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# Development, racism, and discrimination in the Dominican Republic

*David Howard*

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*From an analysis of recent empirical research in the Dominican Republic, this article addresses the ways in which racism underpins elements of governance, and explores organisational and individual responses to racialised discrimination initiated by the state. The context is timely, given the steady rise in reported racist and violent attacks against people presumed to be of Haitian origin in the Dominican Republic over the past five years. The government has intensified formal military and police round-ups of migrants and settlers suspected to be of Haitian origin, and this article assesses the group and individual responses to these state-led actions, analysing formal and informal interventions, their evolution, maintenance, and impact.*

KEY WORDS: Rights; Gender and Diversity; Labour and Livelihoods; Civil Society; Latin America and the Caribbean

## Introduction

This article investigates the three-way relationship in the Dominican Republic between an increasing demographic and economic presence of Haitians and Haitian-Dominicans; recent legal requirements applying to the Migration and Citizenship Laws; and, principally, responses to discrimination against people assumed to be of Haitian origin. This relationship is questioned through a series of interviews undertaken by the author with people of Haitian, Dominican, and Haitian-Dominican origin during 2006. What impact has the growing support for minority nationalist and anti-immigrant political parties had on experiences of anti-Haitian sentiment, and how has this discrimination been enacted and confronted? The article addresses these responses by assessing Hannah Arendt's understanding of violence and placing it in the context of discrimination in the Dominican Republic.

The opening discussion addresses the inter-relations of racialisation, violence, and power in the Dominican Republic. The discussion provides a tentative starting point from which to consider how connected histories have underpinned contemporary examples of racialised violence. Violence, defined as a physical or emotional act of grievous harm, is antithetical to Arendt's understanding of power, the latter derived from consensual dialogue and concerted action

across society. Racialisation, as a motivation for violent behaviour, is related to the territorial basis of aggression. In the Dominican example, acts of state violence have been perpetrated as pre-emptive attempts to defend racialised national spaces or boundaries. The routine normalisation of violence and rejection of diversity and consensus are related to the formation of racialised groups. Attempts by the state to substitute violence for power reveal an implicit lack or loss of authority, and the breakdown of hegemonic structures.

The increase in reported racist and violent attacks against people presumed to be of Haitian origin in the Dominican Republic during the past five years, allied with popular and government claims that Haitian immigration is detrimental to the economy, thus provide the immediate context for what follows. The rhetorical and practical 'development spaces' of Dominican society are acutely racialised. Such tension is repeated in both government and development-agency action: a two-day workshop hosted by an international development agency in Santo Domingo in February 2006 became a highly publicised forum for anti-immigration and nationalist discourse and a rejection of Haitian presence in the country. Thus, the silent discourse of racism hidden in the policy issues became fully verbalised and broadcast under the auspices of an 'economic development' agenda. The article does not claim that racism is implicit in development practice, but it argues that the continued failure by all actors to confront racialised discourse or to recognise malignant 'discursive repertoires' of race (Frankenburg 1993) maintains, and at times strengthens, its presence.

## Placing violence

The premise of this article is that violence is not a manifestation of power, the latter defined in terms of consensual and concerted societal action (Arendt 1969), but an assertion of physical or emotional strength that reflects impotent or waning authority. Counter-hegemonic power in this guise derives from consensual support and resilience at society's 'margins'. In this context, the racial categorisation of groups, the implicit atomisation of human society, becomes a motivational and legitimising idiom for the perpetration of violent acts, but also an ascribed and self-maintained category for group recognition and resistance. Often described as the most violent region in the world (Moser and McIlwaine 2004), Latin America forms the broad spatial focus for this article and special issue as a whole, although this article concentrates on the Dominican Republic. Contrary to paradisiacal images of Caribbean beach life, the region is one of the most urbanised on earth and increasingly among the most violent outside current 'war zones'. Murder rates in the Caribbean average 30 per 100,000 inhabitants, compared with 26 and 22 for South and Central America respectively (Caroit 2007). Potential comparative analyses from the Americas may be grounded in the shared experiences of European colonialism and the legacies of slavery and indentureship.

