



The University of Chicago

**“I no Black, I Dominican”**

**The Collision of Whiteness and Birthright  
Citizenship on the Island of Hispaniola**

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June 2025

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A paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Arts degree  
in the Master of Arts Program in the Committee on International Relations

## **Acknowledgements**

Para papa'm y mama'm,

*a hụrụ mi gị n'anya*, all my successes are for you

For Kara and Samah,

Thank you both for showing me what it means to explore, expand, and create

*In God alone, my strength is found*

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Theoretical Framework and Central Themes.....</b>	<b>6</b>
I. <i>Civil Society</i> .....	7
II. <i>Modernity</i> .....	8
III. <i>Birthright Citizenship</i> .....	9
IV. <i>Fanon, Gani, Kim</i> .....	10
V. <i>The Better Colonized Complex</i> .....	10
<b>Section 1: Historical Analysis.....</b>	<b>16</b>
I. <i>Part One: Hispaniola, an Island of 2 Nations</i> .....	16
II. <i>Part Two: Love thy Neighbor as Thyself</i> .....	20
III. <i>Part Three: La Frontera</i> .....	22
<b>Trujillo: El Jefe, El Tíguere, y el Padre de la Patria; El Genocidarie.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Section 2: Legislative Analysis.....</b>	<b>28</b>
I. <i>Legal Redefinitions of Birthright Citizenship, Belonging, and Mass Statelessness</i> .....	28
II. <i>Article 11.1 of the 1966 Dominican Constitution</i> .....	30
III. <i>Article 18 of the 2010 Dominican Constitution &amp; Sentencia TC/168/13</i> ....	32
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>39</b>

**Abstract**

This paper will analyze the ways in which the racialization of birthright citizenship in the Dominican Republic targets the existence of Dominican-born ethnic Haitians, effectively dismantling birthright citizenship in the nation with systemic efforts to ‘whiten’ the country, leading to both physical genocide and what has been coined as *civil genocide*. My theoretical intervention will be based on the construction of the *better colonized complex* which investigates the role of Fanon’s theory of internalization of white hegemonic structures during imperial rule on the Island of Hispaniola and the reproduction of these racial hierarchies as analyzed through Gani’s theory of transferal. Coupled with the institutional desire for a *mestizo* majority nation in the reimagined racial triangulations of the Dominican Republic, whiteness, as a socially constructed phenomenon, will be cast as the civil and modern foil to the villainized, Black and Haitian Other. The evidence I will use to support this paper will be based on historical contextualization of the imperial conquest of Hispaniola, a case study of the Trujillato regime, and a legislative analysis of the progression of racialized legal processes that has manifested in the denationalization and massive statelessness of ethnic Haitians in the Dominican Republic.

*Keywords:* Whiteness, Othering, Modernity, Civil Society, Birthright Citizenship, Civil Genocide, Internalization, Transferal, Racial Triangulations, Denationalization, Statelessness

## Introduction

Within the Black community, there is a long-running gag that the most offensive thing that you could tell the average Dominican is that they are Black or Afro-Caribbean. Godfrey, a well-known Black comedian, jokingly described how in the discourse surrounding Black solidarity and representation within the *Black Panther* franchise, there is a consistent rejection of any connection to Blackness by Dominicans on the basis that they cannot be both Black and Dominican [divlad, 2020]. A choice must be made between the two identities. Across the Black diaspora, this has led to parodic references made about Afro-Latinos and their Blackness, but just below the surface, this comedic reference reveals a deeply rooted issue of racial categorization, perceptions of nationality and ethnicity, and citizenship. The nuances that lay within the dynamic interpretations of the statement, *I no Black, I Dominican*, demonstrate a range of complexities manifested by the resulting sociopolitical constructions framing Blackness and ideas of *Dominicanidad*. The ramifications of these constructions are quite jarring when drawn into conversation with the reality of the Dominican Republic and its sole island neighbor, Haiti, which is known as the first Black republic: what do these racial conceptions mean for their inter-state interactions?

Throughout this paper, the re-perpetration of colonial ideas within post-colonial societies reveals the continued influence of imperialistic structures in framing state interactions with marginalized communities, social hierarchical networks, and naturalization processes. This thesis seeks to address the following research question: How do naturalization processes regarding birthright citizenship reveal an institutional

desire for an increased proximity to Western hegemony and the continual influence of colonial attitudes?

The primary intervention I achieve within this paper lies in the demonstration of a direct relationship between whiteness (and its approximations) and ideas of birthright citizenship within international state structures. My usage of whiteness does not rely solely on phenotypic descriptions of an individual's identity but extends to include social, political, and hierarchical frameworks that intentionally divide integral elements of society, such as birthright citizenship along racial lines that reinforce the hegemony crafted to systemically provide privilege and power to white people. Ruth Wilson Gilmore describes how "racism is the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death" which once again goes beyond physical nature to describe racism as a spiritual and political force [Gilmore, 2007]. Whiteness is an institution [Chan-Malik, Gerbner, Rana, 2020] that, through the efforts of globalization by imperial forces, has outlined how individuals and communities define national identities and, in turn, birthright citizenship.

This paper is split into two main sections to support my research question; first, a historical analysis of the imperial conquest coupled with a case study of the Trujillato regime and the ways in which this led to the manifestation of reproduced colonial racial hierarchies in the reimagination of a shared Dominican identity. The second section is a discourse analysis of contemporary legislation that has redefined the Dominican Constitution in an effort to legally target Dominican-born descendants of Haitian migrants, which has resulted in discriminatory denationalization processes that have led to mass statelessness amongst this community. The conversation surrounding the

transformative elements of whiteness as more than a racial classification, are framed by the investigations of three themes: birthright citizenship, civility, and modernity, which demonstrate the institutionalization of Western hegemony within definitions of what it means to be a citizen and have access to statehood, nationality, and racial identity.

I argue that the interactions with coloniality by a post-colonial state in regard to the racialization of citizenship represents the manifestation of an institutionalized desire by modern states to increase proximity to Western hegemonic structures through approximations to whiteness in constructions of shared identity and national purity. This study of the Dominican Republic provides evidence on how the socialization of Dominican society to internalize a distinct idea of *Dominicanidad*<sup>1</sup> that is separate from Blackness and ethnic Haitians, crafts a superiority complex that reproduces inequality reflective of colonial ideologies of marginalization and discrimination

### **Theoretical Framework and Central Themes**

*“The Dominican Republic will continue being, for centuries and centuries, a nation with her own flag, an addict to Iberian culture, not like Haiti to Afro-French culture. She will continue for centuries on centuries a nation proud of her traditions, her origins, guardian of Spain in the New World, guardian of her immortal nature, and jealous of the radiance with which Spanish character projects its star in the American territory.”*

~ Former President Joaquín Balaguer

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<sup>1</sup> A shared ‘pure’ Dominican identity; the manifestation of Dictator Trujillo’s Dominicanization Agenda which crafted a shared Dominican identity around the idea of “purifying the nation” through the adaptation of Spanish ideals with regard to race, religion, and society.

This proclamation, made by Trujillo's successor, Joaquín Balaguer, provides the ideal critical lens through which I develop this idea of state-endorsed rhetoric of becoming the *'better colonized'* nation as demonstrated on Hispaniola. This section is structured around the analysis of the connections between Eurocentric ideals and their role in the reinforcement of Western hegemonic structures in ideas of nationhood, shared identity, and birthright citizenship. To better understand this discourse, I develop an understanding of the role of modernity and the curation of civil society as situated within this inherent, colonial hierarchy that uplifts whiteness. This paper highlights how birthright citizenship, civil society, and modernity interact with the nature of white-centric societal structures as globalized by European imperial conquest.

