s inner circle. By 1976 Balaguer had been in power for ten years, and the corruption and repression of his government had begun to incite widespread opposition to his rule. While the laws governing immigration were not revised at this time, in practice the agencies involved in this pivotal meeting began to find ways to deny Haitians documentation. The 1966 agreement between the Dominican Republic and Haiti explicitly stated that sugar companies were responsible for “paying [the costs of]...immigration taxes [and] *cédulas* ...for workers and their families.” However, it appears that subsequent agreements removed any reference to identity documents.⁵⁰⁰ The 1979 contract only stated that the CEA had to pay for immigration taxes, and made no mention of providing other legal documentation to migrants.⁵⁰¹ In interviews conducted during the 1980s, residents of Monte Coca explained that Balaguer had changed documentation policies.⁵⁰² While workers needed a *cédula* during the Trujillo era to work, beginning under Balaguer they were only given serial numbers that allowed them

⁴⁹⁹ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1958–1978 Caja 14,453, AGN.

⁵⁰⁰ “Acuerdo sobre la contratación en Haití y la entrada en la República Dominicana de jornaleros temporeros concertado en Puerto Príncipe el 14 de noviembre de 1966” in *Relaciones Dominico-Haitianas: 300 Años de Historia* ed. William Páez Piantini (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Mediabyte, S.A., 2006.)

⁵⁰¹ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1967-1989 Caja 14,455, AGN.

⁵⁰² Cultural anthropologist Samuel Martínez conducted fieldwork in Monte Coca, the same *batey* where I carried out oral histories, in 1985 and 86. He shared some of his original typed field notes from that period with me. Anecdotes from his field notes are therefore based on his accounts of interviews he carried out or incidents he witnessed. I have not used the names of any of Martínez’s interviewees or informants.

to be paid at the end of the harvest, but did not function as legal identity documents.⁵⁰³

Between 1966 and 1978, the Department of Immigration reported that 13,432 Haitians were granted residency. From 1978 to 1983 that number dropped to just forty-four.⁵⁰⁴

Given the change in documentation procedures under Balaguer, and the dramatic drop in permanent residency granted to Haitians during the 1980s, it seems probable that while Balaguer was unable to legally change the status of Haitian-Dominicans he was able to institute changes in how many Dominicans viewed the citizenship rights of Haitian-Dominicans. In 1983 the president of the Central Electoral Commission wrote to the head of the Department of Immigration to ask if “Haitian workers are in transit...so we can know if [their]...children are...Dominicans...in accordance with the Constitution.”⁵⁰⁵ In addition, evidence suggests that during the 1980s government officials began to refuse to issue birth certificates to the children of those they suspected to be Haitian.⁵⁰⁶ The groundwork for labeling Haitian immigrants as “in transit” had been established, and future governments would eventually return to this legal loophole. During this period, access to documentation for Haitian immigrants and their children would be further circumscribed, and the use of government violence inside *bateyes* would increase.

During what is now known as the *doce años*, or the twelve years of Joaquín Balaguer’s rule, the Dominican political system had remained ostensibly democratic and Balaguer stood for reelection every four years. However, Balaguer supported paramilitary

⁵⁰³ Martínez, “Personal field notes,” September 4, 1986.

⁵⁰⁴ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Emigracion-Inmigracion, 1954-1955 Caja 16,816, AGN.

⁵⁰⁵ Junta Central Electoral, 1995 Legajo 4873, AGN.

⁵⁰⁶ Americas Watch, *A Troubled Year: Haitians in the Dominican Republic* (New York: Americas Watch National Coalition for Haitian Refugees, 1992), 11.

groups who persecuted leftist politicians. Facing open military violence, most opposition groups abstained from participating in the 1970 and 1974 elections. An estimated 3,000 Dominicans were killed in political violence between 1966 and 1974.⁵⁰⁷ By 1978 a majority of Dominicans had grown weary of Balaguer's authoritarianism and militarism. The *Partido Revolucionario Dominicano*, or PRD, originally founded by Juan Bosch, decided to present a candidate for the 1978 election. When it became clear that the PRD candidate Antonio Guzmán was going to win, Balaguer halted the vote count and attempted to falsify the results. Dominicans immediately took to the streets to protest Balaguer's illegal attempt to remain in power. International observers, including the U.S., also vocally opposed the president's actions. Eventually Guzmán and Balaguer came to an agreement that permitted Guzmán to take over the presidency, if he allowed Balaguer to retain the falsified results in the senate election. This meant that Balaguer's party kept an illegal majority in the senate, allowing him to continue to control many agencies of the government through his allies, even if he was no longer legally in power. Balaguer was also able to maintain his influence in the CEA. Guzmán especially struggled to assert his authority over the process of recruiting and contracting workers, which remained under the control of the military.⁵⁰⁸ At the same time, Guzmán, and Salvador Jorge Blanco who succeeded him in the presidency in 1982, felt that the Dominican economy eventually

⁵⁰⁷ Frank Moya Pons, *The Dominican Republic: A National History* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1998), 392.

⁵⁰⁸ José Israel Cuello, *Contratación de mano de obra haitiana destinada a la Industria Azucarera Dominicana (1952-1986.)* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Editora Taller, 1997), 59.

had to pivot away from sugar production because it could no longer compete in a changing global economy.⁵⁰⁹

During most of his years in office Balaguer had presided over a growing economy. However, land ownership became increasingly concentrated in private hands during his twelve-year rule, disrupting the peasant economy, and the government took out international loans to support his massive public works projects and import-substitution-industrialization policies. When the PRD took over from Balaguer in 1978 the economy was in a state of flux. During the 1970s many nations in Latin America relied on external borrowing to fuel economic growth, creating unsustainable levels of external debt.⁵¹⁰ By 1980 commodity prices declined and interest rates increased dramatically, pushing many countries in the region towards default. During the first years of his presidency, Guzmán continued to encourage borrowing as sugar prices remained high and the country was flush with cash compared to some of its neighbors. However, the government soon struggled to make its debt-service payments, and subsequent increases in fuel prices because of global oil price shocks further worsened the Dominican Republic's balance of trade. Guzmán attempted to impose austerity measures, but was met with widespread public strikes.

As the Dominican government struggled to pay its creditors, the International Monetary Fund pressured it to adopt stabilization measures in order to qualify for some

⁵⁰⁹ Jonathan Hartlyn, *The Struggle for Democratic Politics in the Dominican Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 166.

⁵¹⁰ OPEC's constriction of the world oil market at different points during the 1970s created windfall profits that Middle Eastern nations deposited into international banks. These banks then lent out this money, creating the opportunity for Latin American governments to take out relatively low interest rate loans. Many governments relied on loans to create economic growth and support unprofitable import-substitution-industrialization schemes. Between 1970 and 1980 external debt in Latin America went from \$27 billion to \$231 billion. Thomas E. Skidmore and Peter H. Smith, *Modern Latin America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 58.

relief from its debt burden. Many other Latin American nations were at the same time forced to comply with IMF ordered “structural adjustments” which included removing barriers to trade and decreasing government involvement in the economy. IMF officials viewed these policies as “a kind of ‘shock therapy,’ severely painful but deemed necessary treatment for economic recovery.”⁵¹¹ In 1984 the new PRD president Salvador Jorge Blanco acquiesced to pressure from the IMF to stop propping up the value of the Dominican peso.⁵¹² This led to a massive currency devaluation, and a subsequent increase in the prices of basic goods. Many people were unable to purchase enough food to feed their families, and riots broke out across the country. Despite public opposition, the president felt he had to agree to IMF demands in order to secure conditional loans needed to keep the government running.⁵¹³

The implementation of IMF directives led to a shift away from the production of traditional agricultural commodities towards new industries. With the government unable to employ restrictive tariffs or price controls, inexpensive agricultural imports made it more difficult for Dominican products to compete at home. At the same time, world commodity prices, including sugar, dropped precipitously. The U.S. also dramatically decreased its preferential sugar quota for the Dominican Republic. Over the course of the

⁵¹¹ Thomas Weaver, James B. Greenberg, and William L. Alexander, *Neoliberalism and Commodity Production in Mexico* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2012), 35.

⁵¹² During the final years of his presidency Guzmán’s popularity fell, partially due to the struggling Dominican economy. The PRD divided into factions, and Guzmán lost party support and soon realized he could not secure the nomination. The PRD ended up nominating Salvador Jorge Blanco, who Guzmán vehemently opposed. Prior to Salvador Blanco’s inauguration Guzmán shot himself, and his vice president had to take over for the remaining 43 days of his presidency. Moya Pons, *The Dominican Republic*, 410-412.

⁵¹³ Hartlyn, *The Struggle for Democratic Politics in the Dominican Republic*, 180.

decade the value of sugar exports dropped from \$513 million to \$112 million.⁵¹⁴ Under advisement from the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, the government encouraged growth in tourism and free trade zones, believing these were the sectors in which the Dominican Republic could compete in the new global economy. By 1991 sugar accounted for only eight percent of exports, whereas tourism accounted for forty percent.⁵¹⁵ For decades the sugar industry had helped stabilize the Dominican economy by providing a reliable source of foreign currency. Now it struggled to stay afloat. As revenues at the CEA continued to decline during the 1980s, the company faced a difficult financial situation. In addition, the CEA had developed extensive networks of corruption that siphoned funds out of the organization. Workers' wages were cut, and were often paid sporadically. As sugar became less and less important to the Dominican economy throughout the 1980s, *bateyes* underwent numerous changes.

Violence and Coercion in Bateyes

Beginning in the late 1970s violence became a common occurrence on plantations as relationships between residents and company officials broke down. When workers were not paid for their labor, something viewed in *bateyes* as fundamentally unjust, residents responded with force. As the CEA began to fail, the company relied on the Army and National Police to maintain order. For example, in 1986 when workers on the Porvenir plantation began throwing rocks at a company building to protest the delayed

⁵¹⁴ Hartlyn, *The Struggle for Democratic Politics in the Dominican Republic*, 139.

⁵¹⁵ Steven Gregory, *The Devil Behind the Mirror: Globalization and Politics in the Dominican Republic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 22.

payment of wages, the soldiers present shot into the air to disband the crowd.⁵¹⁶ Reports like this were typical during the 1980s. As workers mobilized more frequently, company officials grew suspicious of any large groups of residents assembling together. For example, when a National Police patrol found a group of Haitians meeting in a house near San Pedro de Macorís, the officers shot at them to get them to disperse, injuring three men.⁵¹⁷ Depending on the need for labor, company administrators might attempt to appease protesters; but because Army or National Police representatives were also almost always present on plantations during this period they also relied heavily on force to respond to mobilizations.