Violence, defined as a physically or emotionally induced act of grievous harm, is motivated and experienced by a variety of gendered, sexual, religious, and personalised identities. Certain sectors of society are thus more vulnerable or exposed than others. This article is concerned with the violent expression of racialised prejudice and the perceived territorial rationale for aggressive behaviour. Acts of violence are perpetrated, or fear induced, as a pre-emptive attempt to defend a racialised space or boundary. They may include examples of genocide, such as the massacre of Haitian-Dominicans in 1937 in the Dominican Republic; but more often they relate to the daily, routinised cycle of violent confrontation (actual or implied) between racialised groups. The discussion is presented in the context of the steady rise in reported racist and violent attacks against people presumed to be of Haitian origin in the Dominican Republic over the past five years. In August 2005, 2000 people were deported from the country, primarily on the basis of 'looking Haitian' rather than due to a verified

lack of legal documentation (GARR 2005). During this period, 13 racially motivated murders of Haitian-Dominicans were reported in the media.

The background is thus one in which the Dominican authorities have seldom acknowledged the existence of active discrimination against Haitians and, by default, darker-skinned Dominicans. The experiences of Haitian-origin migrants and settlers in the Dominican Republic first came to international attention in 1978, when the UNESCO Commission on Human Rights proclaimed that 12,000 Haitian cane-cutters were effectively sold to government-owned and privately leased estates every year. The migratory flow and labour patterns of Haitian migrants have changed over the past ten years, as sugar-cane plantations have given way to construction and fruit harvesting as major sources of employment. However, international concerns over the treatment of Haitian migrants and their offspring have not subsided. It is estimated that up to 12,000 people suspected of being Haitian are forcibly deported each year from Dominican territory. Since 2000, the government has intensified formal military and police round-ups of migrants and settlers suspected to be of Haitian origin.

The following discussion specifically addresses the impact of racialised violence that underpins attacks against groups and individuals of presumed Haitian origin in the Dominican Republic. While the findings are not spatially representative of the Americas, I argue that they provide a starting point from which to consider the comparative locational implications of racialised violence in the region. First, the collective defence of an assumed territorial boundary, whether in the form of an international border or urban turf, provides the social and spatial context for physical aggression. Second, the inclusive and exclusive aspects of violent behaviour are related with respect to both overt, direct acts of physical harm and the indirect, less specific everyday occurrences that affect individual and group access or activity within wider society.

The assertion of dominance through aggressive social action creates violent and fearful landscapes that undermine the full participation of segments of the population in mainstream social, economic, and political activities (Tuan 1979; Green 1999). Those harmed in the Dominican context, namely people of actual or suspected Haitian origin, are grouped, by self-definition and external ascription, in terms of racialised discourse which provides the provocation for their victimisation.

## Understanding racialised violence

While noting the inherent brutality of colonial labour systems in the region, Kay (2001) has succinctly reviewed the escalating levels of social and political violence during the final decades of the twentieth century. Contrary to Fanon's (1967) appraisal of physical aggression as a force for liberation, she argues that in the contemporary Latin American context 'this violence has not been of an emancipatory kind' (Kay 2001:741). Instead, physical acts of oppression have tended to reinforce the societal alienation of already marginalised groups. This in turn perpetuates further violence, since social separation and distance, rather than proximity, arguably lead to further misunderstanding, suspicion, and conflict (Simmel 1955). While recognising the possibilities of usurping authority through violent rebellion, the focus here remains on the largely non-emancipatory aspects of violence in recent decades.

Violence signifies, in the first instance, a physical or emotional act of harm which is considered rational, and therefore legitimate, by the individual or collectivity performing the deed and by a section of society who are witness to that act (Riches 1986). Second, violence is also understood to incorporate a sense of violation – 'the concept of an integral space broken into and, through that breaking, desecrated' (Bowman 2001: 25). Here the spatial context is important not only for delimiting both bodily and wider surroundings as sites of

aggression, but also in the creation or reproduction of potentially conflictual boundaries. Once borders or boundaries are located in terms of physical or emotional realms, then these become markers of identity and, thus, entities to be 'defended' in certain circumstances. In the following instances, the defence of both physical and emotional terrain has taken the form of pre-emptive acts of aggression.

