A World Destroyed, A Nation Imposed: The 1937 Haitian Massacre in the Dominican Republic

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Forgetting, I would go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation, which is why progress in historical studies often constitutes a danger for [the principle] of nationality.

—Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?" (1882)

In October 1937, Dominican dictator Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina commanded his army to kill all "Haitians" living in the Dominican Republic's northwestern frontier, which borders on Haiti, and in certain parts of the contiguous Cibao region. Between 2 October and 8 October, hundreds of Domini-

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can troops poured into this vast region,[1] and, with the assistance of *alcaldes pedáneos* (submunicipal political authorities) and some civilian reserves, rounded up and slaughtered with machete perhaps 15,000 ethnic Haitians.[2] Those killed in this operation—still frequently referred to as *el corte* (the cutting) by Dominicans and as *kout kouto-a* (the stabbing) by Haitians—were mostly small farmers, many of whom had been born in the Dominican Republic (and thus were Dominican citizens according to the Dominican constitution) and some whose families had lived in the Dominican Republic for generations.[3] Haitians were

1. The northern frontier, an area covering some 5,000 square kilometers, includes present-day provinces of Monte Cristi, Dajabón, Santiago Rodríguez, and the northern tip of Elías Piña. Together with the southern and central frontier areas, which include the provinces of Pedernales, Barahona, Independencia, and most of Baoruco, San Juan, and Elías Piña, the region encompasses roughly one-fourth of the country's approximately 48,000 square kilometers. Dominicans use the term *la Frontera* to refer to all of these areas.

2. The conventional figure of Haitian deaths given in the Dominican Republic is 17,000. See Joaquín Balaguer, *La palabra encadenada* (Santo Domingo: Ed. Taller, 1985), 300. A higher estimate of 20,000 is reached by subtracting the 10,000 ethnic Haitians who reportedly crossed over into Haiti during and after the massacre from the 30,000 ethnic Haitians whom a Catholic missionary estimated in 1936 were resident in the parish of Dajabón alone (only part of the northern frontier area, what was then the province of Monte Cristi). There were almost no ethnic Haitians left in this parish after the massacre, suggesting that 20,000 were killed just in this region. See José Luis Sáez, S. J., *Los Jesuitas en la República Dominicana*, 2 vols. (Santo Domingo: Museo Nacional de Historia y Geografía: Archivo Histórico de las Antillas, 1988–90), 1:60, 71. In the month after the massacre, Father Émile Robert in Ouanaminthe, Haiti (across the river from Dajabón) and another priest collected from refugees the names of 2,130 persons killed. However, they were able to interview only a small portion of those who escaped. See Jean M. Jan, *Collecta IV: Diocese du Cap-Haitien documents, 1929–1960* (Rennes: Simon, 1967), 82; and Melville Monk to Rex Pixley, 3 Nov. 1937, U.S. National Archives, Record Group 84, 800–D (U.S. National Archives record groups will hereafter be cited as RG). When Lauren Derby and I spoke with Father Robert in Guadeloupe in 1988, he estimated that at least 15,000 persons must have been killed.

3. Lauren Derby and I conducted numerous interviews with elderly Dominican and Haitian peasants who had lived in the Dominican frontier during the 1930s. These interviews were carried out in the Dominican and Haitian frontiers and around agricultural settlements in Terrier Rouge, Grand Bassin, Savane Zonbi, Thiote, and Dosmond that were established in Haiti for massacre refugees. The interviewees described substantial Haitian settlement in the Dominican frontier dating back to the 1870s. Most of the Haitians we interviewed had lived in the Dominican Republic for at least 15 years prior to the massacre and a large portion of those had been born there. Note that in 1934, a government official confirmed the Dominican birth and citizenship of much of the ethnic Haitian population in the frontier. See Julián Díaz Valdepares, "Alrededor de la cuestión haitiana," *Listín Diario*, 10 Dec. 1937.

slain even as they attempted to escape to Haiti while crossing the fatefully named Massacre River that divides the two nations.[4] After the first days of the slaughter, the official checkpoint and bridge between Haiti and the Dominican Republic were closed, thus impeding Haitians' escape.[5] In the following weeks, local priests and officials in Haiti recorded testimonies of refugees and compiled a list that ultimately enumerated 12,168 victims.[6] Subsequently, during the first half of 1938, thousands more Haitians were forcibly deported and hundreds killed in the southern frontier region.[7]

Dominican civilians and local authorities played disparate roles in the massacre. Some assisted the army by identifying and locating Haitians, while others helped Haitians hide and flee; the army recruited a few to participate in the killings. Generally these civilian recruits were prisoners from other areas of the country or local residents already tied to the regime and its repressive apparatus. Above all, local Dominican civilians were compelled by the army to burn and bury the bodies of the victims.[8]

The extraordinary violence of this baneful episode provides a terrifying image not only of the brutality, ruthlessness, and Caligulesque features of the infamous Trujillo dictatorship but also of the potential depths of Dominican

4. The river was rechristened *Río Massacre* in the eighteenth century, purportedly after a battle between Spanish soldiers and French buccaneers.

5. Interviews, 1987–1988. See also R. Henry Norweb to Secretary of State, 11 Oct. 1937, no. 16, RG 84, 800–D; and Bernardo Vega, *Trujillo y Haití*, 2 vols. (Santo Domingo: Fundación Cultural Dominicana, 1988–95), 1:348, 355.

6. "Roosevelt Praises Dominican Stand," *New York Times*, 21 Dec. 1937. See also José Israel Cuello, ed., *Documentos del conflicto domínico-haitiano de 1937* (Santo Domingo: Ed. Taller, 1985), 512. Some of these affidavits are available in U.S. Legation records. See Ferdinand Mayer to Secretary of State, 17 Dec. 1937, no. 19, RG 84, 800–D.

7. On the history of the Haitian massacre, see Juan Manuel García, *La matanza de los haitianos: Genocidio de Trujillo, 1937* (Santo Domingo: Ed. Alfa & Omega, 1983), esp. 59, 69–71; Cuello, *Documentos*, 60–85; Vega, *Trujillo y Haití*, 1:325–412, vol. 2; Eric Roorda, *The Dictator Next Door: The Good Neighbor Policy and the Trujillo Regime in the Dominican Republic, 1930–1945* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1998), chap. 5; Thomas Fiehrer, "Political Violence in the Periphery: The Haitian Massacre of 1937," *Race and Class* 32, no. 2 (1990); and Edward Paulino Díaz, "Birth of a Boundary: Blood, Cement, and Prejudice and the Making of the Dominican-Haitian Border, 1937–1961" (Ph.D. diss., Michigan State Univ., 2001). See also the testimonial novel by Freddy Prestol Castillo, *El Masacre se pasa a pie* (Santo Domingo: Ed. Taller, 1973), 49.

8. Miguel Otilio Savé (Guelo), interview by author and Lauren Derby, Monte Cristi, 1988; Testimony of Cime Jean, Ouanaminthe, 3 Oct. 1937, RG 84, 800–D; García, *La matanza de los haitianos*, 59, 67–71; Cuello, *Documentos*, 60–85; and Prestol Castillo, *El Masacre se pasa a pie*, 49.

anti-Haitianism. Anti-Haitianism, moreover, has only grown and, above all, diffused during the last 60 years, as Haitian migrants to Dominican sugar zones and other areas—mostly far from the frontier regions—actually increased in number after the massacre. These migrants have been subjected to extraordinary exploitation and continual human rights abuses. In addition, there is a salient racial dimension to Dominican anti-Haitianism, as Haitians have been identified in the Dominican Republic as "black" in contrast to Dominicans who, evidently since the colonial era, have rarely constructed such identities for themselves (even though most also have not identified themselves—nor been identified by others—as "white").[9] Hence, narrating the history of the Haitian massacre as a story of anti-Haitian racism resonates powerfully with

9. A full history of Dominican racial identities, modes of racism, and their transformations over time has yet to be written. Both official statistics and outside observers have for centuries identified the majority of Dominicans as being of mixed African and European descent (using the terms *mestizo*, *mulato*, or *indio*). In a 1935 census, conducted during the Trujillo era, 13 percent of the population was recorded as "white," 19 percent "black," and 68 percent "mestizo." See Jean Price-Mars, *La República de Haití y la República Dominicana: Diversos aspectos de un problema histórico, geográfico y etnológico* (Madrid: Industrias Gráficas España, 1958), 181; C. Lyonnet, "Estadística de la parte española de Santo Domingo, 1800," in *La era de Francia en Santo Domingo: Contribución a su estudio*, ed. Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi (Ciudad Trujillo: Ed. del Caribe, 1955), 191; and Carlos Larrazábal Blanco, *Los negros y la esclavitud en Santo Domingo* (Santo Domingo: Julio D. Postigo, 1975), 184. It is unclear, however, how such statistics corresponded to popular racial meanings. In fact, it seems that at least since the late nineteenth century a two- or three-tier racial schema has been far less significant for most Dominicans than has a racist color continuum of physical appearances and "beauty." Physical differences have marked individuals within this colorist mode of racism, but have generally not constituted social groups or communities. Thus, despite the prevalence of this colorist mode of racism, those considered Dominican have generally not been divided by "race" in the sense of collective ascriptions of otherness. The seeming absence of a black identity and indeed of any collective identities or notions of community based on color in the Dominican Republic requires further investigation across time, space, and class. This particular mode of race and racism doubtless evolved in light of the intense but short-lived character of plantation slavery; the early, preemancipation development of a mostly Afro-Dominican peasantry comprising most of the country's population (with only relatively small portions of whites and slaves); the multiple independence wars and caudillo rebellions that required mass mobilization across color lines; and the country's relatively limited history of both de jure and de facto racial segregation, including in marriage. See Silvio Torres-Saillant, "Tribulations of Blackness: Stages in Dominican Racial Identity," *Latin American Perspectives* 25, no. 3 (1998); Frank Moya Pons, "Dominican National Identity: A Historical Perspective," *Punto 7 Review* 3, no. 1 (1996); and H. Hoetink, "'Race' and Color in the Caribbean," in *Caribbean Contours*, ed. Sidney W. Mintz and Sally Price (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1985).

contemporary issues in Haitian-Dominican relations and comparative themes in world history, namely, hostility toward lower-class immigrants and the racial and ethnic conflict, ethnic cleansing, and genocide that marked the twentieth century.

