

Introduction

There are other aspects of the question that require the attention of the government, *the existence on the border of a population, now numerous, descendants of those [Haitian] immigrants who are generally known by the name RAYANOS*. The task of determining the true nationality of these rayanos is a very difficult undertaking, given that the majority do not have civil documents. They live far from the urban centers, and they have the inveterate custom of eluding the requirements of the law that could give them their documents. Are they Dominicans? Born in our territory and from a constitutional point of view, yes, **THEY ARE DOMINICANS**, independent of their parents' condition of illegal foreign residents; but in reality they are and they consider themselves Haitians with all of their characteristics, language, habits, and customs. None, neither these people of doubtful nationality, nor their parents of established or easily established juridical nationality, nor the rest of those established in the interior of the Republic and who form the largest nucleus or colony of foreigners in our country, fulfill the requirements of the immigration law, since the small number of those who possess the entry permit or immigration license have obtained it through the effort and expense of the sugar companies who employ them in their agricultural labors ...¹

– Reynaldo Valdez, Director of Immigration, *Listín Diario*,
December 1, 1937

¹ Reynaldo Valdez, Director General de Inmigración, “Consideraciones sobre La inmigración haitiana,” *Listín Diario* (Santo Domingo), December 14, 1937, 1 (all emphases in original). “Hay otro aspectos de la cuestión que reclama la atención del Poder Público *la existencia en la frontera de una población ya numerosa, descendiente de esos inmigrantes que se denomina con el nombre genérico de RAYANOS*. Son Dominicanos? Nacidos en nuestro territorio y bajo el punto de vista constitucional si SON DOMINICANOS. La tarea de determinar la verdadera nacionalidad de estos

In December 1937, three months after his government had orchestrated the killing of an estimated 20,000 ethnically Haitian civilians,² the Dominican Director of Immigration, Reynaldo Valdez, who supervised the government's campaign against ethnic Haitians from 1937 to 1939, published an especially important article regarding the problem of ethnic Haitians living in Dominican territory. By referring to *rayanos*, or

rayanos es empresa harto difícil pues la mayoría carece de estado civil. Viven lejos de los centros urbanos y tienen la inveterada costumbre de eludir el cumplimiento de la ley que pueda conferirles tal estado Independiente de la condición de extranjeros con residencia ilegal de sus padres; pero de hecho son y se tienen por haitianos con todos sus características, idioma, usos, y costumbres. Ninguno ni estos de nacionalidad dudosa, ni sus padres de nacionalidad jurídicamente establecida o fácil de establecer, ni los demás radicados en el interior de la República y que forman el mayor núcleo o colonia extranjera en nuestro país, cumplen con la prescripciones de la Ley de inmigración, pues el corto número amparado con permiso de entrada o de permanencia, lo ha obtenido a diligencia solicitud y costo de las empresas azucareras que los emplean en sus labores agrícolas." See also Julián Díaz Valdepires, "Alrededor de la cuestión haitiana," *Listín Diario* (Santo Domingo), December 10, 1937, 1.

² Many scholarly estimates for deaths at the height of the massacres in the weeks from late September through November 1937 cluster near the round numbers of 15,000 or 20,000. But this figure does not take into account ongoing killing in late 1937, 1938, 1939, and the 1940s. My understanding of the 1937 Genocide has led me to entertain a higher potential number of ethnic Haitian victims on the basis of postmassacre killings and deaths as well as deaths on Haitian soil from famine, injury, and despair. Also, figures and estimates based on the testimonies of survivors taken down in Haiti could not accurately account for families who did not have a single relative survive to tell their story. It is also difficult to imagine that Haitian officials, notaries, and clergy could have possibly interviewed every single refugee who survived and settled in the Haitian border. Survivors generally insist that many refugees were killed in the aftermath, and that the number of victims of the massacre itself was horrifically vast.

A definitive death toll is impossible to know for reasons that I explore throughout this book. No less an authority than Joaquín Balaguer, a major culprit and top functionary under Trujillo, who would have had no interest in exaggerating the body count, published an estimate of 17,000. Joaquín Balaguer, *La palabra encadenada* (Santo Domingo: Taller, 1985), 300. The varying estimates have become one more of history's macabre numbers games, with figures ranging from 4,000 to 40,000. Richard Turits points out that at Dajabón alone, an estimated ethnic Haitian population of 30,000 was reduced to nearly zero, and an estimate of the numbers of refugees who reached Haitian territory ranged from six to ten thousand. The numbers of ethnic Haitians that died in the 1937 Genocide is a contested terrain. Dominican historian Bernardo Vega argues that early observers such as Élie Lescot and Quentin Reynolds all advanced inflated figures, and that subsequent scholars have generally exaggerated the death toll. His study of primary accounts and the evolving range of scholarly estimates over the years leads him to advance an estimate of four to six thousand victims. This extremely low estimate minimizes the catastrophic event and does not give sufficient consideration to the reports compiled in 1937 by Haitian officials and clergy such as Father Émile Robert. Haitian historians including Suzy Castor and Jean-Price Mars estimate twelve thousand victims or more. Vega's calculations are based on population figures drawn from the 1920 census conducted by the US military as

border-dwelling people of Haitian descent, Valdez characterized an entire class of people as a challenge to the Trujillo regime's vision of mono-ethnic national unity.³ Written shortly after the 1937 Massacre, Valdez's article conceals the fact that any killing took place or that the killings occurred under his supervision and at the order of the dictator Rafael Trujillo. But the article includes the crucial admission on the part of one of Trujillo's leading functionaries that, "from a constitutional point of view," descendants of Haitians who were "born in our territory" legally qualified as Dominican citizens. Valdez's article represents a kind of historical smoking gun in the sense that it amounts to an official admission that Trujillo's top officials were fully aware that they had killed not only unauthorized Haitian immigrants in 1937, but also people whom the constitution legally defined as Dominican citizens. Valdez's article encapsulates the racial views of the leading officials who supported the displacement and denationalization of ethnic Haitians that began in

well as the 1935 census conducted by Trujillo's government. These figures suggest that the Haitian population of the Cibao, Montecristi, and other northern border areas somehow declined by over five thousand from 1920 to 1935. Such a figure does not fit well with the multiple reports of large, growing Haitian enclaves around Dajabón, Restauración, and Loma de Cabrera. In addition, the numbers of children born to ethnically Haitian families from 1935 to 1937 would not appear in these statistics, and represent merely one of many factors that unsettle any effort to arrive at an exact figure, let alone to revise estimates downward. The events discussed in this book indicate that the populations involved were not well documented, and many of the region's residents, including people who would have fallen victim in 1937, could have crossed the border at any point in time confounding the reliability of the 1935 government census for determining the number of victims. Please see Bernardo Vega, chapter 11, "El número de muertes," in *Trujillo y Haití* (Santo Domingo: Fundación Cultural Dominicana, 1988), vol. II, 341–353; and Richard L. Turits, "A World Destroyed, a Nation Imposed: The 1937 Haitian Massacre in the Dominican Republic," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 83, no. 3 (2002): 590.

³ Valdez employed the term *rayano* solely to describe the descendants of Haitian immigrants born in the Dominican border provinces and thereby silenced long-standing patterns of ethnic mixture along the border. Derived from the word *raya*, meaning "line," the term refers to the border separating the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Uses of the term have varied, but it has generally been used to describe a person from the border who lives literally and figuratively along the line between two cultures. It has most often been used to describe people of mixed Haitian and Dominican ancestry. The term appears in Joaquín Balaguer's *La isla al revés: Haití y el destino dominicano* (Santo Domingo: Fundación José Antonio Caro, 1983), where he laments the mixture of Haitians and Dominicans. Interestingly, local border residents do not seem to have used it to identify themselves. Today the term is not especially common, but it carries a negative connotation related to the social stigma of Haitian ancestry. See Silvio Torres-Saillant, "La condición rayana: La promesa ciudadana en el lugar del 'quicio,'" in *La frontera: prioridad en la agenda nacional del siglo XXI* (Santo Domingo: Secretaría de Estado de las Fuerzas Armadas, 2003), 220–228.

1930 and culminated in the 1937 Massacre. Valdez presented three main claims that were used to justify the denationalization: that they generally lacked “civil documents,” that they possessed “the inveterate custom of eluding the requirements of the law,” and that they were irreconcilably foreign in their “language, habits and customs.” Even if the Dominican constitution tied citizenship to place of birth according to the principle of *jus soli*, the Dominican elite and Trujillo’s officials had decided that Haitian origin was not congruent with Dominican nationality. This book tells the story of both Haitian immigrants and ethnically Haitian Dominican citizens who had their homes, property, and in many cases their lives taken away by a state that decided to selectively ignore its constitution and promote an exclusively non-Haitian vision of Dominican nationality. By analyzing how and why the legal status of ethnic Haitians changed beginning with the onset of discriminatory legislation in 1919, this book addresses the central contradiction between Haitian ethnicity and Dominican nationality raised by Valdez and the draconian means by which Trujillo’s regime chose to enforce its vision of the modern Dominican nation.

Notwithstanding Valdez’s acknowledgment that ethnic Haitians born on Dominican soil legally “were Dominicans,” most post-1937 Dominican and foreign historiography has tended to ignore this aspect of constitutional law and has accepted the conflation of ethnic origin with citizenship and nationality. Such approaches do more than unwittingly promote the Dominican nationalist narrative. They ignore the prevailing, pre-1937 views of Dominican border residents themselves – both ethnically Haitian and Dominican, as well as those of the Dominican officials who had accepted ethnic Haitians as citizens for decades. From development economist Mats Lundahl to authors such as Robert Crassweller, generations of foreign scholars have accepted generalizations that inadvertently reproduce the nationalist tone and anti-Haitian rhetoric of the Dominican elite.⁴ Lundahl is cognizant of “the old racist clichés of Africa” and the ideological “haitiphobia” that characterizes Dominican discourse.⁵ Yet he still reproduces the political rhetoric of the Dominican rulers by broadly labeling the early twentieth-century ethnically Haitian residents of Dominican territory as “squatter farmers.”⁶ This language

⁴ Mats Lundahl, *The Haitian Economy: Man, Land, and Markets* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1983); Robert D. Crassweller, *Trujillo: The Life and Times of a Caribbean Dictator* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 149–154.

⁵ Lundahl, *Haitian Economy*, 133–134. ⁶ *Ibid.*, 123.

echoes that of Dominican historian Bernardo Vega, who describes the victims of the massacre broadly as “illegal Haitians” and characterizes the event by writing that “the Dominican Republic initiated an act of deadly aggression against citizens of the neighboring country.”⁷ In the surviving court records of the 1920s and 1930s, ethnically Haitian border residents themselves tell a different story. Rather than immigrant squatters, the majority of the victims of the massacre understood themselves as legal residents of the Dominican Republic on the basis of birthplace, property-ownership, or long-term residency.

From the founding of the Dominican state in 1844 through the rise of Trujillo in 1930, the Dominican Republic had a total of nineteen different constitutions. Starting in 1865, the Dominican constitution formally guaranteed citizenship rights to all people born on Dominican soil. The 1844 constitution had included specific requirements under which foreign nationals could obtain Dominican citizenship, but it did not directly address the question of people born in the Dominican Republic to immigrant parents. The constitutions of 1854 and 1858 granted citizenship to people born to foreign parents on Dominican soil if they voluntarily chose to adopt Dominican nationality upon reaching adulthood.⁸ The 1865 constitution flatly declared that anyone born on Dominican soil was a Dominican citizen, “whatever the nationality of their parents.”⁹ This unqualified declaration of *jus soli* remained the official law of the land in 1930 as Trujillo rose to power, and under the constitution the tens of thousands of ethnic Haitians who were born in the Dominican Republic during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were and knew themselves to be Dominican citizens. What Anne Eller demonstrates in her explorations of the political complexities and racial politics of the Spanish Restoration, and the ensuing second achievement of Dominican national independence, is that there was no nineteenth-century Dominican political consensus on matters of race or citizenship or the country’s relationship to the neighboring Haitian Republic. In particular, the 1822–1844

⁷ Vega, *Trujillo y Haití*, vol. II, 18, 26. “[T]antos Haitianos ilegales.” “Por otra parte, durante la dictadura, por primera vez en nuestra historia, la República Dominicana inició una mortal agresión contra ciudadanos del país vecino.”

⁸ Gobierno Dominicano, *Colección de leyes, resoluciones y decretos 1854* (Santo Domingo: Imprenta Listín Diario, 1929), 537–538. “Son Dominicanos: . . . Todos los nacidos en el territorio de padres extranjeros que invoquen esta cualidad, cuando lleguen a su mayor edad.”

⁹ Dominicano, *Colección de leyes*, 447. “Son Dominicanos: Todos los que hayan nacidos o nacieren en el territorio de la República, sea cual fuere la nacionalidad de sus padres.”

period of unification under Haitian rule, as well as Eller's observation that at least some intellectuals at Puerto Plata in 1865 called for a new era of unification and dual citizenship on Hispaniola, demonstrate that some subset of early Dominican political thinkers had pro-Haitian, pro-Black, and anticolonial points of view.¹⁰

Historians are increasingly aware of the 1937 Haitian Massacre along the northern Dominican border.¹¹ However, the deportation campaign that occurred prior to the 1937 Massacre and the experience of ethnic Haitians in the aftermath of the event remain largely unknown. This book narrates the transformations in the legal status of ethnic Haitians throughout the early twentieth century and examines the ethnic Haitian experience both before and after 1937. The critical question that this book addresses is how and why the legal status of ethnic Haitians in the Dominican Republic changed during the twentieth century. I argue that

¹⁰ Anne Eller, *We Dream Together: Dominican Independence, Haiti, and the Fight for Caribbean Freedom* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 229.