The varied forms and motivations for violent behaviour, whether on the basis of sexuality, gender, age, race, or other socialised categories of difference, have brought a similarly broad conceptual range to meanings of violence. To understand violence and forms of aggressive behaviour thus necessitates flexible interpretation, as evidenced in recent edited works on the topic. For example, Stanko (2003:3) specifically argues against a standard definition of violence by suggesting that 'it is only through fluidity of definition that we can think creatively about disrupting violence as a social phenomenon'.

The deeply transgressive effect of violence clearly goes beyond physical hurt to violate the emotional and bodily integrity of self (Harvey and Gow 1994). Violence directly injures victims, but it also damages witnesses of abuse, the effects of which then transcend the individual through the very act of external observation. Survivors too are victims of violence, as poignantly illustrated by interviews with women whose partners were killed during the civil war in Guatemala:

*As victims they not only witnessed the unimaginable atrocities of the disappearances or brutal deaths of family members and neighbours, but in some cases they themselves were violated or raped. As survivors they live on the economic and social margins of their impoverished communities; more, they continue to experience the trauma engendered by the violence to both their bodies and their memories.* (Green 1999:112)

The memory of violence outlives the original act and therefore prolongs its impact by preparing or re-shaping the grounds for future passive or active intimidation. Trauma and the uncertainties of aftershock transform existing knowledge of violence and associated fears. Ricoeur's (2000) concept of wounded memory, and his more recent reformulation of manipulated, forced, and restricted memory, provides a useful framework in which to analyse the transgressive elements of collective and personalised recollections of past violence and their concurrence with the present. In the following discussion of violence against workers of Haitian origin in the Dominican Republic, one of the principal motivations for resentment among Dominican citizens was the ubiquitous reference to the 22-year-long Haitian occupation of the country more than 160 years ago. The expressed importance of maintaining an intact physical boundary against 'remembered' past abuse underpinned the reproduction of normative racialised prejudice and aggression against people of Haitian descent.

Violent acts are an attempt by one entity to assert power over another which require the dissemination of knowledge about these actions in order for them to have wider meaning and effect. Power is thereby defined as the ability to exert physical force over others, and also the capability to appropriate people's symbols and information as well as their territory and economic resources (Bradby 1996: 5). In the following discussion, acts of violence not only have specific historical causes, but have been perpetrated in an attempt to shape future social transactions in favour of the aggressors. Violence, indelibly linked with but antithetical to the concept of power, 'can be a recourse for those who experience themselves as powerless as well as for the powerful' (Ray *et al.* 2003: 121).

Following Arendt's (1969) evaluation of power as consensual and opposite to the instrumental act of violence, the integration of racialisation as a legitimising process for violent behaviour automatically removes 'race' from the matrix of power. Racialisation is understood as the categorisation of perceived diversity into racial groups, where 'social relations between people



have been structured by the signification of human biological characteristics in such a way as to define and construct differential social collectivities' (Miles 1989: 75). The crux of the ensuing argument seeks to position racialised 'knowledge' as a motivation for violent behaviour, the latter substituted for power in contexts where consensual dialogue between diverse individuals is deemed impossible or inappropriate.

Fears of diminishing power, especially when considered in Arendtean terms of the ability of a group to act concertedly rather than through individual strength alone, underpin violent, defensive, but pre-emptive acts of aggression. Arendt (1969: 54) maintains that 'loss of power becomes a temptation to substitute violence for power'. She argues that since violence always needs justification (if it is to be an effective counterpoint to power), an escalation of physical aggression will require a heightened presence of supportive discourse. The basis of this discourse incorporates the strengthening of group solidarity, which in certain circumstances is most effectively achieved through overt or veiled references to common racialised origin.

### 'Race thinking'

Gilroy (2000) argues that the concept and term 'race' should be dropped, excluded from our rhetoric and discourse, annulled and cast firmly aside. 'Race thinking' brought us into the current embroilment with race-nation politics and common prejudice, he argues, so we need completely new and radical ways of reasoning to change it. This article, however, will highlight the contradictory endurance of race, positioned, placed, and graded as it is throughout Dominican society, and in particular how it is enmeshed with forms of violence in urban areas today.