Yet to tell the history of the Haitian massacre through the lens of post-1937 Haitian migration to the Dominican Republic, indeed to tell it as a history of Dominicans versus Haitians, of one ethnic group or nation versus another, is misleading and may unwittingly reinscribe and essentialize what are, in fact, historically varying and contingent ways of imagining the Dominican nation. The story of the Haitian massacre is also one of Dominicans versus Dominicans, of Dominican elites versus Dominican peasants, of the national state against Dominicans in the frontier, of centralizing forces in opposition to local interests, and, following the massacre, of newly hegemonic anti-Haitian discourses of the nation vying with more culturally pluralist discourses and memories from the past. It is also a story of how multiethnic communities and shifting, complex, or ambiguous national identities come to be perceived as a problem for the state. Current representations of the massacre speak to contemporary problems of immigration, ethnic conflict, and racism. But emphasizing these themes exclusively misses and even misconstrues much of the story of this horrific explosion of state violence. It is a misconstruction, moreover, that suppresses an important and also a "usable" past, one that resists the prevailing conception today of a Dominican nation and Dominicanness as being in radical and transhistorical opposition to Haiti and Haitianness.

This alternative history is revealed in oral histories recorded in the late 1980s with elderly Haitians and Dominicans who lived in the northern frontier regions at the time of the massacre. Their testimonies throw into relief how prior to 1937, Dominican national identity was far from uniformly imagined as antithetical to or exclusive of Haitians and Haitian culture. In contrast to images fostered by official and elite historiography in the Dominican Republic, Dominicans in the frontier were not struggling in the 1930s against a perceived cultural and demographic onslaught by Haitians.[10] In fact, much to the chagrin of officials, intellectuals, and other elite Dominicans, a largely bilingual frontier population remained indifferent and even hostile to urban visions of Dominican nationality. Elite conceptions envisaged a rigid border between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, a distinct Dominican versus Hait-

10. On these images in the postmassacre historiography of the Trujillo regime, see Lauren Derby, "Histories of Power and the Power of History in the Dominican Republic" (manuscript, 1989).

ian community and culture, and a common ethnic basis for citizens of the Dominican state. In other words, the elite sought a both geographically and culturally bounded nation. The frontier population, however, was unable to make sense of, or find a place for itself in, this elite formulation of a mono-ethnic Dominican nation radically distinct from Haiti. Given these conditions, I argue that the Haitian massacre should be seen as an attack not only on Haitians living in the Dominican Republic. The Haitian massacre should also be seen as an all-out assault by the national state on a bicultural and transnational frontier world collectively made by ethnic Dominicans and ethnic Haitians. Reframing the problematic of the Haitian massacre as a conflict between two visions of the Dominican nation deconstructs and challenges the dominant, essentialized construction of Dominican nationality as founded on a putatively transhistorical anti-Haitianism.

The Dominican Frontier

In the pre-1937 Dominican frontier, particularly the northern frontier areas, a bicultural Haitian-Dominican world evolved over several generations of Haitian immigration and interaction with Dominican residents. This immigration was stimulated by a land surplus and sparse population on the Dominican side of the border amidst increasing land and population pressures in Haiti during the second half of the nineteenth century. Because of the region's sparse population, Haitians settling in the Dominican frontier helped constitute what was to a large extent the original society of this part of the country. From the start, that society was a bilingual, bicultural, and transnational one spanning the Haitian and Dominican sides of the border. A status-quo boundary between Haiti and the Dominican Republic was accepted by both states at various times during the 1900–20 period (albeit with continuing disputes in certain sites, above all in the southern Pedernales area).[11] But this border remained entirely porous to travel and held limited meaning for local residents. Although notions of Dominican political sovereignty and nationality impinged on daily life in the Dominican frontier—for instance, in the levying of an immigration tax on those not born on Dominican soil—the territorial as well as cultural boundary between the two countries had little of the significance and strength that was imagined and desired by those living in Santo Domingo (the country's capital) and other areas far from the border. In many ways, the border

11. Report of the U.S. Military Government, 23 Feb. 1923, RG 38, Misc. Recs., box 6.

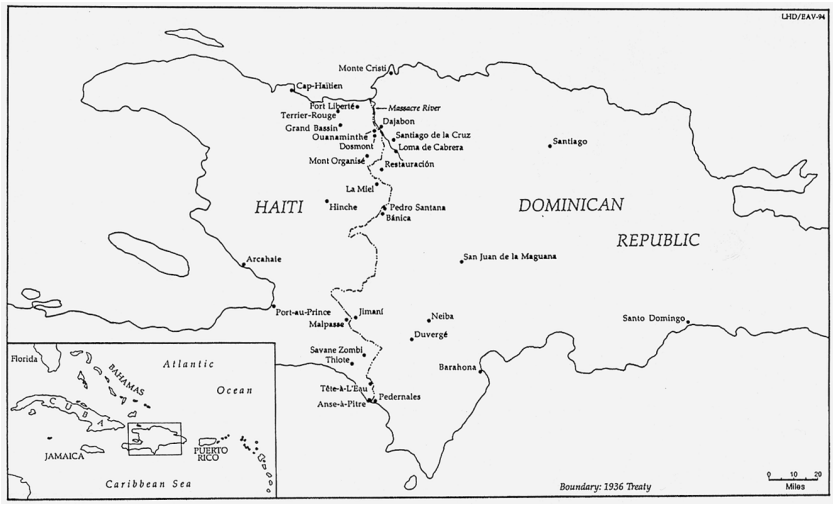

Figure 1. The Haitian and Dominican Frontier Regions (Borderline Based on a 1936 Treaty between the Two Countries). Reprinted, with permission, from Lauren Derby, "Haitians Magic, and Money: *Raza* and Society in the Haitian-Dominican Borderlands, 1900 to 1937," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 36, no. 3 (1994): 492.

remained an inconsequential political fiction for frontier residents. As one Haitian refugee from the massacre recalled, "Although there were two sides, the people were one, united."[12]

Many residents traversed the border repeatedly over the course of a single day; for example, ethnic Haitian children went to Haiti to attend school, crossed back to the Dominican Republic for lunch, then returned to school in Haiti in the afternoon, and finally came back home to Dominican territory in the evening.[13] Also, many of the nearest and largest markets were in Haiti, for which reason residents frequently traveled to Haiti or sold their goods to

12. Anonymous, interview by author and Lauren Derby, Ouanaminthe, 1988.

13. See the Oct. 1937 entry in the logbook kept by (and in 1988 still in the possession of) L'École des Frères, Ouanaminthe. Given the complexity of identities in the Dominican frontier, naming the region's residents is inevitably problematic. Those I am imperfectly calling "ethnic Haitians" were, in fact, more or less Haitian, and more or less Dominican, depending on the political or cultural context in which they found themselves and on the aspects of their identities they chose to, or were obliged to, draw upon at any given time. As we will see, though, in the moment of the massacre, all such fluidity, simultaneity, and ambiguity of identity dissolved. (I am indebted to William Chester Jordan, Susan Naquin, and Stephanie Smallwood for their insights on this point.)

Haitian intermediaries.[14] Both ethnic Haitians and ethnic Dominicans generally baptized their children in Haiti.[15] And many grazed their cattle and worked on landholdings comprising both Haitian and Dominican territory.[16] Communities of friends, relatives, and associates formed across the border. Bilín, a poor Dominican man from Monte Grande, recalled, "In those days, we crossed the border without problems. We went over there as much as they came over here. Papá had many friends over there. And he would drop us off with his *compadres* and they would take care of me."[17]

Oral histories reveal how ethnic Haitians and ethnic Dominicans living in the northern frontier region had mixed fluidly and often formed families together. Percivio Díaz, one of the richest men in the small Dominican town of Santiago de la Cruz (just east of Dajabón), explained, "This place was made of an amalgam of people, of Haitian men marrying Dominican women and Dominican men marrying Haitian women. Many here are the products of Dominican-Haitian unions. So many that right away there were more Dominican-Haitians than pure Dominicans . . . [T]here never were many pure Dominicans here."[18] Frontier residents had generally understood both Haitian Creole and Spanish, and to some extent the two languages fused forming a new idiom.[19] And no clear economic hierarchy or conflict existed between eth-

14. See Dominican Republic, Secretaría de Estado de lo Interior, Policía, Guerra y Marina, *Memoria, 1935* (Ciudad Trujillo, 1936); Amado Gómez to Trujillo, 26 June 1935; and Gómez to Secretary of Agriculture, 4 Sept. 1935, no. 1640, Archivo General de la Nación, Santo Domingo (hereafter cited as AGN), Secretaría de Agricultura (SA), leg. 207, 1935; Michiel Baud, "Una frontera-refugio: Dominicanos y haitianos contra el estado," *Estudios Sociales* 26, no. 92 (1993); and idem, "Una frontera para cruzar: La sociedad rural a través de la frontera domínico-haitiana (1870–1930)," *Estudios Sociales* 26, no. 94 (1993).