¹¹ See Richard Lee Turits, *Foundations of Despotism: Peasants, the Trujillo Regime, and Modernity in Dominican History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); Turits, "A World Destroyed, a Nation Imposed"; and Edward Paulino, *Dividing Hispaniola: The Dominican Republic's Border Campaign against Haiti* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016). Paulino, Turits, and historian Lauren Derby have all conducted oral-history research that has shed new light on the 1937 Massacre. See also Jose Israel Cuello, *Documentos del conflicto dominico-haitiano de 1937* (Santo Domingo: Editora Taller, 1985); Thomas Fiehrer, "Political Violence in the Periphery: The Haitian Massacre of 1937," *Race and Class* 32, no. 2 (1990): 1–20; Arthur Matteis, *Le massacre de 1937, ou, une succession immobilière internationale* (Haïti: A. Matteis, 1987); Juan M. García, *La matanza de los haitianos: Genocidio de Trujillo, 1937* (Santo Domingo: Editora Alfa y Omega, 1983); Suzy Castor, *Migración y relaciones internacionales: El caso haitiano-dominicano* (Santo Domingo: Editora Universitaria UASD, 1987); 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); and Michael Malek, "The Dominican Republic's General Rafael L. M. Trujillo and the Haitian Massacre of 1937: A Case of Subversion in Inter-Caribbean Relations," *Secolas Annals* II (March, 1980): 137–155. Influential fictional representations of the 1937 Massacre include Louis-Philippe Dalembert, *L'autre face de la mer: Roman* (Paris: Stock, 1998); Edwidge Danticat, *The Farming of Bones: A Novel* (New York: Soho Press, 1998); Danticat, "Nineteen Thirty-Seven," in *Krik? Krak!* (New York: Soho Press, 1995), 31–50; René Philoctète, *Le peuple des terres mêlées: Roman* (Port-au-Prince: H. Deschamps, 1989); Jacques S. Alexis, *Compère général soleil* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982); Anthony Lespès, *Les semences de la colère* (Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1970). Several Haitian fictional representations of the 1937 Massacre reproduce the association of ethnic Haitians with the sugar industry that came to characterize the Haitian presence in the Dominican Republic afterwards. Even Philoctète's work, which focuses exclusively on a border region, narrates characters' experiences in the sugar economy. The most prominent Dominican fictional portrayal of the 1937 Massacre is Freddy Prestol Castillo, *El masacre se pasa a pie* (Santo Domingo: Taller, 1998).

prior to the 1937 Massacre, ethnic Haitians living in the Dominican Republic faced a mounting campaign of ethnic profiling. The first year of the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo, 1930, marked a fundamental turning point for the country's ethnically Haitian population since, in that year, Dominican-born people living along the northern border were first legally reclassified as foreigners, deported to Haiti, or forced to pay immigration taxes to remain in the country of their birth. This process of ethnic cleansing through the reversal of citizenship rights and forced displacement exemplified the official discrimination that characterized an increasingly tense border in the years leading up to the 1937 Genocide.¹² By the 1930s, official discrimination even contributed to outbursts of popular anti-Haitianism unknown in the 1920s. In this sense, my book revises the view of historians who have argued that official anti-Haitianism appeared only after the 1937 Massacre.¹³ Rather than approaching anti-Haitianism by searching for ideological pronouncements in newspapers or other mass media, this book emphasizes the actual mistreatment, abuse, and deportations that ethnic Haitians experienced at the hands of the police and military both before and after the 1937 Massacre.

Although I argue that 1930 was a turning point after which ethnic Haitians experienced the formal reversal of their citizenship status, I also claim that the 1920s witnessed new forms of ethnic profiling and racial discrimination along the border. Moreover, examination of records of arrests for illegal border-crossing and contraband revealed new policies of summary arrest and patterns of anti-Haitian bias in Dominican officials' enforcement of these laws in the 1920s. Scholars have often exaggerated the porous and open character of the border in the years before the 1937 Massacre; I argue that as early as the 1920s, the Dominican border was no longer an unregulated boundary, and that the new patterns of enforcement had serious implications for everyday life in places where people had once crossed freely.

This book tells the story of a successively worsening campaign of explicitly racialized anti-Haitian repression. The Dominican Republic's first formal scheme to incentivize European immigration in an effort to whiten

¹² A constant point of inquiry has revolved around distinctions between "ethnic cleansing" and "genocide." I characterize campaigns of deportation from 1930 to August 1937 as ethnic cleansing, and identify the outbreak of mass murder in September 1937 as the onset of the genocide.

¹³ Turits, *Foundations of Despotism*, 146, 159.

the country's demographics came in 1907. Edward Paulino points out that 1907 was also the year that the USA initiated some of the earliest formal efforts to control the Dominican land border by establishing a "Guardia de Frontera," two years after the Americans took the Dominican Republic into "customs receivership" in 1905 in order to secure payments to American creditors.¹⁴ The advent of formally racialized Dominican immigration legislation came in 1912 with a law to control the number of "non-Caucasian" immigrants. The American authorities who contributed to the policing of the border, first through their customs receivership and then during their eventual military occupation of both countries, employed this same language in the 1919 Executive Order 372, which the American occupiers themselves used to arrest and displace ethnic Haitians living along the border. Executive Order 372, issued by American Military Governor Thomas Snowden on December 15, 1919, prohibited the immigration of "*braçeros* [field hands] of any race other than Caucasian" unless they entered through officially designated border checkpoints or seaports and paid for official permits that carried the paradoxically ironic name of *licencia de permanencia temporal* or "license of temporary permanence."¹⁵ Anti-Haitian policy accelerated in 1930 with the rise of Trujillo, who launched campaigns of mass arrest and denationalized Dominican citizens through his application of Executive Order 372, and it culminated in an intense period of violence in the fall of 1937. The closed-border policy and the ideological campaign of "Dominicanization" that immediately followed the 1937 Genocide laid the groundwork for the prevailing conception that has intrinsically defined all ethnic Haitians as foreigners in the Dominican context.

All evidence and testimony indicates that the massacre came as a horrible shock. Survivors who fled to Haiti were lucky if they received even one or two days' warning. But the campaign of killing came after ethnic Haitians in the border region had already experienced a range of dramatic changes in their treatment and legal status in the country over nearly two decades. The years prior to 1937 demonstrate that rather than an event that emerged out of a vacuum, 1937 was the most violent expression of a broader anti-Haitian policy and that the official treatment

¹⁴ Paulino, *Dividing Hispaniola*, 95–96.

¹⁵ Thomas Snowden, Counter-Admiral of the US Navy, Military Governor of Santo Domingo, December 15, 1919, Orden Ejecutiva No. 372, *Gaceta Oficial*, 454. "Queda prohibido en la República Dominicana la inmigración de braçeros de cualquier raza que no sea la caucásica . . . a menos que sea por los puertos habilitados y puntos de la frontera que se prescriban."

of ethnically Haitian Dominicans and Haitian nationals had been worsening along the border since at least 1919. Even before the 1937 Genocide and especially by 1930, many ethnic Haitians in the border region were displaced and denationalized through the enforcement of Executive Order 372. Trujillo used this law to deport both Dominicans of Haitian descent and long-standing Haitian immigrants. Dominican-born people were arrested under this order and forced to prove their birth in Dominican territory or forced to pay the fine and remain in prison for some time. In some cases, the local courts overruled defendants' claims of birth in Dominican territory or failed to give them the opportunity to prove their Dominican birth.

In this book, I argue that 1930 was a fundamental turning point in the transformation of life for ethnic Haitians in the border region. Prior to the 1937 Genocide, legalized racial and ethnic discrimination already existed, which led to frequent arrests, imprisonment, deportation, abuse, and the reversal of citizenship rights. After 1930, many ethnic Haitians in the border region were stripped of their citizenship, formally reclassified as migrants regardless of their birthplace, and forced to pay for a costly immigration permit if they wanted to remain in their homes.

To see the importance of 1930 as a fundamental turning point in the lives of ethnic Haitians is to begin to understand the event from the perspective of many of the victims themselves. Ethnic Haitians in the border region in 1930 knew that their situation in the country had changed. They discussed it among themselves, and a few even made their viewpoints known during trial. In 1930, Elías Hernández, a native of Santiago de los Caballeros, was arrested in Restauración under Executive Order 372; he called his detention "unjust imprisonment." Hernández told the judge that it would take time for him to have his birth certificate sent to him from Santiago, so he paid the fine and was officially reclassified, against his will, as a foreign immigrant.¹⁶ The next year, in the same community of Restauración, Juanis Sodis was arrested for taking plantains from a farm along the border. Sodis had been born in that community and had previously worked on the land in question before he was displaced for the creation of a new Dominican "agricultural colony."

¹⁶ Elías Hernández, August 1931, Alcaldías de Restauración, 1930–31, leg. 181, exp. 65, 3/007945, AGN. "El exponente agrega: que si prefería sacar la licencia de permanencia era por librarse de la prisión injusta que se le ha dado, porque recurrir a su partida de nacimiento era cosa dilatada puesto de que habría que disponer de días por el hecho de que sus familiares tendrían que ir hasta Santiago que fue el pueblo donde nació."

In court, Sodis protested that the land had previously belonged to Haitians and that he himself had worked hard on that farm, so he felt that the plantains were rightfully his.

These courtroom testimonies provide rare windows into the evolving political consciousness of ethnic Haitians who bore the brunt of a heightening campaign of repression.

There may be no way to ever confirm whether Elias Hernandez or Juanis Sodis was killed in 1937 or if they were among the surviving refugees who fled to Haiti. Given their previous criticisms of the Dominican authorities' mistreatment of ethnic Haitians, I have often wondered how Sodis or Hernandez might have interpreted the 1937 Genocide. Their voices preserved in courtroom testimony suggest that some of the ethnic Haitians living in the border regions in the 1930s would view the massacre as an extreme escalation in the state's long-standing mistreatment of them as a group. Patterns of repression in the years before 1937 offered no obvious clues that the countryside was soon to witness a campaign of wholesale mass murder. However, this book explores the fact that the repression of Haitian–Dominican border communities did worsen in phases from at least 1919 onward, and that Trujillo and his officials attacked and reversed the citizenship rights of ethnic Haitians before they launched the slaughter. In retrospect, and given its close consideration of legal and military sources from the border region, this book revises a long-standing argument that the 1937 Genocide was fundamentally distinct from other cases, most notably the Nazi Holocaust, because it was not preceded by any “gradual increase” in repressive measures.¹⁷

NOT AN EXCEPTION: 1937 AND THE LITERATURE ON TWENTIETH-CENTURY GENOCIDES

Historians of the 1937 Massacre have argued that, unlike other genocides in the twentieth century, an ideological discourse did not precede the violence. Rather, anti-Haitianism developed after the killing ended.¹⁸ In this work I take the contrary position, arguing that the 1937 Haitian Massacre was not an exception in this sense. Rather than

¹⁷ Lauren Derby and Richard Turits, “Historias de terror y los terrores de la historia: La masacre Haitiana de 1937 en la Republica Dominicana,” *Estudios Sociales* 26, no. 92 (1993): 71.

¹⁸ Derby and Turits, “Historias de terror y los terrores de la historia,” 71.

seeing anti-Haitianism as an invention that emerged after the violence, I demonstrate that anti-Haitianism preceded the 1937 Haitian Massacre. Viewed in light of the enforcement of Executive Order 372, racialized policing introduced during the first US occupation of the country contributed to new forms of anti-Haitianism and discrimination. The uses and application of this law had disastrous effects well before 1937. Whatever degree of racial and ethnic equality existed in the border region before 1919, this law undermined it. As ethnic Haitians were treated as second-class citizens or made foreigners in their own homes, they became increasingly aware of their degraded status in the country. There is also subtle evidence that in this context, popular prejudice contributed to tension between ethnic Dominicans and ethnic Haitians.

To view the 1937 Massacre in this light is to recognize the powerful role of the American occupation in giving rise to the massacre. Official North American racism influenced the Dominican elite and contributed directly to their policy regarding border controls aimed at ethnic Haitians. Although Dominican elites had been greatly influenced by scientific racism in the late nineteenth century and had gone so far as establishing colonization programs in the border region for European immigrants as early as 1907, the American occupation did heighten racism in the country. One main focus of this book is the history of Executive Order 372, as it epitomizes the role of the American occupiers in the emergence of a formally racialized, repressive policy of border-policing. Historians of the event have not yet explored this important law.

Official anti-Haitian discourse did become widespread in the aftermath of the massacre and became identifiable in media and education. This may be because Trujillo's regime no longer advertised fraternal relations and official cooperation with the Haitian government and grew more explicit in expressing its views on Haiti and Haitians. But I argue that in the summer of 1937, on the eve of the killings, it would be ahistorical to imagine that the entire hierarchy of perpetrators of the massacre, from the loftiest officials down to the remote civil authorities, policemen, army privates, and civilian deputies, were somehow ideological blank slates or empty vessels. In reality, they had ideas about the Black race and ethnic Haitians. The archives record that authorities along the border had histories of racialized policing and repression that intensified in the decades preceding the massacre.

The stakes are high in claiming that a racist ideology and a racist pattern of policing existed in the Dominican Republic before the massacre. Both Dominican and American historians find it convenient to

explain the 1937 killings as an “unthinkable” bolt from the blue, born spontaneously from the capricious machinations of the tyrant. It buries the culpability of the American occupiers who promulgated Executive Order 372 while excluding an exploration of the ideas and motives that led a range of official and civilian actors to execute Trujillo’s orders.

The prevailing claim that anti-Haitian ideology had 1937 as its point of origin serves a certain purpose by attempting to heap the entirety of the blame for a vast social and ideological issue on the person of the tyrant. By implication, a historiography that attributes the ideology of scientific racism, demographic whitening, and racialized police and military repression solely to Trujillo suits the Dominican establishment overall, which has long battled recurring charges of racism. If Trujillo was the principal wellspring of Dominican racist thought and policy, then his fall could perhaps signal the reemergence of a racially harmonious condition. Obviously the historical reality is considerably more complex. When Trujillo’s government decided to resort to more direct forms of violence against ethnic Haitians in 1937, it justified its actions by labeling Haitians as diseased, disabled, illegal, lawless, and indigent. Anti-Black racism and anti-Haitianism drove the massacre, and this racism did not spontaneously erupt in 1937.

It is worth mentioning that during the oral interviews that I collected in the Haitian border regions in December 2017 and February 2018, almost no one recalled pre-massacre repression in the 1930s. Several remembered that local Haitians were arrested for not having the *cédula*. Starting in 1931, all citizens and foreign residents of the Dominican Republic were forced to pay for an obligatory, standardized national identity card called the *cédula*.¹⁹ One survivor vividly remembered that her father was arrested for not having purchased a *cédula*. Not a single person remembered or seemed to know about Executive Order 372. The absence of these recollections in the testimonies says less about the actual importance of the law for ethnic Haitians and more about the age and memories of those interviewed. Needless to say, the survivors that I interviewed in 2017 and 2018 were very young in the 1930s. Many of my interviewees were the descendants of deceased survivors and, thus, even less likely to know the legal details of life along the border prior to 1937. In hindsight, the sheer horror of the 1937 violence could easily dwarf memories of the more picayune pattern of arrests in the comparative peace and prosperity of

¹⁹ Congreso Nacional de la Republica, “Ley No. 247 Cédula Personal de Identidad,” December 29, 1931, *Gaceta Oficial*, Santo Domingo, 1932, 271–274.

previous years. An event such as the 1937 Haitian Massacre could easily spawn a somewhat distorted nostalgia for the preceding period. This can help explain the extent to which many interviewees recall friendly relations between ethnic Haitians and ethnic Dominicans in the border regions before 1937. The earlier history of denationalization, deportations, imprisonment, and displacement is almost completely absent in both my oral interviews and in those of other historians who undertook the initial oral histories of the 1937 Genocide during the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. But these stories do survive in the civil court records of border towns.

SOURCES

This book expands the scholarly study of the ethnic Haitian experience in the Dominican Republic by employing an array of government sources concerning the border before and after the 1937 Massacre. Local courtroom proceedings from the regional municipal records or *Alcaldías* provide detailed information regarding the lives and activities of border residents and the ways in which local police enforced new laws. This book also makes extensive use of records of patrols, arrests, trials, and internal correspondence from the Dirección General de Migración (hereafter DGM) as well as the military. Though this study focuses primarily on the Dominican border, its geographical reach extends as far as the capital and the eastern provinces of Samaná and San Pedro, where ethnic Haitians were forced from small farms and corralled into sugar plantations during the early 1940s. By studying the enforcement of laws regarding contraband, border-crossing, and identity documents, this book identifies patterns of arrest and profiling that disproportionately targeted ethnic Haitians as early as 1920.