In the current context, race is understood in terms of the social construction of categories based on phenotypical appearance and self-assumed or externally ascribed biological inheritance. Wade (2002) has placed emphasis on a more subtle knowledge of race which not only recognises its social construction but also incorporates more flexible understandings of biology, genes, and genetic difference, while avoiding the racist nihilism of biological determinism. The scope of self-ascribed terms linking colour and multiracialised labels used across the region underlines the significance of both social and biological inheritance to people's perception of race.

The concept of race may be expounded in relation to position, place, and hierarchy of race. First, race entails position. This understanding of race is not new, despite frequent re-clothing, and was perhaps first most clearly elucidated in terms of a situational, contextual, and relational identity in Barth's edited volume, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, published in 1959. Race is thus a relational concept, best understood as a relationship and, more specifically, a relationship between nominal groups competing for social, political, or economic resources. As Duster (2002: 549-50) has argued, '[w]hen the relationship goes, so does race'. He continues, "'Race" emerges from the variable meanings attributed to it by people as they relate to one another in life circumstances and is not to be decided *ex cathedra* from some chair of philosophy, political theory or cultural anthropology'.

Second, place expands the relational aspect of racialised categorisation, but lays particular emphasis on the spatial context of identification. In the Dominican situation, the transnational context of Dominicans abroad re-evaluates ideas of race; but perhaps most evidently place reveals its importance in the island context. Historical and contemporary relations between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, at governmental and individual levels, provide an often overtly spatialised notion of race – the understanding of which in crude terms is frequently essentialised in a discriminatory union of alleged biological and national convergence.

Dominicans face sharper racial differentiation in the USA than they generally experience in the Dominican Republic. Dominican migrants who would not identify themselves as

*negro/a* or *mulato/a* on the island are often considered as black Hispanics, *latinos/as*, or African Americans by others. Many Dominicans commonly use the term *indio/a* when asked to describe their racial identity; or *la raza*, the latter conflating territorial notions of nationality with a sometimes biologically expressed or aesthetic description of self. Racialised identity may be translated and understood in the Dominican context as a concept of belonging, which implicitly excludes others of different physical appearance or cultural activities. Popular rhetoric concerning race in the Dominican Republic often refers in overt terms to assumed biological connections, with *dominicanidad* defined in opposition to the neighbouring society of Haiti.

Third, racism entails the implicit hierarchical classificatory basis of race. The perception of this hierarchy neutralises notions of colour-blind meritocracy and myths of racial democracy. ‘Why do claims about racial hierarchy matter? Because a great deal is at stake’, suggests Song (2004: 859). Groups that are able to claim an oppressed status can gain both moral and material capital, and associated belief in a racialised hierarchy can also shape group relations, public policy, and political mobilisation. Social-dominance theory has been influential in arguing that group-based hierarchies, once established and maintained, are similar across social systems (Sidanius and Pratto 1999). Caribbean societies illustrate such hierarchies in all aspects of people’s lives, economically, politically, and socially, where white categories are placed ‘at the top’, with black ‘at the bottom’ and the coloured or mixed population comprising a formal intermediate category. The identification of specific criteria for such analyses means that social scientists might privilege racialised differences as fundamental, while under-emphasising other factors that might be more significant for wider public or policy concerns. How we select these criteria, in the case of the Dominican Republic, must emphasise the continued, but formally unaddressed, influence of race. So, to ignore the concept of race, even to actively jettison it as Gilroy and others suggest, is impossible and irrelevant. Should we posit, however, racialised hierarchies – or does this enforce falsehood?

Claims about top–down hierarchies, even when aiming to destroy or tackle these inequalities, can encourage invidious comparisons between groups and individuals, and can also be politically corrosive. In the Dominican Republic, traditional notions of hierarchy are undermined to some extent by the mixed-race term *indio/a*, which on the surface would seem to reject the putative attempt to place people within neat categories. However, the concept of hierarchy does serve to confront the dangerously homogenising attempts to ignore racial discrimination in society via assuming racial democracy or supposed multiculturalism. Kim’s (1999) concept of ‘racial positionality’ is a useful way forward, because it allows us to explore differential access and status in society, without reverting to multiculturalism’s notion of equal differences. The concept recognises disparate forms of racial disadvantage, as well as the reality of racialised tensions.