This framework is supported by the theoretical contributions provided by Frantz Fanon, Jasmine Gani, and Claire Jean Kim, whose works illustrate the modes of reproduction and internalization of colonial socio-racial hierarchies that cultivate a narrative that influences the existence of racial triangulations witnessed both in Hispaniola and throughout our geopolitical sphere. The discourse developed from the framing of these three themes in the conversation with the works of these authors will establish the resounding effect of coloniality and whiteness in contemporary understandings of belonging, nationhood, and birthright citizenship.

### ***Civil Society***

The definition of civil society has traditionally been shaped and rebranded in relation to Eurocentric views and ideas. Who has the power and platform to determine what is civil has largely rested in the hands of the victors of cultural clashes, which have historically been colonial invaders (Hyatt et.al, 2025; Kenny, 2019; Johnson, 2018). The

discourse generated by violence deemed “necessary” to establish civility will be critical to the discussion within this thesis on the significance of internalization and the reproduction of colonial ideas. The textbook definition of civil society is the dense network of groups and communities that connect the individual and the state within standard liberal democracies, centered on the endorsement of ethical economic and political factions as demonstrated through values of authenticity and belonging (Kenny, 2025). The argument witnessed in the Dominican case, is that the cultivation of civil society is dependent on Western, and intrinsically White proximity. In the eyes of political leaders like Rafael Trujillo and Joaquín Balaguer, Haitians and more specifically, Blackness, hold back the Dominican Republic from achieving success and prosperity (Derby, 1994; Cadeau, 2022; Castor, 1987; Trujillo, 1960).

### ***Modernity***

This transitions into the next central theme of modernity which has a varied definition that is best centralized by this general understanding of a condition of social existence that is significantly different from all previous forms of human experience (Shilliam, 2017). Within the contextualization of this paper, modernity is engaged with through a critical lens that intertwines this theme with superstition, demonstrating the ways that scientific developments have triumphed over myth by dissolving miracles to foster disenchantment and greater dependence on science and ‘natural law’ (Myth of Modernity, 2018; Hickerman, 2018). Additionally, with the combined perspective of critical race theories, modernity can be further interpreted and developed to include this reimagination of worldviews to place whiteness in a position of superiority and power (Ministry of Ideas, 2018). Here, modernity is used as a tool to further establish colonial

and white supremacy within interactions of the ‘New World’ as represented by Christopher Columbus’ initial landing on Hispaniola, distinguishing the power *inherently* provided to certain demographics (Maldonado-Torres, 2014; Quijano, 2000; Wallerstein, 2011). However, the lasting impact of these *modern* ideas did not end when imperial forces returned to their own shores and instead continued to influence many aspects of identity and statehood. Within ideas of viewing modernity, this theme will be highlighted through the dynamic relationship between empire, religion, and race that demonstrates the cultivation of an imaginary in the colonial-modern world that forced non-European, non-white communities into existing epistemologies (Maldonado-Torres, 2014; Quijano, 2000). This shows how we collectively view the world in relation to European colonial perspectives that support a Eurocentric narrative that intentionally limits the diversity of ideologies and interventions.

### ***Birthright Citizenship***

*jus soli*. Latin for “the right to soil” (American Immigration Council). This standard of birthright citizenship is considered as a universal right in most liberal democracies as it is considered amongst this belief that we, as human beings, are provided with specific, unalienable rights with the state we are born into. Legal and sociopolitical rights that are representative of the civil society we reside in. A standard definition of birthright citizenship is defined as the belief that a person’s birth in a specific nation grants them citizenship and automatic rights prescribed by the state (American Immigration Council). The Dominican government, in their desire to set limitations on birthright citizenship by redefining the constitutional meaning of a person ‘in-transit’ to reference a resident who

was only in the country for fewer than 10 days (Philips, 2011; Cadeau, 2022; Amnesty International, 2024) to now be interpreted to reference undocumented immigrants, their Dominican born children and their children's (Philips, 2011; Cadeau, 2022; Amnesty International, 2024). But why go to such extremes? What does the Dominican state gain from making an entire demographic of people stateless?

### ***The 'Better Colonized' Complex***

Throughout this paper, I develop my theory of the *better colonized complex* which refers to the intentional reproduction of colonial ideologies amongst previously colonized groups to cultivate their own sense of regional hegemony reflective of prior colonial influences. This theory is supported by my analysis of the intersections between Frantz Fanon's theory of internalization, Jasmine Gani's conceptualization of transferal and Clare Kim's investigations of racial triangulation.

Fanon's theory of internalization, as described in his work, *Black Skin, White Mask*, challenges the idea that the abandonment of traditional ideologies in favor of European ideals was not a transition into a more 'developed' society (Fanon, 2008) but instead, this demonstrated an extension of colonization from a physical to mental oppression (Fanon, 2008; Gani, 2021). This "internalized, imperialist ideology" (Fanon, 2008) is dependent on proximity or, in a more expansive understanding, *assumed proximity* (Fanon, 2008; Gani, 2021). Naturally, this forms an inferiority complex that situates colonial ideologies and rhetoric as superior, but instead of working to dismantling discrimination, communities within the colonized are positioned in the inferior as the post-colonial society observes and re-perpetrate the same structures (Fanon, 2008; Gani,

2021). In the context of this paper, the denationalization of Dominican-born ethnic Haitians is a reflection of the manifestation of internalization ideologies that intrinsically link birthright citizenship to these approximations to whiteness.

Gani, in congruence with the work of Fanon, investigated the prevalence of the reproduction of racial hierarchies and colonial ideologies by colonized peoples as confirmation of the continued influence of the psychological implications of imperial powers within the communities subjected under imperial rule (Gani 2021; Fanon, 2008). In her work, *Racial Militarism and Civilizational anxiety at the Imperial Encounter: From Metropole to the post-colonial State*, Gani theorizes on the ways in which the multiplied pressures of racial hierarchies and civilizational anxiety as developed from Fanon's theories of internalization (Fanon, 2008) manifest into this internalized stigma of transferal. Gani states,

“Transferal [represents a] strategy that gets deployed when it is deemed necessary to extend the imperialist, civilizational hierarchy downwards within the colonized communities to cultivate a new, opposing Other” (Gani, 2021).

With this transferal strategy, a demographic of the colonized community can resist this inferiority by, “creating an imagined proximity to the colonizer by transferring the stigmas they were fleeing from onto a barbarized category of their own people, whom they can similarly despise for possessing all the inferior traits they have discarded” (Gani, 2021). This positioning will be clearly demonstrated in the role of the American Occupation and Trujillo's dictatorship in the rights retroactively denied Dominican-born ethnic Haitians. To be civilized, modern, and worthy of belonging within the Eurocentric-

global community, means to cultivate a society most clearly reflective of the ideals and technologies of the colonizer.