The limitations of my data reflect many different factors relevant to the Dominican context and to the historiographies of genocide and ethnic cleansing, dictatorial regimes, and poor regions of the world. My archival strategy was to broadly explore any and all official sources having to do with ethnic Haitians in the Dominican Republic in the first half of the twentieth century. Based on surviving records, I developed several archival points of focus: the enforcement of immigration laws and civil codes in border towns in the 1920s and 1930s; the activities of the country's immigration agency, the DGM; and military records from border enforcement campaigns of the early 1940s. The necessarily incomplete nature of the data reflects multiple layers of both archival and historiographical silence. Michel-Rolph Trouillot explores the retroactive erasure of an

event through silencing and the politics of selective memory, but the archival record in this case explicitly signals premeditated erasure – officials were warned not to leave evidence of illegal or otherwise unspeakable acts.²⁰ Upon encountering written evidence of a premeditated coverup, I resolved to adopt the method of other historians who have conducted oral history in border regions with the idea that surviving witnesses represented an important living archive. I have endeavored to expand the base of oral history sources on this period by also conducting interviews with the children of massacre survivors.

The Dominican Republic of the 1930s was hardly a well-documented society. The rural regions were overwhelmingly illiterate, and we can never know how complete or how distorted are the military and police records preserved by a notoriously repressive dictatorship whose functionaries frankly discussed hiding and misrepresenting government aims and actions. Analyses in this book can only reflect the glimpses of the past that I have reconstructed in the surviving archives and the rare voices of surviving witnesses. There can never be a “definitive” history of an obscure atrocity committed in a vast rural landscape and purposefully covered up by the perpetrating government.

Future researchers may generate larger and more detailed statistical analyses and narrative descriptions of the border experience in the era of the 1937 Genocide. During the years I worked there, the functionaries at the Dominican national archives were demonstrating great effort and marked success in bringing order and accessibility to vast public collections that had not always been well maintained by previous regimes. I found quite a bit, but much remains to be discovered. Quentin Reynolds, one of the first foreign journalists to publish a serious exposé of the genocide, which appeared in *Colliers* in January 1938, stated that he read 1,000 depositions taken from priests, doctors, and army officers and that he saw more than 9,000.²¹ So far I have been able to locate only about 30 of these, which made their way out through diplomatic correspondence and which are located in the US National Archives and have been partially reproduced by Dominican historians Bernardo Vega and Jose Antonio Cuello. The remaining thousands of depositions will hopefully be located in Haiti or perhaps elsewhere. I was less successful in exploring histories of violence and displacement in Barahona and along

²⁰ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015).

²¹ Quentin Reynolds, “Murder in the Tropics,” *Colliers* (January 22, 1938): 35.

the southern border. In contrast to the relatively robust local judicial records that I found from the northern border region, I was not able to locate similar records for the southern border region. Evidence that I do have of roundups in the south in 1937, 1938, and 1939 comes from the records of the DGM.

This is certainly more of a historical narrative than a statistical study, but it necessarily has its quantitative dimensions. This, of course, includes a recognition of the macabre and seemingly obligatory “numbers game” of attempting to speculate on the number of victims of the violence. Historians regularly cite estimates of 15 or 20 thousand, but this does not consider the numbers killed in 1938 and in the following years. Observers from the period estimated as many as 30,000 victims. What we do know is that communities all along the northwest border were emptied of their Haitian populations. Official recognition of the killing would require wide-reaching archaeological inquiries all along the border and in the Cibao. But even serious projects to uncover mass graves would not yield anything like a complete picture, as many bodies were washed away by rivers, and it was well reported that many were dumped in the ocean at Monte Cristi. Further inland many of the bodies were burned and eaten by dogs.

All discussions of this sort must be tempered by a serious methodological engagement with “silencing,” and the epistemological problem of unknowability that enshrouds a secretive genocide that I can prove was actively misrepresented by the officials who had a hand in creating the archives. My search for sources extended beyond the official archive, as did my motivation to make the most of a fragmented record. Upon arriving at a small village on the Haitian side of the border, I often learned that an especially knowledgeable witness to the atrocities of 1937 had died a month, a year, or several years prior. An urgent desire to preserve the voices and study the memories of the remaining survivors, now in their 80s or 90s, inspired the oral-history component of this research, which complements previous oral-history work conducted by Richard Turits, Robin Derby and Edward Paulino. I have endeavored to expand this source base by seeking the few surviving direct witnesses, and also by interviewing the descendants of survivors, a category that has not yet figured in the literature.

Part of the burden of this work involved the problem of bearing witness to atrocity. In the realm of popular historical memory, one horrific image epitomizes and exemplifies the bitter consciousness of the Haitians who live along the border, especially in enclaves such as Saltadère, Los Cacaos, or Dosmond, where refugees from 1937 settled and where many of the residents were raised by parents or grandparents who fled the violence

and directly witnessed some of the carnage. Ivona Colas was roughly 10 years old when her family successfully fled Cahuil and reached the Haitian side of the border. She shares what have become the two most iconic details of the event: babies were thrown into the air and caught with bayonets, and mothers were killed and babies put to nurse on their bodies.²² Many of the earliest foreign newspaper reports on the massacre from November 1937 reproduced Trujillo's claims about "alleged" conflict between civilians, but one article published in the *Washington Post* did corroborate this universal feature of the refugees' popular memory by recording the reports of women being killed with daggers and "babies tossed on bayonets in the hands of drunken Dominican rural police."²³

Prosper Prophil of El Corte, born in 1950, whose parents fled Gurab in 1937, shares a representative account. He grew up hearing his parents "recounting to him that they blocked people on the roads, they grabbed children, threw them in the air, raised a knife, and the children fell on the knife."²⁴ Prophil's late parents claimed to have witnessed this directly. As a rule, this notorious description appears at or very near the beginning of local oral accounts of the event.

Barbot Véard, born in 1942 in the agricultural colony at Billegui, the farthest Haitian refugee settlement from the border, was the son of Haitian *braçeros*. His father drove a tractor on a sugar plantation at La Romana until they fled the massacre. Barbot grew up hearing the story that the Dominican police "grabbed children, threw them in the air, held up their bayonets, the children fell on the bayonets and they dumped the children on the ground."²⁵

From one region of the country to another, survivors' stories are remarkably similar in these two details. Gilbert Jean from Corral Grande near Dajabón was 13 years old in 1937 and claims that he had "reached the age of reason" at the time; he personally witnessed the violence and remembers it "like something that happened this morning." "Young and old they killed everyone with knives, little children they threw them in the air. Little children they did not kill, they killed the parents and put them down to nurse on the dead bodies."²⁶ A similar image appears in the stories told to Devilia Lorbet, whose father was

²² Ouanaminthe, February 19, 2018, Ivona Colas.

²³ Louis Jay Heath, "Slaughter of Haitians Described by Observer: Men, Women and Babies," *Washington Post*, November 10, 1937.

²⁴ El Corte, December 13, 2017, Prosper Prophil.

²⁵ Billegui, December 16, 2017, Barbot Véard.

²⁶ Dosmond, December 19, 2017, Gilbert Jean.

roughly 15 in 1937 when he was shot in the leg as he attempted to flee, and survived twenty-two days hiding wounded in the undergrowth. Her mother's family were also 1937 refugees. Devilia recalls that her mother constantly told the story of an aunt who was killed along with her infant. The story centers on the image of a dead baby placed back onto the body of its dead mother as a kind of grisly display.²⁷ While fleeing Corral Grande as a young girl, Germaine Julien of Dosmond recalls seeing "in the ditch, babies nursing on dead bodies on the ground."²⁸

The testimony of Gaspar Fanon of Saltadère, who heard the stories from his father, who was born in Loma de Cabrera in 1937, includes another widespread, but less common popular image of the violence and the cruelty toward small children that was etched into regional popular memory. Fanon's father was a baby when he fled with his mother and siblings. He recounts the story told to him by his father and grandmother that when they were crossing the border, near the very banks of the river, they saw the grisly sight of a dead young woman, with a living baby still nursing on her chest. In the desperation of their flight, his grandmother, who was fleeing with five children of her own, recalled being unable to stop to save orphans during a desperate run for the border.²⁹ In some instances, orphans were rescued and raised by Dominicans, and in others, orphans were rescued almost miraculously by refugees as they fled. At the agricultural colony of Dosmond in the outskirts of Ouanaminthe, Willy Antenor, who keeps the historical registers of the lands granted to massacre survivors in 1938, grew up with his mother's stories of horror, flight, and lost family. He tells the story of a neighbor named Tel who still lives at Morne Coucou. Tel was one of the babies left nursing on his mother's dead body, but he was picked up by refugees in flight and raised in a Haitian refugee settlement.

STATELESSNESS AND THE REVERSAL OF CITIZENSHIP

In a region and an era known for anti-Black racism and state violence, the Haitian Massacre stands out as one of the most horrific acts in the modern history of the Americas.

The premeditated nature of the violence against ethnic Haitians in Dominican border provinces and the almost total destruction of the

²⁷ El Corte, December 13, 2017, Devilia Lorbet.

²⁸ Dosmond, December 20, 2017, Germaine Julien.

²⁹ Saltadère, December 12, 2017, Gaspar Fanon.

ethnically Haitian demographic in the border regions makes it a case of genocide. Although this genocide is lesser known, it was contemporaneous with other genocides and ethnic cleansings in the twentieth century. Since this history of racialized violence and displacement was concentrated in border regions, the massacre is also important for the history of borderlands, postcolonial nation-states, and modern nationalism.

The Dominican twentieth century witnessed the hardening of a racially explicit, anti-Haitian ideology of *Hispanidad* and aspirational whiteness. This condition was the product of a particular confluence of factors. These included the transnational intellectual phenomenon of scientific racism, legacies of explicitly racist laws and patterns of enforcement brought to the Dominican border provinces by the American military occupiers, the rise of fascism – which Trujillo explicitly praised and emulated – and varying degrees of racial and ethnic prejudice in Dominican society. And though this explicit racism was surely concentrated among narrow, elite intellectual circles, some element of prejudice extended downward to include the lower-level military and civil authorities who implemented Trujillo's orders to kill all of the Haitians in certain areas of the country, as well as to the civilian deputies who participated in the slaughter and the civilians who served as informants or plundered Haitians' property.

Scholars often seek to rescue and center progressive, antiracist dimensions of the Dominican historical experience, but historians of the island must also take seriously the evidence gathered by Paulino on the role of civilian deputies who may have been “only following orders” but played a significant role in hunting down and killing ethnically Haitian civilians in rural regions such as Neiba and La Descubierta.³⁰ Despite the prominent emphases on the mobilization of military units from elsewhere in the country, and even of prisoners to conduct the massacre, many of the victims experienced this murder and displacement as a form of neighborly violence. They and their descendants notably discuss and ponder the degrees of local involvement and complicity. As a child at Restauración, Eloisa Gédéon witnessed local policemen, whom she knew personally by name, killing a local woman whom she also knew.³¹ In the depositions taken down following refugees' arrival in Haiti, the role of local police or other local officials directing the death squads stands out as a common element. In light of comparative studies such as Russell Jacoby's work on

³⁰ Paulino, *Dividing Hispaniola*, 63–64.

³¹ Mont-Organisé, February 20, 2018, Eloisa Gédéon, Tann Lolo.

neighborly violence, I explore the extent to which the 1937 violence validates the thesis that “the most common form of violence is violence between acquaintances or neighbors or kindred communities within nations.”³²

In this book I endeavor to consider the roles of local people: the degree to which some participated actively in the killing; the degree to which others looked on powerlessly, but may have also supported it tacitly or benefited materially from newly vacated property and abandoned goods and livestock. Many survivors speak fondly of the Dominican civilians who saved them by warning them or hiding them or guiding them to safety across the border. This is a common kind of story and experience, but the roles of Dominican civilians were multiple and sometimes contradictory. Anacelle Isaac, born in 1930 in a Dominican border town near Dajabón, recalls that a Dominican family that was friendly with her mother saved their lives telling them “ou pa merite mouri.” These Good Samaritans fed them and hid them on their property and even drove them to the border checkpoint where they could cross into Haiti, and yet as she tells her story of her childhood escape, she shares her strong suspicion that the father of that family was simultaneously involved in the campaign of killing.

By 1920, both American military occupiers and local authorities in the border provinces were using Executive Order 372 to arrest Dominican-born people of Haitian descent. During the 1920s, some Dominican authorities pushed back against the discriminatory practices of the American occupiers. Amalia Hintzen points out that in 1920, the governor of Monte Cristi province complained about the American forces’ “twisted interpretation” of immigration law, defended the rights of Haitian Dominicans and resident Haitian nationals, and complained that the Americans’ enforcement of Executive Order 372 was leaving border areas “depopulated as a consequence.”³³ The American occupiers set the precedent for the forcible displacement of ethnic Haitians living on the Dominican side of the border. Trujillo would reprise Executive Order 372 after taking power in 1930 and use it to apply a far more intense degree of racialized repression and border enforcement.

³² Russell Jacoby, *Bloodlust: On the Roots of Violence from Cain and Abel to the Present* (New York: Free Press, 2011), x.

³³ Amelia Hintzen, “A Veil of Legality: The Contested History of Anti-Haitian Ideology under the Trujillo Dictatorship,” *New West Indian Guide* 90, no. 1–2 (January 1, 2016): 28–29.

But over the course of the 1920s, Dominican-born ethnic Haitians were often able to avoid deportation and justify their claim to Dominican nationality by obtaining a reference from a local friend, godparent, or mayor. Also during the 1920s, both Dominican-born ethnic Haitians and Haitian-born immigrants who lived along the border were able to prove to the courts that they were not *braçeros* and therefore not subject to Executive Order 372 by showing that they owned property or pursued a useful profession in the Dominican Republic. But by 1930, with the onset of the Trujillo regime, enforcement of the order became more severe. Ethnically Haitian detainees were now required to produce their birth certificates, and if they could not, they were subject to deportation or forced to pay for an immigration permit. In either case, the state violated their rights as citizens by using a law that did not apply to them. Although not all ethnic Haitians had their citizenship taken away from them, they had real reason to fear the agenda behind the new regime of enforcement.

Although a newly imposed condition of statelessness in the Dominican border region prior to the massacre in 1937 has parallels with processes that occurred in Nazi Germany before the Holocaust, the event has largely escaped historians' attention. Like the massacre, ethnic Haitians' experience of denationalization before and after has been largely ignored. But ethnic Haitians' ominous experiences with discrimination in the years prior to 1937 is comparable to events in other countries that witnessed ethnic cleansing and genocide in the twentieth century. The massacre was the escalation of violence against an ethnic group that had already suffered a worsening pattern of abuses. They had already, by 1920, begun to experience changes in their ordinary lives. As in certain parts of Europe around the same time, discriminatory treatment, displacement, and the reclassifying of internal ethnic groups as second-class citizens or foreign nationals preceded a wholesale slaughter. Here I should point out that the event is yet to figure very prominently in the expanding field of genocide studies, even as more scholars read the category into events that preceded Raphaël Lemkin's creation of the term in 1944.³⁴

³⁴ Raphaël Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress* (Publications of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Division of International Law, Washington; New York: Columbia University Press, 1944).