*Thus, racialised identities, as with all others . . . emerge or retract based upon the relevant social milieu. There is nothing essential in that. Rather, the salience of race is to be determined empirically in various situations and in different societies, and within the same society at different historical periods and different geographical and social locations.*  
(Duster 2002: 549–50)

My aim here is to pursue these meanings of race in the Dominican context, but in the context in which the process of racialisation elicits fears and forms the rationale for violent response. Benjamin Bailey has produced a detailed account of racialised syntax and expression among Dominican Americans, but arguably this work falls into two traps. The first is to re-emphasise the three non-differentiated groupings when he suggests: ‘In the Dominican Republic roughly three-quarters of the population is of both European and African ancestry, and there is little

sense of social identity associated with perceived relative degrees of African and European ancestry' (Bailey 2002:153). The second problem is this false denial of racialised identification, which underpins stereotyped differences between Haitians and Dominicans, intensified by class, colour, and cultural contexts.

The following discussion therefore analyses a situation in which, as I have already suggested, racialised identities and spatial proximity to Haiti are paramount. First, racial legacies are of primary importance among a Dominican population where cultural, linguistic, and religious differences are limited. Racial differences are manipulated through the unequal standing and significance given to mythologised European, African, and indigenous ancestries. Suggestions of 'European' and 'indigenous' heritages in the Dominican Republic have historically been celebrated at the expense of a generic 'African' past. Second, Dominican identities have been constructed *vis-à-vis* Haiti, most notably with respect to race and nation, and through the additional understandings connected to faith-based and linguistic differences. The importance of the Dominican Republic's shared insularity and shared history with Haiti is stressed, although understandings of race incorporate cultural and class factors, as well as territorial and historical association.

Race is created by attaching social and cultural significance to physical features or colour, and then by grouping individuals according to phenotype and appearance. Colour categories represent arbitrary ascriptions or imposed discontinuities along a continuous spectrum and play an important role in social definition and self-description, becoming a sign of cultural and social affiliation. Degrees of whiteness and blackness not only denote racialised distinctions but also allude to over-generalised European and African ancestries, hence cultural associations and assumed origins.

Racial categories as derived from census results or formalised surveys produce results which conform to the general perception of Dominican society as 'racially mixed'. A national census in 1940 stated that *mulatos/as* made up 77 per cent of the population, *negros/as* 12 per cent, and *blancos/as* 11 per cent. Corcino's study highlights the ambiguities of racial categorisation by recording that 96 per cent of the Dominican population could be represented as *jabao*, defining this term as a 'multiplicity of colours' (Corcino 1988:18), whereas many others use variants of the term *indio/a*, often with concomitant connections made to indigenous ancestry or appearance. Racial categories are evidently specific to person and place, but it is this categorisation that creates the racialised boundaries and context for targeting violent or discriminatory actions.

## Race, diversity, and power

The persistent rhetoric of difference, increasingly voiced through nationalist and cultural fundamentalism, is framed in racist discourse that raises alarm among majority populations over levels of immigration, even when they themselves or their families are of migrant origin. Anti-immigration discourse legitimises territorial defence through aggression against 'strangers'. Restrictive ideas of nation or group belonging are thus subsumed in racist cultural determinism.

While the 'defence' of racialised territory from perceived intruders may form the foundation of aggressive behaviour, a consideration of racist practice in terms of 'thresholds of tolerance' is helpful (Stolcke 1995). Anti-immigration stances frequently rely on reference to cultural fundamentalism and the supposed superiority of the potential aggressor; they thereby 'naturalise' hostility between groups on the basis of cultural difference and assumed variant social norms. Violence is similarly made 'routine' or 'natural' through such rationale (Foucault 1977; Bourgois 2001). Crimes are committed, and associated group stereotypes emplaced, on the basis of assumed cultural backgrounds, 'nature' or 'blood' (Scheper-Hughes 1992; Goldstein 2003).



