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Behind the Smoke Screen: Literary Resistance to the Trujillo Dictatorship, 1943-1947

Sokeyra Francisco , '22

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Abstract:

Several scholars have engaged with the era of the Dominican Republic's history, approximately 1930-1961, defined by Rafael Trujillo's dictatorship, focusing on the political and economic repercussions of the regime. However, studying the era of the Trujillo dictatorship from the perspective of its social history reveals the extent to which the dictatorship permeated Dominican society and its citizens both on the island and in exile. This essay will expand on the history of the era through a focus on the efforts of writer activists living in the country and in exile to resist the dictatorship and its rhetoric, investigating the ways in which their resistance manifested based on their location.

In a visit to the Dominican Republic in April of 1946, Sam Lacy of the Baltimore *Afro-American*—a weekly African American newspaper based in Baltimore, Maryland, commonly referred to as the *AFRO*—speculated as to the veracity of claims suggesting the president of the Dominican Republic, Rafael Leónidas Trujillo Molina, was unpopular. Lacy, who usually covered the sports section of the *AFRO*, was visiting the Dominican Republic on a baseball tour and spent his trip in the capital city, visiting and speaking to Dominicans about their lives in the country. In addition to baseball, he covered everything from race relations in the country—he was pleasantly surprised at the absence of segregation between the "light" Dominicans and those considered black and brown skinned[1]—to the historical significance of Santo Domingo, or Ciudad Trujillo.[2] Through the visit, Lacy learned an important takeaway in response to claims suggesting Trujillo's unpopularity, learning from the Dominicans he spoke with that these claims were unfounded. In a column titled "Who Says Trujillo is Unpopular?", he refutes the question in the subtitle stating, "AFRO writer in Dominican Republic finds president is beloved by all."[3]

This conclusion was a result of Lacy's first-hand experience as an African American visiting the country. He experienced the reverence of the president through the manifestation of Trujillo's name across the country on buildings and bridges as well as the acclamation that his presence produced. He states, "It is easy to see that President Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic is not nearly as unpopular in his own country as many of us have been led to believe."[4] With an analysis heavily influenced by the propaganda of the Trujillo regime and the fear of

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[1] Sam Lacy, "2 Colored to Every White in Dominican Republic," *Afro-American* (1893-1988), Mar 20, 1948.
[2] Sam Lacy, "Why Ciudad Trujillo is the Oldest City on the American Continent," *Afro-American* (1893-1988), Jun 05, 1948.
[3] Sam Lacy, "Who Said Trujillo was Unpopular?: AFRO WRITER IN DOMINICAN REPUBLIC FINDS PRESIDENT IS BELOVED BY ALL," *Afro-American* (1893-1988), Apr 10, 1948.
[4] Ibid.

Communism imminent in the context of the Cold War, Lacy provides the answer to his Western readers to the evidently perplexing assertion of Trujillo's unpopularity. He explained that the supposed unpopularity stemmed from the fact that Trujillo was a communist target, a victim of the communists trying to gain control of the Dominican government. In addition to Trujillo's perceived unpopularity, violent incidents that had taken place on the border between the Dominican Republic and Haiti are blamed on the "Reds."[5] Nonetheless, Lacy's provocative title begs the question, who was saying Trujillo was unpopular?

Despite Lacy's assertion that Rafael Trujillo was a loved and popular president, historians have revealed that he was a brutal dictator that was unpopular both outside and inside of the country, demonstrated most notably by his assassination by a group of Dominican men in 1961. Resistance to the Trujillo regime from its beginning in 1930 to its end in 1961 was long and widespread from inside the Dominican Republic and across the Americas. Dominicans organized clandestinely in the country to oppose the dictator and worked together in the United States and Latin America to raise awareness about Trujillo's brutal dictatorship. While Sam Lacy reported a differing reality within the country, his account highlights important dynamics to the possibility of organizing resistance efforts against a brutal dictatorship.

Firstly, Lacy's visit demonstrates that organizing resistance or legible dissent under a dictatorial regime demands risks. In an environment where reverence is expected and demanded, demonstrating opposition is life threatening. Secondly, Lacy's assertion that he and other Westerners understood Trujillo to be unpopular in a context outside of the Dominican Republic reveals that organizing dissent is possible, and did occur, outside of the Dominican Republic and the spatial reach of the dictator. Outspoken activists and expats were organizing against Trujillo

[5] Lacy, "Who Said Trujillo was Unpopular?".

in an effort to gain international attention about the actions of the brutal dictator and thus created a consensus that he was unpopular.

To truly investigate the claims of Trujillo's unpopularity and Lacy's identification with communist propaganda as the reason for this claim, the definition of resistance against the Trujillo regime must be widened beyond its traditional conceptions.[6] Resistance that manifested as direct action against the dictator, such as protests or underground movements, can be understood as legible resistance because of its clear and direct, often physical, confrontations with power. These forms of opposition to the dictatorship have dominated the narrative of the resistance Dominicans engaged in against the Trujillato. However, more subtle forms of resistance, such as written resistance or the creation of counter discourses to the regime, should also be understood as ways that Dominicans were able to engage in resisting the dictatorship by challenging the dictator, his rhetoric, and his reach. This il/legible cultural and literary resistance to the Trujillo dictatorship has been obscured because its very nature demanded that it be covert and il/legible. These efforts have been further obscured because none were tangibly successful in deposing the dictator. This essay will highlight evasive and literary resistance efforts by Dominicans in order to widen the conception of resistance that existed to the Trujillo dictatorship and highlight the ways in which Dominicans fashioned resistance even in a suppressive context. Living under dictatorship and outside of it, how did Dominicans participate in resistance? In what ways did exiled Dominicans, living across the United States, Latin America and the

[6] See Frank Moya Pons, *The Dominican Republic: A National History* (1st Markus Wiener Publishers ed. Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1998); A. C. Moulton, "Militant Roots: The Anti-Fascist Left in the Caribbean Basin, 1945-1954," *Estudios Interdisciplinarios De América Latina Y El Caribe* Vol. 28, no. 2, (Dec. 2017), 14-29; Nancy Robinson, "Women's Political Participation in the Dominican Republic: The Case of the Mirabal Sisters," *Caribbean Quarterly* 52, no. 2/3 (2006): 172-83; James Peck, "Our Struggle Against Trujillo," *Liberation* Vol 2 Iss 9., (Language & Literature, Magazines, microfilm, 1957).

Caribbean, organize their resistance and anti-Trujillo message? How were Dominicans able to resist the regime and its rhetoric?