15. Dominican Republic, Comisión para el Establecimiento de Colonias de Inmigrantes, *Informe que presenta al poder ejecutivo la Comisión creada por la Ley núm. 77 para estudiar las tierras de la frontera y señalar los sitios en que se han de establecer las colonias de inmigrantes* (Santo Domingo: Imp. de J. R. Vda. García, 1925), 19; and Dominican Republic, Secretaría del Estado de lo Interior, Policía, Guerra y Marina, *Memoria, 1933*, xviii.

16. Harold Utley, Major, Gendarmerie d'Haiti and Glenn Miller, Major, Guardia Nacional Dominicana, "Agreement Respecting Border Troubles," 12 May 1920, RG 38, Misc. Recs., box 6.

17. Bilín, interview by author and Lauren Derby, Monte Grande, 1988.

18. Percivio Díaz, interview by author and Lauren Derby, Santiago de la Cruz, 1988. In other areas of the frontier, however, Haitians and Dominicans were said to have engaged more in concubinage than marriage in the sense that Haitian women were treated as mistresses or second wives by Dominican men.

19. Héctor Incháustegui Cabral, "La poesía de tema negro en Santo Domingo," *Eme Eme: Estudios Dominicanos* 1, no. 5 (1973).

nic Haitians and ethnic Dominicans in the region's rural areas. There was no significant labor competition; in fact, there was relatively little recourse to wage labor at all. The great sugar estates employing Haitian and other West Indian immigrant workers were far removed from this region. Most ethnic Haitians in the area cultivated coffee and subsistence crops on small and medium-sized plots with some attention to stock raising, while ethnic Dominican peasants generally placed greater emphasis on hunting and herding livestock on the open range. There was also no notable competition over or shortage of land as much of the northern frontier remained undeveloped and unsurveyed and property claims vague and inchoate, based on overlapping and contradictory rights and on titles yet to be adjudicated in most areas.[20] In the pueblos, such as Dajabón and Monte Cristi, (with populations of over 10,000 and over 8,000 persons respectively), an ethnic division of labor existed to some extent, with many Haitians working as artisans (cobblers, tinsmiths, and tailors) and domestic workers (launderers and servants).[21] However, no such divisions or class hierarchy prevailed in most of the rural northern frontier.[22] And although there appears to have been more ethnic residential concentration and more Haitians working as farm laborers for ethnic Dominicans in certain rural areas of the southern frontier, here too social and commercial integration were nonetheless high.[23]

Despite the overall high levels of Haitian-Dominican integration in the frontier, cultural identities as "Dominican" or "Haitian" nonetheless existed. In fact, the porous border and the transnationalism of the region helped preserve Haitian culture and identity. In many border areas, the population was composed mostly of people identified by outsiders as "Haitian."[24] Certain cul-

20. See Richard Lee Turits, *Foundations of Despotism: Peasants, the Trujillo Regime, and Modernity in Dominican History* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2003), chap. 2.

21. Gobierno Provisional de la República Dominicana, *Primer censo nacional de la República Dominicana, 1920* (Santo Domingo: Univ. Autónoma de Santo Domingo, 1975), 149.

22. Interviews conducted by author and Lauren Derby in the Dominican frontier. See also Freddy Prestol Castillo, *Paisajes y meditaciones de una frontera* (Ciudad Trujillo: Cosmopolita, 1943), 33–40; and Baud, "Una frontera-refugio," 42.

23. On the southern frontier, see Jesús María Ramírez, *Mis 43 años en La Descubierta*, ed. Gisela Ramírez de Perdomo (Santo Domingo: Ed. Centenario, 2000), 13–75, 77–80.

24. For population estimates, see Sáez, *Los Jesuitas*, 60, 71; Franklin Atwood to Secretary of State, 25 Oct. 1937, no. 39, RG 84, 800–D; Manuel Emilio Castillo to Trujillo, 18 Oct. 1937, AGN, cited in Vega, *Trujillo y Haití*, 2:77. See also Julián Díaz Valdepares, "Alrededor de la cuestión haitiana," *Listín Diario*, 10 Dec. 1937. Census data do not provide information on the number of ethnic Haitians in the Dominican Republic, but only of documented foreign residents.

tural, religious, and linguistic practices, and also various physical features (from darker skin to smaller ears), were coded as Haitian, however much they were shared by both Haitians and Dominicans. And these notions of cultural and physical difference were more hierarchical than egalitarian ones. Although links were weak between those in the region and racist and anti-Haitian discourses emanating from the cities, elderly peasants did recall certain forms of differentiation, ethnic stereotypes, and racist constructions of beauty. Frontier Dominicans understandings of their difference from Haitians drew on invidious cultural stereotypes that imputed, for example, stronger magical, sexual, and healing powers as well as less restraint to Haitians.[25] However, these were ethnic rather than necessarily national distinctions. Ethnic Haitians born in the Dominican Republic were Dominican citizens according to the constitution and the evidence suggests that they were accepted as part of the Dominican nation by their ethnic Dominican neighbors and by local Dominican officials. Indeed, numerous Haitians recalled that even those born in Haiti could avoid the yearly immigration tax and pass for Dominican citizens once they spoke Spanish well and had lived in the country for a number of years.[26]

In short, ethnic Haitians did not occupy an inferior position in the overall rural economy and society in the frontier. And Dominican frontier denizens had generally viewed Haitians neither as a poorer and subordinate group nor as outsiders. Nor was Haiti seen then as being less modern than the Dominican Republic. (The Dominican Republic's relative economic and military superiority developed over the course of the Trujillo regime.) Despite everyday frictions and stereotypes, a high degree of socioeconomic equality and community existed across ethnic difference and also across the national border. Thus forms of prejudice and differentiation between ethnic Haitians and ethnic Dominicans in the region were meshed with and even born of intimacy and integration. They constituted notions of difference, but not necessarily otherness or marginality.

When asked how life had been before the massacre, Doña María, a poor elderly Dominican resident of Dajabón, recounted, "A Haitian was the midwife for my first child. And we lived close to one another. I treated this woman as if she were my mother. If I cooked, I would give her food. And my children

25. For an analysis of these notions of difference, see Lauren Derby, "Haitians, Magic, and Money: *Raza* and Society in the Haitian-Dominican Borderlands, 1900–1937," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 36, no. 3 (1994).

26. Ercilia Guerrier, interview by author and Lauren Derby, Mont Organizé, Haiti, 1988.

really loved her. This is one of the ones that was killed [in the massacre] . . . Haitians and Dominicans had treated each other like brothers and sisters, like sons and daughters."[27] For a humble, civilian family such as Doña María's, elite anti-Haitian ideology and constructs of a monoethnic nation had no social or economic basis.

The ways of life and cultural complexity of the Dominican frontier collided with an elite and urban ideal of a Dominican nation excluding and reviling everything Haitian. Dominican intellectuals represented the Haitian presence in the Dominican frontier as a "pacific invasion" that was endangering the Dominican nation.[28] This "invasion" was supposedly "Haitianizing" and "Africanizing" the Dominican frontier, rendering popular Dominican culture more savage and backward, and injecting new and undesirable African admixtures into the Dominican social composition. Since the late 1800s—the years when Haitian migration to the frontier and overall West Indian migration to the nascent sugar zones commenced—elites had demonized popular Haitian culture, and Vodou in particular, as a threat to Dominican nationality. Haitian influence was perceived as an obstacle to the elite's aims to render the country "modern" and "civilized." For centuries the cultural practices of the Dominican peasantry had themselves been seen by Dominican intellectuals and policymakers as backward and the primary obstacle to progress, marked, as one nineteenth-century writer put it, by "religious fanaticism and . . . a peculiar independence rendering it unamenable to enlightened practices . . . of work."[29] And popular Dominican religion, music, and idiom had always exhibited forms traceable to Africa and in common with Afro-Haitian practices.[30] Increasingly, though, "Haitianization" became the means by which intellectuals explained supposedly backward and African dimensions of Dominican cul-

27. Doña María, interview by author and Lauren Derby, Dajabón, 1988.

28. See Joaquín Balaguer, "El imperialismo haitiano," *El Imparcial*, 13 Dec. 1927.

29. Rafael Abreu Licairac, "Dominicanos y Haitianos," *El Eco de la Opinión*, 12 Nov. 1892. See also Raymundo González, "Notas sobre el pensamiento socio-político dominicano," *Estudios Sociales* 20, no. 76 (1987); and Américo Lugo, *A punto largo* (Santo Domingo: La Cuna de América, 1901), 211.