Residents made use of what they had to threaten company officials, often employing machetes and rocks as weapons. For example, in 1979 120 workers near San Pedro de Macorís attacked some of the main plantation administration buildings armed with machetes. They had not been paid recently and demanded their wages. According to the official report, the National Police arrived and “drove [the protesters] to the [nearby] military compound where [the police] agreed to provide them with food or money.”⁵¹⁸ In 1985 residents on the Angelina plantation were apprehended after burning tires and throwing rocks at company barracks. These protests often attacked symbols of company power, like administrative buildings and infrastructure. Sabotage was a common tactic, as when residents of the Rio Haina plantation placed nails onto the rail lines that carried sugarcane in an attempt to cause derailments.⁵¹⁹ Haitian immigrants not residing on

⁵¹⁶ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1980-1985 Caja 15,925, AGN.

⁵¹⁷ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1978-1980 Caja 14,459, AGN.

⁵¹⁸ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1978-1980 Caja 14,459, AGN.

⁵¹⁹ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1980-1985 Caja 15,925, AGN.

plantations also began responding with force to attempts to conscript them. In 1986 an Army patrol “collect[ing] illegal Haitians to cut cane” came across a Haitian man named Alexander Jonson who “tried to assault said patrol with a machete.”⁵²⁰ In 1989, after a Haitian man resisted labor conscription by members of the military, 400 Haitian and Dominican residents of the Amistad plantation attacked the nearby military detachment with machetes, knives, and rocks, attempting to prevent the man from being detained. These actions demonstrate that many *batey* residents viewed sugar companies, and their increasingly close alliance with the military, as unjust.

Batey communal codes upheld the value of hard work and protection of plantation property. In exchange, company officials had long accepted and even protected certain rights that residents considered paramount. Paying workers for their labor was a basic foundation of the plantation moral economy, and when the company failed to fulfill even this, residents responded with force. In *bateyes* across the country people were not just hungry; they were often morally outraged, and their actions demonstrated this. A relatively small conflict between workers and state or company officials could draw hundreds of already frustrated people, something that was rare in decades past. Residents viewed seemingly minor violations of their rights, ones that previously might have been settled by petitioning company or government authorities, as reason to engage in public mobilizations to protest company power. Violence even spilled outside of the plantations and merged with larger protests about the fundamental changes occurring in the Dominican economy. In 1983 Dominican and Haitian workers from the Caterey plantation threw rocks and other objects onto a major highway near the plantation in an attempt to stop traffic. They thus attempted to take their protest about low wages and

⁵²⁰ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1953-1995 Caja 15,939. AGN.

poor working conditions outside the *bateyes*, perhaps connecting it to mobilizations going on around the country in response to the difficult economic situation in the Dominican Republic.

While workers employed mobilizations and acts of violence to attack symbols of company power in novel ways, these tactics were also still used to protect customary rights inside the *batey* as they had been in the past. For example, in 1983 Dominicans and Haitians on the Haina plantation worked together to organize a work stoppage protesting the appointment of a new administrator.⁵²¹ In a similar incident, a group of residents prevented plantation officials from removing a resident from a company home.⁵²² These types of incidents were typical throughout the twentieth century: when fundamental communal codes were violated, residents felt they had the right to respond with mobilizations and even violence. However, during the 1980s this type of resistance became much more common, and residents often used force to respond to company actions that previously might have been tolerated. Attempts to discipline residents could frequently elicit violence. In a typical incident, when a *guarda campestre* agent tried to stop a group of Haitians from cutting down cane that was not mature enough to be harvested, the men attacked him with machetes.⁵²³ Antagonism between *batey* residents and company authorities grew as life became more difficult on plantations and plantation managers and *guarda campestre* agents increasingly relied on force, rather than communal codes of conduct, to control residents. At the same time, these events should not be taken as an indication that forms of non-violent protest disappeared. Indeed, other

⁵²¹ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1960-1978 Caja 15,955, AGN.

⁵²² Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1980-1983 Caja 15,991, AGN.

⁵²³ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1980-1985 Caja 15,925, AGN.

forms of individual resistance no doubt continued, but these actions were not recorded in historical documents as frequently as reports on mass mobilizations.

During this period unrest also frequently broke out because Haitian immigrants were not repatriated in a timely manner. While the Dominican government constantly worried about Haitians staying in the Dominican Republic, and some did remain in the country every harvest season, many workers wished to return to their farms and families in Haiti. Throughout this period scheduled repatriations were often delayed, causing widespread protests. In 1979 Haitians workers on the Consuelo plantations began damaging their barracks to protest the fact that trucks had not yet arrived to take them home. As the 1980s wore on, and the functioning of the CEA further broke down, this became a yet more common occurrence. In 1985 over 2,000 Haitian immigrants awaiting repatriation on the Ozama plantation blocked the highway and began to attack officials with “sticks, rocks and machetes, resulting in five injured *guarda campestre* agents.”⁵²⁴ During the uprising they also partially destroyed the plantation’s Office of Records and Monitoring. As with many similar incidents within the *bateyes*, the *guarda campestre* called in the Army to put down the uprising.

In addition to employing group mobilizations to protest the actions of company administrators, residents continued to rely on sugarcane fires to protest unjust actions. Acts of arson could be anonymous, and were often employed in tandem with open demonstrations. When a *guarda campestre* agent caught a group of eleven Haitian men starting a fire on the Consuelo plantation, they explicitly stated that they were attempting

⁵²⁴ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1983-1992 Caja 15,984, AGN.

to “secure better wages.”⁵²⁵ Residents were well aware of the power of fire, and even refused to fight fires they knew were set in protest. In 1985 a group of *guarda campestre* came across a cane fire while on patrol. They quickly went to the closest *batey* to conscript residents to help them put it out. The residents “refused to cooperate, and some of them rebelled, throwing stones at the...*guarda campestre*.”⁵²⁶ Fires became so rampant that in 1986 the CEA asked the president to order the Army to “conduct adequate military patrols in order to prevent...cane fires.”⁵²⁷ Burning sugarcane forced officials to negotiate with workers, because cane had to be cut quickly after it was burnt. The act of burning sugarcane also held an important symbolic value. Company authorities feared fire, as it could destroy large investments quickly and was difficult to stop. Laborers across the Caribbean had relied on fire for hundreds of years to check the power of sugar plantations, and residents adapted this tactic to express their anger in the context of a changing sugar economy.

By the end of the decade life in the *bateyes* at times resembled a battle zone. Cane fires and threats of violence had been important tools of resistance during the early decades of the sugar industry. During that time state power was weak, and *batey* residents were often able to use these tools to insure they had control over their communities, and an unhindered right to mobility. During the 1980s these tactics of resistance again became important. Cultivation, while still essential for residents’ survival, had been incorporated into company forms of control over the past several decades, and thus lost some of its resistant power. Residents therefore returned to other forms of protest, adapting them to

⁵²⁵ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1980-1985 Caja 15,952, AGN.

⁵²⁶ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1980-1985 Caja 15,952, AGN.

⁵²⁷ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1980-1993 Caja 15,990, AGN.

address current issues. However, the sugar industry had grown increasingly militarized since the 1920s, and violent protests within the *bateyes* were met with further isolation, coercion, and violence.

Because of low wages and rampant unrest, plantations struggled to find an adequate number of laborers. The CEA therefore continued to use the Army and National Police to conscript Haitians in the country for sugar labor. Military personnel reported a variety of reasons for detaining Haitian immigrants. In 1979 when a group of Haitian men were turned over to the Amistad plantation, the Secretary of State for the Armed Forces explained “they were not under anyone’s authority and instead were working for themselves.”⁵²⁸ Haitian immigrants were also often accused of “wandering” (*deambulado*) outside the confines of the plantation. At the beginning of each harvest the Army was responsible for sending workers to plantations that needed workers, and often reported dispatching hundreds at a time.⁵²⁹ As an Army memo explained, “[commanders] begin to recruit and collect undocumented Haitians who are wandering in the region, who are then transported to various [military] detachments...[and then] sent in trucks to plantations.”⁵³⁰ The military became increasingly involved in securing a workforce and moving them between plantations. Army personnel located workers, and held them at military posts across the country until there were enough people to transport to a plantation. The CEA relied on the military to ensure that the sugar industry kept running as revenues dropped and plantation residents became rebellious. Because financial issues

⁵²⁸ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional, Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1978-1980 Caja 14,459, AGN.

⁵²⁹ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional, Sujeto: CEA, 1981-1982 Caja 14,458, AGN.

⁵³⁰ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1964-1986 Caja 15,919, AGN.

plagued many state plantations throughout the 1980s, company officials employed force and intimidation to secure an adequate workforce.

As the company paid wages irregularly, *batey* administrators also employed violence and coercion more often to keep workers from abandoning plantations in search of work elsewhere. During the harvest season, residents were not permitted to leave unless they had permission to do so. The La Romana plantation was still owned by a foreign corporation, and did not struggle to pay wages on time to the extent CEA plantations did. Workers therefore frequently attempted to leave CEA plantations to go to La Romana. According to Diego Castro, the *guarda campestre* “had to spend the night guarding the workers. If [the workers] wanted to leave they wouldn’t let them.”⁵³¹ Lucía Torres added, “on the bridge to [San Pedro de] Macorís there was a guard post and they stopped all the busses that passed there....If there were Haitian workers [on them] they would detain them.”⁵³² Cultural anthropologist Samuel Martínez reported that during his field work in Monte Coca in 1986 an administrator told him “that he would have one or two informers in each [barrack], who would advise him of any plans for escape that they would hear, [and] he would pay each man a couple of pesos every [two weeks].”⁵³³ In addition to the efforts of the *guarda campestre*, the central government employed the power of the Army and National Police to make it difficult for Haitians to live in any space outside of the *bateyes*. In 1982 the Army Chief of Staff informed the Secretary of the Armed Forces that 172 Haitians had been arrested because “they refused to turn over their passports as requested by CEA officials.” The CEA demanded immigrants’ Haitian

⁵³¹ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 24, 2013.