THE 1937 MASSACRE

In May 1937, Director of Immigration Reynaldo Valdez planned a “campaign against the Haitians,” and instructed subordinate immigration officials to avoid leaving a written record of certain official measures and policies. Although many historians have emphasized Trujillo’s role in launching the 1937 Genocide, certain key functionaries immediately under Trujillo, including Valdez and his successor, Emilio Zeller, were leading architects of the atrocity. Valdez specifically instructed his subordinates to be careful not to say exactly what they were doing to ethnically Haitian detainees. Faithful to his own policy of concealment, Valdez did not spell out what form the campaign would take. But the fact that he instructed lower-level officials not to be truthful about what they were actually doing suggests that the measures were somehow outside the realm of legality or acceptable behavior. Because Valdez counseled the officials to be cautious about what they wrote down, it is impossible to know exactly what events they concealed during the key years of 1937, 1938, and 1939. Since immigration inspectors and police were told not to record their actions toward ethnic Haitians, the sources include absolutely no direct record of the murder of Haitians from May 1937 through 1939. These sources avoided mentioning killing and instead described mass roundups, deportation, imprisonment, forced labor, forced taxation, and the confiscation of documents, which were considered acceptable for the purposes of written records.

The outbreak of the massacre took the Haitian government and military totally by surprise. President Stenio Vincent’s regime was by no means mobilized or well situated to start a war against an opponent who had taken the initiative and who was using state and diplomatic channels to deny and misrepresent the events on the ground. Soon after the news of the massacre, Vincent’s government did order a shipment of rifles and ammunition, but his government did not directly intervene during the violence.

Aware that they could not document any measures that might reflect badly on the Dominican government, creators of the Dominican archives conspicuously omitted mention of the killings themselves, and the records include several glaring examples of feigned ignorance. The first, most significant evidence of the atrocities was the transcribed testimony of refugee witnesses in Haiti. Contemporary observer Dr. Jean Price-Mars wrote in 1953 that the true nature of and rationale for the massacre remained a carefully guarded secret of its perpetrators. Price-Mars

observed that the problem of official silence took its own form in the Haitian capital, where Vincent and his officials, concerned about internal threats to the regime, preserved *le plus complet mutisme* long after 1937.³⁵ But the reports could not be kept under wraps. They eventually passed from Haitian officials to US diplomats such as Henry Norweb, journalists such as Quentin Reynolds, and Vatican officials.³⁶

Critical historical appraisals of the event, especially those of Haitian scholars, explore the perfidy and apparent treachery of the Vincent regime. Certain key facts bolster an especially negative interpretation. Not only did Vincent's government not mobilize the military and other resources to intervene and stop the killing, it suppressed news of the atrocities for fear that it could feed turmoil that might be exploited by one of Vincent's prominent political opponents who threatened to topple his regime. Further, his government scandalously accepted an agreement from Trujillo's government to pay damages of roughly \$700,000 US, later reduced to perhaps half a million. The memory of this payment, which most observers casually imagine evaporating into the pockets of corrupt Haitian officialdom, has its own interpretive afterlife in both the Dominican Republic and Haiti, where people refer to the idea that the lives of tens of thousands of murdered Haitian civilians were measured by a paltry indemnification that amounted to a few dollars apiece.

In and of themselves, the records of the Dominican state give the impression that no massacres happened from 1937 to 1939. If members of the DGM or the military ever produced any reports that explicitly referenced the campaigns of mass slaughter, they were destroyed or have yet to surface. But the DGM did leave relatively detailed records of roundups and deportations in the southern border region from the month of May 1937 until 1939. Because these documents are contemporaneous with the outbreak of the massacre in the northern border region, I read these sources with this event in mind and use them as clues to understand the regime's broader anti-Haitian campaign.

Historians have interpreted the massacre as two different regional processes that took place at separate times, first in the north and then in the south. This narrative holds that the 1937 Massacre broke out in the

³⁵ Jean Price-Mars, *La République d'Haïti et la République dominicaine II* (Port St. Lucie, FL: Hope Outreach Productions, 2016), 466.

³⁶ In *Dividing Hispaniola*, Paulino has consulted the Vatican records and brings our attention to the October, 1937 reports of Papal Nuncio Silvani, who played an important role in the diplomatic negotiations that followed the violence.

northern border provinces in early October and ended by roughly November 5. The intense killing in the north was then followed by another event called *el desalojo* or displacement in the southern border provinces, which began in the spring of 1938 and killed hundreds of Haitians but resulted mainly in the forced departure of thousands more to Haiti. The archival sources lead me to suggest a reconsideration of this alleged distinction between the massacre and the *desalojo*. Extensive correspondence from the DGM demonstrates that well before the first reports of violence reached Haiti in late September 1937, Dominican officials were already conducting a campaign directed toward ethnic Haitians in the southern border area that involved mass roundups, imprisonment, and deportation, and possibly, killing.

Ideas about regional patterns must also be judged in light of both deliberate official distortion of the record as well as underlying geographical and demographic patterns. State records from the immediate months of the massacre are difficult to find. This conspicuous vacuum represents a kind of evidence in and of itself. Why has the massacre largely been remembered and interpreted as a northern phenomenon? The extremely mountainous and remote areas of the central border were not very densely populated. Neither were the relatively dry towns along much of the southern border. A smaller population along the southern border meant fewer potential victims, and fewer people living right along the border meant fewer refugees who could flee on foot to tell the story. Haitian officials and catholic clergy at Ouanaminthe seem to have recorded the greatest volume of testimonies. Ouanaminthe is relatively convenient to the metropolis of Cap-Haïtien, and these testimonies were the first to reach diplomats and journalists. A smaller set of reports from Haitian authorities at Las Caobas did record the testimony of survivors and the names of dozens of victims in the summer of 1938. Killing happened in various parts of the country, including locales quite removed from the borderline, but the greatest concentrations of ethnic Haitians lived in communities surrounding such towns as Monte Cristi, Dajabón, Restauración, and Loma de Cabrera. Killing seems to have been especially intense in those regions. Barahona, where artist Antonio Joseph was born, was an example of a southern town with a large population of ethnic Haitians. Derby reminds us that the region was known for Haitian coffee growers, and further sources on the killings there may yet come to light.

Rather than a separate event that took place in the south, *desalojo* seems to have been a euphemistic expression used by officials to describe the removal and disappearance of ethnic Haitians as a means of

sidestepping any explicit mention of the violence. Even in the 1940s, well after an official indemnity agreement between the Dominican and Haitian governments, Dominican officials feigned ignorance about the massacre even as they maintained a policy of killing any Haitian refugees who returned. When they occasionally referred to the events in question, they characterized them euphemistically as *el desalojo*, rather than as a massacre or series of massacres. Again, although there were widespread deportations during the campaign, claims of mass deportation and civilian “riots” were also used as a fig leaf both during and after the killings.

A discussion of this terminology offers a window into the ways in which the event has been named, remembered, and also purposefully obscured. In the Dominican Republic, a less euphemistic term than *desalojo*, known to civilians and scholars of the era but entirely absent in official records, is *el corte*. This is perhaps best translated as “the cutting” or “the cull.” The event is also remembered as *la masacre*. In Haiti, survivors and their descendants often refer to the events as *Masak la* (the massacre), *Kout Kouto a* (the stabbing), or *Kouri a* (the flight, the displacement, or the exodus), and sometimes *Kouri Trujil* (the flight from Trujillo). A few Haitians, mainly intellectuals and activists, now call it *jenosid* (genocide). This last term acquired more currency amid recent political debates over citizenship, the new Dominican constitution, prominent court cases, and contemporary deportation campaigns. The use of *Kouri a* among refugees and survivors in Haiti has not yet appeared in the scholarship, but it reflects the memory of desperate flight and encodes the resilience and resistance of the people who successfully achieved an exodus against terrible odds.

Evidence of an earlier start date for the violence has been systematically concealed, but a critical examination of available sources at least raises the possibility that by May 1937 at the latest, Dominican authorities had adopted a pronounced new campaign of deportations, denationalization, and secret killing. Official references to trucks and jailhouses stuffed full of detainees, jailers running out of money to purchase meager rations for detainees, as well as instructions to hide the trucks and not to record the actual details of the operations, leave room for speculation. The summer 1937 deportation campaign may have represented a kind of initial phase that I consider contiguous and related to the fall massacre, during which survivors who crawled out of mass graves reported that the executioners used false pretenses of deportation to control crowds of detained Haitians.

By May 1937, Dominican officials were already corresponding internally on the topic of a campaign against the Haitians. This suggests that the 1937 Haitian Massacre may well have been planned in May of that year

or before. By June, immigration officials began with mass roundups of ethnic Haitians in the south.

THE INTERPRETIVE PROBLEM OF OFFICIAL CONCEALMENT

Much of the history of the 1937 Massacre will remain obscured by the perpetrators and shrouded in mystery. That officials made clear in some documents that they were consciously concealing their actions means that interpreting some of their actions is left for speculation and imagination on the historian's part. Dominican officials did not mind documenting deportation, mass arrest, and imprisonment. They wanted to conceal what they considered the worst of their acts: large-scale murder of defenseless men, women, and children. This explains why they avoided any mention of killing in the sources pertaining to the campaign in the southern border region for 1937–1939. It likewise explains why Valdez and the lower-level Dominican officials did not produce any information on the northern border region in 1937 – they avoided leaving behind any documents at all to do with the slaughter. The entire genocide in the northern border region is effectively silenced and appears as a nonevent. News of the killings emerged only with the arrival of refugee eyewitnesses whose testimonies were recorded officially by church and government officials on the Haitian side of the border. These documents, along with subsequent interviews, have provided the most authoritative accounts.

In the pages that follow, I have tried to consider whether my official sources encode any evidence of concealed killing. Because the campaign was secretly planned and implemented, and subsequently covered up, some dimensions of the violence will necessarily remain unknown. However, it is possible to interrogate the nature of the concealment in the state documents, especially given survivors' testimonies from 1937 and subsequent oral sources.

The 1937 Genocide in the Dominican Republic differed from the case of Rwanda in many ways, including its magnitude. But I expect that readers will take some interest in possible comparative dimensions of two campaigns of killing separated by half a century but both conducted largely with machetes and in which state authorities mobilized differing levels of civilian participation. In its own ways, the 1937 Haitian Massacre also fits with Mahmood Mamdani's observations about the complex interplay between official and popular emphases. In his consideration of Rwanda 1994, Mamdani writes,

The violence of the genocide was the result of both planning and participation. The agenda imposed from above became a gruesome reality to the extent it resonated with perspectives from below. Rather than accent one or the other side of this relationship and thereby arrive at either a state-centered or a society-centered explanation, a complete picture of the genocide needs to take both sides into account.³⁷

I would argue that the 1937 Massacre was far more the conspiratorial design of Trujillo and his closest collaborators at the tyrannical commanding heights of his militarized dictatorship than it was the product of popular racism, but much of the scholarship on the history of the massacre has not sufficiently explored troubling dimensions of civilian complicity and the wider societal development of anti-Haitian racism and repression in the two decades leading up to the killings.

It is true that Trujillo's regime fostered effusively fraternal displays of cooperation with their Haitian counterparts during a series of formal diplomatic engagements that accompanied border treaty negotiations culminating in the conclusion of a treaty in 1936. Ironically, it was on the basis of the conclusion of this treaty that Dominican law professors nominated Trujillo and Vincent for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1936. I demonstrate that anti-Haitian repression was in fact mounting in the Dominican border region notwithstanding a simultaneous string of highly visible official demonstrations of strong bilateral diplomatic relations that Bernardo Vega and other historians have chronicled and highlighted as a counterintuitive context for a horrific genocide.

US INVOLVEMENT AND INFLUENCE

The US military occupation of both the Dominican Republic and Haiti set the stage for 1937 at multiple levels. Suzy Castor points out that in Haiti, the US occupiers attempted to create a profitable plantation sector of the sort they established in other "banana republics" of the region, granting vast tracts of land to such ultimately unsuccessful enterprises as The Haytian Fruit Company, the Haytian American Development Company, and others. Contemporary Haitian observer Georges Séjourné estimated that land concessions seized by American companies displaced something like 50,000 Haitians. Concentrated in the north, the failed American policy of plantation development through displacement

³⁷ Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 7.

pushed many Haitians into Dominican border communities and thereby fed the 1937 body count, Castor argues.³⁸

Castor's point is important, but an emphasis on the immigration of Haitians to the Dominican Republic on the eve of 1937 risks feeding the overarching discourse of a Haitian "peaceful" invasion, and obscuring the well-documented reality that a significant proportion of the massacre victims were multigenerational natives of Dominican territory. As Derby points out, "The 'Haitian' population living in the Dominican border provinces, however, was already an old and well-established group in the 1930s, well integrated into the Dominican frontier economy and society."³⁹ She places "Haitian" in scare quotes in recognition that many of them were born on Dominican soil. Local court records confirm that many of the ethnic Haitians in the region were Dominican-born. My sources tell the story of rooted people, mainly but not exclusively agriculturalists and pastoralists. I interviewed many who recalled living relatively prosperous lives producing coffee, farming food crops, and raising abundant livestock. In the frontier towns, some practiced skilled trades such as tailoring, baking, shoemaking, and blacksmithing. A few served as local officials, judges, and mayors.

The local origins of many victims' families stretch into periods when the region's documentary record was sparse indeed. Available records from the colonial period and the turbulent era of the Haitian Revolution indicate that the rugged border country was a place of refuge for insurgent military factions as well as civilian refugees. Leaving aside the Dominican nation-state first founded in 1844, what we might term a proto-Haitian presence in the border region is older than the Haitian nation-state itself, founded in 1804.

Returning to the question of American influence and American culpability, in 1919, three years after the Marines took over Santo Domingo, Executive Order 372 officially required that all "non-Caucasian" migrant laborers entering the Dominican Republic be in possession of 50 dollars. This requirement was never rigidly enforced. Fifty dollars was a princely sum in this era and the very poverty that compelled West Indian or Haitian migrant laborers to cut cane in the Dominican Republic meant that none of them had this money. Occupying forces probably designed

³⁸ Suzy Castor, *L'Occupation Americaine d'Haïti* (Port-au-Prince: Societé Haitienne d'Histoire, 1988), 100.

³⁹ Lauren Derby, "Haitians, Magic, and Money: Raza and Society in the Haitian-Dominican Borderlands, 1900 to 1937," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 36, no. 3 (1994): 508.

the Executive Order to allow American authorities discretion in the admission of migrants, and the cash requirement certainly would have pressured migrants to acquire the sponsorship of sugar companies. The law prescribed a fine of between 10 and 100 dollars for undocumented migrants caught without a *licencia de permanencia*. People who received the 10-dollar fine could rarely afford to pay it and were instead sentenced to ten days in jail before being deported. Although the 1919 law did not designate the cost of the license, in the early 1930s, ethnically Haitian detainees who hoped to avoid deportation were forced to pay 3 or sometimes 6 pesos to acquire the document.⁴⁰

Executive Order 372 emerged in 1919 amid a boom in sugar prices known in Dominican history as the “Dance of the Millions.” The sugar boom created spiking seasonal demand for sugar workers, who flocked in record numbers from Haiti and the Lesser Antilles to work on industrial sugar plantations, the majority of which were American-owned. Although intended to regulate and draw further state revenue from these migrants, the racial component of this law reflects the American and Dominican authorities’ concerns over the growing Black demographic presence.⁴¹ Even though racial prejudice had long existed in Dominican society in various forms, the US occupation of the Dominican Republic brought an American-inspired form of legally codified racial discrimination. As it turns out, the American occupiers not only wrote the law, they also directly enforced it. In December 1921, US Marine Fourth Company Commander Harry Hurst, who headed the Dominican Constabulary at Monte Cristi, personally dispatched four ethnically Haitian detainees to the civil courthouse at Dajabón where they stood trial for violating Executive Order 372. In court, the judge pronounced that as a “non-Caucasian *braçero*,” Graciis Benjamin, who had been living in the Dominican Republic for fourteen years, would be fined 10 pesos and deported to Haiti. On the same day, Hurst sent another ethnically Haitian defendant to trial for illegally crossing the border. She was a

⁴⁰ Three Dominican pesos in the early 1930s was equivalent to 60 US cents; it represented a significant sum in a society where people came to blows in the marketplace over one or two Dominican cents, which amounted to a fraction of a US cent.