30. Carlos Andújar Persinal, *La presencia negra en Santo Domingo: Un enfoque etnohistórico* (Santo Domingo: Imp. Búho, 1997); Carlos Esteban Deive, "La herencia africana en la cultura dominicana actual," in *Ensayos sobre cultura dominicana*, ed. Bernardo Vega et al. (Santo Domingo: Museo del Hombre Dominicano, 1988). See also Martha Ellen Davis, *La otra ciencia: El vodú dominicano como religión y medicina populares* (Santo Domingo: Ed. Universitaria, 1987); and Carlos Esteban Deive, *Vodú y magia en Santo Domingo* (Santo Domingo: Ed. Taller, 1996), esp. 170–78.

ture and society as well as the evolution of Haitian-Dominican norms in the Dominican frontier.[31]

The racist opposition of elite Dominicans to the bicultural conditions of the Dominican frontier dovetailed with similarly long-standing state interests in gaining greater political control over the region. With their vast, untamed woods and hills, remoteness from population centers, dispersed peasantry, and scarce infrastructure, these areas had for decades resisted subjection to the national state. Since the late nineteenth century, Dominican leaders had been struggling to consolidate modern forms of political authority and economic regulation in the region where ethnic Dominicans and ethnic Haitians lived together in a world to a large extent apart from the rest of the nation. Also, as in most modern states, members of the Dominican government sought to fix a clear and continuous national border and to regulate the flow of goods and people across it.[32] The government had attempted for decades to collect customs taxes along the border and eliminate contraband in order to gain revenue, protect Dominican merchants and infant industries, and secure economic autonomy and political control.[33] The borderless frontier also offered an optimal location for "revolutionaries," given the ease with which one could flee across the border to Haiti to gather arms and organize forces, and the money that could be made through illegal commerce. Local strongmen who sustained a high level of regional autonomy also derived wealth and power from illicit trade across the border.[34] Thus, establishing and controlling a firm

31. See Rafael Abreu Licairac, "El objetivo político de los haitianos," *El Eco de la Opinión*, 9 July 1892, "Contábamos con la réplica," ibid., 27 Aug. 1892, "Dominicanos y Haitianos," ibid., 12 Nov. 1892; "Contestación al periódico 'Le Droit'," *El Teléfono*, 28 Aug. 1892; Lil Despradel, "Las etapas del antihaitianismo en la República Dominicana: El papel de los historiadores," in *Política y sociología en Haití y la República Dominicana: Coloquio domínico-haitiano de ciencias sociales*, ed. Suzy Castor et al. (Mexico City: Univ. Nacional Autónoma de Mexico, 1974), esp. 102.

32. On the importance of firm borders to Dominican constructs of sovereignty, see *Boletín del Congreso* 2, no. 17 (1911): 2. For comparative perspective, see Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1989), esp. 3–7; and José Antonio Maravall, *Estado moderno y mentalidad social (siglos XV a XVII)*, 2 vols. (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1972), 1:88–149.

33. See Ramírez, *Mis 43 años en La Descubierta* , 8, 23, 25; Law 3733, 26 June 1897, and Law 3788, 10 Feb. 1898, in *Colección de leyes, decretos y resoluciones emanadas de los poderes legislativo y ejecutivo de la República Dominicana*, 23 vols. (Santo Domingo: Imp. de J. R. Vda. García, 1924), vols. 14, 15; *Boletín del Congreso* 2, no. 17 (1911), 2–3; "Editorial," *El Teléfono*, 1 Nov. 1891; Baud, "Una frontera-refugio," 48–49; idem, "Una frontera para cruzar," 16–17.

34. Baud, "Una frontera-refugio," 54–55.

border had long been a matter of official concern. So too had been building markets on the Dominican side of the border, in an effort to reorient the frontier population away from Haiti.[35] And beginning in the 1920s, the government attempted to implement laws requiring official documents (identity cards, passports, visas, or certificates of good conduct) for people to pass through the legal port of entry in Dajabón.[36]

State interest in hardening the border and securing control over the frontier converged with long-standing elite prejudices against the Haitian "pacific invasion" to give rise to government efforts at agricultural "colonization" in the region. New agricultural villages organized, supervised, and supported by the state ("colonies") were first envisaged in the early years of the twentieth century. Early colonization schemes focused on the frontier regions and responded to fears that the growing immigration and presence of ethnic Haitians in that area would support wider territorial claims by the Haitian state, especially as there was no definitive borderline yet drawn between the two countries. In 1907, the year that the nation's first colonization law was passed (but almost 20 years before the first colony was actually established), one newspaper editorial argued, "This spontaneous immigration that flows from the other side of the Massacre [River] would have nothing alarming about it if it continued being as it was before, only to occupy, give impetus to agriculture, and supply our cities with food; but there is now the ambition, the egoism or bad faith of . . . [those who assert that] Gran Fond [now Trinitaria in Restauración] has never belonged to the Dominican Republic [but instead is part of Haiti]."[37] Populating these frontier areas with settlers other than Haitians, it was hoped, would consolidate Dominican claims to the territory. When colonization plans began again in the mid-1920s, national leaders professed essentially the same goals as those of the 1907 legislation: impeding the so-called "pacific invasion" of Haitians into the Dominican frontier and potential Haitian claims to areas held by the Dominican Republic.[38]

Yet the scattered Dominican peasantry was unlikely to populate this region in sufficient numbers to forestall Haitian immigration and prevail in demographic terms. Overall the country was still sparsely populated and land remained available in regions less remote than the frontier. Furthermore, most

35. Law 3733, in *Colección de leyes*, vol. 14.

36. Derby, "Haitians, Magic, and Money," 502.

37. "Los haitianos siguen invadiéndonos," *El Diario*, 21 Feb. 1907.

38. Dominican Republic, Comisión para el Establecimiento de Colonias de Inmigrantes, *Informe que presenta al Poder Ejecutivo*, 5–9.

late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century intellectual and political figures exhibited only contempt for the still highly autarkic Dominican peasantry.[39] Hence policymakers specified the need to populate the colonies with European immigrants, imagining that European cultural influence would be required to "civilize" the countryside, to foster sedentary and commercial agriculture, and thus to settle, claim, and develop frontier lands for the Dominican Republic.[40] State officials spoke of the "moral" and "ethnographic" improvements that would result from European immigration.[41] Similar racist-culturalist discourses had been prevalent throughout late-nineteenth-century Latin America, where European immigration was imagined as a recipe for social and economic "progress." But they were more invidious, ironic, and problematic in a society like the Dominican Republic, which was predominantly of African descent. In this context, European immigration was represented by elite ideologues as a means of "improving the [Dominican] race" and thus reinforcing the country's lack, in contrast to Haiti, of a black identity as well as hegemonic privileging of European practices and beliefs. In more concrete terms, these ideologues assumed that European immigrants would bring new agricultural knowledge and habits, simple but heretofore-unused tools and techniques, and a work ethic that would help modernize the countryside. Ironic as it may seem, the Dominican state proposed European immigration to consolidate Dominican territorial claims and national identity in the frontier.

The actual establishment of agricultural colonies, however, failed to conform to the cultural as well as racial vision of those who first proposed them. The poor performance of early European "colonists" coupled with an unprecedented rise of landlessness among Dominican peasants quickly led to the reformulation of colonization schemes at the end of the 1920s. Increasingly, the project of populating and developing land frontiers involved Dominican rather than foreign "colonists," and was refashioned in more nationalist terms

39. See Andrés L. Mateo, *Mito y cultura en la era de Trujillo* (Santo Domingo: Ed. de Colores, 1993), 58 n. 78; Arístides Incháustegui, "El ideario de Rodó en el trujillismo," *Estudios Sociales* 18, no. 60 (1985); Diógenes Céspedes, "El efecto Rodó, nacionalismo idealista vs. nacionalismo práctico: Los intelectuales antes de y bajo Trujillo," *Cuadernos de poética* 6, no. 17 (1989); and Pedro L. San Miguel, "La ciudadanía de Calibán: Poder y discursiva campesinista en la era de Trujillo," in *Política, identidad y pensamiento social en la República Dominicana (Siglos XIX y XX)*, ed. Raymundo González et al. (Madrid: Doce Calles, 1999), 271–72, 277.

40. González, "Notas sobre el pensamiento socio-político dominicano," 6–7.

41. Report of Gov. of San Pedro de Macorís, *Documentos anexos a la memoria que presenta el Secretario de Estado de Agricultura e Inmigración, 1908* (Santo Domingo, 1909).

as the "Dominicanization of the frontier."[42] Furthermore, contradicting this expressed goal and the earlier anti-Haitian discourse of state ideologues, the vast majority of the "Dominican" peasants who were incorporated in the northern frontier colonies prior to the massacre were, in fact, ethnic Haitians.[43] This ironic situation stemmed from the demographic realities of the sparsely populated border areas. But it also suggests an alternative construction of the Dominican nation that coexisted with official ideals and was embraced even by some local functionaries. This view of the nation effectively endowed Haitians born on Dominican soil, and perhaps some born in Haiti, with Dominican citizenship.

The period when the first colonies were founded in the late 1920s was also the time when the Dominican Republic witnessed the meteoric ascent of Rafael Trujillo. A lower-middle-class man with a few years of schooling from the small town of San Cristóbal, Trujillo joined the Dominican National Guard in 1919, soon after it was formed during the U.S. occupation (1916–24). Having risen through the ranks of the military, in 1927 Trujillo was named commander-in-chief by then president Horacio Vásquez. When a small civilian-led rebellion was organized to unseat Vásquez in 1930, Trujillo, through his control of the army, was in a position to facilitate a coup and three months later seize the presidency.[44] He would quickly gain control of the country and rule the Dominican Republic for 31 years with virtually no organized opposition until the twilight of the regime.