In the case study of Hispaniola, to truly grasp the significance of the approximation *to* whiteness and the distinction *from* Blackness – and directly related, Haitian heritage – emphasis on the efforts put into curating a mixed, *mestizo*, majority population is essential to from this sociopolitical transition. In her work, *The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans*, Claire Jean Kim explores the scholarly trend of going “beyond Black and White” (Kim, 1999) in discussions of race with the analysis of Asian Americans being racialized relative to and through interactions with white and Black communities (Kim, 1999; Mayes, 2014). Racialization does not occur in a vacuum but instead is relative to the extremes that exist within the given sociopolitical environment (Kim, 1999). Kim investigates these intersections of identities and social mobility along the constraints of superior/inferior and insider/foreigner, through the simultaneous, linked processes of relative valorization and civic ostracization in the constructions of culture and race within an American socialization context. Kim found that, in the “field of racial positions”, white Americans were positioned as the superior, insider, which enabled them to work down the racial value chain that positioned Asian Americans as a less superior, foreigner who were afforded more racial hegemony with American society than Black Americans, who were the inferior, insider (Kim, 1999).<sup>2</sup>

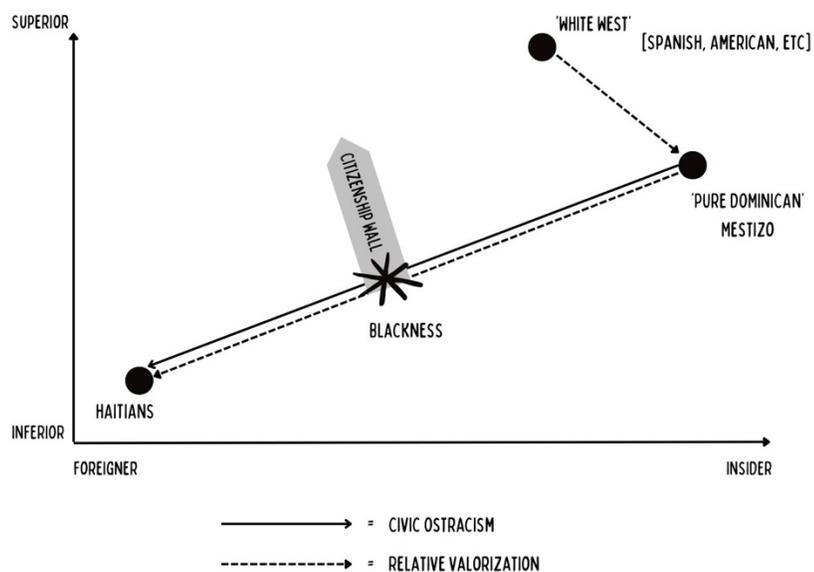
In the case of the Dominican Republic, the development of racial triangulation structures was different as the *mestizo* triangulation was not introduced to this environment but instead developed from it. Ginetta Candelario notes how the cultivation

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<sup>2</sup> Note: See Appendix for Kim’s Racial Triangulation Diagram.

of this racially bound Dominican identity was formed in a “triangular relationship” (Candelario, 2007; Mayes, 2014) that was framed against Haiti as it dually engaged with the prevalence of U.S. imperialism, and this created *White West* standard on the island. The *better colonized* theory highlights the ways in which racial triangulations form in Dominican society are a direct reflection and influence of colonial ideologies and white hegemonic structures.

Figure 1: Racial Triangulations in the Dominican Republic



\*ADAPTED FROM CLAIRE JEAN KIM'S RACIAL TRIANGULATION\*

In Figure 1, I have reconfigured Kim’s racial triangulation to fit the racial constructions witnessed within the context of Hispaniola and, more specifically, the Dominican Republic. Within this adaptation, processes of civic ostracism are defined from the perspective of regionally dominant group B, (‘Pure Dominican’ Mestizo) that constructs subordinate group C, (Haitians) as an immutably foreigner and unassimilable with Mestizos within ideas of cultural and/or racial grounds that have been standardized by the internationally dominant group A, (‘White West’) in order to ostracize Haitians from the

body politic and civic membership (adapted from Kim, 1999). In addition, processes of relative valorization are defined when internationally dominant group A, (“White West”) valorizes regionally dominant group B, (‘Pure Dominican’ Mestizo) relative to subordinate group C, (Haitians) on cultural and/or racial grounds in order to dominate both groups, but especially the latter in a *layered* demonstration of power and social mobility (adapted from Kim, 1999).

Institutions of whiteness are considered to be the pinnacle of superiority, but within racialization processes that have been built into our global systems, the mixed history of the Island prevents whiteness from being attained. This prevents this identification from being considered a complete ‘insider’ in this triangulation, as Whiteness is still considered foreign, though it is a welcome, almost *exalted*, foreigner.

The ‘Pure Dominican’ Mestizo represents the ideal, *pure* Dominican as characterized by Trujillo, which defines a population that actively works towards approximating to whiteness in regard to “ideals and civility” (Trujillo, 1960) within the context of their undeniably mixed heritage. The mestizo identity is uplifted here within the framework and understanding that there is an intentional hierarchy of values uplifting *Hispanidad*, Catholicism, and other Western-centric societal ideas. In the context of my “*better colonized theory*,” Fanon’s theory of internalization is recognized here in the institutional belief that Dominican society, in its current state, is tainted and must actively make intentional movement towards Western ideals in order to become a more purified nation through an ideological and physical purification.

Blackness is marked with an asterisk in this diagram as it represents a point of transition and transferal, as this signals the moment where the ability to identify with

*Dominicaness* is halted, even in reference to a Black, Dominican-born citizen. The prevalence of *limpieza de sangre*<sup>3</sup> is witnessed here as this sociopolitical idea that Blackness is reflective of inherent delinquency, violence, and barbarism was similarly applied to *mestizo* populations during the colonial period as they were described as “restless and incorrigible delinquents who could eventually form gangs to assault and rob the Spanish” (Zamora, 2016). Referring to Gani’s transferal model, Blackness in Dominican society has now been cast as representative of all the inferior traits they had discarded in order to enter into a Western-adjacent society. Within the *mestizo* spectrum, Blackness naturally exists as Afro-Latinos do, but an intentional and distinct line is drawn when the choice is presented that to be a citizen of the Dominican Republic, the decision to be Black or Dominican must be made. A decision that functions as the key to accessing birthright citizenship provided by *Dominicanidad* standards that factor in *limpieza de sangre* and the existence of a *stain* that affects Dominican progress to westernization.

Progressing past the point of no return, Haitians living in the Dominican Republic are not afforded dual citizenship and are instead considered the example of the inferior, foreigner living within Dominican borders, earning the label of *el tema haitiano*, (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 1999; Castor, 1987) the “Haitian Problem”. Haitians in the DR are barred from applying for naturalization processes (Cadeau, 2022; Amnesty International, 2024), forced to reside in a space of illegality and statelessness, providing them with few rights and no civil privileges. However, this was not a legal status that was passed on to their children until the passing of the 2010 Dominican Constitution and, shortly after,

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<sup>3</sup> ‘blood purity’

Sentencia TC/0168/13 that completely revoked birthright citizenship to Dominican-born citizens of Haitian-descent.<sup>4</sup>

Suzy Castor best outlines the realities of this collision of civil liberties, social hierarchies, and socializations of inferiority when she states;

“Por lo tanto, la tesis de la inferioridad racial y cultural del haitiano, defendida por las clases dominantes y el trujillismo, fue penetrando en la conciencia social de los dominicanos en general, condicionando su estructura mental y sus reflejos sociales frente al haitiano. En el grueso de la población quedaron estampados los estereotipos de la ideología dominante que presenta al haitiano, ante todo como el “africano” (aquí el concepto africano es utilizado con una acepción peyorativa, como sinónimo de salvaje, bárbaro) mientras el dominicano es occidentalizado”<sup>5</sup> (Castor, 1987, 87).