To understand the structures that activists were resisting through their written work, a brief history of the Trujillo regime will detail the circumstances of the dictator's rise to power and the oppressive environment that his regime created and sustained for thirty-one years. Understanding this atmosphere will reveal how resistance was necessarily il/legible for those living inside of the country versus for those outside of it. In the country, Aída Cartagena Portalatín, the only woman on the board of directors of *La Poesía Sorprendida* (Surprised Poetry) literary magazine, worked with other writers to create a consciousness separate from the regime while still living under the dictatorship. Cartagena Portalatín's career as an Afro-affirming Dominican writer, as well as her travels to and from France during the dictatorship functioned as resistance to the rhetoric and reach of the dictator, evading his gaze in more ways than one.

Outside of the country, The Unión Demócrata Antinazista Dominicana (Dominican Anti-Nazi Democratic Union) challenged the regime's rhetoric from outside of the spatial reach of the dictator. In Cuba, Puerto Rico, and other countries, Dominican expats resisted the dictatorship by their very evasion of the geographic region of the dictator. Their evasion allowed them to publicly resist the dictatorship in ways that were not possible inside of the country without retribution. They worked to raise awareness about the dictatorship and the brutality of the regime through pamphlets such as "Trujillo es un Nazi" (Trujillo is a Nazi), arguing against the claim that Trujillo was an anti-communist ally and that his regime was a democratic one. The resistance of Aída Cartagena Portalatín and the Unión further challenge the assertion that an inside/outside dichotomy affected opinions and representations of the dictator because they

existed in both spaces: inside and outside of the Dominican Republic. Escape from the country afforded the exiles of the Unión some freedom to clearly speak out against the dictator; a freedom those living in the country did not have. The literary and cultural resistance to the Trujillo dictatorship functioned to create counter discourses to the regime's anti-Black, anti-communist, and democratic rhetoric, organizing against the dictatorship while evading its gaze, these writer activists created the foundation for legible and illegible resistance against the dictatorship across the Western world despite their failure to topple the dictatorship.

The Rise of Trujillo

Trujillo came into power in 1930, a direct consequence of the United States military occupation of the Dominican Republic from 1916-1924.[7] As an officer in the Dominican National Army, Trujillo was trained by United States marines and rose quickly in the ranks, being appointed commander of the Dominican National Police and transforming it into his "virtually autonomous power base."[8] This history made it so in 1930, when a coup was organized to depose president Horacio Vasquez, Trujillo provided the arms with which to do so. Trujillo soon began his push for the presidency using the Army to intimidate other candidates and Dominican voters, leading to his victory and marking the beginning of the era of Trujillo. Thus, violence and the use of force was a crucial element of Trujillo's tactics in both the period before he officially became president of the Dominican Republic and while he ruled. From the beginning "the Dominican government was a tool for [Trujillo's] personal enrichment, and the reorganization of the state was a pretext for his own exaltation."[9] Trujillo's regime was defined

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[7] Frank Moya Pons, *The Dominican Republic: A National History* (1st Markus Wiener Publishers ed. Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1998).
[8] Eric Roorda, *The Dictator Next Door: the Good Neighbor Policy and the Trujillo Regime in the Dominican Republic, 1930-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 22.
[9] Moya Pons, *The Dominican Republic*, 365.

by autocratic control of civil society as most media and radio were state-controlled or owned by Trujillo or his family members. He also controlled the economic sectors, monopolizing the sugar industry of the country and controlling the distribution of milk and salt among other goods. While some of these changes came with positive consequences, for example the focus and improvement of the agricultural sector led to rural stability and peasant support,[10] Trujillo's true aim was totalitarian control. In this context, dissent seemed inconceivable and actions against the regime came with repercussions as "torturing and killing political prisoners and opponents became a daily practice."[11] To escape this repressive environment, many Dominicans chose to enter into exile as early as 1930,[12] travelling to places such as the United States, Haiti, Cuba, and Puerto Rico.[13]

Trujillo was able to remain in power for upwards of thirty years not only because of the repressive nature of the dictatorship but also because of his most staunch ally, the United States government. Viewing the island as an outpost of democracy in a Caribbean vulnerable to the communist threat, the United States supported the dictator because he protected their interests in the region.[14] This support persisted despite the Parsley Massacre of 1937, in which thousands of Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent were murdered on Trujillo's order, and amid growing testimony about the repressive reality of life under the Trujillato. Trujillo used the good neighbor policy to his advantage to facilitate his rise and secure the support of the United States,

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[10] Richard Lee Turits, *Foundations of Despotism: Peasants, the Trujillo Regime and Modernity in Dominican History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).
[11] Moya Pons, *The Dominican Republic*, 372.
[12] Hilda Vasquez Medina, "Itinerarios del exilio antitrujillista durante la década de 1930," *Memorias: Revista Digital de Arqueología e Historia desde el Caribe*, (2017): 33-54.
[13] Myrna Herrera Mora, *Mujeres Dominicanas, 1930-1961: Antitrujillistas y Exiliadas En Puerto Rico* (San Juan: Isla Negra, 2012).
[14] James Peck, "Our Struggle Against Trujillo." *Liberation* 1957-12: Vol 2 Iss 9. Language & Literature, Magazines, microfilm, Archive.org, (1957).

bonded against a common enemy: the Communists. In response to the lack of international action against Trujillo's regime, literature about the dictatorship was produced as early as the 1940s, while Trujillo was still in power, demonstrating that public intellectuals and writers across the Americas were invested and aware of the hypocrisy of United States support of a dictatorship in the Caribbean. Books such as *Angry Men, Laughing Men* by Wenzell Brown (1947), *Trujillo: Little Caesar of the Caribbean* by Germán E. Ornes (1958), *La Era de Trujillo* by Jesús de Galíndez (1958), and more, documented the political affairs and horrors of the dictatorship, arguing that the president was indeed a dictator and murderer and detailing the crimes of the Generalissimo in an effort to raise international attention. This culminated in an episode of a CBS TV series entitled "Trujillo: Portrait of a Dictator," a fifty-nine-minute documentary aired in 1960 about the state of the country, the rise of the dictator, and his brutal power.[15]

While many have studied and much has been written about the dictator himself, historian Lauren Derby developed the theory of informed consent and exchange in *The Dictator's Seduction: Politics and the Popular Imagination in the Era of Trujillo* (2009) in order to understand the actions and experiences of those living under the dictatorship. Derby focuses on the everyday forms of repression by the regime and Trujillo's adoption of cultural phenomena, such as gossip and kinship, to craft a cultural history of the Trujillo era in which she argues "patronage and fear created a culture of compliance."[16] Building on this conception of informed

[15] Trujillo: Portrait of a Dictator. CBS, 1960.
[16] Lauren Derby, *The Dictator's Seduction: Politics and the Popular Imagination in the Era of Trujillo* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 7.

consent, other scholars have investigated how the Trujillo regime engaged with different sectors of Dominican society, such as women and peasants.[17]