⁵³² Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 17, 2013.

⁵³³ Martínez, “Personal field notes,” June 18, 1986.

passports before they began work to prevent them “from dispersing to other places.”⁵³⁴

Any type of documentation might allow an immigrant some right to mobility. As the military grew increasingly involved with the sugar industry, they attempted to curtail this right as much as possible.

Haitians had been subject to forcible relocation for decades, and even as militarization increased they continued to resist such practices. After being relocated to plantations, many left as soon as they could, defending their right to mobility. In 1980 a frustrated military intelligence officer stated that a group of Haitians he had detained “have on other occasions been picked up and sent to different CEA plantations to cut cane, but within a few days they return to this area to engage in agricultural activities.”⁵³⁵ That same year an Army captain stationed near the Barahona plantation informed his superior that, “the cane cutters...in this jurisdiction refuse to cut cane because according to them...when they bring it to be weighed it does not [weigh]...what they expect.” The workers felt they were being cheated, so had been leaving the plantation en masse, forcing the administrator to “gather Haitians from neighboring areas.” As residents left what they considered an unfair working situation, company authorities attempted to coerce other Haitian immigrants into working. The captain blamed a nearby radio station, “Radio Enriquillo,” for “discouraging workers from finishing the work they were contracted for.”⁵³⁶ Radio Enriquillo was run by a local Belgian priest, and broadcasted in

⁵³⁴ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1981-1982 Caja 14,458, AGN.

⁵³⁵ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1981-1982 Caja 14,454, AGN.

⁵³⁶ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1974-1981 Caja 15,956, AGN.

Kreyòl.⁵³⁷ Despite the fact that *batey* residents had long used mobility as a tool of resistance to protest against poor working conditions, government officials often attempted to blame any unrest on outside influences.

By the mid-1980s, even the widespread use of force and intimidation could not provide an adequate workforce for many plantations. The CEA began to use soldiers in the armed forces as a labor source when they faced shortages. A 1986 report stated that during the harvest, 5,354 soldiers were used to cut sugarcane, including several hundred assigned to Monte Coca. These men ended up working for 180 days during the harvest season.⁵³⁸ This brought the military into even closer contact with *bateyes*, often leading to greater violence. For example, one evening during the 1986 harvest on the Porvenir plantation when a group of Haitian men attempted to leave their barracks in the middle of the night for unknown reasons, some soldiers who were residing in the *batey* to help cut sugarcane fired into their room, killing one man.⁵³⁹ The soldiers had reportedly been drinking all evening prior to the incident. After the shooting the men went through the barracks, and forced residents outside, causing many to flee into the cane fields fearing for their lives.⁵⁴⁰

In his field notes from research conducted in Monte Coca in the 1980s Samuel Martínez recorded accounts of a similar event. A group of soldiers had been tasked with harvesting sugarcane in a *batey* about five miles away from Monte Coca. Reportedly on their final night they sprayed the door of a barracks with bullets, killing a Haitian man

⁵³⁷ Maurea E. Landies, "The Band Carries Medicine: Music, Healing and Community in Haitian/Dominican Rara/Gaga" (PhD diss, Columbia University, 2007), 8.

⁵³⁸ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1953-1995 Caja 15,939, AGN.

⁵³⁹ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1953-1991 Caja 14,456, AGN.

⁵⁴⁰ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1953-1991 Caja 14,456, AGN.

and wounding another. The wounded man escaped into the sugarcane but another man who also resided in the barracks remained, and the soldiers took him prisoner.⁵⁴¹ Soldiers were likely unhappy about having to cut sugarcane, a task considered to be “Haitian”, and their presence in *bateyes* often created conflicts. A permissive official attitude towards violence against Haitians in *bateyes* and the presence of more and more soldiers furthered the militarization of plantations. Deaths during altercations with military personnel on the plantation were fairly common, and soldiers were rarely punished for shooting Haitian immigrants. During conflicts between the company and residents, soldiers often responded with gunfire. When the military faced a mobilization on the Ozama plantation, the division’s superior stated that they “made use of their service weapons, shooting them in the air and using necessary policing tactics to control the situation.”⁵⁴² Two protesters died and five were injured due to the gunfire.

Freedom and Bondage on Hispaniola

The increasing militarization of the sugar industry and the CEA’s widespread use of coercion and violence began to draw international criticism. In 1979 the London-based Anti-Slavery Society for the Protection of Human Rights presented evidence to the United Nations claiming that Haitian workers were sold in the Dominican Republic. The group argued, “Haitian immigrants are brought in trucks to the border and driven to posts nearby where they wait to be bought...by representatives of the three principal sugar

⁵⁴¹ Martínez, “Personal field notes,” July 28, 1986.

⁵⁴² Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1953-1991 Caja 14,456, AGN.

producers.”⁵⁴³ This accusation elicited public outcry internationally and domestically. Representatives from the country’s leading newspapers wrote to President Antonio Guzmán demanding to know “what steps will the government take to improve the living conditions for workers who, according to the Anti-Slavery Society’s report live ‘in terrible conditions...for private and government gain.’”⁵⁴⁴ The Independent Trade Union Conference, one of the largest labor organizations in the country, also denounced the “trafficking of Haitian laborers to the Dominican Republic where these workers are treated like animals.”⁵⁴⁵ While the CEA vigorously denied these allegations, they clearly upset some Dominicans who demanded that their government investigate and reform their treatment of Haitians. International observers continued to levy accusations of slavery against the Dominican Republic throughout the 1980s, and there were always Dominican citizens who vocalized their opposition to the government’s actions.

As previously detailed, evidence indicates that Haitian immigrants were forcibly moved between military posts by soldiers and then sent to plantations. Graft was already a well-established part of the networks that moved workers around the country, and it is probable that military officials at times received bribes for relocating workers to certain plantations. This led some observers to argue that immigrants were sold and were therefore slaves.⁵⁴⁶ By the 1980s, workers in the Dominican sugar industry could

⁵⁴³ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1978-1980 Caja 14,459, AGN.

⁵⁴⁴ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1978-1980 Caja 14,459, AGN.

⁵⁴⁵ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1978-1980 Caja 14,459, AGN.

⁵⁴⁶ For examples see Bill Haney and Peter Rhodes, *The Price of Sugar* (New York: New Yorker Films, 2007), DVD; Amy Serrano, *The Sugar Babies: The Plight of the Children Agricultural Workers in the Sugar Industry of the Dominican Republic* (Miami: Siren Studios, 2007), DVD; Kevin Bales, *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Michael T. Martin, “Documenting Modern-Day Slavery in the Dominican Republic: An Interview with Amy Serrano,”

experience coercion, forced labor, and even potentially captivity. However, applying the label slavery to this labor system arguably obscures more than it elucidates.⁵⁴⁷ Michaeline Crichlow writes, “Are Haitians in the Dominican Republic ‘slaves’ as were their fore parents? No. To extrapolate from an earlier global condition, one which tied citizen and place to the global in more forceful and dominating ways, is to refuse to examine the historical situatedness, rationalities, and realities of the Dominican state.”⁵⁴⁸

Reducing discussions of the experiences of Haitian workers to a simple dichotomy between enslavement and wage labor ignores the fluidity between free and unfree labor that residents of Hispaniola experienced.⁵⁴⁹ Migrants made the decision to move to the Dominican Republic in search of work and, once there, they resisted state and sugar company attempts to isolate them and worked to maintain their right to mobility. Haitian migrants could also make the decision to return home, even if they were only able to do so at the end of the harvest because of the militarization of *bateyes*. When conditions became too egregious, especially when wages were not paid, workers refused to provide labor by leaving the plantation in search of work elsewhere, finding other

Camera Obscura 25, no. 2 (2010): 161-171; Roger Plant, *Sugar and Modern Slavery: A Tale of Two Countries* (London: Zed Books, 1987); Maurice Lemoine, *Bitter Sugar: Slaves Today in the Caribbean* (Chicago: Banner Press, 1985); Ramón Antonio Veras, *Haitianos, inmigración, esclavitud* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Taller, 1983.)

⁵⁴⁷ In research on *kafala* guest workers in Dubai, a group that has also been labeled enslaved, Neha Vora similarly argues “focusing on... ‘modern day slavery’... effectively collapses migrant lives into economic terms and removes possibilities of community formation, political agency, cultural hybridity, emotional attachment, consumption, leisure activity, and other forms of belonging from South Asian experiences in the Gulf.” *Impossible Citizens: Dubai’s Indian Diaspora* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 11.

⁵⁴⁸ Michaeline A. Crichlow and Patricia Northover *Globalization and the Post-Creole Imagination: Notes on Fleeing the Plantation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 12. See also Lauren Derby, “‘Se fue pa’ la azucar’: film review of *The Price of Sugar* and *The Sugar Babies*,” *Caribbean Studies* 36, no. 2 (2008): 250-263; Frank Moya Pons, *El Batey: Estudio socioeconómico de los bateyes del Consejo Estatal del Azúcar* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Fondo Para el Avance de Las Ciencias Sociales, 1986.)

⁵⁴⁹ Kendra Strauss, “Coerced, Forced and Unfree Labour: Geographies of Exploitation in Contemporary Labour Markets,” *Geography Compass* 6, no. 3 (2012): 141.

sources of income, or collectively mobilizing. Immigrants made these decisions, however, under incredible constraints. Extreme poverty and the collapse of the peasant economy in Haiti made movement to the Dominican Republic a necessary survival strategy. While labor conditions worsened, many migrants were willing to work on sugar plantations because they had few other options.

Samuel Martínez argues that referring to plantation workers as slaves implies that a human rights abuse only occurs once an immigrant has been forcibly trafficked to a plantation. He writes, “instead of assuming the *bracero* to be free before he falls into the hands of the Dominican authorities, he might accurately said to be deprived of a basic human liberty, and therefore to be not free, the moment his *economic* circumstances in Haiti leave him no choice but to cross the border. He may, in short, be neither slave nor free.”⁵⁵⁰ Understanding freedom and bondage on Hispaniola during the twentieth century demands a transnational perspective. Immigrants were not completely free when they entered into the plantation labor system in the Dominican Republic. Their position in the global economy left them few options but to take exploitative work.

