

# The Drums Are Calling: Race, Nation, and the Complex History of Dominicans



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*“When the homeland speaks its Indigenous and African heart,  
it will have dignity and memory”*

(Marcos, 2001, p. 81).

## Introduction

Quisqueya, the Taíno word to mean *Mother of all Lands*, was the original name of the lush island in the Caribbean known today as Haiti and the Dominican Republic; an island later tainted by European colonizers who imported *el Fukú americanus*,<sup>1</sup> a curse that doomed and plagued Quisqueya and the Antilles (Díaz, 2007). While the island of Quisqueya suffered many oppressive, bloody, and superimposed divisions, both nations are intimately interwoven and warped by a history of destruction and survival. Together, the island became the first unique racial space in the Americas where Black, White, and Indigenous People met. Despite *el Fukú* and its venomous wrath, Quisqueya is a paradise, full of beauty, and “colorful cars, colorful houses, flowers everywhere... even the people are like a rainbow—every shade ever made” (Díaz, 2018, p. 13).

The central purpose of this chapter is threefold. One, we provide a critical look at how colonization and its *Fukú* allowed a minority of European colonizers to control the numerically larger group of Indigenous people in Quisqueya, engaging in the atrocious acts of genocide, slavery, land dispossession, and ultimately instilling a racist colonial ideology of White supremacy. Two, we describe some of the

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<sup>1</sup>An ancient belief that is prevalent among Dominicans about the island being cursed by the arrival of the Europeans which can help explain many of the tragedies experienced by its Native people.

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realities and implications of this history when considering the role of skin color, phenotype, *mestizaje* (an ideology whereby everyone of Latinx<sup>2</sup> descent is deemed to be of mixed race), and nationhood on the present lives of Dominicans. Three, we illustrate the relentless resilience and resistance that Dominicans have displayed throughout history, including the ways they continue surviving against all odds in the United States. An important element of this survival includes Dominicans' recently growing celebration of the epiphany that the *Mother of all Lands* (i.e., Quisqueya) connects Dominicans to Africa; importantly, a growing number of Dominicans are continually seeking *The Motherland's* historical wisdom: all its joyful, beautiful, magnificent, and unstoppable Blackness.

## Dominican History: A Saga of Resistance and Survival

*“The future of the nation must be found by looking toward the past, toward those who were the first inhabitants, to those who first had wisdom, who first made us” (Marcos, 2001, p. 84).*

In pre-Columbian history, the Dominican Republic was occupied by peaceful, seafaring Indigenous populations known as the Caribs and Taínos with a strong legacy of hard work, a zest for life, and deep nautical knowledge. However, the history of the Indigenous people of the Caribbean and the islands they occupied were forever changed with the arrival of the Europeans who brought diseases, destruction, and racism to what they called the “New World” (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017; Garcia-Martínez, 2010, Livi-Bacci, 2008). The following sections describe the multiple unwelcomed invasions that took place in the Dominican Republic throughout history. We begin with pre- and post-Columbian Dominican history, followed by several US invasions and “political interventions” which undoubtedly formed the storm that propelled the migration of Dominicans to the United States and Europe.

### *The Calm Before the Thunder: Pre-Columbian Dominican History*

Before the arrival of the Spaniards, the islands in the Caribbean were home to approximately 5–13 million ethnically diverse and culturally rich Indigenous groups including the Ciboney, the Taínos, and the Caribs (Beckles & Shepherd, 2004; Roorda, Derby & Gonzalez, 2014). These fascinating and intriguing civilizations shaped the culture of today's Caribbean people, including those of Dominican descent (Beckles & Shepherd, 2004). Anthropological evidence suggests humans first lived in what is known today as the Dominican Republic beginning around

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<sup>2</sup>To include and explicitly center the broad range of gender identities present among individuals of Latin American descent, the term Latinx is used throughout this chapter.

approximately 4000 BC, when the Casimiroid People, who later developed into the Ciboney culture, arrived at the island from the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico (Roorda et al., 2014). Around 250 A.D., another group of Indigenous people known as the Taínos arrived in the Dominican Republic from Venezuela (Roorda et al., 2014). Today, most historians agree that the pillars of Caribbean culture are rooted in the combination of three different Indigenous groups, including the Ciboney, Taínos, and Caribs (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017; Beckles & Shepherd, 2004).