However, Derby's theory of power reinforces the narrow definition of resistance possible under the Trujillato because it limits the structures that can be resisted. In Derby's conceptualization of the Trujillo era, the dictator's "predatory regime" and his strict control over the military and civil service facilitate little room for resistance.[18] With this understanding, the structures that were possible to resist nearly completely exclude the dictator and, as she argues, the very state practices that sustained his grandiose stature.[19] While it is true that the dictator created a culture of fear and patronage in the popular imagination of the country that demanded compliance of every citizen, "leaving almost no place for Dominicans to hide or resist,"[20] it does not mean that no Dominican was able to find or create spaces in which to resist the regime and its rhetoric. As a result, focus on resistance to the dictatorship has been narrow, emphasizing underground movements against the dictatorship such as the Fourteenth of June Movement in which the Mirabal sisters participated and for which they were subsequently killed.[21] The unsuccessful missions to infiltrate the country by Dominicans in exile in 1947, 1949, and 1959 respectively, also often figure as prominent moments of resistance, but the movements beyond go uninvestigated. This narrow definition further highlights mainly resistance against the regime

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[17] For more on women see Elizabeth S. Manley, *The Paradox of Paternalism: Women and the Politics of Authoritarianism in the Dominican Republic* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2017). For more on peasants see Richard Lee Turits, *Foundations of Despotism: Peasants, the Trujillo Regime and Modernity in Dominican History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).
[18] Derby, *The Dictator's Seduction,* 3.
[19] In chapter 7, Derby explores the possibility of resistance through the religious Olivorista community in Palma Sol. She identifies Olivorismo as "a complex political project that defied neat dichotomies of coercion and consent or hegemony and resistance," (228). Her analysis of this community demonstrates what the regime considered subversive and the tactics the Olivorista community used in order to continue practicing their religion.
[20] Derby, *The Dictator's Seduction,* 7.
[21] Nancy Robinson, "Women's Political Participation in the Dominican Republic: The Case of the Mirabal Sisters." *Caribbean Quarterly* 52, no. 2/3 (2006): 172-83.

that occurred in the last years of the dictatorship and especially beginning in 1959, perpetuating the idea that resistance did not occur until this turning point. In order to explore resistance that highlights efforts by Dominicans living on the island and abroad to evade the reach, both ideologically and geographically, of the dictator, the definition of resistance must be expanded to include cultural and literary forms of resistance to and evasion of the dictator's policies. In the process, the narrow conception of resistance to the Trujillo dictatorship is dismantled and the efforts by Dominicans to fight against the dictator are uplifted despite their ultimate failure.

Aída Cartagena Portalatín and *La Poesía Sorprendida*, 1943-1947

When the *AFRO's* Sam Lacy visited the Dominican Republic in 1946, Trujillo had been president of the country for sixteen years. The brutality of the regime had already been established and Dominicans in exile, sometimes supported by Americans, were attempting to garner international attention as to the circumstances on the island, as evident in Lacy's article. However, the years between 1944 and 1947 of the dictatorship are distinguished, known as the "Interlude of Tolerance." Named aptly so because of its short span within the three-decade period of the dictatorship, this interlude took place during Trujillo's third term as president and "was the only time in Trujillo's rule that he allowed labor and the political opposition some liberties."[22] Within this three-year period, political opposition parties were allowed to form, labor parties were started and opposition newspapers were founded in contrast to the previous policies of the regime. However, these developments were part of a concerted effort to perform democracy on an international stage.

In response to new United States government policies focusing on Latin American dictatorships, Trujillo restructured his regime to present a facade of democracy with tangible

[22] Catherine C. Legrand, "Informal Resistance on a Dominican Sugar Plantation during the Trujillo Dictatorship," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 75, no. 4 (1995): 555-96.

evidence in the face of increased international attention. He instituted labor laws that set an eight-hour work day and paid leave and encouraged the formation of opposition parties. Lacy's visit in 1946 placed him squarely in the era of the dictatorship with, theoretically, the most possibility for outward resistance because these years were constructed to reflect a democratic nation. However, Lacy's observations demonstrate that despite the interlude, the culture of fear and compliance remained; Dominicans living in the country needed to continually craft covert modes of resistance because the oppressive atmosphere persisted. One prominent way they did so was through literature.

La Poesía Sorprendida (Surprised Poetry) literary magazine began publishing works by a geographically diverse group of authors in 1943. Edited by Alberto Baeza Flores, Franklin Mieses Burgos, Mariano Lebébron Savinón, Freddy Gatón Arce, and Eugenio Granell, the publication represented ideals of anti-capitalism, anti-fascism, and anti-colonialism. Anthony Dawahare (2015) writes about surrealism as an international movement, emphasizing the role of Caribbean surrealism through the work of this literary magazine. Dawahare argues that the surrealist poetic imagination crafted by *La Poesía Sorprendida* worked directly against the neocolonial dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo because of its anti-fascist, anti-capitalist, and anti-colonialist ideals. The *sorprendistas* were able to develop a kind of free zone through their surrealist poetry in which they could escape the reach of the dictatorship, creating spaces in which their dissent could exist as they worked to "surprise" the Dominican public out of complacency.[23]

[23] Anthony Dawahare, "'La Poesía Sorprendida'; or the Surrealist Poetic Imagination Against Neocolonial Dictatorship in the Dominican Republic, 1943–1947," *South Central Review* 32, no. 1 (2015): 96-115.

The establishment of a literary magazine, publishing authors from across Latin America, Europe, and the United States, was an evasive action in and of itself because it challenged Trujillo's totalitarian control of Dominican production. As Frank Moya Pons demonstrates, the culture of fear and control established by the dictatorship permeated all aspects of Dominican society and "many radio stations and the only television station, as well as the two major daily newspapers, were directly owned by the dictator and his relatives and were used to glorify the accomplishments of Trujillo and to spread ideological catechism of the regime."[24] The autocratic nature of the regime infiltrated all aspects of lived experience for Dominicans in the country as demonstrated by the couple in "Trujillo: Portrait of a Dictator" who had six or seven photos of Trujillo displayed in their home and only one of the Virgin Mary. They justified this choice with the fact that obtaining photos of the Generalissimo was easy, comparing Trujillo to a God and conflating their religious veneration with their veneration of the dictator.[25] This logic was one that Trujillo himself tactically weaponized, creating slogans such as "Dios y Trujillo" (God and Trujillo) and "Dios en cielo, Trujillo en tierra" (God in the sky, Trujillo on Earth) to uplift his veneration to the status of a god. In contrast, *La Poesía Sorprendida* magazine evaded Trujillo and his rhetoric through its surrealist imaginings. The magazine was exceptional because it was able to escape Trujillo's censorship for the four years that it was active in ways that were not otherwise possible, crafting a space outside of the imagination and reach of the dictator.