To adapt Arendt's statement on the impact of violent behaviour (1969: 80): the practice of racialised violence, like all action, changes the world, but the most probable change is to a more violent and more racist world. The three incidences of racialised violence outlined in the latter half of this article are thus not merely reflective of social tension but are constitutive of enduring societal inequality.

Arendt (1969) suggests that the end purpose, or the ultimate rationale, for overtly aggressive behaviour receives generally less attention than the process of violence. Conversely, I argue that the results of racist discourse, rather than the practice of racism, gain relatively more public notice. In the context of racialised violence, therefore, the combined impact of racist ideology centring on outcome and the performative focus on violent behaviour emphasises the substitution of physical aggression for power, and the misplaced strengthening of group authority as a 'natural' defence. To converge on the implementation of violence as an individual or collective effort is somewhat subsumed by the recognition that even individual acts of violence contribute to the whole (Carter 1996). An isolated racist attack is never a remote event, but feeds into ongoing forms of racial discrimination in society and emphasises that racism acts at all scales, joining individual body space and everyday social settings as equally legitimate sites for racialised conflict.

Genocide reveals and is related as the nadir of human relations, such as de las Casas' (1992) contemporary account of the dismembering of indigenous populations in the Americas, following Spanish invasion in the sixteenth century. Just as the term communicates mass murder rather than the individual, particular, 'partially and bit by bit' death of genus (Bar On 2002:110), so too these deaths are not caused as a result of aberrant, abnormal regressions to barbarity by evil individuals, but by society itself. Bauman (1989:13) notes how the deaths of millions in the concentration camps of Nazi Germany were enacted under the guise of the concurrent capitalist system: 'the rational world of modern civilisation ... made the Holocaust thinkable'. Society and the instruments of technology make violence possible. All forms of violence, thus, accessorise society, and physical aggression is 'rational to the extent that it is effective in reaching the end that must justify it' (Arendt 1969: 79). In similarly stark terms, Carter (1996:128) suggests that 'Violence becomes one more tool that under certain circumstances (dictated by rationality) becomes the most efficient means of solving a problem'.

Racialised violence, and in particular the dissemination of the knowledge of its presence, however extreme, is socialised as part of our understanding of how societies (mal)function. Discussions of the everyday have informed our understanding of the combination of situational knowledge (the incidence of specific, individual events) and the continuity of the relationship between daily personal and group experiences. General knowledge garnered from the particular and the routine, such as that which informs racism, is the most important factor in building up ideas of belonging or rejection and expected or normative behaviour. Essed (1991) has advanced this analysis to connect racial ideologies with the habitual experiences of daily life and the subsequent standardisation of racism. Stanko (1990: 5) adopts a similar approach to incidences of violence: 'rather than viewing violence as a disruption to the supposedly calm life we lead, I perceive it as an ordinary part of life'. In this guise, the excessive events of civil war become somehow normalised (Nygren 2003). The above conceptions of everyday racism and violence diverge, however, in the manner in which they can be addressed. Stanko (1990), while rejecting violence, adopts policies of management that centralise personal safety awareness and danger negotiation. By contrast, Essed (1991) suggests that everyday racism might be eliminated through the enlightened restructuring of routine or familiar practices. The following discussion considers the intermeshing of racism and violence in ways that have produced routine spaces of aggression and fear.

## Anti-Haitian ideology, the 1937 massacre, and contemporary deportations

This section considers the role of racialised violence in state ideology, beginning with the implications of the massacre of more than 12,000 people of Haitian origin, and Dominicans considered to be Haitian, in the north-western region of the Dominican Republic in October 1937 (Fiehrer 1990; Derby 1994; Roorda 1996; Turits 2002).

The genocidal strategy ordered by the Dominican dictator, Rafael L. Trujillo, was part of a semi-formalised policy to remove Haitian migratory labour and settlers from Dominican territory. At the same time, the Trujillo regime supported the immigration of east European and Japanese labourers to 'colonise' the Dominican–Haitian frontier (Augelli 1962, 1980; Horst and Asagiri 2000). The colonisation programme sought to develop the sparsely populated borderlands and to negate the growing presence of Haitian cultivators. The allegedly greater 'component' of African ancestry among the Haitian population was deemed by racists to be a threat to the European-inspired heritage of the Dominican Republic. While such overt racism and generic terminology is clearly false and misleading, it nevertheless still forms part of the racialised cultural fundamentalism in Dominican society. The new 'colonisers', it was argued, would 'lighten' the frontier, stimulating economic development and providing a buffer against Haitian incursion.