The Indigenous groups of the Caribbean were not all the same. To illustrate, the Ciboney had a simple social organization that did not use agriculture or farming and instead relied heavily on hunting, fishing, and gathering (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017; Beckles & Shepherd, 2004). Conversely, the Taínos had a more complex civilization which included innovative systems of agriculture and social organization. The Caribs (also known as the *Kalinago*), speakers of the Caribbean language, were known for being skilled warriors and seafarers (Rouse, 1992). Of these three cultural groups, the Taínos were the largest, most complex, and most studied by historians and archaeologists (Beckles & Shepherd, 2004). Although each of these three ethnic groups were different, they have all been described as ingenious, hard-working, and joyful people, characteristics that are alive today and can be observed in their Dominican descendants (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017). Unfortunately, the arrival of the colonizers was an infringement upon and the near-destruction of this complex and diverse civilization.

### ***The Encroachment and Looting of Quisqueya by the Spaniards***

An unfortunate reality of the Dominican Republic is that it has the painstaking distinction of being the first European colony established in the Americas by the Spaniards. According to historians, Christopher Columbus first arrived on the island in 1492. In his endless arrogance, Columbus changed the island's original Indigenous name from *Quisqueya* to *Hispaniola*, a word that connotes and means little Spain. Four years later in 1496, Columbus' younger brother, Diego Columbus, established a settlement in Santo Domingo. The encroachment of Quisqueya by the Spaniards, along with their looting of the natural resources, devastated the island and its Indigenous inhabitants. For instance, the Indigenous people of Quisqueya became victims to the Spaniards' immoral sense of racial superiority and greed, which led to their mass murder and the destruction of Indigenous cultures (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017). Many other Indigenous people in Quisqueya died after contracting viruses from the Spaniards (e.g., chicken pox, small pox) for which they had no immunity (Roorda et al., 2014). In 1697, the Spaniards lost the western half of the island to the French. As a result, Quisqueya was divided into two separate colonies with the western part of the island constituting French Haiti and the eastern portion representing Spanish Santo Domingo. Until 1821, the eastern part of the island remained in the possession of Spain until the political leader, Jose Nuñez de Caceres y Albor, best known for leading the independence movement against Spain,

proclaimed the eastern portion of Quisqueya an independent state. This was Spanish Santo Domingo's first independence. However, independence was short-lived, as 2 months later the president of Haiti, Jean-Pierre Boyer, invaded Santo Domingo with the goal of uniting the island and fostering racial equity and abolishing slavery across the island (Ricourt, 2016). Consequently, the two halves of Hispaniola were reunited from 1822 to 1844 with Santo Domingo becoming part of the *First Black Nation* in the western hemisphere known as the Republic of Haiti (Ricourt, 2016). Boyer ruled French-speaking Haiti, and governed Spanish-speaking Santo Domingo as a conquered province until 1843, when Boyer was overthrown in a revolution (Ricourt, 2016). Santo Domingo officially proclaimed its second independence from Haiti in 1844. Unfortunately, the Dominican Republic experienced many other forms of invasions and control in the subsequent decades.

### ***Not Once but Twice: The Invasions of the Dominican Republic by the United States***

The United States has a long history of engaging in imperialistic actions towards Latin American countries to take advantage of their natural resources as well as to control and influence their political process (e.g., the Platt Amendment in Cuba, Operation Condor in Argentina, multiple invasions of Nicaragua, operation PBSUCCESS in Guatemala, CIA assistance, organization, training and funding of death squad activity in El Salvador). This imperialistic pattern can be readily observed in the Dominican Republic, an independent country which the United States has invaded and occupied twice. Through its multiple invasions and interventions, the United States has profoundly affected the island's history, economic stability, and immigration patterns of Dominicans.