Aída Cartagena Portalatín was the only woman on the board of directors of *La Poesía Sorprendida* literary magazine. In addition to her role on the board she published her own works in the magazine. Her first poem published in the magazine, *Vispera del sueño* (1944),[26] presented

[24] Moya Pons, *The Dominican Republic*, 375.
[25] Trujillo: Portrait of a Dictator. CBS, 1960.
[26] In English roughly translated to, "In the Eve of Sleep."

"a world at rest" presumably juxtaposing life under the Trujillo regime with what a post-dictatorship world would look like.[27] She intertwined the double meanings of *sueño*, a dream and sleep, to communicate the possibility of each, exploring the limits of what dreams can achieved.

In *Una Mujer Está Sola* (1955),[28] Cartagena Portalatín meditates on the female condition, one that relegates her and all women, implied by the use of the third person throughout the poem, to a state of isolation and peripheral existence. In the first stanza, Cartagena Portalatín manages to invoke hope despite the woman's lonesome condition. Even though the woman is alone she persists "With open eyes/ With open arms/ With an open heart like a wide silence/ She waits in the desperate and maddening night/ without losing hope."[29] In reading the first stanza within the context of the Trujillo dictatorship, Cartagena Portalatín alludes to the condition of life under dictatorship in her analysis of what it is to live as a woman. Her reference to a "desperate and maddening night" is mirrored by the dictatorship itself. The implicit quality of the dictatorship as an everlasting night is clear when considering timing: when this poem was published Trujillo had been in power for fifteen years. Through the rest of the poem, Cartagena Portalatín facilitates the woman's self-actualization through both her loneliness and her femininity. In *Una Mujer Está Sola,* Cartagena Portalatín intertwined her feminist commentary and critique of society with her anti-trujillo stance, subtly masking her resistance of Trujillo's rhetoric and evading his gaze. Her engagement with *La Poesía Sorprendida*, which Dawahare has identified as "the manifestation of contradictions that the regime tried to conceal,"[30] belies her role as a clandestine political actor

[27] Michele Back, "'En tiempo puro': The Search and Discovery of Territory in the Life and Work of Aida Cartagena Portalatín," *Lucero*, Vol. 6 Iss. 1. (1995).
[28] In English, "A Woman is Alone."
[29] Aída Cartagena Portalatín, *Una Mujer Está Sola* (La Isla Necesaria, 1955). Translation mine.
[30] Dawahare, "'La Poesía Sorprendida,'104.

during this era, resisting the dictatorship and its rhetoric through her writings and her work with the magazine.

However, in her last interview, given shortly before her death in 1994, Cartagena Portalatín resisted the assertion of herself as a political actor or even as a writer that was political. She states, "No, no. There's been a great deal of misunderstanding about me. A great deal of misunderstanding. I am not a politician. I am a citizen of a country that is mine, and I turn my back on what's wrong. I don't particularly like politics."[31] Cartagena Portalatín's assertion of her apolitical character is part and parcel of the role that she held as a covert resister. In order to participate in resistance against the dictatorship and escape retribution, Cartagena Portalatín had to define herself as the very antithesis: apolitical. This assertion masked hers and others' resistance efforts in the face of violent retribution from the state but, it does not erase their efforts.

In seeming contradiction to her assertion of an apolitical character is Cartagena Portalatín's involvement in the *Album simbólico en el vigesimoquinto aniversario de la era de Trujillo* (1957), "a 365-page anthology of verse commemorating the 25th anniversary of the dictator's rise to power."[32] The anthology was full of poems and writings praising the dictator but, as Elizabeth Christine Russ (2016) states, "what such activity means is difficult, if not impossible, to assess."[33] The participation in veneration of the dictator in some capacity was common and involuntary for intellectuals and artists living under the regime.[34] Refusing to

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[31] Carolina González, "A Poet on Her Own: Aída Cartagena Portalatín's Final Interview," *Callaloo* 23, no. 3 (2000): 1080-085.
[32] Elizabeth Christine Russ, "Between the Unthinkable and the Unsayable: The Legacy of Brigadas Dominicanas (December 1961-March 1963)," *Hispanic Review* 84, no. 4 (2016), 398.
[33] Ibid.
[34] For more on the experience of intellectuals under the dictatorship see Franklin J. Franco and Patricia Mason, *Blacks, Mulattos, and the Dominican Nation* (New York; London: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2015).

participate in this veneration had tangible consequences and while we can assume that Cartagena Portalatín's participation was involuntary, we cannot know for sure. While it may be true that Cartagena Portalatín did not "particularly like politics," she was nonetheless involved in it.

In addition to her involvement with *La Poesía Sorprendida*, Cartagena Portalatín often traveled to Paris while Trujillo was in power, engaging with other intellectuals and travelling often.[35] In a manifestation similar to that of the Dominican exiles who fled Trujillo's rule by traveling to places like Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the United States, Cartagena Portalatín engaged in this evasive act of resistance in addition to her resistance of the regime's rhetoric through her personal writings. In her lifetime, she evaded the surveillance of the dictator both literally and figuratively.

If her role as an opponent of the regime and its rhetoric remains unclear because of its il/legible characteristics, consider that after the death of the dictator in 1961, Cartagena Portalatín's critique of the regime surfaced in a much more legible manner. She founded the literary magazine *Brigadas Dominicanas* (Dominican Brigades) in which outward critiques of the dictatorship and renunciation of its rhetoric appeared. "The assassination of the dictator was experienced not only as the end of an era but as the end of a social and moral universe as three generations had come to know it,"[36] and for Cartagena Portalatín this manifested through a reclamation of free speech. *Brigadas Dominicanas* was the visible product of her il/legible resistance under the dictatorship, now represented through a conspicuous manifestation rather than a covert medium.

Other poems, novels, and works by Cartagena Portalatín published after the dictatorship focus on themes of feminism, colonialism, and highlight the African diaspora and especially her

[35] Gonzalez, "A Poet on Her Own," 1081.
[36] Derby, *The Dictator's Seduction*, 231.

identity as an Afro-Latina woman. This second phase of her writing is known as the "radical" phase for its less traditional and more "aggressive" tone.[37] She weaved her feminist ideals and the theme of womanhood into *Yania Tierra* (1981), an epic poem in which she narrates the history of the Dominican Republic through a female narrator, subverting traditional gender norms and the Eurocentric telling of Dominican history perpetuated through the Trujillo dictatorship.[38] This theme is further exemplified in *Culturas africanas: Rebeldes con causa* (1986) in which Cartagena Portalatín explores the Negritude movement and the black authors and thinkers that were a part of it. Outside of a dictatorial context, Cartagena Portalatín was able to fully embrace her intellectuality, focusing on nontraditional gender roles and the centrality of Blackness to Dominican national identity.