A worsening economic situation in Haiti compelled greater numbers of people to migrate to the Dominican Republic, even if this meant facing unfree labor conditions and uncertain wages. In 1971 dictator François Duvalier died suddenly, leaving his 19-year-old son, Jean- Claude Duvalier, as president-for-life. Corruption, which had been rampant under his father, only worsened under Jean-Claude. By 1984 his fortune was estimated at \$450 million and his mother’s at \$1.2 billion, higher than Haiti’s Gross National

⁵⁵⁰ Samuel Martínez, “Indifference with Indignation: Anthropology, Human Rights, and the Haitian Bracero,” *American Anthropologist* 98, no. 1 (March 1996): 22.

Product.⁵⁵¹ The family embezzled money from U.S. foreign aid, and increased taxes and fees on the peasants. Government appointees at every level, from top advisors to the paramilitary Tonton Makout, used graft to support or enrich themselves. As peasants were squeezed for more and more tax revenue, they began to cut production. Michel-Rolph Trouillot writes: “crushed by taxes and by oligopolies in the commercialization of export crops, the Haitian peasant was becoming an economic maroon, avoiding all production that benefited the urban middleman.”⁵⁵² Seasonal migration to the Dominican Republic was for many peasants the only way to support themselves and their families.

At the same time, the revenues from the Dominican sugar industry helped to sustain the Duvalier family’s ostentatious spending. Jean-Claude continued to renew bilateral labor contracts and during this period the cost per worker paid to the Haitian government increased dramatically. In 1966 the Dominican government paid fifteen U.S. dollars for every worker recruited, and by 1976 that had reached fifty dollars.⁵⁵³ Just two years later in 1978 the Dominican government agreed to pay eighty-one dollars per worker.⁵⁵⁴ These funds were allegedly meant to cover the costs of recruitment centers, but for the most part ended up in the pockets of the Duvaliers.⁵⁵⁵ In addition, a portion of each workers’ wages were withheld from each paycheck, supposedly to be returned to them at the end of the harvest season. However, the Duvaliers’ personal finance manager

⁵⁵¹ Alex Dupuy, *Haiti in the World Economy: Class, Race and Underdevelopment since 1700* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989), 173.

⁵⁵² Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *State Against Nation: The Origins and Legacy of Duvalierism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990), 212.

⁵⁵³ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1958–1978 Caja 14,453. AGN.

⁵⁵⁴ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1978-1980 Caja 14,459, AGN.

⁵⁵⁵ Cuello, *Contratacion de mano de obra haitiana*, 213.

pocketed this money, and wage garnishing made it increasingly difficult for workers to return home with savings.⁵⁵⁶

While Haitian communities on Dominican sugar plantations helped maintain and augment Jean-Claude's wealth, they also posed a potential risk to his government. As life in Haiti grew more difficult, and Duvalier faced growing opposition, his government grew increasingly concerned about the possibility of political threats from the Haitian diaspora in the Dominican Republic. Indeed, some migrants left for the Dominican Republic to escape persecution at home because of their opposition to Duvalier. The Haitian government often claimed that opposition forces were organizing on Dominican plantations, although it is hard to confirm the veracity of such accusations. In 1979, Duvalier officials asserted that a plantation police officer was training up to 3,000 men to invade Haiti and overthrow the government.⁵⁵⁷ Dominican officials sometimes corroborated these accusations. In 1982 the Dominican Army reported that a group of men in a CEA *batey* had formed a group called "The Democratic Movement for the Liberation of Haiti" and that they regularly held meetings with *batey* residents.⁵⁵⁸ This may have been part of the motivation for the changes in 1978 to the bilateral labor contract to include the creation of a group of Haitian immigration inspectors who visited plantations to certify the good treatment of workers. These inspectors were undoubtedly also charged with helping ensure that *batey* communities were not breeding opposition

⁵⁵⁶ Eugenio Matibag, *Haitian Dominican Counterpoint: Nation, State, and Race on Hispaniola* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 158.

⁵⁵⁷ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1978-1980 Caja 14,459, AGN.

⁵⁵⁸ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1977-1982 Caja 15,979, AGN.

groups. Dominican officials also often reported the presence of Tonton Makouts within the *bateyes*, and claimed they were searching for political exiles.⁵⁵⁹

By the mid-1980s the economic situation of many Haitians had grown desperate. The cost of living had quadrupled since 1970 and rural residents on average consumed forty percent fewer calories and fifty percent less protein than was recommended by international organizations.⁵⁶⁰ This situation was only exacerbated by food shortages that rocked the country, leading to widespread local unrest. In November of 1985, the murder of a demonstrator in the city of Gonaïves set off waves of violent protests that the regime could not contain. Desperate to obtain workers for the harvest season, on January 20, 1986 the CEA sent two million U.S. dollars in cash, carried in a suitcase on a flight to Port au-Prince, to secure workers. On February 7th Jean-Claude fled the country in an exit organized by the United States. The two million dollar payment was spirited away and while the Dominican government tried to demand its return, this sum almost certainly instead helped fund the Duvaliers' exile in France.⁵⁶¹ With the departure of Jean-Claude, bi-lateral labor contracts between the two nations ended. Following 1986, immigration to the cane fields was increasingly unregulated and undocumented. In addition, in the chaos that followed Duvalier's departure many fled to the Dominican Republic in search of work.

⁵⁵⁹ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: Braceros Haitianos, 1978-1980 Caja 14,459, AGN.

⁵⁶⁰ Trouillot, *State Against Nation*, 214; Dupuy, *Haiti in the World Economy*, 184.

⁵⁶¹ Cuello, *Contratacion de mano de obra haitiana*, 328.

Cultivation During Crisis

As Haiti endured political and economic crises, the Dominican Republic also faced major economic problems in 1986. After eight years of difficult neoliberal restructuring, the economy contracted further, marking the first time the GDP had shrunk since 1965. Although the failures of the Antonio Guzmán and Salvador Jorge Blanco governments were in large part due to structural problems they had inherited from Balaguer and economic problems beyond their control — for example, the increase in fuel prices and the decrease in the sugar quota — many Dominicans were weary of the party's leadership. At age eighty, Joaquín Balaguer decided to run for the presidency again and won. This time he would rule the country for ten years before he was forced out in the middle of his third term because of electoral fraud committed by his party. Once in office, Balaguer attempt to roll back some of the neoliberal policies that had been implemented during the prior eight years.

While there had been discussion of privatizing money-losing state enterprises like the CEA prior to 1986, once Balaguer took over he increased economic centralization under his authority once again. Typically around sixty percent of the entire central government's annual expenditures went directly through the president's office during this period. Because of the continued presence of Balaguer's allies inside the CEA leadership, Guzmán and Jorge Blanco had struggled to command the sugar industry in the way that Balaguer had. In control of the government again, Balaguer resumed his personal involvement with CEA operations. During his previous presidency he had shown special interest in cultivation rights on sugar plantation land, and after 1986 continued to do so.

Throughout the twentieth century *batey* residents fought for the right to established cultivation plots, and peasant communities near plantations fought to maintain usufruct rights to land. If sugar companies respected local moral codes that held that land not being used for sugarcane could be used for cultivation and animal husbandry, peasants often protected sugarcane fields from animals and fire. By this period, however, the informal agreements that had maintained peace between company management and peasants were also breaking down. While Balaguer was openly supportive of *batey* residents' right to cultivate, his government did not provide the same level of protection to peasants residing around plantations as Trujillo had. During the 1930s and 1940s Trujillo helped peasants living on the edges of plantations win informal rights to cultivate plantation territory. Although during the second half of his presidency he presided over peasant evictions as he expanded and increasingly took over the sugar industry, some were able to maintain these claims. However, once the CEA claimed these plantations management began evicting squatters from plantation land. During the 1960s and 70s these peasants desperately appealed to the government for help. In their letters they did not claim ownership over the land they cultivated and readily admitted it was sugar plantation land. Yet, they argued that simply because a piece of land was legally part of the sugar plantation did not mean management was the final arbiter of how it was used. Writing about land takeovers by Brazilian sugar workers during the 1990s, Wendy Wolford explains, "property was private only inasmuch as it belonged to the people who worked it. Embodied in this sense of justice was a rejection of the idea that the landlord is the 'natural' owner of the land."⁵⁶² If terrain was not being utilized productively, then

⁵⁶² Wendy Wolford, *This Land is Ours Now: Social Mobilization and the Meanings of Land in Brazil* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 59.

local cultivators should be able to have access to it to produce food.⁵⁶³ Balaguer seldom intervened in these disputes and many squatters were evicted.

The breakdown of informal agreements between *batey* residents, peasants, and the CEA led to a dramatic increase in land takeovers. Beginning in 1980, peasants living around sugar plantations were frequently accused of forcibly taking over CEA land. In 1980 the Secretary of the Armed Forces reported arresting seventeen people for “attempting to clear land [that is the] property of the Barahona plantation.”⁵⁶⁴ The Army or National Police were increasingly called in to deal with squatters, and confrontation with peasants at times turned violent. Members of the National Police requested the reinforcement of nearly fifty soldiers to assist with the “eviction of some 400 peasants who have invaded [plantation] land and impeded the cane harvest at the Caei plantation.”⁵⁶⁵ Tensions were already high on this particular plantation: in the three months prior there had been four major fires that had destroyed acres of sugarcane, potentially set by disgruntled peasants.⁵⁶⁶ Following the currency devaluations and increases in food prices of the mid-1980s such takeovers increased. On May 21, 1985 “four hundred people invaded a field in...Batey Palabe, property of the... CEA.”⁵⁶⁷ Ten days later twenty-one peasants were arrested in the same *batey* for “occupying lands belonging to the CEA.”⁵⁶⁸ On June 18th sixty-three people were detained, and on July 25th

⁵⁶³ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1966-1973 Caja 15,952, AGN.

⁵⁶⁴ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1962-1986 Caja 15,919, AGN.

⁵⁶⁵ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1980-1986 Caja 15,972, AGN.

⁵⁶⁶ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1980-1986 Caja 15,972, AGN.

⁵⁶⁷ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1980-1985 Caja 15,925, AGN.

⁵⁶⁸ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1980-1985 Caja 15,925, AGN.

another eighteen were arrested, all in the same place.⁵⁶⁹ A final report from August 6th stated that, “peasants associated with the ‘Association of Landless Peasants’ intended to invade land belonging to the CEA, located in...[Batey] Palabe.”⁵⁷⁰ Faced with economic uncertainty, and a government that did not appear to respond to their concerns, peasants demanded the right to use plantation land to support themselves. Many clearly believed that cultivation provided an important avenue to economic independence, and considered access to land a right.