Spanish colonial attitudes created the societal space that valued this identity of Hispanidad and Latinidad, which placed significance on this relation or a mixed society that prioritized this affixation to white hegemony (Diffie, 1943; Howard, 2007). The socialization that “Dominicans may not be white but at least they are not Black” (Wucker, 2000) generates a racial triangulation that further marginalizes Dominican-born ethnic

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<sup>4</sup> Note: A legislative analysis of these two pieces of legislation is conducted in a later section of this project to support Figure 1 and my central interventions.

<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the thesis of the racial and cultural inferiority of the Haitian, defended by the dominant classes and Trujillo, penetrated the social conscience of Dominicans in general, conditioning their mental structure and their social reflexes towards the Haitian. In the bulk of the population, the stereotypes of the dominant ideology were stamped, presenting the Haitian, above all as the “African” (here the African concept is used with a pejorative meaning, as a synonym of savage, barbarian) while the Dominican is westernized.

Haitians through this crisis of an ultimatum: to be Black is to exist as the antithesis of *Dominicanidad*.

### **Section 1: Historical Analysis**

*“To them we are always foreigners, even if our granmè mès granmè mès were born in this country”*

*~ The Farming of Bones, Edwidge Danticat*

#### ***Part One: Hispaniola, an Island of 2 Nations***

Gold, God, and Glory. The resounding mantra that led European imperial powers to explore beyond their shores and conquer our known world. Columbus’ initial arrival in 1492 to the island of Hispaniola marked not only the start of the Spanish empire but also denoted the initial incorporation of racial constructs such as *limpieza de sangre*<sup>6</sup> and Hispanidad. Limpieza de sangre is related to ancestry, bloodline and the belief that Spanish people are biologically predisposed to superiority and sovereignty (Johnson, 2018; Quijano, 2000; Martínez, 2008). Congruently, Hispanidad describes a shared cultural, linguistic, political identity, and heritage rooted in Spain which actively worked to erase native traditions and drew stark separations from Blackness in favor of promoting Eurocentric views (Johnson, 2018; Quijano, 2000; Martínez, 2008; Cadeau, 2022; Diffie, 1943). The combination of these factors set the foundation of a Eurocentric society that developed a hierarchical system based on the approximation to whiteness and what had been defined as white ideals including conversion to Catholicism and a desired ascension to modernity (Johnson, 2018; Quijano, 2000; Cadeau, 2022; Diffie, 1943).

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<sup>6</sup> ‘blood purity’

Within this paper, I will interact with modernity through a critical lens that explores the ways in which the significant differences in the conditions of social existence are heavily influenced in the reimagination of worldviews to position whiteness as the pinnacle of superiority and power (Myth of Modernity, 2018; Sharma, 2015; Wynter, 1995; McKittrick, 2015, Quijano, 2000). Sabine Cadeau describes how, “in a rigid Spanish-colonial context, 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” (Cadeau, 2022). In short, this discusses how the binary of white and black was challenged by the large mestizo population that was growing in Santo Domingo as a result of intermixing between Spanish colonizers, native Tainos, and enslaved Africans. Rubén Silié highlights the use of the term, *blancos de la tierra*<sup>7</sup>, by freed people of color to distinguish themselves from slaves (Cadeau, 2022; Silié, 1989) which is connected to labor tensions of intense racial ideology and white supremacy in a largely non-white society (Cadeau, 2022; Silié, 1989). But the colonial environment of Spanish-controlled Santo Domingo is only half of the Hispaniola story.

By 1655, France had gained control of the Western part of Hispaniola, and in the 1697 Treaty of Ryswick, French Saint-Domingue officially came into existence (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000; Ponce Vázquez, 2020). However, the interactions between these neighboring colonies were shaped by their differences in language, European ties and economies which naturally shaped race relations (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000; Ponce Vázquez, 2020; Sagás, 2000). In addition, the Spanish colonial government encouraged white colonists to intermix with former enslaved Africans and treat their mixed children

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<sup>7</sup> “whites of the land”

as if they were white, brought up with a sense of Roman Catholic identity (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000).

Santo Domingo was a cattle-centric society that, over the centuries cultivated a more integrated, mixed society with blurred racial lines, while Saint-Domingue was plantation-centric, which was sustained with powerful masters that relied on the social stratification of European and enslaved African populations (Wucker, 2000). This separation and harsh standard of master and slave enabled the flames of revolution to slowly but surely be stoked. Over a century of reinforcing the positionality of the minority white-population, who only made up 6% of the population in 1793, over the growing majority Black enslaved population, who made up over 85% of the population, came to a head when revolutionaries in the French mainland led the French Revolution (Wucker, 2000; Ponce Vázquez, 2020). Toussaint Couverture led the enslaved Black population to fight for their independence in the 1804 Haitian Revolution, abolishing slavery in Saint-Domingue and establishing Haiti as the first free Black republic in the world (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000).

In the wake of revolution on the island of Hispaniola, the significance of efforts to assimilate colonized people into a shared community with their oppressors was made more abundantly clear through two main factors of identity: language and religion. In conversation with the language, Haitian-Kreyol was the national language of Haiti while Spanish was universally taught and singularly spoken in Santo Domingo. In conversation with the role of religion, Haitian society demonstrated how the syncretizing of Catholicism and African traditional religious beliefs evolved into the widespread practice of Vodun in comparison to the almost complete conversion and indoctrination of Santo

Domingo's inhabitants into Roman Catholicism (Cadeau, 2022; Derby, 1994; Wucker, 2000; Quijano, 2000).

Haiti represented a nation that developed a perpendicular society that continued to maintain a French vein reflective in the use of the French language (largely among the nation's elites) and the significant religious influence of Catholicism, combined with popular interactions with Vodun. On the Eastern side of the Island, Santo Domingo represented a more thoroughly colonized people with the methods of colonial control becoming more wholly integrated into a shared identity that connected the colonized populations to their Spanish colonizers (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000; Quijano, 2000). In this discourse surrounding *the better colonized*, the seeds of white hegemony have been planted and will be watered through the institutional desire to remain under Spanish influence, even in the aspiration to become an independent nation (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000). These seeds will fully bloom under the American Occupation of Hispaniola, which used the island as a means to foster American economic ties and growth at the expense of decimating the established socio-political frameworks.

***Part Two: Love thy Neighbor as thyself***

*“The poor man, no matter who he is, is always despised by his neighbors. When you stay too long at a neighbor's house, it's only natural that he becomes weary of you and hates you.”*

*~ The Farming of Bones, Edwidge Danticat*

After gaining independence, Haiti turned its eyes to liberating its neighbor. In 1821, Haiti assisted in shaking off the Spanish administration to establish a unified Haiti Español that initiated 20 years that marked the Haitian Occupation (Cadeau, 2022;

Wucker, 2000) that ended with the independence of the Dominican Republic in February 1844 (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000). Continuous attempts to reunify the island through routine failed invasions that began to sow discord manifested in the creation of anti-Haitian discourse (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000; Ponce Vázquez, 2020). This fueled a brief campaign in the early 1860s to reannex the Dominican Republic to “the madre Patria” - Spain (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000) until 1865 when they regained independence though this began a state-endorsed campaign to whiten the nation (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000).