⁴¹ Executive Order 372 seems to have been only the second formally discriminatory racial law in the history of the Dominican Republic, following the 1907 law passed by President Ramón Cáceres to encourage the “colonization” of border regions by families of the “white race.” Ramon Cáceres, “Ley sobre la colonización y fomento de las fronteras,” April 24, 1907, *Colección de leyes, decretos, 1907*, 353. “[F]amilias de agricultores de la raza blanca.”

mother who claimed that she crossed to harvest some food for her sick children. The authorities jailed her for three months.⁴²

Whereas previous Dominican regimes and laws did not place any racial or ethnic qualifications on citizenship and belonging, the forces of “modernization” were envisioning an exclusionary new version of citizenship predicated on a definition of *Dominicanidad* that favored European and Hispanic language, race, and culture.

Executive Order 372 forever changed the experiences of Haitian immigrants and Dominican-born ethnic Haitians. By November 1921, less than two years after Snowden issued the order, the newly created Dominican National Guard was patrolling the border and arresting ethnically Haitian civilians on suspicion of illegal immigration.

Although Executive Order 372 predated the rule of Trujillo by over a decade, before 1930, Dominican-born people of Haitian descent who were arrested under this law were generally able to prove their citizenship. Also, before 1930, Dominicans of Haitian descent could rely on the testimony of local citizens to prove their citizenship without any recourse to documents. Even Haitian-born immigrants were often protected from prosecution by local judges if they owned property or were productive laborers. But 1930 represented a sea change. Starting in this year, ethnic Haitians who claimed in court that they were born on Dominican soil were deported to Haiti for the first time.

American occupiers doubled down on the categories of “Caucasian” and “non-Caucasian” introduced first in Dominican legislation in 1912. This terminology was eagerly adopted by the Trujillo regime. The terms circulated widely in a region very much influenced by scientific racism and official demographic campaigns of whitening. In his influential 1974 book *Black into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought*, Thomas Skidmore points out that in 1913, the Brazilian aristocrat, intellectual, and statesman Martin Francisco argued that “although the Negro had been indispensable in Brazil’s agricultural growth, the ‘caucasian blood’ was ‘stronger’ and therefore was now ‘dominating the Ethiopian.’”⁴³ Skidmore discusses the ways in which the early twentieth-century “whitening ideal,”⁴⁴ though based on largely European and American

⁴² US Marine Corps Fourth Company Commander Henry (Harry) E. Hurst. Commanding Officer, 4th Company P.N.D. Dajabón D.R. to Alcalde de Dajabón, D.R. Alcaldías de Dajabón 1921 Leg. 4 3/003809 Exp. 176 Leg. 4 Paq. 9.

⁴³ Thomas Skidmore, *Black into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought* [1974, 1993] (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 66.

⁴⁴ Skidmore, *Black into White*, ch. 6.

intellectual trends, took on its own meaning in various Brazilian contexts, where many of the country's elite adopted but also adapted the theory by excluding the common trope among European racial ideologues, who decried the degeneracy of mixed categories. In the Dominican case, the local adaptations of racial theory were many and have been the subject of much scholarly interpretation.⁴⁵ The language of Executive Order 372 exemplifies an issue that has attracted the attention of many scholars: the condition of an overwhelmingly nonwhite nation-state ruled by a political class that was immersed in white supremacist thinking.

The extreme dimensions of the 1937 Genocide come into relief when viewed in the comparative light of the especially parallel case of Cuba. The early twentieth-century Cuban sugar industry was homologous to the Dominican case in a variety of ways. In both cases, foreign capital ran many of the large *centrales*, massive industrial sugar refineries that heavily exploited the labor of large numbers of poorly paid migrant cane-cutters both from British West-Indian colonies and from Haiti. In both cases, the presence of these migrants further provoked racist discourse. Arguably, before 1937, the public expression of anti-Black political rhetoric and the incidents of anti-Black violence were especially harsh in Cuba in the years before Cuba's mass deportation campaign of 1937. Marc McLeod explains that Haitian cane-cutters in Cuba in the 1930s faced discriminatory labor laws, extremes of privation, a public discourse that decried them as undesirable, occasional violent attacks, and waves of forcible deportation that culminated with almost 25,000 deported in 1937. Repression and forcible deportation of Haitian cane-cutters was an expression of Cuban officials' explicit goal of "ethnically improving" their country.⁴⁶

But unlike Cuba, the Dominican borderlands were home to rooted communities of ethnically Haitian farmers, who, as I discuss in Chapters 1 and 2, asserted firmly that they were natives rather than *braçeros* when Dominican authorities arrested and extorted them under racialized legislation designed to police and tax the flow of foreign laborers. Trujillo's answer to these communities was to plot their total destruction through mass murder. Only in the case of the Dominican Republic did a special confluence of racially and ethnically discriminatory policies,

⁴⁵ See April Mayes, *The Mulatto Republic: Class, Race, and Dominican National Identity* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015).

⁴⁶ 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 (1998): 613.

scientifically justified theories of race borrowed from both European and North American influences, a “modernizing” spirit of elite-directed demographic engineering, and the particular political decisions of a totalitarian tyrant elevate the general phenomenon of Latin American racism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to such a terrible culmination in the form of outright genocide.

ON GENOCIDE

One of the main factors that distinguishes the 1937 Massacre is that the numbers of victims make it by far the largest single event of its kind in the modern history of the Americas. In terms of the sheer magnitude of the killing, the 1937 Massacre went well beyond other stark outbreaks of twentieth-century campaigns of anti-Black violence, such as the 1912 repression of Cuba’s Partido Independiente de Color, or the massacres in Tulsa, Oklahoma or Elaine, Arkansas. Also, the fully genocidal dimension of Trujillo’s anti-Haitian campaign sets it apart, as nowhere in Cuba or the US South did anti-Black race rioters or military units execute so many women and children in a concerted effort to exterminate entire communities down to their last member. When in 1912 the whites of Forsyth County, Georgia ethnically cleansed their county by driving out over 1,000 Black residents and burning down their property, they did not slaughter scores of women and children. In this sense, North American comparisons to 1937 call the historian to look farther back to massacres of Native Americans in the prior century, which historians such as Benjamin Madley carefully categorize as incidents of genocide.⁴⁷

In addition to questions of magnitude and the significant distinction between racial violence and displacement vs. genocidal extermination, I posit an inverted comparison between the 1937 Massacre and both the mass incidents of racial violence in the pre-World War II US “race riots” and the widespread, small-scale phenomenon of lynching. Both US race riots and the US pattern of lynching represented a prolonged condition of civilian-led violence facilitated by multiple layers of state complicity. Trujillo’s anti-Haitian campaign and its culmination in the 1937 killings represent a centralized, state-led conspiracy to commit mass murder, dutifully executed by military men and local government

⁴⁷ Benjamin Madley, *An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe, 1846–1873* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016).

officials, and facilitated by significant forms of civilian complicity, all of which I endeavor to explore in depth in the following chapters.

The massacre stands as an exemplary case of twentieth-century genocide because the killers used ambush and deception to maximize the death count, rather than simply ethnically cleansing the border provinces by allowing the bulk of the ethnically Haitian population to flee. Once news of the killing began to spread across the northern border region, groups of soldiers and civilian deputies took up positions at main points of transit and key crossing points, where they killed people as they attempted to flee into Haiti. Survivors' accounts emphasize that killing was especially intense along the very banks of rivers that divided the two countries – the killers were driven by a spirit of extermination rather than a campaign of expulsion. Survivors' accounts from people left for dead in mass graves repeatedly emphasize that people were rounded up and told that they were to be processed for deportation so that the one-by-one killing could be accomplished efficiently, minimizing panics, scuffles, and escapes.

Genocide Studies

Historians of the 1937 Haitian Massacre have acknowledged that it was a genocide. However, the massacre has not been incorporated in genocide studies. This in part is an enduring legacy of the fact that it was officially suppressed and largely misrepresented in the international press. Launched in secret, intense killings went on for many days before the first refugees made reports to the Haitian military, clergy, and notaries. These reports compiled by Haitian officials took days to reach US diplomats and journalists. The first Haitian newspaper article appeared on October 18, but it took weeks more for the news to reach the pages of the international press, and many of the initial reports were heavily tainted by the misrepresentations of Trujillo's government, which even placed a lengthy paid announcement in the *New York Times* to advance their claim that the "incidents" were the result of spontaneous clashes between Dominican farmers and Haitian squatters. Interestingly, US Senator Hamilton Fish was one of the few prominent foreign officials to speak out about the 1937 Genocide, but he changed his tune after an official visit to Ciudad Trujillo. Subsequent press reports include muckraking allegations that he received a considerable payment from Trujillo.

Attitudes toward race impacted the paucity of reports in the press as well as the nonexistent US response. A remarkable exchange on the floor of the US Congress in 1938 proves that US politicians were at least aware

of the 1937 Massacre. Before receiving his payoff from Trujillo, Representative Hamilton Fish III declared before Speaker Sam Rayburn that “one of the most hideous massacres in our time” had just occurred, “without [*sic*] scarcely a reference in the press. Why it has not been featured in the press I do not know. It may be on account of the fact that the victims belonged to the colored race.”⁴⁸ The retort of representative James Rankin of Mississippi revealed a great deal about American racial ideology and the response to the killings. Rankin said that “The gentleman is not leaving the impression that these were white people who killed these colored people, is he? He is not intending to leave that impression, I hope. As a matter of fact, they are all colored people. The people of the island of Haiti are all the same kind of people, virtually, whether they live in Haiti or Santo Domingo. They just speak different languages; that is about the only difference.”⁴⁹ These ethnological presumptions about the “island of Haiti” reflected the familiarity that the USA acquired with the two countries during the simultaneous occupations of the Dominican Republic in (1916–1924) and Haiti (1915–1935). Since US media and society had been largely indifferent to Haitian deaths at the hands of the US Marines, they could hardly have been expected to raise an outcry in 1937. Also, American leaders were not terribly concerned over the mass murder of Haitians in an era in which many of them were indifferent to the generalized phenomenon of anti-Black violence within US borders. In March of 1939, many US senators voted against a bill (HR 1507) to “assure persons within the jurisdiction of every state the equal protection to punish the crime of lynching.”⁵⁰

As Trouillot observes, important historical events are not necessarily acknowledged or appreciated in the era in which they occur. Generally, the 1937 Haitian Massacre was underreported and trivialized in the minor coverage that it received at the time. The scale of the killing was generally diminished, and newspapers mostly failed to convey the scale or character of the massacre. In his work on another aspect of Haitian history, Trouillot writes about the epistemological problem of ideologically inflected silences. He reminds us that erasure and banalization both

⁴⁸ Quoted in Fiehrer, “Political Violence,” 15. *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States* (Vol. V, 1937), 133–141; Congressional Record, 75th Congress, 2nd Session, Senate (Appendix, 19 January), 750–772; House of Representatives, 2039–2204; 2043.0.

⁴⁹ *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States* (Vol. V, 1937), Congressional Record, 75th Congress, 2nd Session, Vol. 82, Part II, 2040–2043.

⁵⁰ Fiehrer, “Political Violence,” 12.

generate glaring silences that blanket important episodes and phenomena in world history. The forces and agendas underlying the silence that Trouillot sees shrouding the treatment of the Haitian Revolution in world history have also helped make the 1937 Haitian Massacre into a non-event. He writes,

The treatment of the Haitian Revolution in written history outside of Haiti reveals two families of tropes that are identical, in formal (rhetorical) terms, to figures of discourse of the late eighteenth century. The first kind of tropes are formulas that tend to erase directly the fact of a revolution. I call them, for short, formulas of erasure. The second kind tends to empty a number of singular events of their revolutionary content so that the entire string of facts, gnawed from all sides, becomes trivialized. I call them formulas of banalization.⁵¹

To add another historical element to Trouillot's formula of erasure, I draw attention to the direct historical concealment that takes place when states grasp that their actions are outrageous, illegal, and therefore politically troublesome. As they planned the 1937 Haitian Massacre, the perpetrators were intensely aware of the significance of the genocidal killing and announced in the documents that they had to conceal their actions so as not to leave any trace of a killing campaign against ethnic Haitians. Concealment of the event took place as the archives were produced, but it was especially effective because the victims of the violence were Blacks.

Scholars of genocide studies have yet to properly include the 1937 Haitian Massacre among the other significant histories of genocide in the twentieth century. Leading volumes undertaken as comprehensive overviews of genocide studies neglect to mention the massacre. In both Ben Kiernan's *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur* and *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, the 1937 Haitian genocide is entirely absent. Arguably, the world has not forgotten the 1937 Haitian Massacre since it was generally not aware of it in the first place. The works mentioned above reflect the ambitious growth of the field of genocide studies, which does endeavor to explore the category's relationship to histories of colonialism and race.

Adam Jones's comprehensive study of genocide from antiquity to modern times does explore Atlantic slavery, postslavery lynching in the USA, the Biafra War, and a vast range of other events. Jones does center

⁵¹ Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 96–97.

Hispaniola as the first site of the extermination of indigenous people in the Americas. Undoubtedly, the history of genocide in the Caribbean looms large in colonial history, as the near-total elimination of the native peoples on many Caribbean islands has led historians to interpret the early modern colonial system there in terms of a historical “blank slate.” But what explains the continued erasure of the 1937 Haitian Massacre?

It is worth mentioning that although Jones erases the 1937 Haitian Massacre, the early history of Haiti is quite central to the conceptual categories that he formulates in this comprehensive study of genocides. As part of a discussion on the question of whether genocide is ever justifiable, he uses the wars in late eighteenth-century Bolivia and the Caste War of Yucatán in the nineteenth century, alongside Dessaline’s 1805 massacre of the remaining French as examples of a category that he and Nicholas Robins call “subaltern genocide” or “genocides of the oppressed.”⁵² What explains the erasure of the 1937 Haitian Massacre in the same text that uses the massacre of whites during the Haitian Revolution as a reference point? Jones is not blind to the African diaspora within the arena of genocide studies. He gives credence to the use of the genocide category to characterize the Atlantic slave trade. He references the widespread practice of lynching, and he considers the radical African American William L. Patterson’s 1951 petition “We Charge Genocide,” in which he used the UN Convention as a device to expose the plight of Blacks in the USA.