In 1986 the CEA decided to close the Catarey plantation because of massive financial problems. In the months leading to its closure, the plantation had gone through a series of layoffs in an attempt to stay open. This led to widespread demonstrations and strikes by the plantation’s inhabitants. When the plantation finally closed, an estimated 25,000 workers were left without a job. Suddenly those living in the *bateyes* of the Catarey plantation had no source of employment. While the CEA intended to sell or rent the land in order to help the company recuperate some of its losses, former workers demanded that the government distribute land to them. Héctor René González, a representative from the local city council wrote to President Balaguer lamenting the fact that “although we are a community of more than 200 thousand *tareas* [of land] all of the root vegetables, rice, and beans that we consume have to be brought from markets in Santo Domingo...[We have to] prevent...soon having a town without food and all of its land held by *latifundios*.”⁵⁷¹ González, like his constituents, used the threat of looming

⁵⁶⁹ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1980-1985 Caja 15,925, AGN.

⁵⁷⁰ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1980-1985 Caja 15,925, AGN.

⁵⁷¹ A *tarea* is about .16 acres. Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1983-1992 Caja 15,984, AGN.

food insecurity to explain the impact of the closing plantation, and the moral obligation the government had to distribute land to former workers.

In 1987 the CEA closed the Esperanza plantation in the north of the country. Inhabitants there also demanded land, and threatened continued protests and general strikes until the government capitulated.⁵⁷² Eventually some of the former plantation lands were included in a government program of agrarian reform and were distributed to residents. However, a report from 1990 concerning the Esperanza lands claimed that they were distributed “mostly to people not from this community, and in some cases employees of the Dominican Sugar Institute...[which] exacerbated community outrage.”⁵⁷³ While residents of closed plantations fought to maintain their claims to land, and to expand their holdings, government corruption appears to have limited their ability to do so.

Although peasants had laid claim to sugar plantation land unused for cane cultivation for decades, the type of collective, militant land takeovers that became prevalent during the 1980s were not previously reported. Balaguer had overseen the consolidation of land ownership in the hands of the elite during his first twelve years in office, which left many more peasants landless.⁵⁷⁴ In addition, as the Dominican Republic was forced to open its economy because of IMF-mandated policies, small producers crowded onto undesirable lands struggled to compete with cheap food imports. Many felt abandoned by the country’s seemingly sudden shift away from agricultural production, which had been the nation's economic foundation throughout its history. Independent

⁵⁷² Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1983-1992 Caja 15,984, AGN.

⁵⁷³ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1983-1992 Caja 15,984, AGN.

⁵⁷⁴ Hartlyn, *The Struggle for Democratic Politics in the Dominican Republic*, 107.

cultivation had long signaled freedom for many Dominicans, and this way of life was becoming more and more difficult. Some of those who lived in and around sugar plantations responded by attempting to expand cultivation rights. From the 1920s onward, cultivation had been limited to areas around *bateyes* and spaces where companies did not cultivate sugarcane. However, dramatic changes in the economy, and the government's increasing unwillingness to step in and mediate land disputes on plantations as they once had, led some to question these longstanding arrangements. This led to group mobilizations that attempted to convert sugarcane fields into cultivation plots. Peasants no longer squatted only on fallow fields; rather, they questioned the company's right to use land at all.

Balaguer, once back in office, provided only limited support to peasants engaged in land conflicts with CEA plantations. However, he continued to back cultivation rights inside *bateyes*, even working to expand them for inhabitants. During the period Balaguer had been out of office, the CEA had faced widespread strikes, sugarcane fires, and worker violence. This labor unrest was in some ways similar to what had happened after Trujillo's assassination in 1961. Workers took advantage of new political openings to demand change, and violence often erupted when wages were paid inconsistently. After experiencing the impact of widespread labor unrest, Balaguer staunchly supported cultivation rights, even pressuring the American-owned La Romana plantation to provide land to their residents. He was aware that land for cultivation could help improve food security and thus decrease dissatisfaction. Under his presidency, the CEA began granting larger plots of land that had previously been used for sugarcane cultivation to some *batey* communities. Each family in the *batey* was granted a certain amount of space within the

plot to plant with food.⁵⁷⁵ In 1986 cultural anthropologist Samuel Martínez asked ninety adult residents in Monte Coca if they preferred to have a steady job or their own land. Respondents were nearly equally split between the two options.⁵⁷⁶ Peasant production was still clearly very important to many *batey* inhabitants.

Changing Conceptions of Citizenship

As had been the pattern for decades, an extension of cultivation rights inside *bateyes* was accompanied by further constraints on *batey* residents' rights outside of plantations. While the government began to discuss denying citizenship rights to Haitian-Dominicans in 1976 it made no major changes to citizenship laws at that time. Instead, officials found other ways to deny documentation to Haitians and people of Haitian descent. First, the government changed bilateral agreements with Haiti to no longer require the issuance of *cédulas* to immigrants. Then, during the 1980s low-level government officials began to refuse to provide birth certificates to children of Haitian parents.⁵⁷⁷ Without a birth certificate, a resident could not apply for a *cédula*. While Balaguer had been unable to change Dominican laws to officially define Haitian workers as “in transit,” it appears that he had been able to change public perception of the citizenship rights of Haitian-Dominicans, in part, through these various government actions. As president, Balaguer intensified Trujillo-era policies to make sugar plantations the only legal spaces for Haitian immigrants. Haitians came to be considered an “illegal” presence if they were not actively laboring in the cane fields.

⁵⁷⁵ Anonymous interviews, by author, Monte Coca, 2013.

⁵⁷⁶ Martínez, “Personal field notes,” April 10, 1986.

⁵⁷⁷ *A Troubled Year*, 11.

Discussing Mexican immigrants in the United States, Mae M. Ngai writes, “foreignness was a racialized concept that adhered to all Mexicans, including those born in the United States, and carried the opprobrium of illegitimacy and inferiority.”⁵⁷⁸ In the Dominican Republic, this assumption of illegitimacy not only impacted people’s perception about Haitians, but also fundamentally shifted the legal understanding of citizenship. This was also reflected in changes to the census during this period. While from 1920 onward the census included a question about the respondent’s race, in 1981 the government changed the question to read “based on your physical characteristics and accent are you Haitian, Dominican, or another nationality.”⁵⁷⁹ Since this was not a question about place of birth, but instead about how someone looked and spoke, state officials were clearly preoccupied with determining which residents had any Haitian heritage. Many in the government believed that anyone with a Haitian background could not be a citizen, and therefore the statement that immigrants had always been “in transit” and never part of the body politic became naturalized as fact.

When Balaguer took over the presidency again in 1986 he continued to promote his own understanding of citizenship rights. By 1990, some legal experts and government officials argued that Haitian workers had long been considered in transit.⁵⁸⁰ This historical “fact” would become only more widely accepted during that decade, and eventually became the legal basis for the open retraction of citizenship rights from all children born to Haitian workers in the twenty-first century. In 1991 when the Inter-

⁵⁷⁸ Mae. M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 132.

⁵⁷⁹ *La variable étnico racial en los censos de población en la República Dominicana* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Oficina Nacional de Estadística, 2012), 17.

⁵⁸⁰ *A Troubled Year*, 10.

American Human Rights Commission investigated the Dominican Republic's treatment of Haitian immigrants, the government argued that *jus soli* citizenship "excludes those foreigners in transit" and also stated that "if [someone] is from illegal parents, even if they are born here they are illegal."⁵⁸¹ While many Dominicans came to believe that the children of Haitian workers had been ineligible for citizenship for much of the twentieth century, this was in fact a relatively recent legal invention. Both in the service of the Trujillo regime, and during his many years ruling the country, Balaguer had proven his adept ability to rewrite Dominican history to serve his political goals. By dramatically changing many people's understanding of the phrase "in transit" within little more than a decade, Balaguer and officials within his government dramatically changed citizenship within the Dominican Republic.

Throughout this period it became more difficult for Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent to obtain documentation, leading to the initial growth of a stateless population inside *bateyes*. Those with limited claims to citizenship were vulnerable to coercion and corruption when they interacted with state authorities. When the National Police arrested immigrants and the children of immigrants for failing to produce documentation, they often could pay small bribes to secure their release. In 1983 the National Police organized a raid around the Quisqueya plantation to apprehend undocumented immigrants. Afterwards, a *guarda campestre* agent was accused of soliciting bribes from detained immigrants in exchange for releasing them before police

⁵⁸¹ Inter-American Human Rights Commission, *Informe Anual de la Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos 1991* (Washington D.C.: Secretaria General Organización de los Estados Americanos, 1992), 281.

authorities arrived.⁵⁸² During an interview in 1986 a Haitian resident of Monte Coca recounted that when traveling through the country immigrants had to pay bribes to soldiers at various checkpoints. Haitian passengers on cross-country buses could pay for their fare and handle bribes themselves, or pay a higher flat rate to the driver who then negotiated bribes on their behalf.⁵⁸³ Bus drivers presumably developed relationships with soldiers at the check points they passed, and could negotiate a lower bribe than an individual migrant, while also keeping a cut for themselves.

As the incomes of many in the Dominican Republic dropped in real terms due to frequent currency devaluations throughout the 1980s, low-level government workers relied on small bribes to supplement their incomes. Migrants and their descendants with enough money could obtain documentation relatively easily: a bribe could often induce an official to forge a birth certificate or even a *cédula*. Traveling to far away government offices in order to secure documents was difficult, and people could opt to pay a *buscone*, or an informal fixer, to negotiate a complicated bureaucracy.⁵⁸⁴ Many profited from the existence of a large stateless population, and those without money to pay bribes in this system were the most at risk for coercion. Citizenship in the Dominican Republic was therefore increasingly a commodity: those with wealth and connections had fewer problem acquiring documentation, while poor and often darker-skinned Dominicans struggled both to afford government fees, and to convince officials they had a right to citizenship. As Brodwyn Fischer argues of *favela* dwellers in Rio de Janeiro, this led to a “poverty of rights” creating a population “akin to that of undocumented immigrants:

⁵⁸² Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1963-1995 Caja 16,033, AGN.

⁵⁸³ Martínez, “Personal field notes,” July 28, 1986.