While Elizabeth Christine Russ argues against the notion that "literary discourse played a negligible role during the postdictatorship moment," the work and life of Aída Cartagena Portalatín demonstrates that this argument can be expanded to include the dictatorship years. If we are to understand the role of Cartagena Portalatín through her own writings and her work with *La Poesía Sorprendida*, she can be understood as an example of resistance to the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo. Cartagena Portalatín, along with other *sorprendistas,* was able to craft spaces in which to resist the rhetoric of the regime while still living under the dictatorship. Her travels to France, her published poetry, her affirmation of her Afro-Dominican identity, and even her hosting of poetry readings at her house, literally *brigadas clandestinas*,[39] attest to her

[37] Back, "'En tiempo puro," 44-45.
[38] For more on the formulation of Dominican national identity see Franklin J. Franco and Patricia Mason, *Blacks, Mulattos, and the Dominican Nation* (New York; London: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2015); Silvio Torres-Saillant, *Introduction to Dominican Blackness* (CUNY Dominican Studies Institute, CUNY, 2010); Teresita Martínez Vergne, *Nation & Citizen in the Dominican Republic, 1880-1916* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); and Lorgia García-Peña, *The Borders of Dominicanidad: Race, Nation, and Archives of Contradiction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).
[39] Russ, "Between the Unthinkable and the Unsayable," 386.

role as an actor in this historical moment. In her work and writings published since the end of the dictatorship, Cartagena Portalatín continued to actively resist the Indo-Hispanic identity[40] that Trujillo was crafting to define the Dominican people. She resisted the narrative of a solely Spanish and Indigenous Dominican heritage through her affirmation of her Afro-Dominican identity and the African heritage of the Dominican people while she lived under the dictatorship and long after.

After four years of publishing, the end of *La Poesía Sorprendida* literary magazine came in 1947, coinciding with the end of the interlude of tolerance. These years marked a stark return to the dictators' policies of complete control and established an even more violent reality than before. After losing faith in the possibility of what surrealist literature and surprised poetry could do for the Dominican people, *La Poesía Sorprendida* literary magazine shut down. Their failure to change the state of the dictatorship and the lives of Dominican citizens in a tangible manner is significant to their effort. However, what remains is their successful resistance to the dictator's rhetoric and control of society. They crafted a space to resist the fascist, racist, and colonial rhetoric and manifestations of the dictatorship where one was thought not to exist.

Even though the *sorprendistas* crafted a safe zone for themselves, the atmosphere of the country was becoming increasingly suffocating. Reports testify to a stiffening policy in the Dominican Republic as early as May of 1946 with the government working in its "suppression of allegedly subversive elements."[41] Amid the abandonment of any democratic pretenses, the dictator continued to weaponize the assertion of "communist agitator" to target anyone that

[40] Ginetta E. B. Candelario, *Black Behind the Ears Dominican Racial Identity from Museums to Beauty Shops* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).
[41] "DOMINICAN REPORTS STIFFENING POLICY," *New York Times* (1923-Current File), May 06, 1946.

opposed him. However, how did Dominican revolutionaries weaponize the dictator's own discourse and false assertion of democracy against him?

Trujillo es un Nazi (Trujillo is a Nazi), 1943

In 1943, Ellis O. Briggs, counselor of the Embassy of the United States of America in Havana, Cuba, wrote to the U.S. government informing them about a publication by the Unión Demócrata Antinazista Dominicana (Dominican Anti-Nazi Democratic Union) entitled "Trujillo es un Nazi." The 52-page pamphlet dedicated itself to combating the assertion of democracy in the Dominican Republic, accusing the dictator himself to be a Nazi agent and identifying various aspects of the regime, such as foreign relations and government officials, that supported this claim. Dominican exiles involved in the writing and publication of this pamphlet strategically weaponized the dictator's own assertion and rhetoric of democracy and anti-communism to attempt to dismantle the base of support for the regime. The legacy of literary resistance to the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo allowed those involved in creating "Trujillo es un Nazi" to subvert Trujillo and his surveillance by organizing outside of the country and under a unified front.

The pamphlet "Trujillo es un Nazi" itself is a significant manifestation of resistance to the Trujillo dictatorship in its very production and publication, however, the first manifestation of resistance that occurred in this instance was the escape and exile of its authors. Exiled Dominicans in Cuba that participated in the creation of this pamphlet and others like it committed their first act of resistance in their movement away from the geographic locality of the dictator and to other Latin American countries. Dominicans have been documented to have engaged in evasion as resistance from the very start of the dictatorship in 1930. Hilda Vasquez Medina (2018) has demonstrated that the first exiles, among them former president Horacio Vasquez, entered into the condition in 1930 as a result of Trujillo's violent assumption of

power.[42] The first ports of refuge were on the other side of the island in Haiti and subsequently to Puerto Rico and Cuba.

Once Trujillo was squarely in power, the regime's surveillance extended to movement in and out of the country. In an extension of Trujillo's control over civil society, passports were held by the Dominican government. Dominicans who wanted to leave the island had to request to do so from the Ministry of Foreign Relations which would deny or approve the request.[43] Oftentimes, those seeking to leave the country because of persecution would be identified as "communist agitators" in an effort to mask their true anti-Trujillo sentiments. However, the weaponization of the term "communist agitator" merely communicated to American immigration authorities that the person in question held anti-Trujillo sentiments rather than communist ones.[44]

The imposition of a limited geographic mobility is exemplary of the control Trujillo held over civil society, but it also demonstrates the possibility of escape. In evading the spatial reach of the dictator by entering into exile, Dominicans could evade the informed consent and exchange imposed on those living in the country. Once in a context outside of the Dominican Republic, revolutionaries were able to represent their opposition to the dictator in clear terms. The low possibility of legible resistance inside of the country versus the possibility of organized resistance outside of it created the impression that "Trujillo [was] not nearly as unpopular in his country" as he was understood to be from the outside.[45] "Trujillo es un Nazi" was one of the many efforts by the Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (Dominican Revolutionary Party), known as the Unión Demócrata Antinazista Dominicana in Cuba, to combat the representations

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[42] Medina, "Itinerarios del exilio antitrujillista."
[43] Elizabeth S. Manley, *The Paradox of Paternalism Women and the Politics of Authoritarianism in the Dominican Republic* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2017), 74.
[44] "DOMINICAN REPORTS STIFFENING POLICY," *New York Times* (1923-Current File), May 06, 1946.
[45] Lacy, "Who Said Trujillo was Unpopular?".

of a democratic Dominican Republic.[46] The authors and those that led and participated in the Partido Revolucionario Dominicano lived in the Dominican Republic but were not able to safely engage in resistance until their exit from the country.