One of the first of many US interventions in the Dominican Republic took place during the last years of Ulises Hilarion Heureaux Leibert's third and last presidency (1889–1899). During this time, the Dominican Republic's foreign debt, primarily owed to European nations, was more than \$32 million. The debt conveniently came under the control of a firm of New York investors named the *Santo Domingo Improvement Company* (SDIC). The investments made by SDIC increased the political power of the United States over the island. Consequently, the investment served as the pretext for the US government to take control of the administration of Dominican customs in 1905 (Roorda et al., 2014). The United States proclaimed that its goal in intervening was to "help" the Dominican Republic pay off its debt to foreign creditors (Roorda et al., 2014). However, in 1916, the United States' imperialistic motives became more apparent when they invaded the Dominican Republic. Two main reasons purportedly propelled the invasion. The first involved the United States' concern that the island could be used as a military base by Germany to attack

the mainland. Second, the US government intended to “not only restore order to the nation’s finances but also create the conditions necessary for political stability” (Peguero, 2004, p. 28). To this end, the United States dissolved the Dominican armed forces and transformed them into the Dominican Constabulary Guard (DCG) which was organized and led by a US citizen, selected by the US government, and appointed by the president of the Dominican Republic. The DCG acted as the defense agency and was the predecessor of the Dominican National Police (DNP).

One of the individuals who joined the DCG was Rafael Leonidas Trujillo, nicknamed “*el jefe*” [the boss] who was trained by U.S. Marines in 1918. Moreover, despite opposition from the island, the US armed forces took control of the Dominican Republic’s government and heavily meddled and influenced their presidential elections (Peguero, 2004, p. 28). The overall goal of the US government was to ensure that only presidential candidates who supported the occupation would be elected. In 1922, the United States and the Dominican Republic came to an agreement, which led to the removal of troops from the island 2 years later in 1924. However, it was not until 1941 that the Dominican Republic regained its autonomy and authority over its custom revenues. In 1927, Rafael Leonidas Trujillo was promoted to commander in chief of the National Army and shortly thereafter, he took full control of the Dominican Republic (in 1930) beginning a period known as *El Trujillato*, infamously known as one of the darkest chapters in Dominican history (Peguero, 2004).

Trujillo became one of the most ruthless dictators in the history of Latin America. He ruled the Dominican people by fear and engaged in countless heinous human rights violations, including the murder of thousands of civilians, a figure believed to be over 60,000 homicides (Lawler & Yee, 2005; Peguero, 2004). Trujillo is also known for the horrific and racially motivated massacre of 20,000 Haitians (Peguero, 2004). He remained in power from 1930 until 1961, when he was killed by a group of conspirators aided by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (Peguero, 2004). Following Trujillo’s death, the former vice president, Joaquin Antonio Balaguer, took nominal power of the island while the decision-making power remained under the control of the military (Peguero, 2004; Roorda et al., 2014). On December of 1962, Juan Emilio Bosch was elected president of the Dominican Republic; however, the United States disapproved of Bosch’s political ideologies and worried that he might turn the island towards communism (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017; Lawler & Yee, 2005). Bosch’s election led to civil unrest, and in 1963, a military coup supported by the US government appointed a military committee (Peguero, 2004; Roorda et al., 2014). Two years later, on April 28th, 1965, the United States invaded the Dominican Republic for the second time (Peguero, 2004). During this invasion, 42,000 troops arrived on the island, leading to the death of over 3,000 Dominicans (Peguero, 2004; Roorda et al., 2014). Following this invasion, the United States supported Joaquin Balaguer and quickly appointed him as president of the Dominican Republic, leading to another era of dictatorship that lasted for 28 years (Peguero, 2004).