⁵⁸⁴ Anonymous interviews, by author, Monte Coca, 2013.

people for whom neither economic prosperity nor citizenship was fully attainable, who built their lives with a patchwork of scanty rights and hard-won tolerance, and whose access to theoretically public benefits and guarantees was scarce or nonexistent.”⁵⁸⁵

Lack of documentation limited people’s lives in manifold ways. Many were afraid to leave *bateyes* because of the possibility of being arrested and deported to Haiti, a country many Haitian-Dominicans did not know. In addition, without a *cédula* a child could not continue school beyond eighth grade and adults could not apply for jobs within the formal economy. *Batey* residents often worked together to get around increasingly repressive citizenship laws. Dominican residents of *bateyes* would “declare” children born to Haitian friends as their own at government offices in order to help them obtain birth certificates. Victoria Pascua, a Dominican resident of Monte Coca, explained, “I’ve declared four children who weren’t mine...[T]here was a woman we were close friends with who didn’t have a *cédula* and...she had a three year old daughter who, up until then, hadn’t gotten papers...because they said her last name was strange.”⁵⁸⁶ Since Pascua had a Dominican *cédula*, she claimed her friend’s daughter was her own, and obtained a birth certificate listing her as the mother. She continued, “the Dominican government should give documents to people who were born here, this is the only country they know.” Stories of Dominican women who had legally claimed the children of Haitian friends as their own were common in Monte Coca. As the government made it increasingly difficult for Haitian-Dominicans to legally obtain documentation, *batey* residents relied on personal networks of friendship and kinship to help their children.

⁵⁸⁵ Brodwyn M. Fischer, *A Poverty of Rights: Citizenship and Inequality in Twentieth-Century Rio De Janeiro* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 2.

⁵⁸⁶ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 4, 2013.

While the government was intolerant of Haitian-Dominicans, *batey* residents continued to view ethnic identity in diverse and nuanced ways. In a 1986 survey of Monte Coca's 420 permanent adult residents Samuel Martínez found that forty-one percent of people reported they were Dominican and twenty-one percent reported they were Haitian. Thirty-two percent of residents identified themselves as either of mixed ancestry, or as having been born to Haitian parents in the Dominican Republic. Fifty-eight residents reported they were second generation Haitians, and thirty-nine stated they were third generation Haitians, fourteen and nine percent of the whole population respectively.⁵⁸⁷ While *bateyes* were portrayed as places only occupied by Haitian immigrants, the permanent communities there were clearly much more diverse. Many people's understanding of their own ethnicity was closely related to location. Isabella Sosa, whose mother was from Haiti and father was from Saint Lucía, explained: "I am Haitian, but not Haitian from over there, Haitian from here. I am English, but not English from over there, English from here."⁵⁸⁸ Sosa expressed a connection to places that she herself had not seen, but grounded her identity in the physical space of the Dominican Republic. *Batey* residents frequently located a person's identity by physically locating where they were born. Children born to Haitian parents in the *batey* were often called "Haitians from here," as distinguished from "Haitians from there." Angélica Ramírez, a Dominican, explained the difference, "those who are born here are from here, they belong here."⁵⁸⁹ Edouard Robert, whose parents were both Haitian, described this ethnicity: "I'm

⁵⁸⁷ A remaining five percent were of West Indian descent and one percent did not report their ethnicity. Martínez, "Personal field notes," April 10, 1986.

⁵⁸⁸ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, February 2, 2013.

⁵⁸⁹ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 2, 2013.

Dominican because I was born here and all of my documents are Dominican. I was born here and I don't know Haiti, so according to the law I'm not Haitian. But I know that I'm Haitian because my mother and father were Haitian."⁵⁹⁰ Using location to explain ethnic identity might have been related to the *jus soli* citizenship laws of the country. By claiming to be Haitians born here residents asserted Haitian cultural identity but also implicitly established their right to citizenship.

The fact that Dominicans of Haitian descent born in the *batey* frequently identified as Haitian was probably influenced by the fact that they were considered Haitian by Dominican society. Yet, residents also actively self-identified as Haitian, and expressed pride in their ethnic identity. Isabella Sosa stated, "people say 'you look English (West Indian)' But I say I'm mixed, because I have Haitian blood."⁵⁹¹ Samuel Martínez recorded a similar conversation with a resident of Monte Coca in the 1980s. The woman explained, "people tell me 'you aren't Haitian' ...they tell me I look English...[but] I say 'yes I am Haitian.'"⁵⁹² Both of these women were pointing out that they could pass as another ethnicity whose members enjoyed more respect from Dominicans, but chose not to. Residents often denigrated Haitians or Haitian-Dominicans who attempted to deny their ethnic background. Martínez recorded people making fun of Haitians who "once they learn how to speak Spanish...don't want to speak Kreyòl with you."⁵⁹³ Paul Canno made a similar statement, arguing "everyone here speaks Haitian...[A]nyone who [says] they don't speak Haitian is stuck up. They know how to

⁵⁹⁰ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 17, 2013.

⁵⁹¹ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, March 19, 2013.

⁵⁹² Martínez, "Personal field notes," June 18, 1986.

⁵⁹³ Martínez, "Personal field notes," June 18, 1986.

speaking Haitian.”⁵⁹⁴ Given the power of Spanish in the Dominican Republic, reclaiming the use of Kreyòl could be a subversive act. In 1985 two men living on the Porvenir plantation were arrested for running “a ‘Creole’ literacy school” in a *batey* because it was thought they were engaging in “communist indoctrination.”⁵⁹⁵ A woman in Monte Coca also recalled such informally run classes in Kreyòl taking place in the *batey*.⁵⁹⁶ While speaking Kreyòl or having a “Haitian”-sounding accent could lead to abuse from government officials, for many Haitian-Dominicans language was an important part of their identity, and they worked to maintain the use of Kreyòl in *bateyes*.

When asked about discrimination or violence from Dominicans, many long-term residents of the *batey* who had been born in Haiti stated that they did not encounter such prejudices. They explained this fact by stating that they were good people who did not invite that type of treatment. Luis Yambate clarified, “I hate [when] people say that Dominicans treat [us] badly. For me, since I don’t mistreat [anyone]...I don’t [get in] fights...I don’t mess with anyone [so] Dominicans and I are [friends].”⁵⁹⁷ However, interviewees often followed these statements by recounting times they had suffered prejudice or abuse. By stating that they did not experience mistreatment even when they eventually acknowledged that they had, informants may have been arguing that they did not conform to Dominican stereotypes about Haitians. The stories immigrants decided to tell about their experiences with anti-Haitian prejudice were often meant to demonstrate their intercultural acumen. Yambate later said, “I don’t like when people say to me...

⁵⁹⁴ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, March 21, 2013.

⁵⁹⁵ Fondo Presidencia Palacio Nacional Sujeto: CEA, 1967-1978 Caja 15,941, AGN.

⁵⁹⁶ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 15, 2013.

⁵⁹⁷ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, March 22, 2013.

haitiano del diablo (damn Haitian)...I respond ‘that’s my last name *haitiano del diablo*, that is our last name.’ That’s how I make fun of them.”⁵⁹⁸

Manuel Thomas told a similar story about how a Dominican store owner in a *batey* assumed he did not speak Spanish and then, surprised at his language ability, asked him where he lived. Joseph recounted, “I said [I lived] in Consuelo, and the man said to me ‘people like you don’t live in Consuelo, you must [live] on the plantation with the other *cimarrones*.’ I said no....and he was surprised.” Consuelo is the nearest town to Monte Coca, and this Dominican storeowner was expressing surprise that Thomas lived there and not on a plantation, where Haitians were supposed to be isolated. The use of the word *cimarron*, whether it was actually employed by the store owner or only remembered as such by Joseph, is also interesting, since the term historically referred to escaped slaves and in this case was being employed to refer to Haitian immigrants. The stories people told about their identities demonstrated the tellers’ ability to cross between cultures, and to defy Dominican expectations of Haitians. Immigrants portrayed their cultural intelligence that allowed them move beyond the closely circumscribed roles Dominican society created for Haitians. Thomas ended his story by stating, “some people speak badly about Haitians, but they never speak badly about me.”⁵⁹⁹

The Dominican government negated the possibility of a Haitian-Dominican identity. They divided the population of plantations into Dominican citizens and Haitian immigrants, who would supposedly return to their country at some point in time. There was no official or legal recognition of Haitian-Dominicans. However, *batey* residents had their own ways of explaining and understanding this identity. They were “neither

⁵⁹⁸ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, March 22, 2013.

⁵⁹⁹ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, March 26, 2013.

invisible nor temporary, and their presence and everyday mundane forms of belonging [were] integral to the production of national identity, economic growth, and the boundaries of citizenship.”⁶⁰⁰ While children born to Haitian parents may have been considered Haitian by the wider Dominican society, *batey* residents conceived of the new classification of “Haitian from here.” In doing so they created their own claims to *jus soli* citizenship, based not on constitutional law, but on their knowledge of and contributions to the Dominican Republic. Angélica Ramírez, a Dominican resident of Monte Coca argued “they shouldn’t stop those who were born here [from obtaining] their *cédula*. If [someone] comes [from Haiti] that’s different. But [those born here] don’t know Haiti. [The government] says they are Haitian...but they were born [under] the Dominican flag.”⁶⁰¹ This understanding of citizenship countered government attempts to denationalize *bateyes* by grounding these spaces in the Dominican nation.

Lucía Torres, who had been born to Haitian parents in a *batey* in the 1960s, succinctly explained why it had become more difficult during her lifetime for Haitian-Dominicans to obtain documentation. She explained, “it’s a kind of economic racism....Right now in the United States if you want to declare your child [obtain a birth certificate]...you can, because the United States generates more money. Why is it that people...who have lived their whole lives here, and have their papers, but just their last name is Haitian [cannot obtain] documents? It has to do with the economy.”⁶⁰² As the long profitable sugar economy declined, government efforts to deny citizenship rights to Haitian-Dominicans intensified. For over fifty years the Dominican government relied on

⁶⁰⁰ Vora, *Impossible Citizens*, 172.

⁶⁰¹ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 2, 2013.

⁶⁰² Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 17, 2013.