The first page of the pamphlet is titled "Explicación" and provides an explanation for the motivations and content of the pamphlet. It is clear from the title "Trujillo es un Nazi" that the Unión Demócrata Antinazista Dominicana is concerned with the relationship between international communism and fascism and the leader of the Dominican Republic, stating as much in the first page:

> "Faithful to its essential purposes—fighting against Nazi-fascism everywhere and determined support for the Dominican people in the battle for the reestablishment of true democracy in our country—, today the Dominican Anti-Nazi Democratic Union delivers to the public conscience of America and the world the present brochure."[47]

The anti-communist, anti-fascist, and democratic positionality of the Unión Demócrata Antinazista Dominicana created a tension in the political sphere of the 1940s and 50s precisely because the rhetoric of the Trujillo regime had been nearly identical: anti-communism and pro-democracy. By centering ideologies that were anti-communist and democratic, the Unión contrasted the performance of democracy coming from the Trujillo regime. As Aaron Coy Moultan (2019) has uncovered, the regime, much like those of Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua and Tiburcio Carías in Honduras, conflated challenges to their power and regimes with international communist threats.[48] Any opposition efforts to these regimes would have been

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[46] A key figure of exile resistance, Juan Bosch was the founder of the PRD and wrote extensively against the Trujillo dictatorship throughout his years in exile. Bosch served as president of the Dominican Republic after Trujillo's assassination, from February 1963 until he was deposed shortly after in September 1963.

[47] "Documentos sobre la publicación de folleto anti-trujillista," (Colección Bernardo Vega), November 15, 1943, 1.

[48] Aaron Coy Moulton. "The Dictators' Domino Theory: a Caribbean Basin Anti-Communist Network, 1947-1952," *Intelligence and national security* 34, no. 7 (2019), 947.

categorized as communist, signaling to each other, and to the international community, common enemies and threats to regional stability. In fact, Trujillo interpreted the 1947 Cayo Confites expedition by exiled Dominicans attempting to infiltrate the Dominican Republic as a communist threat to his regime.[49] The Unión Demócrata Antinazista Dominicana was strategic in undoing the smoke screen that Trujillo had built to safeguard his autocratic regime through their argument in "Trujillo es un Nazi," targeting Trujillo himself as well as the government and its policies, in the process revealing the hypocrisy and totalitarian nature of the regime. While their argument did not transcend the pages of the pamphlet, they were nonetheless successful in creating counter discourses to Trujillo's sensationalist rhetoric by revealing the fascist nature of the dictator and the regime.

The assertion that Trujillo was an agent of Adolf Hitler is one that the authors claim to have lodged at the dictator long before the war reached the Western hemisphere.[50] By making this clear, the authors communicate the essential point of their argument: that Trujillo himself displays a commitment to the ideologies of fascism. The connections to fascism they relate as inherent in the rule of the dictator were ones that exiled Dominican revolutionaries understood to be dangerous and exemplary of the German dictator especially as World War II began. However, the Unión may have chose to use the terminology of "Nazi" for their title to elicit a fundamental sense of shock and disgust associated with Nazism. The authors point to Trujillo's actions and apparent negligence for regional unity, the presence of Nazi agents in the Dominican Republic, and the fascist qualities of the Dominican Army to support their argument. They presented evidence of their claims by detailing Trujillo's actions and even including decoded correspondence between Trujillo and other government officials to support their claims. Further,

[49] Moulton, "The Dictators' Domino Theory," 947.
[50] "Documentos sobre la publicación de folleto anti-trujillista," 3.

they cite the case of an Axis agent of Austrian nationality who had been residing in the Dominican Republic. They state that this agent "managed to get out of Santo Domingo a few hours before the counterintelligence of a certain democratic country was to take him down."[51] This story is an important part of their argument because it directly incriminates the dictator. In order to leave the country, this Austrian agent needed to get permission from the Dominican government and Trujillo himself as "without a special permit from Trujillo, no one, Dominican or foreigner, can leave the country."[52]

By drawing these international connections, the Unión hoped to awaken the United States and the rest of Latin America to the reality of Trujillo's rule, communicating that his investment in democracy was untrue. Their argument even extended to the Dominican Army whom they accused of being pro-Nazi.[53] In doing so, the Unión extended their argument to the apparatus that was most indicative of the dictator. In the era of Trujillo, the Dominican Army was a direct extension of the dictator's power and influence. By identifying the Dominican Army as a pro-Nazi force, the Unión clarified the fascist roots of the regime, further communicating to the rest of the Americas that the Dominican Republic was not an ally. The Nazi propaganda that the Army perpetuated as well as the fact that no government official, namely Trujillo himself, had declared themselves against Hitler were key points in demonstrating the dictator's performance of democracy to the Western world, and particularly the United States.[54] The project of the Unión in this pamphlet was to make clear that Trujillo's allegiances were not only to the United States, in consequence dismantling the dictator's facade of safeguarding democracy and revealing his true intentions.

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[51] "Documentos sobre la publicación de folleto anti-trujillista," 10.
[52] Ibid.
[53] "Documentos sobre la publicación de folleto anti-trujillista," 13.
[54] "Documentos sobre la publicación de folleto anti-trujillista," 14.

The authors of "Trujillo is a Nazi" argue that these communist and Nazi affiliations further influenced the policies of the Dominican government as evident in the conduct of its diplomatic centers, extending their argument beyond the figure of Trujillo and to the structures of the government and country. They claim that government centers within the country and in Latin America, specifically in Santiago de Chile, collaborated with German individuals and established allegiances with the ideologies of fascism and Nazism. The establishment of the Dominican-German Institute of Scientific Research supported their claims that Trujillo himself was a Nazi because of the cooperation between the two countries needed to bring the institute into existence. In consequence, the atmosphere that Trujillo was crafting inside of the country, according to these exiles, was one tolerant of fascism and secretly supportive of the Fuhrer.[55] The regime maintained its performance of democracy and anti-communism while secretly collaborating with the enemies, creating a fifth column with Trujillo at the head. The authors further claim that fascism and Nazis were able to live freely in the Dominican Republic and quote testimony as recently as 1942 that "Nazi agents swarmed in Santo Domingo," precisely because Trujillo was not committed to democratic ideals.[56] Whether or not these claims are true or mere speculation, the authors of "Trujillo is a Nazi" underline foundational differences between the ideals of the dictator and themselves in unraveling Trujillo's rhetoric and regime.