The banalization of the 1937 Haitian Massacre reflects the enduring power of Trujillo’s propaganda. From the earliest journalistic reports to recent scholarship, the views of the perpetrators echo loudly. Newspaper articles from November and December 1937 record that several thousand desperate immigrants were killed in “clashes.” Victims were portrayed as foreign squatters, not landowners, foreign nationals rather than birthright citizens. Journalistic accounts also suggested that the violence was a rekindling of age-old conflict between Haitians and Dominicans, the sort of news bound to come out of the tropics, and probably not terribly important since *The Observer* observed that it was a “clash of negro states.”⁵³

In the immediate aftermath of the killings, the prominent Haitian writer and ethnologist Jacques Roumain published an essay on the

⁵² Adam Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2017), 65.

⁵³ “Massacre Reported: Threatened Clash of Negro States,” *The Observer*, November 7, 1937.

1937 Haitian Massacre and compared it to the plight of the Jews under Hitler and US lynching of Blacks. Considering the role of common soldiers and civilian perpetrators, Roumain wrote that he preferred

to believe that these people, whose lives have been worsened by the distress to which the dictator Trujillo regime has reduced them, obeyed with the same obscure motive that drive a pack of “poor whites” in the southern United States to lynch a black man, and the ruined petty bourgeois in Hitlerland to mistreat a Jew.⁵⁴

Although the 1937 Massacre occurred seven years before Lemkin coined the term, it fits the UN Convention on Genocide. Roumain’s comparison with the rise of Nazism proved prescient. After the systematic killing of millions of Jews in the Holocaust, the Genocide Convention was adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 9, 1948. It was the first human rights treaty to establish genocide as a crime and represented an international commitment to the prosecution and prevention of genocide. Roumain’s predictions are a strong reminder of the interpretive value of reading a novel conceptual category backwards in time to encompass earlier events. The fact that the convention’s definition did not exist in 1937 should not prevent historians from seeing it within this conceptual and legal framework.

As with Madley’s work on the history of California native populations, I have chosen to retroactively interpret the UN Convention’s legal and analytical definition of genocide to categorize the 1937 Haitian Massacre. Lemkin invoked the term in 1944 and recognized that there were many cases of genocide in history prior to the 1940s. By 1948, the UN Convention provided a more restricted legal definition for genocide. Article II of the 1948 United Nations Convention defines genocide as

any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such, including (a) killing members of the group, (b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, (c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, (d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group, (e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

In addition to defining these policies as acts of genocide, the convention also included in article III that (a) genocide, (b) conspiracy to commit

⁵⁴ Jacques Roumain, “La Tragedie Haitienne,” in *Oeuvres completes*, ed. Leon-François Hoffman (Paris: Coll. Archivos, 2003), 682–688; translated by Patti M. Marxsen, “Dictatorship and Dissent: Jacques Roumain’s ‘La Tragedie Haitienne, 1937,’” *Journal of Haitian Studies* 23, no. 2 (2017): 112.

genocide, (c) direct and public incitement to commit genocide, (d) attempt to commit genocide, (e) complicity in genocide, were punishable by law.

The 1937 Massacre was a genocide because the perpetrators of the genocide did “destroy in part” ethnic Haitians in the border regions. It was a policy contrived to eliminate as many ethnic Haitians as they could, including women and children. The methods used at the time of the killing represent the clearest evidence that the Dominican state decided to wipe out ethnic Haitians in Dominican border regions through systematic murder. As survivors have often repeated, they watched defenseless ethnic Haitians get killed up to the very edge of the Haitian border itself. Indeed, the banks of the Massacre River and the Libón River were important sites of concentrated killing. The image of a dead woman with a baby nursing on her chest was most often associated with piles of bodies along the border.

With regard to the key element of intent, the 1937 events easily fit the strictest, most narrow definition of genocide as described in the 1948 UN Convention. Trujillo’s campaign was not simply about killing a few ethnic Haitians, or a few thousand. The victims were not incidental collateral damage of a deportation campaign, and the killing was not the spontaneous act of angry civilians. There is no way to measure the anguish of victims and survivors who watched “a world destroyed,” as entire families and communities disappeared. However, survivors did live their entire lives with the physical and mental scars. Even in 2018, researchers could easily encounter survivors who still bear the mark of the machete on their bodies. Furthermore, thousands of survivors died due to the loss of their land and economic livelihoods. Others lost their minds, like the son of Cime Jean, who went mad after being the sole survivor when the soldiers came to kill his family.⁵⁵ Ethnically Haitian survivors often speak about remaking new families after arriving in Haiti as refugees. Even though the legal definition of genocide did not exist when the Haitian Massacre occurred, the event was immediately contemporaneous with the Rape of Nanjing and proximate to the Holocaust and other fascist atrocities in Europe. Had the victims of the 1937 Haitian Massacre been white, the story would almost certainly not have been obscured for so long. That 1937 went unpunished surely emboldened Trujillo’s regime and paved the way for horrific treatment of ethnic Haitians through subsequent generations. Dominican sources indicate that ethnic Haitians were killed along the border as late as 1946. To understand the Haitian Massacre in light of

⁵⁵ Cime Jean, September 28, 1937.

the international history of genocide is to begin to consider more seriously histories of African-descended people. By now, the leading state officials who directed the 1937 Genocide are long dead. However, the Convention's definition remains a meaningful theoretical framework for understanding the 1937 Haitian Massacre. Interestingly enough, the Dominican Republic was one of the signatories of the original 1948 Convention, but it is conspicuous as the only signatory nation listed by the UN as not having ratified the treaty.⁵⁶

THE GEOGRAPHY OF REPRESSION

This book revolves around the 1937 Massacre and the transformations that occurred in the northern and southern border provinces, but it also explores the ethnic Haitian experience in areas far from the border, especially during and after the 1937 Massacre. At the same time, changes in the legal status of ethnic Haitians in the Dominican Republic reached beyond the border and into nearly every region of the country. Through studying the concerted campaigns of deportation throughout the 1930s and early 1940s, this book examines the plight of ethnically Haitian farmers, artisans, and *braçeros* who were detained in such places as Baní, San Cristóbal, Samaná, Sanchez, and the capital. Mass roundups and deportations began along the border in 1930 but did not stop there. Vega records that in 1932, several thousand people living outside of sugar regions were rounded up and deported to Haiti.⁵⁷ This book makes use of the records of the Dominican immigration authorities, which record state officials' careful concealment of a nationwide campaign of mass roundups and deportations that took place in 1937–1939. I speculate that this campaign of mass arrests, contemporaneous with the slaughter of 1937, involved secret, summary executions of ethnically Haitian prisoners. Finally, this book examines a law issued by Trujillo in 1943 that called for the destruction of any Haitian farms on Dominican territory. Along the border, this resulted in army patrols being sent to root out secret border farms tended by Haitian refugees.

⁵⁶ United Nations Treaty Collection, "Status of Treaties." https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=IV-1&chapter=4&clang=en.

⁵⁷ Vega writes, "in 1932 Trujillo deported several thousand Haitians, but these were not *braçeros* on the sugar plantations. This was the first effective means that he took to reduce the Haitian presence in the country." Vega, *Trujillo y Haití*, vol. II, 24. "En 1932 Trujillo deportó a varios miles de haitianos, pero éstos no eran *braçeros* de los ingenios. Fue esa la primera medida efectiva que tomó para reducir la presencia de haitianos en el país."

In eastern areas of the country, such as Samaná and Trinidad, the law was used to harass, evict, and deport immigrant sharecroppers as well as locally born ethnic Haitians, and to confiscate their crops and livestock.

A History of the Border

Slavery and racial conflict in Hispaniola date to the earliest decades of Spanish colonization (see Map 0.1). Indeed, one of the great interpretive challenges of approaching the question of anti-Haitian state repression in modern Dominican history involves the accretion and intercombination of different historical layers of anti-Black, anti-Haitian ideology. For example, although North American military occupiers brought in their own form of codified racial discrimination fully 100 years ago, they certainly did not introduce racial thinking or racial conflict in a country that witnessed the first New World slave plantations, whose small outward-looking elite had been steeped in nineteenth-century scientific racism, and whose political consciousness remained shaped by concepts of *limpieza de sangre* (blood purity) and *Hispanidad* inherited directly from the era of Columbus.

National historiographies of either Haiti or the Dominican Republic are inherently limited by the fact that the era of national independence encompasses well under half of the island's modern history. Racial strife and territorial conflict on the island of Hispaniola vastly predate the founding of either Haiti or the Dominican Republic. In roughly 1502, merely ten years after the first arrival of Columbus, Santo Domingo colonists had already begun to face a serious labor shortage due to the horrific death tolls among indigenous slaves from disease, violence, and forced labor. In response, they imported the first African slaves to the Americas. Twenty years later, in 1522, the first major slave uprising in the Americas took place on a sugar plantation owned by Christopher Columbus's son Diego Colon. Fugitives who survived this rebellion created the first Caribbean maroon communities.⁵⁸ For fully 500 years, the rural hinterlands of Hispaniola have been the site of conflict between changing generations of white metropolitan authorities and free Blacks.

⁵⁸ For extensive primary material on slavery in sixteenth-century Santo Domingo, see the CUNY Dominican Studies digital archival project First Blacks in the Americas: <http://firstblacks.org/en>.

Santo Domingo was the center of the first New World sugar boom during the first half of the sixteenth century. Santo Domingo's small sugar industry was fast overtaken by Brazil's. The Spanish colonial apparatus became far more interested in the mineral wealth of Mexico and Peru, and the anticommercial dead hand of Spanish mercantilism ultimately prevented the emergence of a particularly robust plantation sector in the early Spanish colonies. But if Santo Domingo could not afford to import many Black slaves overall, it also attracted very few white settlers. As a low-intensity cattle economy developed following the end of the sixteenth-century sugar boom, slaves became a minority of the population. A growing majority of free Blacks and mixed-race people favored rural ranching and small farms. In a rigid Spanish-colonial context in which Blackness was wedded to slavery and whiteness meant freedom, social and demographic realities were squeezed to fit the linguistic and conceptual confines of peninsular ideology. In the era that I study in this book, Haitian journalists satirized Dominicans' collective historical claim to whiteness and *Hispanidad*, referring sarcastically to the free people of color who during the colonial era came to refer to themselves as the *blancos de la tierra* in order to distinguish themselves from slaves.⁵⁹ Through much of the twentieth century, scholarly and lay observers of the Dominican Republic have repeatedly pondered the perverse tension of intense racial ideology and white supremacy in an overwhelmingly non-white society.

Narrow layers of light-skinned elite colonials were surely the most significant progenitors of modern Dominican racial thinking. Raymundo González considers the claim that the generalized poverty of a "flattened" and stagnant colonial economy reduced social distances between racial castes, but he also entertains the opposite notion advanced as well by Harry Hoetink – that widespread economic hardship and the specter of de facto racial leveling could have intensified an ideology of racial distinctions.⁶⁰

Racial consciousness in Dominican society first emerged from the Spanish colony and its sixteenth-century slave system. But the evolution of racial and national consciousness in the Dominican Republic was

⁵⁹ Rubén Silié, "Esclavitud y prejuicio de color en Santo Domingo," *Boletín de Antropología Americana* 20 (December 1989): 165.

⁶⁰ Raymundo González, *De esclavos a campesinos: Vida rural en Santo Domingo colonial* (Santo Domingo: Archivo General de la Nación, 2011); H. Hoetink, *The Dominican People, 1850–1900: Notes for a Historical Sociology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).

shaped by the changing sovereignties and politics that first divided Hispaniola between French and Spanish colonies, twice united Hispaniola under Haiti, and ultimately divided it between the two contemporary nation-states.

For the Spanish Empire, the loss of western Hispaniola, first to lawless buccaneers and eventually to the French crown, was self-inflicted on at least two levels. In the first place, as the quintessential mercantilist empire organized around the extraction of gold and silver through tribute and slavery and keeping interlopers out, Spain consistently failed to foster commerce. As the colony of Santo Domingo stagnated and shrank over the course of the sixteenth century, its sparsely populated coasts were increasingly visited by Dutch ships and other European smugglers. The abandoned areas, including Tortuga Island, the north coast, and Leogane, became refuges for buccaneers. In a draconian attempt to stamp out buccaneer and smuggler activity, suppress small maroon communities, and drive out Protestant heretics and European imperial rivals, the Spanish governor of Santo Domingo adopted a policy that added far more fuel to the fire. In 1605, Spanish King Philip III ordered Santo Domingo governor Antonio de Osorio to forcibly depopulate all colonial settlements along the northern and western coasts of Hispaniola. The campaign harmed the colony's internal economy, drove many colonists to leave, and left vast tracts of territory wide open for incursions and settlements from buccaneers and rival empires. French officer and colonial administrator Bertrand d'Ogeron led early French settlements at Petit-Goâve and Tortuga Island. The French and the Spanish fought over territory on Hispaniola both before and after the 1697 Peace of Ryswick, when Spain first formally acknowledged the French colony of Saint Domingue. The Massacre River, which separates Dajabón from Ouanaminthe, and which was a principal scene of the modern massacre discussed in this book, received its name from a 1728 massacre of French buccaneers by Spanish troops.

Although the French Empire was not ultimately as proficient in manufacturing and commerce as the English or Dutch, it was more economically vibrant than Spain. Eighteenth-century Bourbon mercantilism was apparently not as economically stifling as sixteenth-century Spanish mercantilism had been, and French Saint Domingue witnessed a profitable and brutal eighteenth-century plantation boom. By the eve of the Haitian Revolution in 1791, French Saint Domingue was importing remarkable numbers of slaves and exporting significant volumes of sugar and coffee. The deep, rich soils of the Haitian plains had scarcely been cultivated

since the demise of the native people. They yielded more sugar per acre than anywhere in the world. With the introduction of coffee to Saint Domingue in the first half of the eighteenth century, the French planters found a means to profitably exploit the colony's mountainous areas. By 1788, Saint Domingue supplied an estimated half of the coffee consumed in the Atlantic Basin, along with a massive proportion of the sugar.⁶¹ The smaller economy of sparsely populated Santo Domingo participated indirectly in the plantation boom in neighboring Saint Domingue. The eastern hinterland produced surpluses of draft animals that were sold west to power the French plantations.

At times, the Spanish colony also became a site of refuge and settlement for fugitive slaves and rebel maroons who fled intense exploitation under the French. In 1670, a Black slave called PadreJean led a dramatic uprising in northern Saint Domingue. Facing defeat at the hands of the French, PadreJean and his surviving followers fled eastward and eventually came to an accord with the Spanish authorities, who in 1678 authorized them to create a new settlement in the outskirts of Santo Domingo: San Lorenzo de los Negros Mina. The name referred to the fact that many of these Black rebels were from the area of el Mina Castle on the Gold Coast, Ghana.

Borrowing Antonio Benitez-Rojo's motif of the tragically cyclical "repeating island" of Caribbean history,⁶² troubled migrations to remote sanctuaries of Black survival seem to echo hauntingly through five centuries of Hispaniola's history. The massive slave imports of the Saint Domingue plantation boom generated a demographic imbalance. Spanish Santo Domingo, especially the rugged and remote districts along the border, was relatively empty of people, and at various points in history, the mountainous border regions drew migrants from the west. No less an authority than Reynaldo Valdez himself acknowledged the distant historical origins of the Haitian communities in the Dominican border provinces, when he disparaged their emergence as uncivilized maroon settlements.⁶³ During the eighteenth century, hundreds of fugitives from Saint Domingue plantations fled to the Maniel maroon communities in the Bahoruco mountains. These same regions had served as

⁶¹ Mark Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds: The History of Coffee and How It Transformed Our World* (London: Texere, 2001), 17.