Haitian labor and encouraged migration, while at the same time espousing anti-Haitian nationalism. When Trujillo initiated these policies in the 1930s sugar was so important to the Dominican economy it undoubtedly appeared to many that the government would always be able to isolate the country's growing Haitian population on plantations. By 1990, the global economy had changed and this was no longer the case. There followed growing anxiety among right-wing nationalists and members of Balaguer's government about the nation's Haitian-Dominican population, estimated in the hundreds of thousands, who would try to leave plantations as jobs there disappeared.⁶⁰³

Residents of Monte Coca did begin to look for work elsewhere. During this period a free trade zone opened up in San Pedro de Macorís, the nearest major city about ten miles away and some residents commuted there for work. Others traveled to the nearby beach towns of Juan Dolio and Boca Chica, which hosted growing numbers of foreign tourists. Obtaining employment in a factory, or in the tourism sector, often required a *cédula*.⁶⁰⁴ Those without documentation were relegated to the growing informal economy, where regular employment was much more uncertain. By this point citizenship rights were not fully guaranteed by a birth certificate or *cédula*. While no president had actually managed to change the citizenship laws, in practice government offices changed how they responded to requests for documents. Even those with official birth certificates demonstrating that they were born in the Dominican Republic could be denied citizenship

⁶⁰³ Andre Corten, Isis Duarte, Consuelo M. Soto and Viviana Fridman, "Five Hundred Thousand Haitians in the Dominican Republic" *Latin American Perspectives* 86, no. 22 (1995): 94-110.

⁶⁰⁴ In 1999 the Director General of Migration wrote an article in one of the major national newspapers assuring readers that the government would never allow Haitian immigrants to work in tourism and the free trade zones. They were to be relegated to "undesirable" economic sectors. Gregory, *The Devil Behind the Mirror*, 182.

documents, or an official could refuse to recognize a *cédula* if they believed the person was of Haitian heritage.⁶⁰⁵

The right to citizenship was determined by a complex web of indicators that marked some as full citizens and some as “other.”⁶⁰⁶ Someone’s skin color was a major factor in signifying “Haitian-ness” to a Dominican public, but so was a person’s name, job, the way they spoke, the way they dressed, and their birthplace. Being from a *batey* could automatically throw into question a person’s identity. The fact that someone’s right to citizenship was always up for debate made it difficult for *batey* residents to adapt to the Dominican Republic’s changing economy. Steven Gregory writes “it was through the policing of citizenship—its enabling discourses, practices, and logics of verification—that differences tied to race, class, gender, and national origin were embodied and articulated as a system of exclusions that was the foundation of the social division of labor.”⁶⁰⁷ *Batey* residents were increasingly forced into the nation’s informal economy, and thus became an even more easily exploitable labor force.

Conclusion

On June 11, 1991 Joaquín Balaguer ordered the expulsion of all Haitian nationals under the age of 15 and over the age of 60 from the country. The decree came two days

⁶⁰⁵ Samuel Martinez, *Peripheral Migrants: Haitians and Dominican Republic Sugar Plantations* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 10.

⁶⁰⁶ While the statelessness crisis in the Dominican Republic stands apart, many nations in Latin America also have developed forms of uneven citizenship. James Holston writes about Brazil: “this formulation of citizenship uses social differences...of education, property, race, gender, and occupation to distribute different treatment to different categories of citizens. It thereby generates a gradation of rights among them, in which most rights are available only to particular kinds of citizens and exercised as privilege of particular social categories.” *Insurgent Citizenship: Disjunctions of Democracy and Modernity in Brazil* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 7.

⁶⁰⁷ Gregory, *The Devil Behind the Mirror*, 39.

after the U.S. Congress heard testimony about human rights violations in the sugar industry from activists recommending trade sanctions against the Dominican Republic. While the order technically only marked Haitian immigrants for deportation, in practice the police and military targeted people who they believed were Haitian, even if they had legal documentation of their Dominican citizenship.⁶⁰⁸ In response to deportation sweeps, some of which turned violent, many immigrants “self-deported” and returned to Haiti, and an estimated twenty to thirty thousand people were forced out of the country. This was the first mass expulsion of Haitians since the 1937 massacre.⁶⁰⁹

Much had changed in the Dominican Republic in the intervening half century. Sugar had increased in economic importance and fallen once again. Anti-Haitianism had become a key component of official state nationalism, and the country’s Haitian population had expanded. As the possibilities for paid work on sugar plantations decreased, and residents were still isolated there by state policies, they employed mass mobilizations and violence to express their moral outrage. Unable to maintain the informal bargains made with *batey* residents that had helped create a willing workforce, the CEA increasingly relied on the force of the Army and National Police to control workers. This led at times to shocking levels of oppression and coercion. As the sugar economy failed, the government of Joaquín Balaguer, once again in power, grew anxious about the large population of Haitian-Dominicans who could no longer be isolated on plantations through the use of violence alone. Officials no longer issued birth certificates

⁶⁰⁸ This even included Dominican citizens with one Dominican parent, and soldiers reportedly destroyed the *cédulas* of many of those they arrested. The widespread nature of these accusations seems to indicate that soldiers were under orders to remove anyone who seemed Haitian. Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, *Expulsions of Haitians and Dominico-Haitians from the Dominican Republic* (New York: Lawyers Committee for Human Rights), 8-14.

⁶⁰⁹ Martínez, *Peripheral Migrants*, 50-51.

to the children of parents who they assumed to be Haitian, and even refused documents to those with proof of their local birth if they “appeared” to be of Haitian descent.

During this period a statelessness crisis developed in the Dominican Republic, a result of policies that intended to keep Haitians in the country while never allowing them to become part of the nation. Increasing numbers of Haitian-Dominicans were left in legal limbo with no recognized nationality. In response, *batey* residents found ways to claim citizenship for themselves and their children without legal documentation, demanding recognition of their contributions to the Dominican Republic. In the years that followed, residents would maintain their right both to Dominican citizenship and to Haitian identity, even as periodic mass deportations continued to disrupt the lives of Haitian-Dominicans.

Epilogue

In 1998, after years of falling profits, Dominican president Leonel Fernández began the process of privatizing the *Consejo Estatal del Azucar*. According to the agreement reached, the state would continue to own the land and the *bateyes*, but would rent out the sugarcane fields to the highest bidder. Residents of the *bateyes* were not consulted about the privatization, and it is remembered as a time of great apprehension. That same year Hurricane George hit Monte Coca. Many homes were destroyed and power was cut off for nearly a year afterwards. The CEA did not consider it their responsibility to fix any of the buildings in *bateyes*, and much of the damage from Hurricane George is still visible in Monte Coca. Many abandoned their homes because they lacked the resources to repair them, and because there were no longer job opportunities on the plantation. Following privatization, residents of the *bateyes* were left in a strange limbo. While, the CEA still owned company land and housing, the homes of permanent residents were not included in contracts with private companies, thus tacitly recognizing people's rights to housing. However, residents did not receive any legal titles to their homes or the land their homes occupy. In addition, following the destruction of the state sugar company *batey* residents no longer had established avenues for petitioning the state, leaving many feeling abandoned. As one former cane cutter told me "our mother and father have died and we are left orphans without any strength."⁶¹⁰

After 1998 sugar production dropped dramatically to the point where the industry could not even keep up with local demand. Once a major sugar exporter, the Dominican

⁶¹⁰ Anonymous interview, by author, Monte Coca, April 16, 2013.

Republic began to import the commodity.⁶¹¹ Haitian immigrants continued to arrive in the Dominican Republic, escaping political instability and economic crises in Haiti. However, they increasingly settled in urban areas, where they worked in the informal economy, construction, and tourism.⁶¹² With sugar production completely stalled on many plantations, *batey* residents also relocated in search of work. The Haitian presence in the country thus seemed more visible to many Dominicans, especially to the urban middle and upper class, than it had been when immigrants and their families were isolated on sugar plantation.⁶¹³

The same year that the government began the process of privatization, human rights organizations filed a complaint with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights on behalf of Dilcia Yean and Violeta Bosico, two girls of Haitian descent who had been refused birth certificates by Dominican authorities. In 2005 the court ruled against the Dominican government, arguing that it had violated the human rights of Yean and Bosico and demanding that the Dominican Republic comply with its constitutional promise of birthright citizenship. The court ordered the government to create an accessible system of birth registration and ensure that nationality requirements were uniformly applied.⁶¹⁴ The Dominican government refused to recognize the court's decision, and in an effort to

⁶¹¹ David C. Brotherton and Luis Barrios, *Banished to the Homeland: Dominican Deportees and Their Stories of Exile* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 39.

⁶¹² Kiran Jayaram, "Capital Changes: Haitian Migrants in the Contemporary Dominican Republic," *Caribbean Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (2010): 31-54.

⁶¹³ Mark Padilla writes, "the accelerating dispersal of *batey* residents—many of whom are Haitian or Haitian-Dominican—has begun to rekindle the omnipresent Dominican prejudice against Haitians." *Caribbean Pleasure Industry: Tourism, Sexuality, and AIDS in the Dominican Republic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 39.

⁶¹⁴ Bridget Wooding, "Contesting Discrimination and Statelessness in the Dominican Republic" *Forced Migration Review* 32 (2009): 24.

prevent future legal challenges in 2010 changed the constitution to clarify that “those who reside illegally in Dominican territory” did not qualify for Dominican citizenship.⁶¹⁵

As the spaces that people of Haitian descent occupy in the country have changed, anxiety about the presence of Haitian immigrants in the nation has grown. Right-wing nationalists have drummed up renewed fears of a passive invasion, confirmed, in some Dominicans’ minds, by the new daily presence of Haitian immigrants in their lives. These perceptions of invasion have also been influenced by a series of economic and natural disasters in Haiti, including the 2010 earthquake, which have led to spikes in migration. During most of the twentieth century the Dominican government has attempted to limit Haitians’ right to mobility. Following the failure of the sugar economy, the state employed new tactics to do so. Unable to isolate people of Haitian descent on plantations as they had for decades, the government focused heavily on documentation, dramatically increasing efforts to ensure that the children of Haitian immigrants did not acquire Dominican citizenship.

Thus, geographies of exclusion in the Dominican Republic shifted during this period. Certain zones of the urban landscape and of tourist enclaves could be dangerous for those without documents. Steven Gregory writes, “the division of labor, hierarchically ranked according to social differences, was both constituted through and expressed by spatial practices of exclusion. Informal workers had a clear sense of this socioeconomic geography and adjusted their movement through space accordingly.”⁶¹⁶ During the heyday of sugar production, state forces granted Haitian immigrants provisional legality when

⁶¹⁵ Article 18, Constitución de la República Dominicana, proclamada el 26 de enero, *Gaceta Oficial* No. 10561, 2010.