To further display the differences between themselves and the dictator, the Unión included a section of the pamphlet dedicated specifically to Dominican-Haitian relations. Richard Lee Turits argues that a shift in Trujillo's policies to do with Haitians living in the Dominican Republic can be seen right before and especially after the 1937 massacre. The

[55] In seeming contrast to this claim, Trujillo is known for his acceptance of Euro-Jewish refugees into the Dominican Republic during World War II. However, this was a disguised effort to perpetuate a Euro-centric and whiter ideal of Dominican racial identity through a literal whitening of the nation.
[56] "Documentos sobre la publicación de folleto anti-trujillista," 13.

massacre marked a turning point in policies that "foster[ed] ethnic Haitians' identities as Dominican citizens and subjects of the regime" and towards policies that targeted Haitians living in the Dominican Republic and especially on the border between the two countries.[57] The work to hispanicize the border translated to an increase in public education that emphasized *hispanidad* and an increase in anti-Haitian rhetoric, even changing French names of rivers and towns to Spanish ones. The authors of "Trujillo es un Nazi" quote Dominican historian and lawyer Manuel Arturio Peña Batlle who served as the Foreign Minister of the Dominican Republic from 1943 to 1946:

> "The Haitian who bothers us and puts us on notice is the one who forms the last social expression beyond the border ... That guy is frankly undesirable! ... The Haitian who enters us lives infected with numerous vices and capital and is necessarily disabled by diseases and endemic physiological deficiencies in the lower class of that society."[58]

Peña Batlle was one of the main intellectuals behind the project of a nationalism based on Spanish heritage, *hispanidad* nationalism, and largely shaped the relationship between the Dominican Republic and Haiti during the era of Trujillo.[59] In fact, he was the author of the Dominicanization project of the border region.[60] However, these projects and anti-Haitian ideologies were often masked by the regime's propaganda. The pervasive quality of Trujillo's propaganda can even be seen in Lacy's article when he states, "and it was the same Reds who, after failing to overthrow Trujillo, provoked a series of border incidents between [the Dominican Republic] and Haiti."[61] As a result of anti-communist propaganda and rhetoric that identified

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[57] Richard Lee Turits, "A World Destroyed, A Nation Imposed: The 1937 Haitian Massacre in the Dominican Republic," *The Hispanic American historical review* 82, no. 3 (2002), 608–609.
[58] "Documentos sobre la publicación de folleto anti-trujillista," 51. Translation mine.
[59] April J. Mayes, *Mulatto Republic: Class, Race, and Dominican National Identity* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014), 135.
[60] "Muere El Historiador y Abogado Manuel Arturo Peña Batlle," *Vanguardia del Pueblo*, April 15, 1954.
[61] Lacy, "Who Said Trujillo was Unpopular?".

resistance to Trujillo as communist, Lacy associated the massacre, which Trujillo ordered, to be the doing of Communists.

In stark contrast to the words of Peña Batlle and the policies of the dictator, the Unión called for harmony and solidarity between the Dominican Republic and Haiti in a section titled "Onda Corta" (Short Wave) of the pamphlet. Written by Jesus Gonzalez Scarpetta and originally published in *El Mundo*, a Cuban newspaper, this section renounces the anti-Haitian and racist policies of the regime. The Unión challenges the rhetoric of an innocent and democratic republic perpetuated by Trujillo's propaganda by calling out the "violent anti-Haitian journalistic campaign that is dangerously stirring up the spirits."[62] The authors are clear in their opposition to the aggressive and violent attitude the Dominican government displayed in its border policies and in doing so represent the opinions of the Unión and the Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (PRD). Gonzalez Scarpetta quotes one of the leaders of the PRD, Juan Isidro Jimenes-Grullón who stated in direct rebuke of Peñ Batlle's stance:

> "The Dominican Republic and Haiti ... must cooperate in solving their respective national problems within the spirit of international harmony that prevails in America today. It is not by belittling or annihilating poor black Haitians—a claim of the propagators of racist Creole imperialism—that we resolve this complicated issue."[63]

While the exiled Dominicans who participated in writing this pamphlet do not contend with the rumors that they themselves are Communists, they do the important work of revealing the contradictions in Trujillo's regime. In creating this pamphlet and others like it, the exiles resisted the rhetoric of democracy and anti-communism that Trujillo perpetuated, drawing clear differences between the dictator and those working against him.

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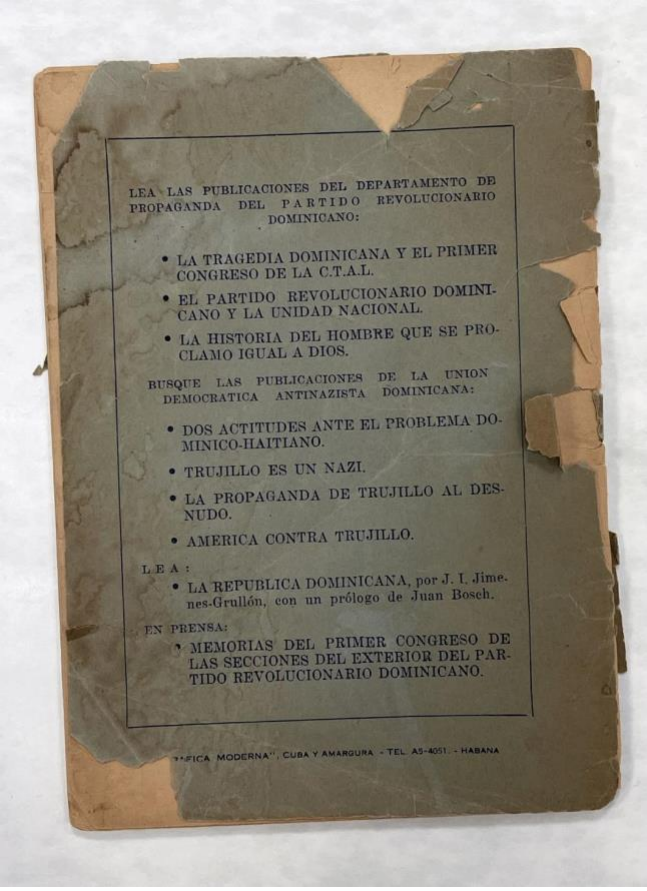
[62] "Documentos sobre la publicación de folleto anti-trujillista," 51. Translation mine.
[63] "Documentos sobre la publicación de folleto anti-trujillista," 52. Translation mine.

In contradiction with Sam Lacy's claim that Trujillo was one of the "Western world's favorite communist targets,"[64] these exiles framed the dictator himself as a fascist Nazi, unveiling his performance of democracy to reveal the true autocratic and capitalist motivations of his regime. Like the *sorprendistas,* their activism revolved around the aim of surprising the international community out of their complacency to the regime and awakening them to its true nature. These exiled revolutionaries were concerned with flipping the script about the Trujillato and the claims that were used to invalidate them. From their own words they wanted the international community to understand that they were not "communist agitators" and that Trujillo was the true enemy. Counselor of the Embassy Ellis O. Briggs maintained the United States government up to date about the activities of Dominican exiles in Havana, including in a letter to the Division of Research and Publication on March 10, 1944 a list of anti-trujillo publications published by the Unión including "Trujillo es un Nazi," "América contra Trujillo" (America

[64] Lacy, "Who Said Trujillo was Unpopular?".