This was a tumultuous time across the island; Haiti was in debt after an ill-fated agreement to pay back French slave-owners (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000; Porter et.al, 2022) after the Haitian Revolution while suffering numerous coups and military-led massacres; the Dominican government was extremely unstable and had fallen victim to US creditors (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000; Porter et.al, 2022). These sequential events led to the U.S Marines occupying the island of Hispaniola, first taking control of Haiti in 1915 shortly followed by the Dominican Republic in 1916 (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000; Anghie, 2006). Under the American occupation, the borderlands of Hispaniola would forever be changed and with them, the definition of birthright citizenship within a Dominican context.

The, arguably, most notable piece of legislation introduced under the American Occupation in the Dominican Republic was the Executive Order 372 which required that all “non-Caucasian” migrant laborers entering the Dominican Republic be in possession of \$50 (an impossible fee for Haitian and West Indian migrant workers) and carry with

them a *licencia de permanencia*<sup>8</sup> (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000). This was implemented in the middle of the Sugar Boom in the Dominican Republic, which initiated a huge influx of migrant laborers coming to work the sugarcane plantations (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000). Although this order was not rigidly enforced, it set a precedent of strict border enforcement. Referring back to the introduction of this paper, Dominican-born ethnic Haitians, who lived in proximity to the Haitian border, had the physical appearance of the average Haitian migrant and were stopped to prove their citizenship and often when they were unable to produce the necessary documentation (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000; Castor, 1987)

This began socializing Dominican society into developing a shared perspective of what it meant to have a claim to *Dominicaness* that would not be questioned which developed the importance of one's ability to more closely approximate their identity to the institution of whiteness. As Cadeau described, "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" (Cadeau, 2022). The borderlands which had maintained a fluid nature, was now being fortified to create this distinct, unwanted Haitian Other, despite the desire of sugarcane companies to have a constant supply of cheap Haitian labor – exclusionary and yet exploitative policies that have a startling similarity to American policies limiting the rights of Black and Brown communities. Suzy Castor investigates this phenomenon when she describes the reproduction of colonial mentalities in Latin America:

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<sup>8</sup> 'permanent license'

“Es bien sabido que la meta de cualquier colonización es llegar a moldear en el país dominado, todas las estructuras – incluso la mental – de los colonizados. Así, en América Latina, aún después de haberse independizado de España, los ex-colonizados llegaron a concebirse de una manera distinta de la que en la realidad eran, teniendo como modelo para identificarse, a los patrones culturales y étnicas del colonizador. Además en las sociedades coloniales multirraciales, la estructura económica se reflejaba en la estratificación social basada en el color de la piel: indios y negros eran explotados, blancos los explotadores”<sup>9</sup> (Castor, 1987).

***Part Three: La Frontera***<sup>10</sup>

*“We, as Dominicans, must have our separate traditions and our own ways of living. If not, in less than three generations, we will all be Haitians. In three generations, our children and grandchildren will have their blood completely tainted unless we defend ourselves now”*

*~ The Farming of Bones, Edwidge Danticat*

The borderlands, a representation of the mix of identities and traditions that make up Hispaniola, citizens to both nations and contained to neither, has now been reinforced to restrict who has access to birthright citizenship with the social mobility and political

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<sup>9</sup> ‘It is well known that the goal of any colonization is to mold in the dominated country all the structures - including the mental structure - of the colonized. Thus, in Latin America, even after gaining independence from Spain, the ex-colonized came to conceive themselves in a different way from what they really were, having as a model to identify themselves, the cultural and ethnic patterns of the colonizer. Furthermore, in multiracial colonial societies, the economic structure was reflected in the social stratification based on skin color: Indians and blacks were exploited, whites were the exploiters, and the colonizers were the exploiters.’

<sup>10</sup> The border

positionality that it provides. Gloria Anzaldúa examines this question of transitioning levels of legitimacy when she describes how:

“Living on the borders and in margins keeping intact one’s shifting and multiple identities and integrity, is like trying to swim in a new element, an ‘alien’ element [and] the only legitimate inhabitants are those in power, the whites and those who align themselves with whites” (Anzaldúa, 1987).

The result of this reclassification of Dominican-born ethnic Haitians, those who lived in between, destabilized their legitimacy and belonging within Dominican society with the revoking of their access to claim *jus soli*, as it no longer fit the created Dominican mold that has been formed around this *whitening* standard. The language used in Executive Order 372 exemplifies this issue of an overwhelmingly non-white nation-state ruled by a political class that was immersed in white supremacist thinking. Is this what modernity looks like? Is the approximation to whiteness the key to a nation’s development and hegemony? These are the questions that lit the spark that lit a prairie fire of denationalization processes that would lead to genocide, systemic disenfranchisement, and retroactive, punitive laws that racialized birthright citizenship. The American Occupation introduced a new wave of border enforcement that was marred with slews of arrests intentionally destabilizing the previous binational culture that was manifested in a Haitianized Dominican border society (Cadeau, 2022; Castor, 1987; Wucker, 2000; Derby, 1994). This legal condition of racial discrimination moved against the inclusive definition of citizenship that had prevailed in the constitution to instead be replaced with anti-Black, anti-Haitian policies that would be extrapolated during the Trujillato era (Cadeau, 2022; Castor, 1987; Wucker, 2000; Turits, 2002).

***Trujillo: El Jefe, El Tíguere, y el Padre de la Patria; El Genocidarie***

General Rafael Leónidas Trujillo Molina was a dictator known by many names throughout his political career but the creation and implementation of his *Dominicanization* agenda that racialized perceptions of Dominican nationality would earn him the title of *el genocidaire*, which means the person responsible for an ethnic cleansing and is used in reference to the genocide he orchestrated against ethnic Haitians living in the Dominican Republic many who were Dominican-born or had been Dominican residents for many years (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000; Castor 1987). Trujillo had positioned himself as a champion of Dominican prosperity through his reinforcement of previous American state-building efforts with a strong central state and military, well-defined borders, Spanish language and heritage and a *pure*, Dominican population (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000; Trujillo, 1960). His *Dominicanization* Agenda was based on his desire to reconstruct the Dominican Republic as a European-adjacent nation that would be racially white and religiously Catholic, which Trujillo planned on implementing through the reinforcement of the physical border with “an impassible social, ethnic, and religious fence” (Trujillo, 1960). From the beginning of his regime in August 1930, Trujillo began implementing a series of new laws to frame his regime’s Eurocentric view of modernity that targeted ethnic Haitians through repressive forms of taxation, surveillance, profiling, imprisonment, and deportation (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000; Mayes, 2014). Trujillo worked towards institutionalizing *Dominicanidad* (a shared Dominicaness) based on sharp distinctions from a dangerous, Haitian *Other* through three main mechanisms of distributing propaganda: schools, radios, and the Catholic Church (Victoriano-Martinez, 2024; Wucker, 2000). To promote a *pure Dominicanidad* seems

incredibly ironic with the knowledge of the Dominican Republic's inherent mixed history and largely *mestizo* population of varying shades (Victoriano-Martinez, 2024; Wucker, 2000; Mayes, 2022) but efforts to whiten the nation was manifested through physical means such as whitening creams and powders like those used by Trujillo himself to hide his Haitian heritage (Victoriano-Martinez, 2024; Mayes, 2022) and the fictional, ideological whitening of Dominican citizenship processes (Victoriano-Martinez, 2024; Mayes, 2022; Sagás, 2000).