⁶¹⁶ Steven Gregory, *The Devil Behind the Mirror: Globalization and Politics in the Dominican Republic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 57

they occupied sugar plantations and worked cutting cane. However, there were no such spaces for immigrants in the neo-liberal economy. When the police want to earn extra cash they conduct raids in neighborhoods considered Haitian, demanding bribes to secure the release of residents.⁶¹⁷ Even those with documentation can suffer police harassment and coercion if they appear Haitian, and can have their documents destroyed or not returned.⁶¹⁸ The result has been hierarchical claims to space: those considered to be Haitian have shifting claims to territory. All people who appear to be of Haitian descent can be considered an “illegal” presence in the Dominican Republic. Dominican birth, documentation, and even education and wealth can never completely ensure protection from state harassment.⁶¹⁹

On September 23, 2013 the Constitutional Tribunal of the Dominican Republic ruled on the case of Juliana Dequis Pierre. Pierre was born in 1984 to Haitian migrants, and in 2008, when she attempted to acquire her *cédula*, government officials confiscated her birth certificate and informed her that they could not issue her any documents because her last name was Haitian. After a lower court rejected Pierre’s appeal for the return of her birth certificate, the case eventually reached the Constitutional Tribunal, which ruled that Pierre was not a Dominican citizen because her parents were not in the country legally. The ruling applies to anyone born in the Dominican Republic to Haitian migrant workers after 1929 and could potentially impact hundreds of thousands of Dominicans.

⁶¹⁷ Kiran Jayaram, “Hitting the Books and Pounding the Pavement: Haitian Educational and Labor Migrants in the Dominican Republic.” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2014), 77.

⁶¹⁸ Lesley Bartlett, Kiran Jayam, and Gulin Bonhomme, “State literacies and inequality: Managing Haitian immigrant in the Dominican Republic,” *International Journal of Education Development* 31, no. 6 (2011): 591-93.

⁶¹⁹ For extensive examples see Jayaram, “Hitting the Books and Pounding the Pavement.”

In its decision, the Constitutional Tribunal acknowledges that Article eight of the 1929 Constitution established the right of *jus soli* citizenship. However, it emphasizes that the 1929 Constitution, and those since, excluded children born to “diplomats and those in transit.” The judges argue that a 1939 immigration law, which designates temporary laborers and their families as “non-immigrants,” proves that Haitian workers who entered the country to work on sugar plantations and their family members are considered “in transit” and that, on this basis, their children do not qualify for birthright citizenship. The 1939 law distinguished between “immigrant” and “non-immigrant” by explaining that “foreigners admitted as immigrants can reside indefinitely in the Republic [and] those non-immigrants will only be granted temporary admission.”⁶²⁰ The Constitutional Tribunal’s argument hinges on the claim that “temporary admission” is synonymous with “in transit.” The Tribunal writes of Dequis, “[her] birth certificate ... demonstrates that her father Mr. Blanco Dequis, declarant of the birth, was a *temporary laborer* of Haitian nationality, in other words, a *foreign citizen in transit*.”⁶²¹ Therefore, the judges conclude, children born to Haitian seasonal workers after 1929 are not considered Dominican citizens and should instead apply for Haitian citizenship. Following international backlash to the decision, the government created a “naturalization” plan. Haitian immigrants and people of Haitian descent were given until June 17, 2015 to register with the government and prove their claim to citizenship. In effect, the law required Dominican citizens to register as foreigners and then go through a

⁶²⁰ Ley de inmigración No. 95 del 14 de abril de 1939, Gaceta Oficial No. 5299.

⁶²¹ (Emphasis original) SENTENCIA TC/0168/13, Expediente núm. TC- 05-2012-0077 September 23, 2013, 68.

process of naturalization. Following the deadline, tens of thousands of people still remained stateless.⁶²²

The Dominican government has vigorously defended the legality of the court's decision. However, as this dissertation has demonstrated children of Haitian immigrants were legally considered citizens for most of the twentieth century, even by anti-Haitian government officials. Only when the sugar economy began to fail did the state pursue legal avenues to retroactively revoke the citizenship rights of hundreds of thousands of people. Throughout the twentieth century, state actors integrated anti-Haitian racism into economic policy by associating Haitian identity with certain types of labor. Anti-Haitian ideology originated as a political instrument to help Rafael Trujillo gain control over a decentralized nation suspicious of central state authority. However, Trujillo, and his successor Joaquín Balaguer, soon realized that anti-Haitianism also served as a powerful economic tool. Isolating Haitian immigrants on sugar plantations, and associating Haitian identity with sugar labor, created a cheap workforce that helped keep sugar profitable for decades. Yet, the internal contradiction inherent in the simultaneous promotion of anti-Haitian nationalism and increased Haitian immigration became clear to many government officials once the sugar economy began to fail. Haitians and people of Haitian descent could no longer reliably be segregated on sugar plantations, and anxiety about those with Haitian heritage who had a claim to Dominican citizenship grew. How the Dominican state attempted to control the space of its territory therefore changed understandings of citizenship. Because plantations were conceived of as denationalized, government officials believed that those born within *bateyes* should not be eligible for birthright

⁶²² Human Rights Watch, "We Are Dominican: Arbitrary Deprivation of Nationality in the Dominican Republic," *Human Rights Watch* June 30, 2015.

citizenship. For the next few decades, state officials attempted to find ways to align the laws of the country with their understandings of space and citizenship.

The association between Haitian identity and certain spaces continues to serve the goals of the economic elite by creating an easily exploitable labor force. Haitians and people of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic are, in the words of Bridget Wooding and Richard Moseley-Williams, “needed but unwanted.”⁶²³ Haitian immigrants are still an important part of the Dominican economy, especially in the booming industries of construction and tourism. Removing documentation has been a necessary step to assuage fears of a Haitian “passive invasion”, created, in part, by decades of state anti-Haitian rhetoric. Because the Haitian spaces of the country are more visible due to a changing economy, the state has been forced to search for other ways to prove to their constituencies that Haitian labor will not “contaminant” the Dominican Republic. Since people of Haitian descent no longer have any claim to citizenship, Dominicans can be convinced that this labor force is a temporary presence that does not endanger the nation.

However, this should not be taken as an indication that recent anti-Haitian policies are universally popular. Many Dominicans have spoken out against the decision and the naturalization plan, often despite threats to their personal safety. In addition, following the collapse of the sugar economy, Haitian-Dominican communities have found new ways to demand government attention. During the 1990s, Sonia Pierre, the child of Haitian immigrants who grew up in a *batey*, helped found the Movement of Dominican-Haitian Women (MUDHA). This organization led the way in vocally challenging the government’s policy of denying documentation to children of Haitian

⁶²³ Bridget Wooding and Richard Moseley-Williams, *Needed but Unwanted: Haitian Immigrants and Their Descendants in the Dominican Republic* (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 2004.)

parents, and prior to her death in 2011 Pierre was recognized internationally for her advocacy work. More recently, young people of Haitian descent have formed Reconoci.do, cleverly meaning both recognized in Spanish and serving as the organization's URL. Reconoci.do has proved savvy at utilizing the Internet and social media, along with large-scale public mobilizations, to demand recognition of their citizenship. By widely publicizing the impact of anti-Haitian policies on people of Haitian descent, these groups have found ways to induce international organizations and governments to put pressure on the Dominican state. Contemporary Haitian-Dominican movements not longer defend rights to provision plots and grazing land, but have developed new tools to demand recognition of their right to occupy other spaces, both physical and imaginary. By seeking the recognition of international organizations, protesting frequently in public spaces, and documenting the widespread existence of Haitian-Dominican identities through online tools, Haitian-Dominican organizations have asserted their right to both occupy the territory of the Dominican Republic, and to contribute to national narratives of identity.

During the final interview I recorded in Monte Coca, Diego Castro, an important informant and friend, told me

The *batey* is one house with many rooms. If something good happens it benefits all of us, if something bad happens it impacts all of us. We are a family, a community, a *batey*... We know who has [something to] eat, we know who has clothes [to wear], we know how [everyone] lives. This is a house with many rooms and because of that [our] fight is for the community, so we can achieve something good because the bad touches us all.⁶²⁴

The history of *bateyes* is undeniably one of oppression, coercion, racism, violence, and captivity. The actions of the Dominican state over the course of the twentieth century

⁶²⁴ Anonymous interview, with author, Monte Coca, April 23, 2013.

have created a contemporary human rights crisis, and there is no easy solution in sight. However, the history of Haitian-Dominican communities does not end there. In this dissertation I have traced the creative and diverse ways that plantation residents have responded to and resisted oppression. By making claims to space, they have found ways to insist that state and company officials participate in protecting rights communities deemed inalienable. By grounding these communities in Dominican territory they demanded recognition of their belonging in the nation, and asserted alternative understandings of birthright citizenship. Haitian-Dominican communities continue to find innovative ways to petition the Dominican state, now utilizing new forms of media to bring international pressure to bear upon the government. *Bateyes* may eventually become depopulated, the hard-won *conucos* and homes abandoned as people seek out economic opportunities elsewhere. Yet, their history of resistance continues, evolving to confront ever-changing challenges.

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Frontera Haitiana

Guarda Campestre

Prostitución

Repatriación

Asociación Dominicana de Productores de Azúcar

Consejo Estatal del Azúcar

Dirección General de Migración

Embajada Dominicana en Haití

Gobernación de San Pedro de Macorís

Gobernación del Seibo

Gobierno Militar

Inspección de Inmigración Barahona

Junta Central Electoral

Memoria Secretaría de Agricultura e Inmigración

Secretaría de Agricultura

Secretaría de Agricultura e Inmigración

Secretaría de Interior y Policía

National Archives and Records Administration (Washington D.C. and College Park, Maryland)

Record Group 59, General Records of the Department of State

Record Group 84, Records of the Foreign Service Post of the Department of State

Record Group 127, Records of the United States Marine Corps

City of Vancouver Archives (Vancouver, British Columbia)

Series S18 - Ozama sugar plantation and factory records

Personal Archive of Samuel Martínez

Personal field notes

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