Seeking legitimation and expertise—and keeping his potential rivals close to him—Trujillo quickly incorporated into his regime the leading intellectuals and policymakers of the time.[45] Many of these figures had become disillusioned with the inequities, failures, and "denationalization" of the classical lib-

42. See L. E. Henríquez Castillo, "El caso domínico-haitiano," *La Opinión*, 19 Jan. 1929.

43. In 1935 the "Haitian" population in the northern border colonies was reportedly four times that of Dominicans. See Rafael Carretero and Francisco Read to Secretary of Labor, Agriculture, Industry, and Commerce, 3 May 1935, no. 721, AGN, SA, leg. 209, 1935.

44. Roorda, *The Dictator Next Door*, 27–62. The classic biography of Trujillo—a rich but undocumented account—is Robert D. Crassweller, *Trujillo: The Life and Times of a Caribbean Dictator* (New York: Macmillan, 1966).

45. On the role of intellectuals in the early Trujillo regime, see Mateo, *Mito y cultura*, 21–63; Incháustegui, "El ideario de Rodó, 51–63; Céspedes, "El efecto Rodó," 7–56; Francisco Antonio Avelino, *Las ideas políticas en Santo Domingo* (Santo Domingo: Ed. Arte y Cine, 1966); and González, "Notas sobre el pensamiento," 14–15.

eral path to modernization—peasant dispossession, foreign monopolies, food shortages, and a state with limited power to regulate economy and society—that had been followed in the eastern provinces of the Dominican Republic where sugar plantations grew in the 1880 to 1930 period. Seeking to deploy the dictatorial state's unprecedented power for the realization of their policy goals, these cabinet members proposed an alternative, relatively nationalist and populist version of modernization that Trujillo quickly embraced. Through populist agrarian policies, this reformist project of modernity promised to forge a peasant social base for the regime, foster agricultural self-sufficiency (critical in the global economic depression of the 1930s), and increase internal revenues. It also allowed Trujillo to extend as never before the reach and vision of the state. Distributing fixed plots of land and providing much of the aid and irrigation upon which sedentary agriculturalists came to depend permitted a far greater expansion of state control into rural areas, lives, and even subjectivities than existed in the past, when peasants lived a mostly autarkic existence, subsisting through hunting and slash-and-burn agriculture.[46] Through agrarian reform, the national state under Trujillo would steadily domesticate a peasantry that had been able to elude state control, taxation, and monitoring for centuries. And it would enlist peasants' participation in the political, cultural, and economic projects of the national state, its civic obligations, and rituals of rule. Trujillo's reformist project of modernization thus pried open the countryside to state power and authority as previous Dominican governments had tried but failed to do.[47]

The porous Haitian-Dominican borderline and the transnational frontier society were clear fault lines for the new regime, as it worked to bring rural

46. On the relationship in general between modernization, "sedentarization," and state formation, see James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1998).

47. This discussion of the Trujillo regime is elaborated in Turits, *Foundations of Despotism*. On peasant-state relations in Dominican history, see also Pedro L. San Miguel, *Los campesinos del Cibao: Economía de mercado y transformación agraria en la República Dominicana, 1880–1960* (San Juan: Univ. de Puerto Rico, 1997); idem, *El pasado relegado: Estudios sobre la historia agraria dominicana* (Santo Domingo: Lib. La Trinitaria, 1999), esp. 142–46, 211–13; idem, "La ciudadanía de Calibán"; and Orlando Inoa, *Estado y campesinos al inicio de la era de Trujillo* (Santo Domingo: Lib. La Trinitaria, 1994). On the ideological foundations of the Trujillo regime, see also Rosario Espinal, *Autoritarismo y democracia en la política dominicana* (San José, Costa Rica: CAPEL, 1987); and idem, "Indagaciones sobre el discurso trujillista y su incidencia en la política dominicana," *Ciencia y Sociedad* 12, no. 4 (1987); and Jonathan Hartlyn, *The Struggle for Democratic Politics in the Dominican Republic* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1998), 45–52.

areas within the range of vision and effective control of the central state. From Trujillo's viewpoint, the frontier doubtless cried out for increased state presence, a concern heightened by ongoing border disputes with the Haitian government in the early 1930s.[48] Trujillo was also deeply concerned that revolutionary exiles might launch an invasion across the Haitian-Dominican border and that the area would provide easy passage for illegal arms coming into the Dominican Republic.[49] From a military perspective, the border was indeed the regime's Achilles' heel. The long-standing state impulse to police the border and control the region also intensified as Trujillo sought to dominate the national economy, to impose new taxes and fees on external trade, and to promote local industry and import-substitution programs through high tariffs.[50]

Trujillo's efforts at state formation and political control in the frontier dovetailed with continuing territorial and cultural concerns over "Haitianization" in the border areas. This can be seen in the regime's early policies toward frontier colonies. Overall, frontier colonization played only a marginal role in the Trujillo regime from 1930 to 1937. The state did not create any new colonies in the region and significantly expanded only one of the existing ones in this period. And over the course of the trujillato, colonization would become a national rather than primarily frontier policy, ushering in no more than a few thousand European "colonists" (most of whom soon abandoned the country after being given only modest support) and serving instead mostly as an instrument of agrarian reform for distributing land to Dominican peasants and modernizing production.[51] Nonetheless, even in the premassacre period, under Trujillo the colonization program served and gave voice to the anti-Haitian nationalism that had originally molded it.[52] In 1935 the editors of the

48. Dana G. Munro to Secretary of State, 15 Mar. 1932, no. 346, RG 59, M 1272, roll 32; César Tolentino, Secretary of Agriculture, 18 Dec. 1930, no. 2304, AGN, SA, leg. 111, 1935; and Vega, *Trujillo y Haití*, 1:122–133.

49. Vega, *Trujillo y Haití*, 1:54–59, 105–21, 148–57, 196–97.

50. E. M. H., "Memorandum," 9 Sept. 1938, RG 84, 710–800.2, Official Correspondence, vol. 5; and Law 391, 2 Nov. 1932, in *Colección de leyes*. See also Roberto Cassá, *Capitalismo y dictadura* (Santo Domingo: Univ. Autónoma de Santo Domingo, 1982).

51. The history of colonization under Trujillo has generally been misrepresented as a project essentially to promote white immigration. Exceptions are Inoa, *Estado y campesinos*, 157–80; and San Miguel, *Los campesinos del Cibao*, 307–12. See also Turits, *Foundations of Despotism*, esp. chap. 6.

52. Reynaldo Valdez to Secretary of the Interior, 4 June 1937, no. 1221, AGN, SA, leg. 40, 1937; Moisés García Mella, *Alrededor de los tratados de 1929 y 1935 con la República de Haití* (Ciudad Trujillo: Imp. Listín Diario, 1938), 6; and Félix M. Nolasco, *Listín Diario*, 11 Feb. 1932, reprinted in Vega, *Trujillo y Haití*, 1:132–33.

Dominican daily *Listín Diario* praised colonization in the frontier for simultaneously meeting official goals for production, "civilization," and "Dominicanization":

> [Colonization] in the frontier . . . not only elevates production and reeducates inhabitants who used to wander aimlessly, without God or law, marauding about the region, without work, without producing, and by robbing other people's efforts. It also raises a wall with distinctive features of an authentic Dominicanism in the sites that are closest to the neighboring Haitian state."[53]

Reference to an "authentic Dominicanism" with "distinctive features" may have implicitly condemned an "inauthentic Dominicanism" in the Dominican frontier—one that incorporated or shared key features with Haitians. I will argue that it was precisely this overlapping of cultural practices between Haitians and Dominicans and the overall biethnic community "in the sites that are closest to the neighboring Haitian state" that made establishing state control over the border seem both necessary and problematic to Trujillo. Cultural homogeneity became a critical concern to the Trujillo state where it was seen as instrumental to marking political space and consolidating political authority.[54]

Anxieties about the Haitian presence in areas "closest to the neighboring Haitian state" were evident when the Trujillo government founded the agricultural colony of Pedernales in the southern frontier in 1931. In the premassacre period, the regime appears to have been concerned with Haitians primarily in areas where the border was actively disputed by the two countries. Pedernales was the longest and most hotly contested point along the border. Establishing a colony there resulted in the single dramatic action the state took against Haitians before the massacre.[55] To make way for the colony, the regime gave ethnic Haitian residents six months to leave the area and offered them a marginal sum for their improvements. The Haitian minister of foreign

53. "Editorial: Sobre las colonias agrícolas," *Listín Diario*, 30 Dec. 1935. See also "La frontera dominicana comienza a ser lo que debe ser: Dominicanizante," *La Opinión*, 9 Mar. 1932.

54. In general, the drive to "protect" strong borders may lead modern states to oppose cultural mixture in frontier regions, even when they accept it elsewhere. See Timothy Snyder, "'To Resolve the Ukrainian Problem Once and For All': The Ethnic Cleansing of Ukrainians in Poland, 1943–1947," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 1, no. 2 (1999).