Against Trujillo), “La Propaganda de Trujillo al Desnudo” (Trujillo’s Propaganda Naked), “Dos Actitudes Ante el Problema Dominicano-Haitiano” (Two Attitudes to the Dominican-Haitian Problem), and “La Historia del Hombre Que Se Proclamo Igual a Dios” (The Story of a Man Who Proclaimed Himself Equal to God).[65] The exiled Dominican authors of these pamphlets refused to be silent in the face of fascism, totalitarianism, and brutality, finding and creating spaces and ways to resist the dictator and his rhetoric from abroad. While their efforts did not contribute directly to the end of the era of Trujillo, they contributed to an understanding of the contradictions inherent in the dictatorship and are essential to the story of resistance to the Trujillato.


LEA LAS PUBLICACIONES DEL DEPARTAMENTO DE PROPAGANDA DEL PARTIDO REVOLUCIONARIO DOMINICANO:

- LA TRAGEDIA DOMINICANA Y EL PRIMER CONGRESO DE LA C.T.A.L.
- EL PARTIDO REVOLUCIONARIO DOMINICANO Y LA UNIDAD NACIONAL.
- LA HISTORIA DEL HOMBRE QUE SE PROCLAMO IGUAL A DIOS.

BUSQUE LAS PUBLICACIONES DE LA UNION DEMOCRATICA ANTINAZISTA DOMINICANA:

- DOS ACTITUDES ANTE EL PROBLEMA DOMINICO-HAITIANO.
- TRUJILLO ES UN NAZI.
- LA PROPAGANDA DE TRUJILLO AL DESNUDO.
- AMERICA CONTRA TRUJILLO.

LEA:

- LA REPUBLICA DOMINICANA, por J. I. Jimenes-Grullón, con un prólogo de Juan Bosch.

EN PRENSA:

- MEMORIAS DEL PRIMER CONGRESO DE LAS SECCIONES DEL EXTERIOR DEL PARTIDO REVOLUCIONARIO DOMINICANO.

...FICA MODERNA", CUBA Y AMARGURA - TEL. A5-4051. - HABANA

Figure 1: A photo of the last page of "America Contra Trujillo" listing other publications of the propaganda department of the Partido Revolucionario Dominicano including "Trujillo es un Nazi" via the Dominican Studies Institute.

Conclusion: Rhetoric as Power

Location defined the range of possibility for those organizing against the Trujillato and its rhetoric. Inside of the country, activists and resisters had to claim an apolitical stance as they attempted to organize against the dictator as did Aída Cartagena Portalatín. These activists’ apolitical stance disguised their resistance efforts and afforded them cover from the dictator’s

[65] “Documentos relativo a publicaciones anti-trujillistas,” (Colección Bernardo Vega), 1944.

gaze. However, their efforts remained covert to other Dominicans unable to read into the subtleties of their critiques. For *La Poesía Sorprendida* literary magazine, this weakness was their fatal flaw. Those organizing against the dictator and the racist, fascist, and imperialist ideals of the regime were able to assume a much more political stance if they were located outside of the country. For the Partido Revolucionario Dominicano and Dominicans living across the Americas, their activism could manifest as overtly political and, in fact, often did so to attract more international attention. Choosing to call Trujillo a Nazi was as much a strategic decision as it was rooted in truth for the Unión Demócrata Antinazista Dominicana. However, despite their efforts to organize behind, and in spite of, Trujillo's smoke screen, their efforts remained ineffective and unsuccessful.

In September 2021, President Luis Adinader of the Dominican Republic gave a speech at the U.N. General Assembly in which he stated that Haiti is a place of "regional insecurity" and therefore cannot hold "free, fair, and reliable elections," calling on the international community to consider Haiti a pressing issue in the region in need of security.[66] In drawing attention to the "Haitian crisis" he stated, "I also reiterate that there is not, nor will there ever be, a Dominican solution to the crisis in Haiti."[67] These statements are indicative of the Dominican Republic's continued attitude toward their neighbor and represent a palpable legacy of the Trujillo era. This speech, as well as the erasure of birthright citizenship through ruling 168-13 in 2013, in effect targeting Dominicans of Haitian descent and leading to their deportation,[68] are policies that grow out of the regime's projects of *hispanidad* nationalism and the legacy of neo-trujillismo.

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[66] "Dominican Republic - President Addresses General Debate, 76th Session | UN Web TV," (United Nations. United Nations), September 22, 2021.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Katz, Jonathan M. "What Happened When a Nation Erased Birthright Citizenship," (*The Atlantic.* Atlantic Media Company), November 12, 2018.

While the claims that the Unión Demócrata Antinazista Dominicana make in the pamphlet "Trujillo es un Nazi" have not been explored, the legacy of the ideologies that they were fighting against evidently lives on. The legacy of Trujillo's regime has failed to be disrupted within the Dominican Republic and, as a result, continues to be capitalized on to influence the policies of the country and its foreign relations. Nearly a century after the start of the era of Trujillo, the Dominican state continues to be influenced by its relationship with the U.S. government and the legacy of its most brutal dictator.

This reality emphasizes the failure of *La Poesía Sorprendida* and the Unión Demócrata Antinazista Dominicana, and other resistance efforts by Dominicans, to dismantle the dictatorship and substantially intervene in its rhetoric and policies. Despite the different ways they had to engage in resistance to the Trujillo dictatorship, activists inside and outside of the country failed to dismantle the regime and its legacy. As Anthony Dawahare argues about *La Poesía Sorprendida* literary magazine, organized political activity, in tandem with these literary efforts, was required to deal a successful deathblow to the regime and its *trujillista* personifications.[69]

The il/legible resistance to the Trujillo dictatorship, whether the poems of the *sorprendistas* or the pamphlets of the Partido Revolucionario Dominicano, were not enough to combat the structural forces of the Trujillo dictatorship. However, this fact does not diminish their success in combating the dictator's rhetoric through their evasion of his gaze and their literary resistance. In their works, these activists combated and resisted the oppressive dictatorship and the Indo-Hispanic and falsely pro-democracy rhetoric of the regime. Their efforts demonstrate that there exists a legacy in resisting the personifications of the Trujillo

[69] Dawahare, "'La Poesía Sorprendida.'"

regime in Dominican society. Aída Cartagena Portalatín and *La Poesía Sorprendida*, as well as the Unión Demócrata Antinazista Dominicana through "Trujillo es un Nazi," represent only a few efforts in the expanse of exiled Dominicans across the Americas and clandestine movements within the Dominican Republic to take down Trujillo. While none were successful, their efforts to do so remain significant and essential to uplift. In the process, the narrative of Dominican complacency, a lack of agency, or isolated moments of resistance to the most brutal dictatorship in their history is combated. As we uncover how the resistance that was meant to go unrecorded and undetected, or that failed to garner sufficient attention but that was nonetheless resistance, manifested, we can begin to uncover the long legacy of Dominican resisters who understood that rhetoric is power in the fight against oppression.

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