Traditional definitions of citizenship are now defined along exclusionary lines that highlight state-desired approximations to white hegemony. Through schools and fireside radio chats, Dominicans were socialized to recognize and emphasize distinctions that had previously been accepted as simply a part of a shared, mixed existence (Victoriano-Martinez, 2024; Wucker, 2000; Mayes, 2022). However, increased state surveillance meant an increase in citizen-to-citizen surveillance with neighbors turning on neighbors and community lines being redrawn to separate families and communities (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000; Danticat, 2014; Castor 1987). Additionally, as in most Latin American countries, the Catholic Church played a fundamental role in the cultivation of public opinion (Derby, 1994; Wierda, 1965) so Trujillo posed this *Dominicanizing* of the nation as a dual effort to re-establish the prominence of Catholicism in the borderlands which had lived in a syncretic position alongside Vodun within this region (Derby, 1994; Wierda, 1965). This garnered widespread support amongst Catholic leaders (Derby, 1994; Wierda, 1965) who signaled that this was no longer a battle of flesh and blood, but a battle to save the shared spirit of the nation (Derby, 1994; Wierda, 1965). Support that Trujillo would utilize in his justification of genocide.

On October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1937, Dictator Rafael Trujillo ordered for *El Corte* to begin under the cover of darkness, with the military tasked to move discretely by using machetes, instead of guns, to hunt ethnic Haitians and those perceived as racially Haitian in a premediated attempt to mimic an eruption of civil disputes as opposed to a state-led ethnic cleansing (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000; Turits, 2002). More commonly known as the Parsley Massacre, this genocide swept across the borderlands and reflected the absolute brutalization of Black bodies in an effort to forcibly physically whiten the nation (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000; Turits, 2002). The coining of the name, Parsley Massacre, was reflective of the use of the pronunciation of the word, *perejil*, which means parsley in Spanish as a shibboleth (Wucker, 2000) to distinguish native – Spanish speaking Dominicans versus ethnic Haitians whose maternal language was more likely than not, Kreyol (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000; Castor, 1987). Trujillo’s methods to hide the magnitude of this massacre led to a lack of documentation of the number of civilians murdered through historians and researchers believe the numbers range between 20,000 – 30,000 deaths in seven days that the genocide occurred with more people killed in the months and even years that followed (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000; Evangelista, 2016; Sagás, 2000). Men, women, children. Mothers carrying newborns and small children as they attempted to cross the river that marked their freedom (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000; Turits, 2002). Even those that surrendered during the nationwide round-up were led to what they believed were vehicles for deportations but instead were marched to their deaths (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000; Castor, 1987). Black Dominicans citizens with Haitian ancestry were revoked their access to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness along racial lines that placed them against Trujillo’s *Dominicanization* processes (Cadeau,

2022; Wucker, 2000; Sagás, 2000). This was the price of whitening the Dominican nation. This violence occurred not only at the hands of the military but also at the hands of civilian vigilantes who believed it was their civic duty to help cleanse the nation (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000; Estrella, 2020). The most disheartening result of this genocide was that Trujillo's intentions in *cleansing* the nation (Trujillo, 1960; Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000) in mind, body, and soul, actually worked: Black bodies and communities that had been suffering from systemic racism were now associated with a death sentence (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000; Turits, 2002). You had to choose: are you Black or are you Dominican and it was not possible to choose both.

Naturally, questions arose on where everyone was when news of this genocide spread outside Dominican borders. *Where was the Haitian government?* Paid off by Trujillo in the amount of \$750,000 which equated to less than \$62 per known victim, which at the time was documented as 12,000 lives (Turits, 2002 ; Chéry, 2024). *Where was the international community?* Despite Trujillo's actions bearing stark resemblance to that of Hitler, the International – more specifically, Western – community accepted Trujillo's downplaying of the genocide and his 'civil dispute' fabrication (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000; Turits, 2002) and international geopolitical leaders such as the United States, aided in the silencing of victims (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000; Turits, 2002). Here we witness a situation that has repeated itself time and time again: how systemic racism that is so wholly entrenched in our global systems allows and enables genocides that are routinely overlooked to be committed against non-white communities with little international consequences.

The implementation, enforcement, and socialization of Trujillo's *Dominicanization* Agenda redefined the parameters of birthright citizenship to disqualify *jus soli* to Black, Dominican-born ethnic Haitians based on the created threat that this community posed against Western hegemonic structures used to define national purity. In the years to follow, this community was forced to live an *invisible life* in order to survive, forgetting their cultural traditions and burying a rich heritage to live in constant fear under constant state surveillance, fluctuating legal status, and racist regulations (Cadeau, 2022; Wucker, 2000; Victoriano-Martínez, 2024).

## Section 2: Legislative Analysis

*“Papers are everything. You have no papers in your hands, they do with you what they want”*

*~ The Farming of Bones, Edwidge Danticat*

### Legal Redefinitions of Birthright Citizenship, Belonging, and Mass Statelessness

250,000 people. That is the rough estimate of the number of ethnic Haitians, a large portion of them being Dominican-born, including those in need of international protection, who were deported from the Dominican Republic to Haiti in 2023 (Amnesty International, 2024). 250,000 dreams. 250,000 + families torn apart. 250,000 lives that were disrupted by decades of racist, anti-Haitian, and anti-Black retroactive laws that have made the presence of ethnic Haitians in the Dominican Republic ‘illegal’.

The widespread implementation of these retroactive laws has manifested in what Javiela Evangelista describes as the civil death of Dominicans of Haitian descent, who “disproportionately lack access to education, healthcare, economic stability, civic

participation” (Evangelista, 2016), and the list goes on, describing the injustices upon this population. Civil genocide represents the crux of my intervention: the racialization of Dominican-born ethnic Haitians in an effort to cultivate a renewed, institutional white-centric definition of birthright citizenship demonstrates the purposeful exclusion of Blackness from nationhood. Many of the families who suffered from denationalization processes and civil death had lived in the Dominican Republic for generations with the documentation to prove it as well (Danticat, 2014; Hannam, 2014; Cadeau, 2022). However, the intentionality of labeling this majority Black demographic of people as a threat (Cadeau, 2022) to Dominican nationhood reveals this second layer to birthright citizenship that now distinguishes ‘pure’ Dominican blood, which is laced with racial connotations, as the only viable inheritor of *Dominicanidad*.

In this section of my paper, I will use my theoretical lens of the *better colonized complex*, developed from the interventions of Fanon, Gani, and Kim, to conduct a discourse analysis of three pieces of legislation: Article 11.1 of the 1966 Dominican Constitution, Article 18 of the 2010 Constitution, and the judicial ruling of Sentencia TC/168/13. The analysis of these three portions from their larger documents directly addresses birthright citizenship as redefined within the central themes of modernity and civility, which will be twisted and manipulated in order to reject the presence of ethnic Haitians in Dominican society. A manipulation that has resulted in the current devastation of mass statelessness in the Dominican society, which has left hundreds of thousands of Haitians living in a state of uncertainty.

***Article 11.1 of the 1966 Dominican Constitution***

“Dominican nationality can be acquired by “all persons born in the territory of the Dominican Republic, except legitimate children of foreign residents in the country in diplomatic representation and those who are *in transit* <sup>11</sup> in the country”

(Constitution of the Dominican Republic, 1966).