55. *Mensaje que el presidente de la República presenta al Congreso Nacional* (Santo Domingo: Imp. La Cuna de América, 1912), 7, 124–8; and Vega, *Trujillo y Haití*, 1:122–33.

affairs complained in 1932 to both Dominican and U.S. authorities that reportedly "thousands of Haitians" who had lived there for generations had been forcefully dispossessed by Dominican soldiers.[56]

A small number of ethnic Haitians who were living and working in state agricultural colonies in the northern frontier, where there was no long-standing and heated border dispute, were also dispossessed in the 1930–37 period. But these ejections, though they may have responded to some type of central state directive, were a desultory operation, impelled by individual conflicts and conditioned by local discretion. This operation was also complicated by multiple and contradictory notions of Haitian versus Dominican identity. In 1934 the administrator of the northern border colony of Restauración decided to evict Pierre Damus, a better-off Haitian-born peasant, following a dispute over livestock that had damaged Damus's crops. Damus wrote a letter to Trujillo protesting this arbitrary action. He concluded his letter, "It's true I am Haitian but I have followed the laws and have a Dominican wife."[57] Chief of Colonization Francisco Read responded to this complaint with a recommendation that Damus be given one year to harvest his crop before being forced to leave the colony. Read further proposed that because Damus was "hardworking and married to a Dominican woman, he can be offered a plot in the colonies of Jamao or Pedro Sánchez, which are not border colonies." Read evidently wished to accommodate a productive agriculturalist and understood the goal of evicting Haitians as something relevant only to the frontier region and border concerns.[58] In another case, an official from the border town of Bánica revealed a national rather than an ethnic criterion for determining who was Haitian. In 1936 he reported matter-of-factly, "The tenants to whom we have distributed land in the Section are mostly Haitians, but ones born in the country, for which reason they are considered as Dominicans and therefore we resolved to distribute land to them."[59]

Thus the Trujillo state's early policies toward the frontier left room for local interpretation and discretion. Indeed, policies may have been left intentionally ambiguous in light of competing interests and ideologies within the

56. Vega, *Trujillo y Haití*, 1:131; and Luis Ortiz Matos to Secretary of Agriculture, 25 Oct. 1962, AGN, SA, leg. 1820, 1963.

57. Pierre Larrochel Damus to Trujillo, 9 Sept. 1934, AGN, SA, leg. 182, n.d.; and Damus to Secretary of Agriculture, 25 Sept. 1934, AGN, SA, leg. 182, n.d.

58. Francisco Read to Secretary of Agriculture, 5 Oct. 1934, no. 753, AGN, SA, leg. 181, 1934.

59. Alcibíades Ogando R. to Supervisor of Agricultural Boards, 17 Apr. 1936, no. 25, AGN, SA, leg. 2, 1936.

state that Trujillo was not ready to resolve. By incorporating the nation's elite statesmen and leading intellectuals into his regime, Trujillo had acquired a number of exceptionally anti-Haitian thinkers, above all Joaquín Balaguer, Julio Ortega Frier, and eventually Manuel Arturo Peña Batlle, who would hold numerous key posts in the regime. These men were part of a small Dominican elite in the Trujillo era: white-identified, university and foreign-educated, and, save Balaguer, members of the urban upper class from Santiago and Santo Domingo. They were also all born around the turn of the century and educated at a time when racist scientific discourses had been widely diffused in Europe and the Americas.[60] Imbued with deeply racist and culturalist notions, this cohort of anti-Haitian thinkers and functionaries doubtless envisaged expelling rather than assimilating or incorporating "Haitians" as the solution to the racial, cultural, territorial, and political threat they supposedly posed for the Dominican nation.[61]

Yet the early Trujillo state appears overall to have accepted a more assimilationist approach to nationalizing the frontier and ethnicizing the nation. Although not a central or trumpeted policy, the regime took clear steps in the pre-1937 period to integrate ethnic Haitians (as well as ethnic Dominicans) in the frontier into urban Dominican culture and society by the infusion of national symbols, imposition of standard Spanish, and the performance of Dominican nationality. The government changed dozens of Haitian and French names of frontier towns, rivers, and even streams to Spanish ones.[62] The Trujillo regime also built up the then weak Catholic Church in the frontier. In 1935, the Archbishop of Santo Domingo entered into an agreement with the Ministry of Interior to send a mission to the border region. In addition to

60. See Nancy Leys Stepan, *"The Hour of Eugenics": Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1991); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876–1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000); and Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1999), chap. 3.

61. On twentieth-century anti-Haitian Dominican intellectuals, see Pedro L. San Miguel, *La isla imaginada: Historia, identidad y utopía en La Española* (San Juan: Isla Negra, 1997), 61–100; Michiel Baud, "'Constitutionally White': The Forging of a National Identity in the Dominican Republic," in *Ethnicity in the Caribbean: Essays in Honor of Harry Hoetink*, ed. Gert Oostindie (London: Macmillan Caribbean, 1996); Raymundo González, "Peña Batlle y su concepto histórico de la nación dominicana," *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 48 (1991); and Mateo, *Mito y cultura*, esp. 127–183.

62. "Los nombres de poblaciones y ríos o arroyos fronterizos son cambiados por dominicanos," *La Opinión*, 3 Sept. 1931; and "Nombres de ciudades y aldeas que han sido substituidos por otros nombres," *Revista de Educación* 7, no. 25 (1935): 68–69.

marriages, baptisms, and spreading Christian doctrine, the Frontier Mission of San Ignacio de Loyola organized celebrations for national holidays, including Trujillo's birthday and the Day of the Benefactor.[63] And between 1932 and 1935 the government significantly expanded the number of public schools in the frontier (both in the south and north) and established special curricula emphasizing standard Spanish and national symbols and histories.[64] *Listín Diario* reported that this curriculum was designed "to arrest the denationalizing influence of the contiguous country's language" and habits and to inculcate "love of the land, the language, [and] the customs," of the Dominican Republic.[65] A large number of the children attending these new schools were ethnic Haitians. Trujillo, himself of partial Haitian descent,[66] thus backed policies to foster ethnic Haitians' identities as Dominican citizens and subjects of the regime.

Ethnic Haitians themselves recall dramatizing their Dominican nationality and loyalty to Trujillo during the premassacre years in the Dominican frontier. Ercilia Guerrier, an elderly Haitian women who had lived in the Dominican border town of Restauración prior to the massacre, recalled how, when she was a child, she and her primary schoolmates performed for Trujillo:

> President Trujillo arrived at the school for the children. I stood on top of a table. And when he arrived, I greeted him, and I said to him, 'Generalissimo Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina,' I said to him, 'Chief, Benefactor of the Fatherland, the Fatherland of Duarte . . . I proclaim you Lifetime Chief . . . God blesses you'. . . . And he shook your hand, and gave you a gift, and then another child came [and recited to him].[67]

This tribute was doubtless recalled because of its bitter irony. Before the massacre, Trujillo presented himself to ethnic Haitians not as an eliminationist anti-Haitian tyrant but rather as a ruler granting state protection and assistance (namely, free land access) to those offering political loyalty, agricultural production, and taxes to the regime. Another Haitian refugee, Isil Nicolas,

63. Sáez, *Los Jesuitas*, 53–55.

64. "La política escolar del honorable presidente Trujillo," *Revista de Educación* 7, no. 28 (1935): 21.

65. "Notable plan de estudios para las escuelas fronterizas," *Listín Diario*, 30 Jan. 1935; "Editorial: Plan de estudios para las escuelas fronterizas," ibid., 31 Jan. 1935.

66. Trujillo's maternal grandmother, Luisa Erciná Chevalier, was Haitian.

67. Juan Pablo Duarte was the leader of the Dominican independence movement from Haiti in 1844. Guerrier, interview.

who was born in Cola Grande near Dajabón, recalled Trujillo's words on one of his early-1930s visits to Dajabón:

> He said all people are the same. There are no differences between one another. . . . He told everybody . . . that Dominicans and Haitians have the same blood. . . . And he brought us twenty or thirty trucks of tools, machetes, pickaxes, and rakes. He said these were for us to cultivate the land, and he divided them up. . . . You could use land wherever you found it with one condition, he said. Each citizen must farm productively.[68]

Asked then why Trujillo had ordered the massacre, Nicolas replied, "The cause, we don't know. It's pretty much of a mystery. Its something for us to ask God."[69]

Thus the various anti-Haitian nationalist measures pursued in the early Trujillo years were sporadic and contradictory. Although the Trujillo regime was united ideologically by a discourse of nationalism, how a stronger Dominican nation was to be achieved was not yet uniformly perceived. And more notable than the anti-Haitian measures of the early Trujillo state was the extent to which Trujillo publicly silenced and ostensibly ignored the virulently anti-Haitian discourses of many of his advisors and the country's leading intellectuals during those years.

Trujillo also revealed his independence from anti-Haitian thinkers during the premassacre years of his regime by pursuing unprecedented friendly and collaborative relations between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. In 1936, following 250 years of conflict, the two states finally resolved the long disputed demarcation of the Haitian-Dominican border.[70] This resolution brought to a crescendo endless pronouncements in the Trujillo-controlled Dominican press, which began in 1934 and continued until the massacre, on the closeness and warmth of Haitian-Dominican political and cultural relations. After the settlement of the border agreement, Haitian President Sténio Vincent renamed Port-au-Prince's main street, La Grand Rue, "Avenue Président Trujillo," while Trujillo christened the Northern frontier route between Monte Cristi and Dajabón "Carretera Vincent." Just six months before the massacre, the editors of the daily newspaper, *La Opinión*, proclaimed:

68. Isil Nicolas, interview by author and Lauren Derby, Ouanaminthe, 1988.

69. Ibid.

70. Jean Ghasmann Bissainthe, *Perfil de dos naciones en la Española* (Santo Domingo: n.p., 1998); and Vega, *Trujillo y Haití*, 1:224–32.