## The Complicated Realities of Skin Color, Mestizaje, Nation, and Dominican History

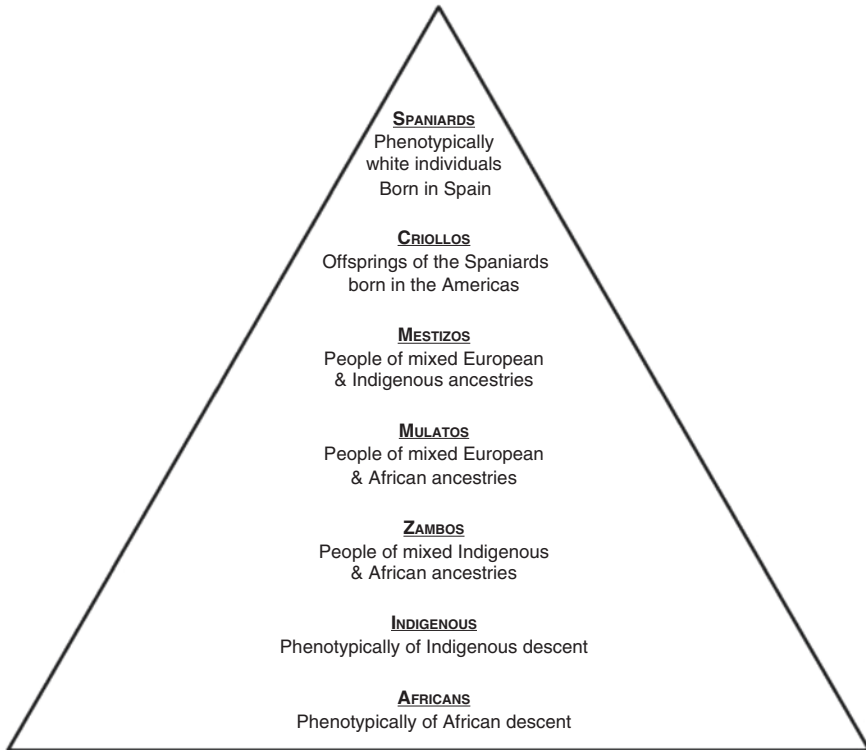
*“Every time someone gives you a formula for what you should be and what you should do, you should know, they’re giving you a pair of handcuffs” (Díaz, 2016, para. 14).*

Race, the fictitious category created by people to group individuals according to their shared phenotypical characteristics, has real social, political, and economic consequences for individuals and groups (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017; Helms & Cook, 1999; Smedley & Smedley, 2005). The concept of race has been strategically used to uplift whiteness and oppress those who are not socially categorized as White. Hence, to fully comprehend the role of race on the lives of Dominicans requires an understanding of how skin color, phenotype, nation, and history all intersect to uplift whiteness within these spaces.

### *History*

Several historical events and ideologies help frame how Dominicans make sense of race. To illustrate, the exploitation experienced by Indigenous groups on the island, coupled with the diseases imported from Europe to the Dominican Republic, led to the decimation of the Taínos and Caribs (Casas Arzu, 2009; Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2014). These oppressive realities, which were replicated in other Latin American countries, coupled with the need for free labor and Europeans ideologies about racial superiority, gave rise to the *Transatlantic Slave Trade* where more than ten million African people were kidnapped, tortured, and transplanted into the Americas (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2014). Like Native American populations, African enslaved people experienced grueling work and inhumane treatment that contributed to high rates of mortality (Andrews, 2004; Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2014).

The colonial period gave rise to three racial groups in Latin America including African, Indigenous, and European (Gates, 2011). Consequently, a caste structure based on skin color and phenotypical characteristics (see Fig. 1) was established during the colonial period in Latin America (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017; Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2014). Spaniards and their descendants were strategically placed on the top of the system, allowing them access to political, social, and economic control (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2014; Organista, 2007). Individuals and groups of Indigenous and African descent were at the bottom of the system with little to no freedom nor power and control over their existence. During the early 1800s, the “Spaniards composed about a quarter of the population and Africans a fifth, with the remainder a rapidly increasing racial blend of predominantly Indigenous and Spanish roots” (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2014, p. 7).



**Fig. 1** *Latin American Social Caste Pyramid (LASCP)*. Adapted from “Skin-Color Prejudice and Within Group Racial Discrimination: Historical and Current Impact on Latino/a populations” by N.Y. Chavez-Dueñas, H.Y. Adames, & K.C. Organista in *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 36(1), 3–26. Reprinted with permission. Note. Racial mix determined hierarchy, social status, and economic privileges

### ***Skin Color, Phenotype, and Nation***

The blending of Indigenous, Africans, and European people is referred to as *mestizaje*, a term used to connote that all individuals of Latinx descent are racially mixed (Adames et al., 2016). In general, *Mestizaje Racial Ideologies* (MRIs) “place individuals from the entire color spectrum, from the darkest Indigenous/African type to the lightest European type, into one racial category, deemphasizing the impact of skin color and phenotype on the lives of Latinxs” (Adames et al., 2016, p. 48). Hence, Latinxs have historically been socialized to not identify themselves racially despite being perceived and treated as such. As a result, a skin color hierarchy, leading to uplifting whiteness, is one of the most consequential implications of MRIs (Adames et al., 2016).