This article was included in the 1966 Constitution on November 28, 1966 under the presidential administration of Joaquín Balaguer, Trujillo’s vice president and former Foreign Minister. The intentionality in the decision to incorporate the exception of a person in transit allowed for a loophole that could, and later would, be used to target “temporary” immigrant groups. To be more specific, Haitian laborers, known as *braceros*, who worked in the bateyes on sugarcane and sugar plantations (Wucker, 1999; Castor, 1987). The federally supported bracero contract was established under the Trujillato regime in 1952, when a sugar boom and a need for a steady supply of cheap labor led to an agreement for the Dominican government to “buy” Haitian laborers directly from the Haitian government (Wucker, 1999; Castor, 1987). By the 1970s , the Dominican government was paying Haiti as much as \$3 million a year for braceros; money, that went straight to the pockets of corrupt politicians such as François Duvalier, better known as *Baby Doc*, whose wedding alone cost \$3 million (Wucker, 1999). The bracero contract represents modern-day slavery, where Haitian migrant laborers do not have access to legal protections, rights, healthcare, or education, and are paid mere pennies for their days of grueling, back breaking labor (Wucker, 1999).

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<sup>11</sup> *emphasis added*

Wucker situates Haitian *braceros* in Dominican society and in the context of Dominican history when she writes:

“The cane cutters are animals, says Dominican common wisdom. They are good for labor and no more, worth consideration only to make sure they do not leave the bateyes and spread their dirty diseases, their inferior culture, their black, black skin...the Spanish colonizers justified working the Taino of Hispaniola to death in their barren gold mines with the belief that the Indians were not human. When the Taino died out, the black slaves brought with them from Africa harvested coffee, tobacco, and sugar for Europe, and they, too, could be mistreated because their owners believed they were not human” (Wucker, 1999, 113).

The reality of the *bracero* contract and the increasing presence of Haitian migrants in the Dominican Republic reveal an institutional desire to maintain a distinct Dominican identity that is removed from Blackness and *Haitianess*, as demonstrated in Article 11.1. Some authors have interpreted Article 11.1 as developing separately from this *tema haitiano*<sup>12</sup> (Phillips, 2011; Hannam, 2014) referencing the initially understood temporality and intentional manipulation of the phrase in recent rulings, however I argue that in the context of Article 11.1’s creation, the influence of coloniality with its internalization and transferal of inferiority complexes and racial triangulation, were already a play.

In the selection from Wucker in conversation with the language of Article 11.1 regarding people “in transit”, the parallels between colonial ideologies and those reproduced by Dominican society are apparent: the fertile lands of the island needed to be worked and minority populations were dehumanized and expected to work these lands

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<sup>12</sup> Haitian problem

while being subject to inhumane working conditions. Fanon's theory of internalization is witnessed in the existence of this state of permanent "transit" preventing the integration and assimilation of populations that do not fit the constructed Dominican standard.

Dominican society takes pride in their Taino, *mestizo* ancestry, however, this does not prevent them from transferring the same sentiments of barbarism that their Taino ancestors were subject to, onto Haitians and Blackness as a necessary evil to stimulate economic growth in the cultivation of the land. As recognized in imperial thought and conquest, in order to establish modernity and civil society, both physical and ideological violence were deemed a means to an end to ensure the progress and longevity of the collective, *superior* race. A sacrificial lamb is now considered necessary for civilization, westernization, and approximations to Whiteness.

Through the efforts of genocidal dictators such as Trujillo and Balaguer, *Dominicanidad* has been shaped with an acknowledgement of native heritage, though in this acknowledgement, it includes an intentional societal movement to reposition the Dominican mestizo to a position of natural, inherited hegemony, that is unattainable to ethnic Haitians and Black populations in general. The triangulation witnessed within this interaction between social mobility and the permanent, intentional state of uncertainty is evidence of a purposeful desire to bar ethnic Haitians from accessing citizenship and the human rights afforded citizens, through this civic ostracism that forces Haitians into the inescapable legal status of being inferior, foreigner.

***Article 18 of the 2010 Dominican Constitution & Sentencia TC/168/13***

“Dominicans are:

- (1) Sons and daughters of a Dominican mother or father;

- (2) Those who enjoyed the Dominican nationality before the entry into effect of this Constitution;
- (3) The persons born in [the] national territory, with the exception of the sons and daughters of foreign members of diplomatic and consular delegations, [and] of foreigners...in transit or *residing illegally* in [the] Dominican territory. Any foreigner defined as such in the Dominican laws is considered a person *in transit*<sup>13</sup> (Constitution of the Dominican Republic, 2010 as cited by Hannam, 2014).

This article places special emphasis on the stipulation of illegality, incorporating an additional layer that positions marginalized peoples as inherently foreign, situated outside of established national claims, and they are an active threat to the law of the land. A threat that represents an unsanctioned and unwanted resource suck. The most important aspect of the incorporation of this illegality clause within this article that defines what Dominicans are, is witnessed in the destabilization of *jus soli* citizenship structures that will now be replaced with *jus sanguinis*, the right of the blood. In this new interpretation, citizenship is determined based on a person's parents' birthplace, however, the Dominican Courts did not limit this determination of citizenship to a child's immediate parents. Instead, this determination extended to the earliest documentation of migration to include generations within someone's ancestral line (Danticat, 2014; Hannam, 2014; Cadeau, 2022). A child could be born to Dominican-born parents, but if their grandparents, or

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<sup>13</sup> *emphasis added*

even great-grandparents, had illegally resided in the Dominican Republic, then the entire lineage was now considered to have been “in transit”, illegal, and non-citizens.<sup>14</sup>

This enabled the Dominican state with the justified capacity to retroactively revoke the citizenship documents of ethnic Haitians, a legislative decision that would come to a head in the Pierre decision<sup>15</sup> and Sentencia TC/168/13 (Hannam, 2014; Cadeau, 2022). Juliana Dequis Pierre is a Dominican-born daughter of two Haitian immigrants, who had a Dominican birth certificate, was denied her request for a *cedula*, a Dominican national identification card necessary for all civil activities ranging from voting, labor protection rights, access to education, and more (Hannam, 2014; Cadeau, 2022). Most significantly, this card establishes one’s rights as a Dominican, a physical representation of belonging. The denial of her request led Pierre to go to the Constitutional Tribunal, and on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2013, the Constitutional Tribunal made the infamous Sentencia TC/168/13 ruling which states:

“All persons born since 1929 to immigrants in the Dominican Republic are not citizens of the country due to the fact that their parents were persons *in transit*” (República Dominicana Tribunal Constitucional, 2013; Cadeau, 2022).

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<sup>14</sup> A note on contemporary contextualization must be made here as this constitutional revision occurred on January 26, 2010, mere weeks after the 2010 Haitian Earthquake on January 12, 2010 that devastated Haiti, claiming around 300,000 lives and displacing about 2 million Haitian citizens. This initiated an immense wave of migrations to the Dominican Republic as this national emergency spread to

<sup>15</sup> In 1984, two Haitian cane farmers welcomed the birth of Juliana Dequis Pierre in the Yamasa municipality of the Dominican Republic. Under the 1966 Dominican territory were entitled to Dominican nationality unless their parents were diplomats of foreigners in transit. Believing she was entitled, Ms. Pierre applied to the Dominican authorities for a Dominican national identity card. When the authorities denied her application, she appealed to the Constitutional Tribunal. To her surprise, the Constitutional Tribunal [referred to] the 1966 Dominican Constitution to hold the illegal residents are “foreigners in transit,” that Ms. Pierre’s parents were illegal residents, and that as a result, Ms. Pierre was not entitled to Dominican nationality (Hannam, 2014, 1125-26).