The presence of Haitians on Dominican territory was narrated via state-sponsored anti-Haitian ideology of the Trujillo regime as an imminent biological, economic, and political threat to the security of Dominican society (Sagás 2000). Similar to the colonisation programme started in 1934, the motive for territorial defence underpinned the rationale for the massacre of Haitian labourers. Racialised violence provided an immediate pre-emptive tactic for securing Dominican sovereignty against demographic, cultural, or military invasion. The underlying stimulus to eradicate the Haitian presence was overtly racist, and based on assumptions that are still current in mainstream political discourse today. Accusations actively employed against Haitians, and against many Dominicans of assumed Haitian origin, contend that the lived experiences of Haitians are so radically incompatible on religious, political, and social grounds that the 'two cultures' can never exist in the same spatial context without tension and the ultimate subversion of Dominican civil progression (Howard 2001; for a 'best-selling' example of racist text, see that of the former president, Balaguer 1993). A series of anonymous, but arguably government-sponsored, faxes sent on the eve of the 1994 presidential elections used graphic cartoon images of the main opposition candidate, the late José Francisco Peña Gómez, showing him engaged in brutal satanic rites (Figure 1). The images were aimed at convincing the electorate that the Haitian origins of his mother's family, and thus his implied belief in *vodoun*, posed a serious threat to Dominican civility.

Genocide was clearly not the only action that Trujillo could have pursued to reinforce his concept of *dominicanidad*, but just one possibility legitimised by the racialised discourse which informed his ideas of sovereign territory, security, and nationhood. As Bauman has suggested, 'racism comes into its own only in the context of a design of the perfect society and intention to implement the design through planned and consistent effort' (1989: 66). The 1937 massacre legitimised subsequent state acts of racialised violence against the Haitian-origin population in the Dominican Republic. Each successive government since has forcibly removed thousands of Haitians and Haitian-Dominicans in the now routine round-ups and expulsions by the military (Plant 1987; Martínez 1995; Ferguson 2003). Arbitrary physical and political violation, often of documented workers or those born in the country with full rights to Dominican citizenship, has remained as state policy for limiting the social impact of Haitian immigration. Where racialised violence is made routine as government policy, the atomisation of power is in process: 'Violence appears where power is in jeopardy, but left to its own course it ends in power's disappearance' (Arendt 1969: 56).



Figure 1: One of a series of faxes sent anonymously during the 1994 presidential elections

Beyond the evident statement that forced and implicitly violent expulsions, at the minimum level of transgressing civil rights and physical relocation against an individual's will, are used by Dominican governments to 'defend' national space, it is the very regularity and routine nature of expulsions that support the Arendtean thesis that violence underpins weakness and waning authority. Close monitoring of deportations by Dominican and external human-rights agencies clearly documents the gross juxtaposition of a Haitian and Dominican-Haitian population fearful of state-directed discrimination with the implicit political and popularly expressed fear of a 'Haitian threat' to the Dominican nation. As Bauman has argued, 'In a system where rationality and ethics point in opposite directions, humanity is the main loser' (Bauman 1989: 224).

### *Racial formation and development projects*

In 2006, a meeting of non-government agency workers and academics, convened in Santo Domingo to discuss the possibilities for mutual economic development policies between Haitian and Dominican interests, degenerated into a heated debate over Haitian immigration and the presence of Haitian-origin workers in the Dominican Republic. The well-publicised seminar on development mutated into a discussion on racialised difference, in which the presence of Haitian labourers was commonly perceived as making a negative cultural and economic impact, rather than a necessary, and formally solicited, contribution to the economy.