While Dominicans come from a deep history of traditions that trace their roots to the three predominant racial groups (i.e., Indigenous, Black, and White), they are socialized to reject their African roots and their Blackness (Sagás, 2000; Torres-Saillant, 2010). For instance, despite their historical and oftentimes visible Blackness, when asked about their racial group membership, most Dominicans will identify as White or mixed Indian (Indigenous) and White (Ricourt, 2016). To understand this racial myopic stance and anti-Blackness view that a majority Dominicans hold about *Dominicanidad* requires us to briefly review the conflict between the French and the Spaniards. Historians posit that this conflict began when Spain was defending Catholicism during the advent of Protestantism (see Peña Batlle, 1988 for more details). Hence, the French and Spaniards imported their toxic rivalry, greed, and intolerance of differences to the island, creating an artificial border with lasting atrocious consequences. Ricourt (2016, p. 24) lists several historical events that resulted from the long-lasting conflict between the French and the Spaniards including: (1) Haiti's independence and their struggle to remain a free Black nation; (2) Haitian President Jean Prierre Boyer's temporary unification of the island (when Haiti invaded and occupied the Dominican Republic); (3) the creation of the Dominican Republic as an independent nation where the Dominican elites and ruling power advanced anti-Blackness rhetoric and practices; (4) the mass murder of Haitians in 1937, also known as the *Hispaniola Holocaust*; (5) the unparadonable conditions of Haitian immigrants working in the Dominican Republic; and (6) creation of distinct cultural boundaries and languages between the two colonized nations.

The toxic effect of the artificial border that split the island into two countries continues to reverberate today. The 2010 catastrophic 7.0 Mw magnitude earthquake in Haiti that killed more than 300,000 people forced many Haitians to immigrate to the Dominican Republic, causing a refugee crisis (Pallardy, 2010). Some scholars posit that the 2013 law passed by the Dominican Constitutional Court, stating that anyone born in the country after 1929 will no longer be considered a Dominican Citizen, was motivated by the refugee crisis (Phillip, 2015). Consequently, the new law, which was retroactively applied, disproportionately impacts Dominicans of Haitian descent. Hence, for the past few years, the Dominican government has engaged in several shameful raids to round-up undocumented Haitians and have continued to racially profile anyone with dark skin who is perceived to be Haitian and those who have difficulties phonetically pronouncing the letter "r" (Phillip, 2015). In an interview with CNN, Raquel Aristilde de Valdez, a bicultural Dominican Haitian woman, describes the devastating impact that the new law has on the lives of dark skinned Dominicans. She states, "My skin color, my race, my physical features don't say I am Dominican" (Castillo, 2016 para. 18). Raquel further describes that her birth certificate is the only proof she has of being a Dominican citizen. Raquel's experiences parallel the realities that many Dominicans experience when they immigrate to the United States where their experiences are shaped by racism, nativism, xenophobia, and shameful criminalizing policies that target Latinx immigrants (Chavez-Dueñas et al., [in press](#)).



## Dominicans in the United States

*“You look at this country and you look at this world, and you need to understand it in complex ways” (Díaz, 2015, para. 1).*

### *The Making of the Migratory Dominican Experience*

**Three waves** Prior to Trujillo’s dictatorial regime, also known as *El Trujillato*, few Dominicans immigrated to the United States. Upper class individuals made up a large percentage of Dominicans that left the country to travel and live abroad. During *El Trujillato*, few Dominicans were allowed to leave the country due to fear of anti-Trujillista Dominicans organizing in other countries to overthrow the regime (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017; Torres-Saillant & Hernandez, 1998). Hence, the political consequences of the economic and political turmoil following *El Trujillato* propelled the first wave of Dominicans, which was comprised mainly of pro-Trujillo followers who left the country due to concerns related to their safety and security. The civil unrest of 1965, when the island was re-occupied by the United States for fear of the Dominican government’s alleged communist ideologies, fueled the second wave of Dominican immigrants (Lawler & Yee, 2005). The third large wave took place following the Dominican economic crisis of the 1980s and 1990s when billions of dollars were embezzled by the Banco Intercontinental (Graziano, 2006).