> The new generation does not remember . . . the old misunderstandings [between Haiti and the Dominican Republic]. The hearts and minds of these youths have been cultivated in a new era, when fortunately the two countries of the island have stopped being rivals, and have become brothers instead. . . . The day should come when, though having distinct personalities, Haiti and the Dominican Republic will become socially speaking, like one country, one home, in which each can pass freely over the entire breadth [of the island].[71]

In the premassacre years, Trujillo also sought to gain support among the people of Haiti. His efforts included financial support for Haitian artists, intellectuals, political leaders, and newspapers; propaganda concerning successful economic development in the Dominican Republic; and official visits to Haiti in which he handed out gifts and pictures of himself to the crowd, declared his love for the Haitian people, and dramatically kissed the Haitian flag.[72] Even more startling in retrospect, both the Haitian and Dominican press reported that the Dominican president now proudly affirmed his Haitian ancestry.[73] His efforts to establish strong relations with Haiti and to ingratiate himself with Haitian elites were, it appears, efforts to gain control over the Haitian state and people. Haitian historian Roger Dorsinville explained: "There was an epoch when Trujillo wanted to have the Haitian elite with him . . . to facilitate the visits of businessmen, and of all Haitians of a certain prestige, great writers. . . . At that time, we always thought that Trujillo had the idea to expand his control over the entire island, not with the idea of invading and demolishing everything, but by rendering his power acceptable."[74] Efforts to "render" Trujillo's power "acceptable" to Haitian elites as well as the other ambiguous and contradictory discourses and strategies vis-à-vis Haiti that marked the early Trujillo years would contrast starkly with the widespread, official anti-Haitianism that followed Trujillo's ordering of the massacre in 1937.

Friendly relations with Haiti did not mean the regime did not simultaneously seek to solidify a well-controlled border between the two countries. To the contrary, there are indications that Trujillo intended the 1936 agreement demarcating the border with Haiti to signal the end of illicit trade and ulti-

71. Editorial, *La Opinión*, 14 Apr. 1937.

72. "Chronique," *Le Temps* (Port-au-Prince), 14 Mar. 1936; and Crassweller, *Trujillo*, 153–63.

73. *La Croisade*, 14 Mar. 1936, reprinted in "Los Presidentes Vincent y Trujillo: Dos soldados de la Paz Americana," *Listín Diario*, 28 Mar. 1936.

74. Roger Dorsinville, interview by author and Lauren Derby, Port-au-Prince, 1988.

mately the unsupervised movements of people across the border.[75] But state efforts to impose a firm border continued to be frustrated by the bicultural, bilingual, and transnational character of the frontier. Popular transnational networks combined with weak national infrastructure on both sides of the border to impede state efforts to pursue rebel groups and exiles as well as cattle smugglers and thieves.[76] Biculturalism and, in particular, the extensive use of Haitian Creole, also hindered the national state's ability to monitor, interpret, and control life in the frontier. Furthermore, frontier residents simply had too much of a personal and economic stake in their transnational world to adhere to official efforts to close the border. State efforts to control and tax trade with Haiti were staunchly resisted by Dominican exporters of livestock and agriculture and by frontier residents in general who depended on Haiti for inexpensive products, such as clothes. And in addition to trade restrictions, new passport fees and regulations requiring Dominicans to obtain permission to travel to Haiti and Haitians to travel to the Dominican Republic produced a barrage of complaints to the government. Both ethnic Dominicans and ethnic Haitians in the Dominican frontier had no interest in curtailing their frequent transit across the border to visit Haitian friends, relatives, and business associates as well as markets. To the denizens of the frontier, state efforts to harden the border were contrary to their interests and lacked both sense and legitimacy.[77] It may thus have appeared to government leaders, and ultimately to Trujillo, that to harden the boundary between Haiti and the Dominican Republic in expeditious fashion, a boundary between ethnic Haitians and ethnic Dominicans also had to be established in the frontier.

The Haitian Massacre

The frontier world in which border control was an anathema and a monoethnic nation inconceivable collapsed in the wake of the Haitian massacre. This

75. See cartoon in *La Tribuna*, 26 May 1937.

76. Baud, "Una frontera para cruzar," 20–21. On smuggling often covered up as "theft," see Utley and Miller, "Agreement Respecting Border Troubles."

77. Rafael Merens Montes to Secretary of Agriculture, 16 Jan. 1934, SA, leg. 181, 1934; Paulino Vásquez to Secretary of Agriculture, 6 May 1935, no. 84; Emilio Ramírez to Trujillo, 14 May 1935, AGN, SA, leg. 207; Miguel Lama to Secretary of Agriculture, 17 May 1935, AGN, SA, leg. 207; Vicente Tolentino to Secretary of Presidency, 18 May 1935, no. 2478, AGN, SA, leg. 207; and Amado Gómez to Trujillo, 26 June 1935, AGN, SA, leg. 207, 1935. See also Utley and Miller, "Agreement Respecting Border Troubles"; Prestol Castillo, *El Masacre se pasa a pie*, 92; Baud, "Una frontera para cruzar," 17; idem, "Una frontera-refugio," 51–52; and Manuel de Jesús Rodríguez, "Nuestras fronteras," *La Voz del Sur*, 1 Oct. 1910.

massacre followed an extensive tour of the frontier region by Trujillo that commenced in August 1937. Trujillo traveled by horse and mule through the entire northern half of the country, both the rich central Cibao region and northern frontier areas. Touring these provinces, traditionally the most resistant to political centralization, reflected Trujillo's concerns with shoring up political control at the time. The Cibao was the locus of elite rivalry with Trujillo in these years. And because the northern frontier had been a traditional area of autonomy and refuge for local caudillos, the U.S. Legation in Santo Domingo assumed that the August 1937 tour was intended to "cowe [sic] opposition."[78] Much like earlier frontier tours, Trujillo shook hands and distributed food and money; attended dances and parties in his honor; and made concerted efforts to secure political loyalty in many heretofore intractable lands.[79] Yet, the conclusion of this tour was entirely unexpected. On 2 October 1937, during a dance in Trujillo's honor in Dajabón, Trujillo proclaimed, "For some months, I have traveled and traversed the frontier in every sense of the word. I have seen, investigated, and inquired about the needs of the population. To the Dominicans who were complaining of the depredations by Haitians living among them, thefts of cattle, provisions, fruits, etc., and were thus prevented from enjoying in peace the products of their labor, I have responded, 'I will fix this.' And we have already begun to remedy the situation. Three hundred Haitians are now dead in Bánica. This remedy will continue."[80] Trujillo explained his ordering of the massacre as a response to alleged cattle rustling and crop raiding by Haitians living in the Dominican Republic. This was the first of a series of shifting rationalizations that misrepresented the massacre as stemming from local conflicts between Dominicans and Haitians in the frontier.

Some Haitians heard Trujillo's words and decided to flee. Others had already left following news of the first killings, which occurred at the end of September.[81] A few recalled clues that something ominous was brewing. Most were incredulous, however, and had too much at stake to abandon their homes, communities, and crops for what sounded, however horrible, like preposterous rumors. Yet on 5 October 1937 these rumors were confirmed after a U.S. official in Dajabón filed a grim report. More than two thousand ethnic

78. Franklin Atwood to Secretary of State, 15 Sept. 1937, no. 4021, RG 84, 800–801.2.

79. Guerrier, interview; Díaz, interview.

80. Jan, *Collecta IV*, 82–83.

81. Cuello, *Documentos*, 61; and Testimony by Parchide Pierre and Cime Jean, Ouanaminthe, 3 Oct. 1937, RG 84, 800–D.

Haitians had crossed into Haiti from the northern Dominican frontier. They had not been forcibly deported, but rather were escaping bands of Dominican soldiers slaughtering ethnic Haitians. Already some five hundred had been killed in Dajabón alone.[82]

A few Dominicans from the northern frontier recalled that at first Haitians were given 24 hours to leave, and that in some cases Haitian corpses were hung in prominent locations, such as at the entrance of towns, as a warning to others. And during the first days of the massacre, Haitians who reached the border were permitted to cross to Haiti over the bridge at the official checkpoint. But the border was closed on 5 October. After this, those fleeing had to wade across the Massacre while trying to avoid areas where the military was systematically slaughtering Haitians on the river's eastern bank.[83]

Many Haitians were captured while trying to make their escape. In interviews with refugees in Dosmond—a colony near Ouanaminthe set up for those who escaped the massacre—one woman vividly recalled the details of her Dominican-born family's ill-fated flight. With still visible scars covering her shoulders and neck, she recounted:

> At four in the morning . . . we started to march towards Haiti. While we were walking, some Dominicans told us to be careful and not go through Dajabón, since they were killing people there. . . . When we arrived at the Dajabón savanna, we saw a *guardia* [soldier]. When we saw him, I said, "Mama, we're going to die, we're going to die." She told me to be quiet. Then a guardia screamed, "You're under arrest.". . . One guardia on a horse was tying people up. When he saw that . . . people were beginning to run, he started killing them and then throwing them into a hole. He killed everyone. I was the only one who was saved. They thought I was dead because they had given me a lot of machete blows. I was soaked in blood—all the blood in my heart. After all these tribulations, its thanks to God I didn't die. . . . They killed my entire family. . . . We were 28 . . . I was the only one to survive.[84]

Documents reveal how in other cases Dominican troops sought to deceive those targeted for slaughter by disavowing the state's murderous intentions and simulating some semblance of normalcy, presumably to avert panic and

82. Isidro Medina to Thomas Norris, 5 Oct. 1937, RG 84, 800–D.

83. Unless otherwise stated, the description of the massacre is drawn from interviews in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, 1987–88.