⁶² Antonio Benitez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997).

⁶³ Director General de Inmigración Reynaldo Valdez, "Consideraciones Sobre La Inmigración Haitiana," *Listín Diario* (Santo Domingo), December 1, 1937, 1.

refuge for sixteenth-century maroons who fled the Spanish plantations. Immediately after the outbreak of the Haitian Revolution in August of 1791, Black insurgents moved eastward across Haiti's Plaine du Nord and sought refuge in Spanish territory. Many of the rebel leaders, including Toussaint Louverture, initially took commissions in the Spanish army as they made war on their former masters.⁶⁴

In 1794, Louverture abandoned the Spanish cause in favor of the French Republic after he learned that the Jacobin regime in Paris had officially abolished slavery in all French possessions. In January 1801, having bested all rivals in the war for Saint Domingue, Governor General Louverture occupied the Spanish colony of Santo Domingo and abolished slavery there for the first time. Napoleon sent French forces to invade Hispaniola and reestablish slavery. These forces held Santo Domingo until 1808, but were driven out of Haiti in 1803. The founding ruler of independent Haiti, Emperor Jean-Jacques Dessalines, declared Haitian independence on January 1, 1804. Emperor Dessalines aspired to unite the island under his military rule, as Louverture had briefly achieved several years earlier. He launched a two-pronged invasion of French-held Santo Domingo in 1805, and nearly captured the capital in a lengthy siege but was eventually driven out. His retreating columns set fires, looted livestock, and forcibly captured hundreds of civilians whom they brought to Haiti as forced laborers. As Dessalines and his immediate successor Henri Christophe relied on a system of forced labor to generate plantation exports and to construct massive fortifications, a trickle of laborers in northern Haiti fled eastward to set up unauthorized farms along the border. Ironically, these eastward refugees from early Haitian work gangs were fleeing the formally free soil of Haiti for nominally French colonial territory, where the rulers maintained slavery. But laborers who sought to farm on an isolated mountainside near Capotille, or who set up a fishing village on an island off of Monte Cristi, were not fleeing one regime for another, but were in fact gravitating toward the relative freedom of sparsely populated border areas.

Over the centuries, as the polities ruling Hispaniola have undergone waves of radical change and refashioning, the border has changed dramatically – both in terms of its physical contours and the different regimes that

⁶⁴ For a pioneering, fine-grained study of cross-island movements of people during the political turbulence of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see Graham Nessler, *An Islandwide Struggle for Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

have policed and shaped the movements of people and goods. As this book explores, the Haitian–Dominican border is no less artificial, mutable, and contested than other lines in the sand around the world. To the limited extent that we can conceptualize historical subjects as proto-Haitian or proto-Dominican in the colonial era, both ethnicities existed on both sides of the border long before either modern nation-state had come into being. The pre-1937 border region, which Eller calls the “center-island,” has been characterized by Lorgia García Peña as an “interethnic” space.⁶⁵ In certain border communities, mixed Haitian-Dominican people were apparently common enough to acquire their own designation. They were known in Haitian as *anega* and in Spanish as *rayanos* or *arrayanos* in reference to the *raya* or line that marked the border.⁶⁶ García Peña has centered this lesser-known terminology by theorizing hybrid Haitian-Dominican subjectivity in terms of “rayano consciousness.” She explores the work of Dominican border poet Manuel Rueda and critically interprets Juan Bosch’s 1940 story “Luis Pie,” identifying both as points of reference for the emergence of “rayano consciousness” and for a dissident, progressive Dominican counternarrative of solidarity and reconciliation with Haiti.⁶⁷ In this book I locate these terms of hybridity (*rayano* and *anega*) in their primary context, in the lived reality of border residents who grappled with problems of shifting borders, changing regimes, and hardening attitudes around the borders of *dominicanidad*, and in the correspondence and worldviews of authorities, from the top Dominican statesmen down to the rural Dominican officials who explicitly addressed the *rayanos* as a troubling social element.

Changing Borders

The official boundaries of French Saint Domingue, and the initial boundaries of independent Haiti as shown in Map 0.2 from 1814, cling to the western coast. Large areas of the interior officially belonged to the Spanish colony, including the inland towns of Hinja/Hinche, San Rafael/Saint-Raphaël, and San Miguel de la Atalaya/Saint-Michel-de-l’Attalaye.

⁶⁵ Eller, *We Dream Together*, 23; Lorgia García Peña, *The Borders of Dominicanidad: Race, Nation, and Archives of Contradiction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 134.

⁶⁶ I have been unable as yet to explain the etymology of *anega*, but the term is well known among survivors in Haiti and their descendants.

⁶⁷ García Peña, *Borders of Dominicanidad*, 125.



MAP 0.2 The colonial boundary.

Source: Map generated by author and redrawn courtesy of Joe LeMonnier, <https://mapartist.com/>

In 1820, the southern Haitian Republic under President Jean-Pierre Boyer defeated the northern regime of King Henri Christophe. Having unified Haiti and captured King Christophe's considerable treasury, President Boyer turned his attention toward the crumbling Spanish colonial administration in the east. In 1821–1822, vying Dominican leaders proposed joining the new confederation of Gran Colombia, unifying with Haiti, or striking out on their own. Early Dominican nationalist José Núñez de Cáceres declared the creation of the independent state of *Haití Español* in December 1821. He went on to attempt to gain the protection of newly independent Colombia. However, Boyer's military was by far the most significant force on the island, and the Dominicans who favored unification with Haiti won the day. Boyer and his army entered Santo Domingo in February 1822 and received the keys to the city from Núñez de Cáceres. No shots were fired. Just as Louverture had done twenty years earlier, Boyer again formally declared the abolition of slavery in Santo Domingo.

The following twenty years, known mainly as the “Haitian Occupation” among Dominican historians, but also described by some scholars as the era of unification, remains both obscure and controversial. The era of 1822–1844 witnessed outflows of Dominican émigrés, and almost certainly the relative empowerment of Black and mixed-race



MAP 0.3 The national boundary, circa 1900.

Source: Map generated by author and redrawn courtesy of Joe LeMonnier, <https://mapartist.com/>

Dominicans, some of whom were formally freed from slavery, and many of whom found some opportunity for advancement through service in the Haitian military. When the Boyer regime fell in 1843 amid liberal agitation and armed peasant rebellion in Haiti's southern peninsula, Dominican nationalists recognized the opportunity to win independence. Juan Pablo Duarte, leader of the pro-independence Trinitaria secret society, along with Francisco del Rosario Sanchez and Matías Ramón Mella, declared Dominican independence in February 1844. But the new Dominican Republic did not restore the colonial border that had existed before the Haitian Revolution. Following independence in 1844, Haiti retained Saint Michel l'Attalaye, Saint-Raphaël, Hinche, and significant stretches of land along the central border. Obviously Spanish place names such as Cerca Carvajal, Los Cacaos, or Rio Frio remain as evidence of the eastward movement of the border (see Map 0.3).

Immediately following the 1844 declaration of Dominican independence, former slave Santiago Basora led a brief uprising of Black Dominicans who feared that separation from Haiti could mean the return of slavery – a living reality nearby in Cuba and Puerto Rico, or farther afield in the USA or Brazil.⁶⁸ In response, the first official decrees of the

⁶⁸ Silvio Torres-Saillant, "The Tribulations of Blackness: Stages in Dominican Racial Identity," *Latin American Perspectives* 25, no. 3 (1998): 130.

Dominican Republic affirmed the total abolition of slavery, harsh punishments for slave traders, and the maintenance of a free-soil policy. Three subsequent Haitian rulers – Charles Rivière-Hérard, Jean-Louis Pierrot, and the Emperor Soulouque – each organized campaigns to reannex Santo Domingo. Each of these invasions failed miserably, but the fact that they were launched at all, and that they failed in the face of armed resistance, helped the Dominican political class to elaborate a narrative of Haitian expansionism and to cast the rule of Boyer as a *cautiverio babilónico*.⁶⁹ Nineteenth-century anti-Haitian discourse was not always explicitly racial. But often enough it was, especially from 1861, when the Dominican dictator Pedro Santana oversaw the brief reannexation of the Dominican Republic to the *madre Patria* – the slaveholding empire of Spain. Various schemes to whiten the Dominican Republic and to thereby bolster the Dominican elite's aspirations toward *Hispanidad* began to emerge in the nineteenth century. Dreams of white immigration and schemes to import Asian labor especially proliferated during the short-lived Spanish-colonial reannexation of Santo Domingo from 1861 to 1865.⁷⁰ Political campaigns to “whiten” Dominican society would reemerge during the twentieth century, and a modern ideal of racial demographic engineering inspired the repression and violence described in this book.

Ultimately, the Dominicans did not accept the recolonization scheme. The era of the Spanish reannexation of Santo Domingo, 1861–1865, witnessed significant Dominican–Haitian military and political collaboration. Many of the war's most significant campaigns were waged along the border. Although formally obliged to maintain diplomatic relations with Spain, Haitian President Fabre Nicolas Geffrard maneuvered to help expel Spain, with an eye toward preventing similar threats to his own country's independence. Founding independence leader Francisco del Rosario Sánchez organized resistance in Haiti and entered the Dominican Republic in 1861, where he was captured and executed by the Spanish. The war for the restoration of Dominican independence began in earnest in 1863, with decentralized, mass, armed mobilization and the *Grito de Capotillo*, a daring armed uprising along the northern border. The northern border towns of Guayubín, Capotillo, and Sabaneta were cradles of the rebellion and sites of some of the most important battles. Border caudillos such as Benito Monción and Santiago Rodríguez retreated and attacked

⁶⁹ This usage drawn from contemporary Dominican political discourse translates to “Babylonian captivity.”

⁷⁰ See Eller, *We Dream Together*, ch. 3.

back and forth across the Haitian border as they skirmished with Spanish forces. Gregorio Luperon and Ulises Heureaux, both of partially Haitian ancestry and future military rulers of the Dominican Republic, began their wartime careers in the Dominican Restoration War.

Following the ouster of the Spanish occupiers in 1865, Dominican politics returned to a cyclical pattern of so-called *caudillismo* not dissimilar from the condition in Haiti where periodic uprisings and coups marked the transitions between successive dictatorships. Fighting during the Dominican Restoration War from 1863 to 1865 was especially intense along the northern border, but after 1865, this region once again became something of a refuge for civilians fleeing war and conscription in Haiti. At Ouanaminthe, local law professor and journalist Maismy-Mary Fleurant recounts the stories he heard from his grandfather Dumesle Joseph, who fled the massacre as an adult. Fleurant's grandfather told him that the family had started farming and raising cattle in Dominican territory during the *temps bayonette*, when the border was open, and the relatively quiet and empty Dominican hillsides offered some refuge from civil wars in Haiti. Other people in the region speak of the *eleksyon a fusil* or "elections by rifle" that shook Haiti periodically in the decades before the US occupation, and they explain that their ancestors came to live in Dominican territory because they were trying to avoid the depredations of civil war and the prospect of conscription.⁷¹ When asked how her parents came to live in the Dominican Republic, where she was born, massacre survivor Madame Jean Tiresias reports that in her parents' time, "there were the *cacos*, who were marching around killing people," and so her parents fled the violence to live on the Dominican side of the border.⁷² Dating to the nineteenth century, the Haitian term *caco* referred to rural armed bands. The most prominent *cacos* were the armed nationalists who rose up against the US occupiers. Whether her parents fled during the uprising against the US occupation, or earlier internecine fighting between different groups of Haitian *cacos*, her story emphasizes that instability drove Haitian farmers to seek quieter land across the border.

With the dawn of the twentieth century, the opening of the Panama Canal, and the eventual outbreak of World War I, the island of Hispaniola would soon be fully in the thrall of a new imperial juggernaut:

⁷¹ Ouanaminthe, December 18, 2017, Maismy-Mary Fleurant. Fleurant has also published on the history and memory of 1937. See Maismy-Mary Fleurant, "Massacre de 1937: Les frontières de l'oubli," *Le Nouvelliste*, September 4, 2017.

⁷² Saltadère, December 12, 2017, Madame Jean Tiresias née Elizna Metelis.

the United States. In Haiti and the Dominican Republic, governments rose and fell on the basis of credit arrangements with foreign banks, backed by the force of foreign militaries. From the year 1825, when Boyer signed a slave indemnity with the French and indebted his country in order to pay damages to the heirs of French slave-owners, Haitian and Dominican diplomacy and foreign relations invariably revolved around loans and credit payments. Dictators courted foreign capital often in the hopes that the next big loan could bail them out of existing debt problems, and they dangled the prospect of lucrative investment in port facilities, railroads, plantations, mines, offshore guano islands, and coaling stations. Ulises Heureaux, who ruled the Dominican Republic almost continuously from 1882 to 1899, oversaw the early development of the country's modern sugar industry. Heureaux managed to court foreign investment first from European financiers, and ultimately from American interests who formed the San Domingo Improvement Company. Foreign capital built the country's first railroads and electric power plants, and it set the stage for sugar production on an industrial scale. A rising tide of American investments also gave the US government reason to intervene in Dominican affairs to guarantee the repayment of US debts, which unstable and predatory governments predictably threatened to default on. In 1905 the USA took control of the Dominican customs houses in order to directly collect the country's revenue and guarantee payments to US creditors.

This "customs receivership" presaged the eventual US military occupation of both the Dominican Republic and Haiti. In their efforts to improve customs revenues, American authorities tightened what had long been an unregulated and ill-defined land border between the two countries. It was also during the era of the US customs receivership that Dominican President Ramón Cáceres first took aim at the border regions and initiated the earliest Dominican policy designed to displace ethnic Haitians from Dominican territory. In 1907, he promulgated a law for the "colonization" and development of the border provinces, which offered land grants and subsidies for European immigrants and people from other areas of the Dominican Republic in order to encourage them to settle and cultivate lands near the border. Leading Dominican historian Frank Moya Pons writes that this law called for the "development of the unsettled border areas that had been left uninhabited for decades, allowing the Haitians to gradually take over the best lands."⁷³ This contradictory line

⁷³ Frank Moya Pons, *The Dominican Republic: A National History* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1998), 300.

sums up the official Dominican perspective on the history of the ethnic Haitian presence in the border region. How could an area that had been “taken over” be simultaneously described as “unsettled” and “uninhabited”? If alleged Haitian squatters had been there for decades, what of their children, born on Dominican soil, under a series of constitutions that declared that anyone born on national territory was a citizen?

After repeated diplomatic and economic wrangling with rival governing factions, the US Marines occupied Santo Domingo in May 1916. On the eve of US involvement in World War I, the most prominent Dominican opponents of the American intervention were seen as pro-German. With Haiti already occupied by the US Marines and with the increased wartime strategic importance of Caribbean shipping lanes following the opening of the Panama Canal in 1914, the US Marines would not leave the Dominican Republic until 1924. During this occupation, the American authorities would introduce a variety of new laws and create new institutions and economic policies that remade the country. In a variety of ways, the American occupying authorities laid much of the institutional, ideological, and legislative groundwork for the Trujillo regime.