The three waves contributed to the increase in the Dominican immigrant population of the United States. In fact, after *El Trujillato* the number of Dominican immigrants grew from approximately 10,000 in 1960s to 350,000 in 1990 and 879,000 in 2010 (Nwosu & Batalova, 2014). By 2012, approximately 960,000 Dominican immigrants lived in the United States, approximately 2% of the total US foreign-born population of 40.8 million (Nwosu & Batalova, 2014).

Currently, the percentage of Dominicans in the United States is rapidly growing. In fact, the number of Dominicans in the United States has more than tripled since 1990 from half a million to approximately 1.8 million (López, 2015). Dominicans account for 3.3% of the total U.S. Latinx population, making them the fifth-largest Latinx group in the United States (López, 2015). Over half of Dominicans (55%) in the United States are foreign born, a significantly higher percentage compared to the general Latinx population (35%) and the total US population (López, 2015). Approximately 80% of Dominicans in the United States are concentrated in the northeast with about 47% residing in New York City and another large percentage residing in Lawrence, Massachusetts (Nwosu & Batalova, 2014).

**Undocumented Dominican immigrants** In 2004, approximately 45% of Dominicans were US citizens, with 55% being immigrants and 13–15% being undocumented immigrants (Grieco, 2004). However, according to the Migration Policy Institute, Dominicans account for only 1% (approximately 112,000) of the

11 million unauthorized immigrants in the United States (Zong & Batalova, 2018). Similarly, the number of Dominicans who are recipients of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program is minuscule. For instance, during the 2012 and 2014 period, roughly 2,670 DACA-eligible unauthorized youth of Dominican descent applied for the program (Zong & Batalova, 2018). In general, most immigrants from the Dominican Republic gained their permanent legal residence through a family reunification process with a smaller number of immigrants first arriving to the United States with a work visa (Nwosu & Batalova, 2014).

Growing social, economic, and political turbulence in the Dominican Republic has propelled individuals with less resources and financial need to migrate out of the country without documentation. In the 1990s, thousands of Dominicans used *yolas* [wooden boats] to migrate to Puerto Rico on a treacherous journey across a 60- to 90-mile stretch of sea that separates both islands (Graziano, 2013). The journey was deadly for hundreds of Dominicans seeking access to the United States. Given Puerto Rico's political status as a commonwealth of the United States, such a perilous journey has become the only viable option of survival for a segment of Dominicans. While many undocumented Dominican immigrants make Puerto Rico their home, others only stay temporarily on the island before continuing their journey to the US mainland (Graziano, 2013). Once Dominican immigrants make it to Puerto Rico, entering the United States becomes easier since travel from the island is similar to crossing from one state line to another; in other words, passports or visas are not required.

### *Challenges Encountered*

The history of the Dominican Republic with the United States is long, contentious, and complicated by power dynamics. In many ways, these intense, arduous, and oppressive patterns continue to be reenacted today, creating a myriad of challenges for Dominicans in the States. The Dominican saying, *no es facil en los paises* [it is not easy in the states], captures the difficulties related to systemic oppression that many Dominicans face as Immigrants of Color (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017, p. 60). Similar to other Immigrants of Color, the struggles faced by many Dominicans are often rooted in systems of power and oppression (Adames et al., 2018).