Development policy in the Dominican Republic advances an open-market approach, access to neighbouring and global markets for the core sectors of tourism, sugar processing, ferronickel and gold mining, textile and cement manufacture, and tobacco production; but the discourse that surrounds such debate focuses on the restrictive application of citizenship rights and territorial integrity. Racial formation addresses the role of government in maintaining and rearticulating racialised designations and institutionalising or channelling discrimination via these categories. Here physical abuse and deportation can be added, but the legislative focus on immigration is also important in the Dominican case. As noted above, the encouragement of Japanese and European immigrants to the Dominican Republic during the twentieth century was a racially motivated policy to 'lighten' Dominican territory.

Expulsions of assumed Haitian-origin workers in recent years have been promoted by racist vigilante action, 'justified' by alleged incidents of criminal behaviour by 'non-locals'. In January 2006, 21 homes in the hamlet of Fao, perceived as a predominantly 'Haitian' settlement, were burnt to the ground in retaliation for the death of a Dominican soldier. The victim was murdered by another Dominican, but common justice sought to blame and expel the Haitian-Dominican community (Wooding 2006). Similar incidents of vigilantism have increased in recent years (Christian Aid 2006; Reyes Díaz 2006).

The process of racial formation in the Dominican Republic has not necessitated the rupture and reconstruction of race-thinking to maintain existing discourses of power. Racialised discourse remains grounded in Dominican territory and augmented by the proximity of the Haitian political frontier and levels of Haitian immigration. Racial projects constitute the state-approved discourse by which categories are standardised and lead to the popular acceptance of such classifications as 'common sense' (Omi and Winant 1994).

Race is defined thus by formal political and popular discourse. Official classifications of race are evidenced by the ascription of *raza* on state identity cards which each Dominican citizen is bound to possess. During interviews with the author, it was commonplace for Dominicans to show their identity card as 'evidence' of their 'race', to remind themselves or to verify doubt. The longevity of this discourse rests with the alignment of collective and state understandings of racialised identity: 'The ideological struggle between the state and the collective will occur if and only if racial projects mobilise the collective to demand changes in the racial order' (Nagasawa 1999: 158). The stasis of racial formation is supported by the lack of popular opposition to the racialised objectification of Dominican identity, thus limiting the need for government policy to accommodate populist or grassroots demands for change.

## **Conclusion**

The above discussion illustrates the everyday connections of violence and racism, as reflected in rural and urban landscapes. Implicit is the routine, normalised aspect of violence and the racialised, territorialised context of its implementation. Although extreme events of aggression are the most visible markers of harm, it is also the less obvious, routine experiences of violent abuse



that maintain societal tension and discriminatory practices between group members. It is therefore the spatial reproduction of overt, physical, and dramatic forms of violence and the more subtle but consistent everyday friction of aggressive threat that underpin daily experience.

The use of violence as a substitute for social or political power further reflects the importance of landscape. The manipulation of space through direct harm, the application of aggressive surveillance, or the promotion of collective memories of violation relies on the dissemination of fear as a preventive measure (Gold and Revill 2003). Fear, as an instrument of violence, whether experienced, imagined, or remembered, thus acts as a self-monitored, pre-emptive warning against challenging the status quo. As all actions are expressed spatially, aggressors in the preceding case studies have attempted to manage territorial control through actual or threatened violence as a rational means of pursuing their ideals of social order. Since 'not all members of society recognise the same acts as violent, and accordingly, such acts may be justified in different and even contradictory ways' (Torres-Rivas 1999: 286), the significance of racialised violence lies in the ongoing manipulation of memory and territory to reproduce racialised hierarchies of societal access and participation.

Conceptual boundaries of racialised belonging have been spatially appropriated to demarcate territories conditioned by fear, motivated by protection or trespass, deliberate or otherwise. Where violent acts are not current, such legacies are instrumental in governing the fearful and marginalising those who have been targeted: 'Terror is not the same as violence; it is, rather, the form of government that comes into being when violence, having destroyed all power, does not abdicate but, on the contrary, remains in full control' (Arendt 1969:54). Given that a lasting consequence of violence among survivors and witnesses is that of fear, the ultimate denial of those strategies that ignore diversity and substitute violence or terror for power is the impossibility of gaining sustained social consensus by these means.

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