Immediately after the marines landed, the American occupying authorities imposed press censorship and ordered the disarming of the civilian population. Concerned first and foremost with national revenue and the payment of foreign debt, the American authorities instituted new systems of public accounting, tax-collection, and customs controls. The Americans levied new taxes on alcohol and forced the industry into concentrated urban operations in order to prevent small, rural stills from dodging them. They established a new National Guard under American control, which would eventually become the National Police and later the National Army. The ambitious young Rafael Trujillo began his political career in the ranks of the National Guard. In 1919, the American Military Governor Snowden instituted a new property tax, and in 1920 he passed a land registration law, which finally unmade the country’s arcane system of collectively owned rural land or *terrenos comuneros* in favor of a more modern system of private land ownership.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ See Bruce Calder, *The Impact of Intervention: The Dominican Republic during the U.S. Occupation 1916–1924* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984), 103–109; and Aura Celeste Fernández Rodríguez, “Origen y evolución de la propiedad y de los terrenos comuneros en la República Dominicana, I,” *Eme Eme: Estudios Dominicanos* 9, no. 51 (1980): 5–46.

The border changed during the US occupation in profound ways. Prior to the occupation, border residents were free to travel and trade with friends and family in the Haitian–Dominican border region. But in the period from the beginning of the US customs receivership in 1905 through the passage of Executive Order 372 in 1919, the Americans laid the groundwork for what would become a draconian new regime of border enforcement. New waves of arrests occurred at around the same time as laws that brought legal enforcement and state intervention in the lives of border residents to levels unknown in previous centuries.

As Bruce Calder has observed, the US military occupation of the Dominican Republic represented a turning point in Dominican history, since it created a strong centralized state authority.⁷⁵ For the first seventy years of the country's existence, the ruling Dominican *caudillos* had relatively little interest in creating infrastructure or pursuing any particular educational, religious, linguistic, racial, or immigration policy. After taking control of the country in 1916, the American occupiers ushered in rigorous systems of taxation and customs enforcement, a network of national highways, a professional military organized along North American lines, and an improved surveillance and communications infrastructure in the form of aviation, radiogram messaging, and a telephone network. Not only was Trujillo a creature of the American occupation in the sense that he began his political career as a member of the Dominican National Guard under the tutelage of the US Marines, but he also built his regime on political and economic foundations established by the US occupiers.

In this book I trace the ways in which Dominican authorities employed a key piece of racialized US occupation legislation – Executive Order 372 – in their evolving campaign to repress Haitian civilians who lived along the border. The US Marines formally withdrew from the Dominican Republic in 1924 and from Haiti in 1934, but the USA continued to cast an especially long shadow on the future of both countries. The Americans paved the way for the rise of Trujillo, who had climbed the ranks of the US-controlled Dominican constabulary. The Americans generally favored Trujillo's regime, though they eventually soured on the dictator as he became increasingly powerful and rich.

The Americans played a key role in the final delineation of the Dominican–Haitian border, which directly preceded Trujillo's decision

⁷⁵ Calder, *Impact of Intervention*, xiii–xiv.



MAP 0.4 The contemporary boundary, circa 1936.

Source: Map generated by author and redrawn courtesy of Joe LeMonnier, <https://mapartist.com/>

to organize the genocide. Border negotiations mediated by the United States drew a new line in 1929, and the agreement was concluded in 1936. This agreement delineated the border as it currently exists (see Map 0.4). Though it bears some resemblance to the border that emerged after 1844, certain central border zones such as Macasías changed hands from Haiti to the Dominican Republic. Also, some border towns with large concentrations of ethnically Haitian civilians, including Loma de Cabrera, Restauración/Gurab, and Matas de Farfán, which Haiti attempted to claim, were retained by the Dominican Republic. This area, dense with ethnically Haitian property-owners, would become the epicenter of the violence in 1937.

This book focuses on the problem of the ethnically Haitian population in the twentieth-century Dominican Republic, and the draconian means that the Trujillo dictatorship ultimately adopted in order to ethnically cleanse and socially reengineer the country's border provinces in a campaign that came to be known as "Dominicanization." By 1930, Haitian-Dominicans were arrested under a law that was supposed to be applied exclusively to immigrants. Locally born people who had not paid immigration fees were brought to court and forced to present birth certificates that they usually did not have. Many who could not prove that they were born in the Dominican Republic were imprisoned and deported. Fully aware that many of the

poor, rural border residents never had birth certificates, the Dominican state under Trujillo knowingly classified them as foreigners. Trujillo's introduction of the Dominican *cédula* in 1931 reinforced Dominican nationality in a powerful new way. For binational border residents, the national identity document changed the patterns of everyday life. People accustomed to crossing the border freely and living in one country or another for weeks, months, or even years without documentation now faced police patrols that demanded to see ID. Living under an increasingly corrupt and authoritarian government, some who paid for the *cédula* were issued immigrant permits instead. This climate of ethnic discrimination and racism became part of the daily experience of Haitian Dominicans and border residents throughout the 1930s. Every ethnic Haitian knew that local officials were out to get them, and this meant that they would be stopped for the *cédula*, the residency permit, illegal crossing, or contraband. They also became aware that they needed to have their birth certificates on hand, since these could potentially protect them from arrest.

Although she fled the massacre as a child, Germaine Julien remembers the enforcement of the *cédula* law. Many local children apparently were not allowed to attend school because their parents did not have a *cédula*. Many Haitian residents, including her father, were arrested for not having a *cédula*. Over eighty years after the arrest, she still repeats the exchange between the police officer and her father who said, “yo no tengo la *cédula* ahorita . . . más tarde.” The policeman replied, “camina, está preso.” Her mother had to go to Dajabón with the princely sum of fifty gourdes to pay for his release.⁷⁶ Ivona Colas similarly recalls that the Dominican authorities arrested many Haitians in the years before the massacre and that they would deport them to Haiti if they did not have the *cédula*.⁷⁷

ETHNIC HAITIANS AND ETHNIC DOMINICANS

Like Richard Turits, I have chosen to use the term *ethnic Haitian* to describe people of Haitian origin who lived on Dominican soil. The label *ethnic Haitian* is particularly useful because people of Haitian descent throughout the Dominican Republic in the early twentieth century had different migration histories and different legal statuses. People of Haitian ancestry came to eastern Hispaniola in many different periods, and under diverse circumstances. The earliest migrants from the west were fugitives

⁷⁶ Dosmond, December 20, 2017, Germaine Julien.

⁷⁷ Ouanaminthe, February 19, 2018, Ivona Colas.

seeking to escape the sugar plantations of colonial St. Domingue and who often settled in the most remote and rugged parts of what is now the Dominican Republic. Long after Dominican independence from Haiti in 1844, Haitian migration continued as farmers from the more densely populated Haitian countryside made their way into emptier land on the Dominican side of the border. By the early twentieth century, these ethnically Haitian farmers made up a significant proportion of the population, if not a majority, in border regions such as Barahona, Elías Piña, and Restauración. With the introduction of foreign capital and expansion of the Dominican sugar industry in the late nineteenth century, a new kind of Haitian migration began during which thousands of migrant laborers or *braçeros* came to work on temporary contracts in the sugar regions.

Ethnic Dominican is perhaps a more difficult category to define. Were the colonial maroons who arrived in the present-day Dominican Republic from colonial St. Domingue ethnic Haitians or ethnic Dominicans? Some of the complexities and slippages that challenge the typologies of *ethnic Haitian* and *ethnic Dominican* reflect movements of people that occurred long before the two nations became independent nation-states. By definition, ethnic categories are difficult to define with precision, especially in a border region, but these categories certainly existed on the ground, and they became important in new ways. Roughly defined, an *ethnic Dominican* did not trace their origins to Haitian ancestry (or perhaps their Haitian ancestry was so distant that the person was no longer aware of it). In practice, a significant proportion of ethnic Dominicans were differentiated from the majority of ethnic Haitians on the basis of skin color. However, Dominican border society also had many dark-skinned ethnic Dominicans whose presence confounded any simple identification on the basis of appearance. Local court records demonstrate that strangers often had to ask whether someone was ethnically Haitian or Dominican.⁷⁸ Border residents raised in small communities were generally aware of one another's ethnic backgrounds on the basis of family history.

Ethnic populations do not neatly cleave to national boundaries: the Dominican border provinces were characterized by a large ethnically Haitian presence, and Haitian border provinces were home to families of

⁷⁸ Before attacking a Haitian boy at Dajabón in 1936, the ethnic Dominican Miguel Castro asked whether the boy and his friends were Haitians. Miguel Castro, October 22, 1936, Alcaldías de Dajabón, 1936, leg. 53, exp. 54, 3/002275, AGN.

ethnic Dominicans. Although the main immigration thrust was from west to east, some ethnic Dominicans also resided on Haitian soil, as both families and borders shifted over time. The central regions of the Haitian border, especially Hinche, Belladère, and Lascahobas, were home to established ethnically Dominican populations. The back-and-forth, cross-border patterns of social and economic life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also meant that ethnic Dominicans sometimes settled on Haitian soil to live near friends and family. Some properties straddled the border, and some extended families such as the Poché of Elías Piña lived on both sides, confounding any discrete or straightforward definition of nationality.⁷⁹ The 1937 Massacre spurred a desperate wave of east to west migration that included a minority of ethnic Dominicans, especially women and children who fled with ethnically Haitian husbands and fathers. Trujillo and his officials were aware that the Haitian border provinces harbored communities of ethnic Dominicans. In 1944 and 1945, amid labor shortages and wartime commodity booms, Dominican officials attempted to repopulate border regions that they had forcibly emptied out by organizing a campaign of “reintegration of Dominicans to the fatherland.”⁸⁰ Here the process is nearly contemporaneous with Partition, which offers another possible comparative lens. Where Joya Chatterji explores the interrelations between nationalism and religious communalism in Bengal and the genesis of a new Hindu national identity, in the Haitian-Dominican case the work of differentiation involved a stark reinterpretation of an existing national typology emphasizing a divide that Trujillo’s regime conceived of as at once racial, linguistic, cultural, and to a lesser extent religious.⁸¹ Official interrogations of a small group of returnees demonstrate the climate of suspicion and intense propaganda that characterized Trujillo’s border in the era of “Dominicanization,” and they suggest that the campaign of reintegration was largely unsuccessful.

“More than a massacre” is a title meant to argue that the 1937 Haitian Massacre was a full-fledged modern genocide that needs to be more fully

⁷⁹ Fausto E. Caamaño to Dr. Trujillo, August 21, 1943, Elías Piña, EN, 1944, leg. 48, 8/006013, AGN.

⁸⁰ Oficial Comandante 3ra Compañía EN to Comandante Departamento Noroeste EN, “Reintegración de Dominicanos a la Patria” November 6, 1945, Elías Piña, EN, 1945, leg. 60, 8/005315, AGN. Dozens of civilians, some born on Dominican soil and some born in Haiti were formally “reintegrated” to the Dominican Republic in 1944 and 1945.

⁸¹ See Joya Chatterji, *Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932–1947* (Cambridge South Asian Studies, Series Number 57; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), and *Partition’s Legacies* (New York: SUNY Press, 2021).

acknowledged as such. The survivors and their descendants themselves interpret it this way. In one sense the book title signals that along the border, there was more than a single massacre, since victims who managed to flee could be killed months or even years after 1937. The genocide was more than an episodic frenzy, a few days of mass murder. In addition to direct violence, the campaign was about depriving people of the products of the land they had once owned and cultivated, and thereby killing some of them indirectly through famine. Killing and struggles over the land continued as late as 1947 and the legacies and tensions persist through the present day. Refugees insist that waves of killing occurred after 1937, including refugees who managed to return to Haiti but who were killed afterwards.

The title for this book grows out of oral interviews with the survivors and their descendants, along with the correspondence of the officials who orchestrated the overarching “plan,” and the archival evidence covering nearly two decades of repression along the border that preceded 1937. The year 1937 along the border was the worst culmination of the horror, but the story of anti-Haitian policy encompasses the entirety of Dominican territory and encompasses many decades of history that followed and preceded 1937.

“More than a massacre” also speaks to the fact that there was more than one phase of killing. It was more than a massacre because the violence reached the level of genocide. It was also more than a genocide, since the major period of mass murder and the subsequent, smaller incidents of violence merely punctuated a longer process of racial repression that began no later than 1919 and that does not have an obvious end date. The number of ethnic Haitians that were killed in 1937 matters to how historians place this event in comparison to other racial genocides in the twentieth century. People in refugee communities insist that any existing estimates must be too low, especially as several thousand were killed in the aftermath and many were killed indirectly through starvation and shock. Gaspar Fanon doubts that the number of victims can ever be known with any accuracy, but he sums up the local memory of the killing:

And they killed more than half of the Haitians who were living in the Dominican border. Only a few survivors came to Haiti. Despite their arrival, when they returned at night, looking out for the officer who was guarding the border, they returned to get things, and they were killed again.⁸²

⁸² “E yo tiye plis ke lamwatye Ayisyen ki t ap viv lotbò a. Se enpe ki sove ki vin la. Malgre yo vini, lè ke y ap tounen leswa, veye chèf k ap okipe frontyè a, retounen deyè kichòy,... yo tiye yo ankò.” Saltadère, December 12, 2017, Gaspar Fanon.

Debates over numbers of victims surround many histories of genocide, but magnitude alone is not what makes the 1937 Haitian Massacre a genocide. It is the fact that the perpetrators committed this crime against humanity with the intention of totally exterminating the ethnic Haitians living in the region.

CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

Chapters 1 and 2 contrast immigration enforcement and border policing during the 1920s with the new era of anti-Haitian repression and displacement that began with the rise of Trujillo in 1930. Chapter 1 demonstrates that 1930 was a watershed year in the history of the ethnically Haitian population in the Dominican Republic. In that year, Dominican-born ethnic Haitians were first systematically deported to Haiti and forced to pay for immigration permits. The second chapter traces a border in transition; it analyzes, in particular, the way that new laws in the border region – laws created to define and create territorial boundaries between Haiti and the Dominican Republic – come to have consequences for people in the border region. Chapter 2 examines the ways in which Trujillo's regime, emboldened by a rhetoric of modernity and order, discriminated against ethnically Haitian border residents through its enforcement of a variety of new laws to do with contraband, illegal border-crossing, health, and sanitation. Chapter 3 considers the question of prejudice and ethnic consciousness among the civilian population and focuses on examples of anti-Haitian slurs and insults that emerged amid arguments and public disturbances in 1930s border communities. Chapter 4 recounts the most intense phase of the violence of the 1937 Genocide as it unfolded along the border, and Chapter 5 analyzes the nationwide coordination and concealment of the government's wider anti-Haitian campaign. This chapter, based largely on government records of roundups and deportations, wrestles with the interpretive problem of official concealment. I argue that records of surveillance and arrest from other parts of the country shed light on the centrally coordinated, nationwide character of the genocide, and offer clues about killings in the south and elsewhere. Chapter 6 examines Trujillo's campaign to "Dominicanize" the remaining residents of the border provinces by which his officials struggled to eradicate the linguistic, economic, cultural, and religious

vestiges of the ethnic Haitian presence. Finally, Chapter 7 reconsiders the portrayal of genocide survivors as mere victims by examining the forms of resistance that emerged in the early 1940s as genocide refugees continued to contest the territorial claims and closed-border policy of Trujillo's state.