While Dominicans share similar systemic obstacles with other Latinx groups in the United States, they also experience several unique vulnerabilities. For instance, the percentage of Dominicans who live in poverty is higher (28%) compared to other U.S. Latinxs (25%) and the general US population (16%; López, 2015). To illustrate, the 2013 median annual individual earnings for Dominicans was \$20,000, a figure lower when compared to all U.S. Latinxs (\$22,000) and the general population (\$30,000; López, 2015). The cost of poverty for Dominicans is reflected in the low rates of homeownership (24%) and high uninsured health rates (79%). Despite the financial hardship faced by most Dominicans in the United States, they continue to subsidize a portion of the Dominican Republic's economy through the billions of dollars in remittances that family members receive from relatives abroad (Graziano, 2013).

With regard to education, Dominicans have higher levels of college education when compared to other U.S. Latinxs (17% vs. 14%, respectively). However, their level of education is significantly lower than the general US population (30%; López, 2015). Nonetheless, nearly half of Dominicans are bilingual (43%) and about half are Spanish-dominant (48%). Interestingly, most Dominicans (88%) speak Spanish at home, a figure that is significantly higher compared to other Latinxs (73%) residing in the United States (López, 2015). Concerning health insurance, approximately 2 in 10 Dominicans (21%) are uninsured, a figure that is slightly lower when compared to other Latinxs (29%) but higher when compared to the general US population (15%; López, 2015). Lastly, homeownership rate is lower when compared to other Latinxs (24% vs. 45%, respectively) and the general US population (64%; López, 2015). Despite the many challenges that Dominicans have faced throughout history, their unwavering hope and perseverance persist.

## Dominicans Transforming a History of Colonization into Hope for the Future

*“Nothing more exhilarating ...than saving yourself by the simple act of waking” (Díaz, 2016, para. 28).*

Despite their small numbers, people of Dominican descent have made significant contributions to the United States. Dominicans enrich the US culture through the beauty and complexity of their art, their service and leadership in politics, their invaluable contributions to the sciences, and their visibility in major league baseball (e.g., Boston Red Sox designated hitter, David Américo Ortiz a.k.a. “Big Papi” and New York Yankees, shortstop and third baseman, Alexander E. Rodriguez a.k.a. “A-Rod,” who are both philanthropists). Table 1 provides a list of selected prominent Dominicans who have left their mark on the United States.

Throughout their history, people of Dominican descent have demonstrated their resilience and ability to thrive despite their colonization, the invasion of their homeland, and their experiences of racism and xenophobia in the United States. Dominicans exemplify all seven psychological strengths of Latinxs as described by Adames & Chavez-Dueñas (2017) which include (1) *determination*, (2) *adaptability*, (3) *esperanza*, (4) *strong work ethic*, (5) *connectedness to others*, (6) *collective emotional expression*, and (7) *resistance*. For instance, *determination* is shown in the endless drive and courage that it takes for many Dominicans to leave their country and migrate to the United States. Their immigration story also demonstrates a profound sense of *esperanza* that in a foreign land, they will be able to give their children the opportunities (e.g., formal education, economic stability) that they did not have for themselves in the Dominican Republic. They display the strength of *adaptability* by learning how to navigate a climate that is vastly different from the Caribbean, oftentimes not knowing the language and culture. Finally, their love and respect for merengue, bachata, and perico ripiao [oldest style of merengue] allows