Referring back to the 1966 Constitution and the historical context of the American Occupation, the fluidity of the borders from 1929-1937, prior to the Parsley Massacre, reflected a steady migration of Haitians who had settled and grown families in the Dominican Republic. This was commonplace, hence the *tema haitiano*, which revealed an intentional state action to forcibly, through legislative means, remove ethnic Haitians from Dominican society, including those who have legally resided in the nation for generations, who retroactively had their citizenship revoked and were forced into a status of permanent statelessness. It is a civil genocide. The *better colonized complex* is wholly at play, and is completely integrated with the valorization of an unreachable, but approximated white standard that is ideologically supported by the civic ostracization of Haitians.

The cultivation of these three pieces of legislation reveals the ways in which the standardization of modernity and civil society in institutions of whiteness affect interpretations of birthright versus ‘bloodline’/ancestral citizenship. In the quest for a state of modernity that uplifts whiteness, Black people and culture are positioned as a foil to progress that must be made subservient in order to formally move into a more modern society. The cyclic nature of this redefinition of birthright and who has access to Dominican nationality and identity is directly linked to the changing establishment of civil society to fit white hegemonic structures. Initially, it was okay to have fluid borders that were reflective of the co-dependency of Hispaniola’s neighbors. *Una familia mezcla*<sup>16</sup>, on both sides of the border, was the norm. Then came the American Occupation that created this notion that civil society requires distinct borders, a distinct national

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<sup>16</sup> A mixed family

identity, and a clear racialized hierarchy that stratifies social mobility. This leads to a reflection of colonial prowess, particularly in regard to pro-Spanish sentiments that encourage the continuity of colonial ideologies. Even if this allows for a genocide, both physical and civil. The drastic nature of mass statelessness of ethnic Haitians and generational Dominican-born descendants of Haitian migrants should not be surprising, but instead should act as a wake-up call in reference to the Eurocentric, colonial statutes that frame our international society, enabling such horrific treatment of marginalized communities.

### Conclusion

“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 had 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”

~ Reynaldo Valdez, Director of Immigration, *Listín Diario*, December 1st, 1937  
(as cited by Cadeau, 2022)

This paper explored the continual impact of coloniality in the prevalence of institutions of whiteness that have fundamentally shaped constructions of modernity, civil

society, and birthright citizenship. Using the case study of Hispaniola, interventions on the influence of approximating to whiteness within non-Western, post-colonial contexts can be developed and applied. Through the lens of the *better colonized complex*, we witness the ways in which whiteness is inherently tied to ideas of birthright citizenship and heavily influences determinations on who is deemed worthy to access naturalization processes. Colonial ideologies generate this claim of superiority over a region while situating racialized populations along the outskirts of society, positioned as the Other, the foil to civilization. In the Dominican Republic, the approximation to whiteness is encapsulated by the *mestizo*-majority population that, despite the racial space they exist within, traditionally represents fluidity and diverse thought where processes of internalization, transferal, and racial triangulations that complicate ideas of identity and solidarity. The creation of a *pure* Dominican actively working towards a Western-adjacency, is now under threat by the “taint” of Blackness and, more specifically, ethnic Haitians. The Dominican state has taken legislative actions based upon, and reinforcing, the coloniality of thought that shapes and perpetrates institutions of whiteness through the constitutional redefinition of birthright citizenship developed with the intention of socially, physically, and legally segregating ethnic Haitians within Dominican society. Even if this means mass waves of statelessness and civil genocide.

I will end my paper with the words that resounded throughout the crowds of survivors of the 1937 genocide and that have been repeated across the crowds of the hundreds of thousands of ethnic Haitians that are currently suffering under a civil genocide:

*“Nou pa moun?” Are we not Human?*

As an international community, we have to be intentional in uplifting the voices, stories, and dreams of those who have been historically suppressed and forced into silence. We are all human, and we must hold our respective political leaders accountable to ensure that everyone is treated as such.

## Appendix

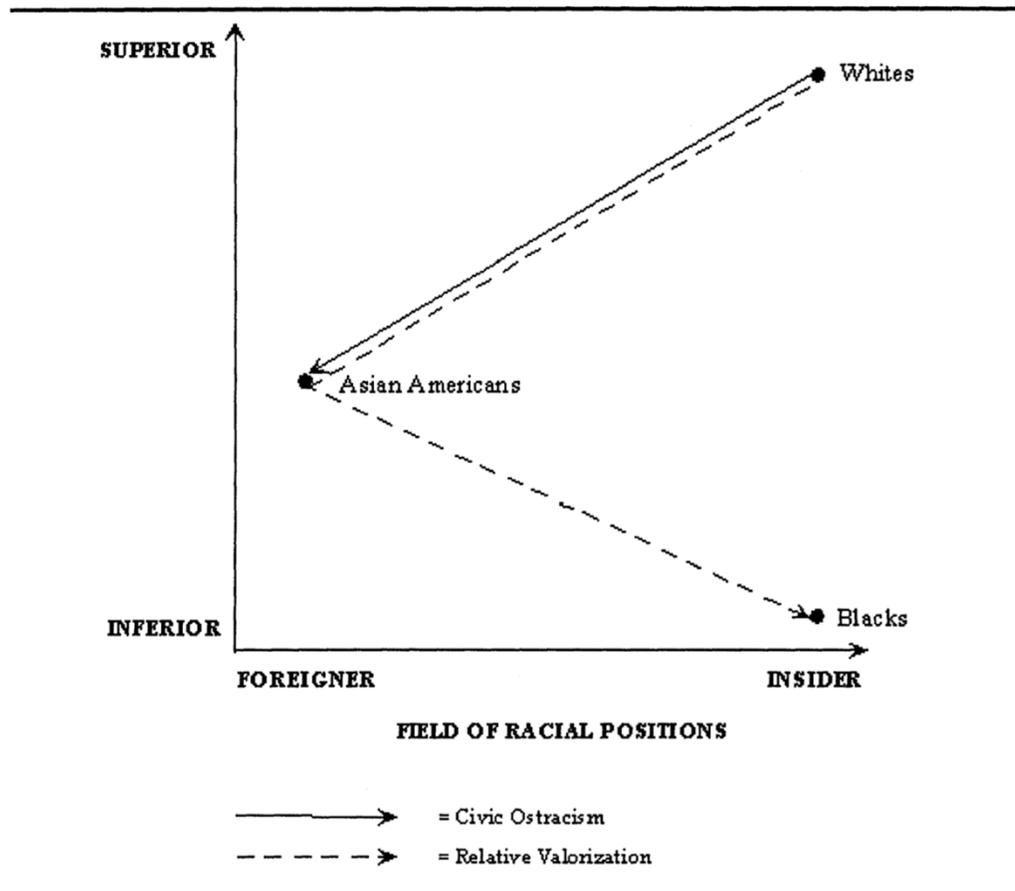


Figure 1. Racial triangulation.

Claire Jean Kim's Original Racial Triangulation with regard to Asian Americans:

“Asian Americans have been racially triangulated vis-à-vis Blacks and Whites, or located in the field of racial positions with reference to these two points. Racial triangulation occurs between two types of simultaneous, linked processes: (1) processes of “relative valorization”, whereby dominant group A (Whites) valorizes subordinate group B (Asian Americans) relative to subordinate group C (Blacks) on cultural and/or racial grounds in order to dominate both groups, but especially the latter, and (2) processes of “civic ostracism,” whereby dominant group A (Whites) constructs subordinate group B (Asian Americans) as immutably foreign and unassimilable with Whites on cultural and/or racial grounds in order to ostracize them from the body politic and civic membership. Processes of relative valorization and civic ostracism are linked both analytically and functionally” (Kim, 1999, 107).

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