**Table 1** Exemplars of Prominent Dominicans in the Sciences, Arts, and Politics

Field	Name	Recognition
Sciences	<i>Elsa Gomez</i>	First Latina woman to serve as President of a major public university in the United States; served at Kean University from 1989 to 1994.
	<i>Shirley M. Collado</i>	Psychologist appointed President of Ithaca College in 2017.
	<i>Aida Teresa Mencia Ripley</i>	Social scientist and clinical psychologist who served as chairperson of the Social and Academic Inclusion for People with Disabilities and Special Education Needs in UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization).
	<i>Victor A. Carreño</i>	Aerospace Engineer and Aerospace Technologist of NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration). He also holds the patent for Single Frequency Multitransmitter Telemetry System.
Arts	<i>Juan Manuel Taveras Rodriguez</i>	Radiologist referred as the “Father” of the Medical Specialty of Neuroradiology. He is also a founder of the American Society of Neuroradiology and founding editor of the society’s journal.
	<i>Junot Díaz</i>	AfroLatino Literary icon, author, and recipient of the Pulitzer Prize and winner of the 2012 MacArthur “Genius Grant” for the novel, <i>The Brief and Wonderous Life of Oscar Wao</i> .
	<i>Julia Alvarez</i>	World renowned scholar, novelist, and poet who authored (1) <i>In the Times of the Butterflies</i> and (2) <i>How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents</i> .
	<i>Clara Ledesma</i>	Prominent artist considered the founder of the modernist school of Dominican painting and one of the first Latina woman to join the National School of Fine Arts.
	<i>Oscar de la Renta</i>	Internationally renowned fashion designer.
Politics	<i>Adriano de Jesus Espadillat Rodriguez</i>	U.S. Representative for New York’s 13th Congressional District. He is also the first formerly undocumented immigrant to serve in the U.S. Congress.
	<i>Marcos A. Devers</i>	First Dominican American elected as a Mayor of a US city (Lawrence, Massachusetts) in 2001 and Member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 2010.
	<i>Thomas E. Perez</i>	Accomplished US politician who serves as the first Latino in history elected as chairman of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) in 2017.
	<i>Rolando T. Acosta</i>	First Dominican American elected as New York County Supreme Court Judge in 2002.

the Dominican community to engage in *collective emotional expression* whereby their rage, sadness, and joy are expressed through rhythm and dance.

As the number of Dominican families continues to grow in the United States, their warmth, zest for life, and *sazón* [flavor] will likely continue to shape and color the future of this great country. Nonetheless, the destiny of this beautiful community

will be heavily impacted by their ability to recognize, see, and connect or reconnect with the wisdom of their African and Indigenous Ancestors. In the mid-1960s, the prevailing Dominican narrative and ideology, which was devoted to its European Spanish roots at the expense of silencing and making invisible its diverse racial roots and complicated history, began to crack (Ricourt, 2016). It is through the dismantling and the cracks in the Dominican colonized hegemony that light can filter through so that a new movement, seeking to recover and celebrate African and Indigenous culture, can be born. The affirmation of Blackness was evident in the new political parties that surfaced during the post Trujillato era. For instance, prominent political figures such as Maximiliano Gómez (affectionately called “El Moreno”) one of the founders of the *Dominican Popular Movement* and José Francisco Peña Gómez (Dominican of Haitian descent), a three-time candidate for president of the Dominican Republic and former Mayor of Santo Domingo, promoted an ideology where Blackness was centered. Today, there is a new generation of Dominicans in the United States who are, once again basking in the light of this movement by unapologetically celebrating their Black roots. These *Dominican Ambassadors* of African pride are educating the United States and Latinx communities on what it means to be both Black and Latinx. Celebrities such as Amara La Negra, Belcalis Almanzar (a.k.a., Cardi B), Maluca Mala, and Juan Carlos Ozuna Rosado (a.k.a., Ozuna) have taken the lead in this new movement. There is also a small but growing number of scholars in the social sciences (e.g., Hector Y. Adames, Beverly Araújo Dawson, Nayeli Y. Chavez-Dueñas, Edward Codina, Lillian Comas-Díaz, Lorgia García-Peña, Frank Montalvo, Milagros Ricourt) who are beginning to unpack the negative impact of colorism on Latinxs while researching and highlighting the importance of reconnecting this community with its African and Indigenous roots. Together, these scholars build on the work done at the City University of New York (CUNY) Dominican Studies Institute (DSI). CUNY-DSI was founded in 1992 and is the first university-based research institute solely devoted to the study of people of Dominican descent in the United States (CUNY, n.d.).

## La Lucha Sigue

While a growing number of Dominicans are claiming, embracing, and celebrating their Black and Indigenous roots, the struggle for the Dominican Republic and its people is to find antidotes to the poison of White supremacy. It is in this spirit that Dominicans can continue to find creative ways to liberate themselves from *el Fukú americanus* and dance to the healing beats of merengue and bachata with its Indigenous and African musical elements. “The drums have called, and in the land’s voices our pain and our history have spoken” (Marcos, 2001, p. 49). Some Dominicans may be sleeping and dreaming of their ancient past but the sound of the drums will now wake up the collective so that together we find the wisdom, the strength, and the love to transform despair into hope (Fig. 1).

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