84. Irelia Pierre, interview by author and Lauren Derby, Dosmond, 1988.

efforts at escape. Many victims were led to the border by soldiers with the understanding that they were being deported to Haiti. In some cases, deportation papers were actually processed.[85] The Guardia then informed the "deportees" that their numbers were too great to cross over the bridge so they would be led through the woods in groups of four or six to the river. Once in the woods, most were killed. Women and children were reportedly less successful than men in escaping and hence composed the majority of those murdered.[86] In other cases, soldiers called Haitians to local meetings and told them not to believe rumors of deportations. The troops reportedly announced that it was Trujillo's wish that Haitians continue to work the land. A group of some 50 guardias, some disguised in civilian clothes, then surrounded and massacred the Haitians in attendance.[87] The army's use of dissemblance expedited the killings. Otherwise, Trujillo's army, which totaled around 3,000 active troops and perhaps 12,000 trained civilian reserves, might not have been able to slay such a large number of Haitians scattered throughout the countryside. Many more would have escaped across the border.[88]

Few Haitians were shot, except some of those killed while trying to escape. Instead machetes, bayonets, and clubs were used. This suggests again that Trujillo sought to simulate a popular conflict, or at least to maintain some measure of plausible deniability of the state's perpetration of this genocide. The lack of gunfire was consistent with civilian rather than military violence. It also reduced noise that would have alerted more Haitians and propelled them to flee.

The soldiers who perpetrated this massive slaughter shattered forever the prevailing norms of nation and ethnicity in the premassacre frontier world within which Dominican-born Haitians were more or less accepted as Dominican citizens and as members of a multiethnic national community. Those norms were clear in the testimony of many elderly Dominicans. When asked how Haitians were identified in the slaughter, Lolo, who had been the alcalde pedáneo of Restauración at the time of the massacre, responded by contrasting state practices of identification before and after the massacre: "There were

85. Norweb to Secretary of State, 11 Oct. 1937, no. 16, RG 84, 800–D; Howard Eager, Lieut. Colonel, Bureau of Insular Affairs, "Memorandum for the Chief, Military Intelligence Division, G–2; Subject: Haitian-Dominican Incident," n.d., RG 165, Reg. Files.

86. Bilín, interview. See also Goodwin, memo., 6 Nov. 1937, RG 84, 800–D.

87. M. J. Perry to Deputy Fiscal Rep., "Frontier Inspection, 5 to 7 Nov. 1937," RG 84, 800–D.

88. U.S. Military Intelligence Report, 1 Nov. 1938, RG 165, Reg. File.

many that they didn't know. But if they had their birth certificate, they presented it. But here they didn't check that. If they checked that, all the Haitians here would have remained because they were all recognized here [as Dominicans citizens]. Only the elderly persons were Haitians. Those that they threw out in 1937 were not Haitians. Most were Dominican nationals."[89] One such Haitian-Dominican, Sus Jonapas, similarly recalled how a baptismal record showing Dominican birth had exempted one from the migration tax, but "when they started killing people, they were no longer interested in whether or not you had a baptismal record."[90] And another Dominican-born Haitian, Emanuel Cour, a school teacher living in Ouanaminthe in 1988 who had been fifteen years old at the time of the massacre, remembered, "Those who came over to the Dominican Republic as adults kept their Haitian names. But those who were born there generally got Dominican names. They were Dominican. But when the knife fell, no longer were any distinctions made."[91] Dominican birth (or the appearance thereof), a critical determinant of ethnic Haitians' membership in the Dominican nation prior to the massacre in the frontier, was rendered suddenly meaningless. The outside military units that led the genocidal operation imagined and imposed an absolute distinction between Haitians and Dominicans on a frontier society in which many people had divergent national and ethnic identities as well as multiple and intermixed cultures and ethnicities.

Still, the basis on which Trujillo's genocidal army would draw their imagined absolute distinction between "Haitians" and "Dominicans" was not obvious. Were Haitians whose families had lived in the Dominican Republic for several generations and who spoke Spanish fluently still "Haitian"?[92] And how should children of Haitians and Dominicans be identified? It is often recalled that the Guardia used Spanish pronunciation as a supposed litmus test for deciding who was "Haitian." Many soldiers demanded that those captured utter *perejil* (parsley), *tijera* (scissors), or various other words with the letter "r." Supposed inability to pronounce the Spanish "r" was then represented as an indicator of Haitian identity. This practice may have been borrowed from local guards who had used it in the past to determine whether ethnic Haitians would be required to pay the annual migration tax (as records of birthplace were not necessarily or easily available). Anyone who pronounced the "r"

89. Lolo, interview by author and Lauren Derby, Restauración, 1988.
90. Sus Jonapas, interview by author and Lauren Derby, Dosmond, 1988.
91. Emanuel Cour, interview by author and Lauren Derby, Ouanaminthe, 1988.
92. See Vega, *Trujillo y Haití*, 1:337.

clearly was presumed to have been born in the country and would not be taxed. Ercilia Guerrier, who lived in Restauración, recalled being stopped prior to the massacre by Dominican soldiers checking to see if immigrants had paid their tax: "You were going to the market or to Loma de Cabrera, you run into the guards, they say to you, 'Stop right there!' And so you do that, you stop. 'Say "perejil!' And so you say, 'Perejil, perejil, perejil!' 'Say *claro*, '¡Claro, claro, claro!'." Asked if it was ever necessary to produce a birth certificate or baptismal record to avoid the migration tax, Guerrier replied, "No, no. As soon as you could say that ["perejil" or "claro"], you didn't have any problems with them."[93] Thus when lacking records of Dominican birth, fluency in Spanish allowed many persons of Haitian descent to pass for Dominican citizens. Jonapas also recalled, "If you spoke Dominican well, [Dominicans] said you were not Haitian."[94]

Prior to the massacre, the "perejil" test was used by local guardias to distinguish recent Haitian immigrants from assimilated Haitians presumed to be Dominican nationals. During the massacre, however, this same test was used by national troops in an effort to distinguish "Haitians" from "Dominicans," without differentiating between Haitian lineage and Haitian nationality. In fact, ethnic Haitians with deep roots in the Dominican frontier pronounced "perejil" fluently and often indistinguishably from ethnic Dominicans in the area.[95] Thus this litmus test was evidently rigged. It served largely as a pretext, a mock confirmation of the presumptions and fantasies of an inherent and radical distinction between ethnic Dominicans and Haitians clung to by outside officials and elites. Asked whether the Guardia demanded that they utter certain words to determine whether or not they were Haitian, one escapee from Mont Organizé exclaimed:

> "Perejil, perejil, perejil!" They made us say that. Many had to say it, but however well you said it, there was no way for you to stay. . . . You had to say "*tijera colorada*, *tijera colorada*, *tijera colorada* [red scissors]." They were mocking us, trying to trick us. They told us, "Say that *tú no eres Haitiano* [you're not Haitian]. Say clearly 'tijera'. Say clearly 'perejil'." And you

93. Guerrier, interview.

94. Jonapas, interview.

95. This is also suggested in Edwidge Danticat, *The Farming of Bones: A Novel* (New York: Soho Press, 1998), 193, 265. The Spanish "r," moreover, has tended to be barely rolled even by ethnic Dominicans in the frontier and much of the Republic, when placed at the end or in the middle of words. See Max A. Jiménez Sabater, *Más datos sobre el español de la República Dominicana* (Santo Domingo: Ediciones INTEC, 1975).

> said all sorts of things. They told to you to say "*generalísimo*, *jefe*, *benefactor de la patria* [generalissimo, chief, benefactor of the fatherland]." They told you to say it faster to see how well you could speak. They were really making fun of us.[96]

This refugee's testimony suggested that soldiers' demands to utter words such as "perejil" were less a genuine tactic for identifying Haitians than a theater of national linguistic difference separating Haitians and Dominicans. The perpetrators of the massacre slowed their killing machine for what was doubtless an often dubious test. Yet, however problematic or false it was, by acting as if this test was clear and efficacious, the killers imputed to their victims radical cultural difference that served to rationalize the violence and ethnicize images of the nation. Thus the violence in the Haitian massacre and the discourse within which it took place were themselves performances that helped constitute notions of inherent and transhistorical difference between Haitians and Dominicans.[97]

It appears to have been Dominican frontier residents who frequently determined who was Haitian by pointing out to the Guardia where ethnic Haitians resided and guiding soldiers to their homes.[98] Local officials played this role primarily. The alcalde pedáneo of Restauración at the time of the massacre recalled his complicity in locating the victims as well as his refusal to participate directly in murder:

> They didn't compel the alcaldes to kill Haitians. The guardias were practical about it. I went with the sergeant and we assembled eleven Haitians. And the guardia said to me, 'kill this woman.' And I told the sergeant, 'No. I fulfilled my obligation by showing you where they lived because that is the order I was given. But I will not kill a Haitian.' And then another guardia came and killed the Haitian woman, and after that killed her son and the rest of the Haitians.[99]

96. Anonymous, interview by author and Lauren Derby, Mont Organizé, 1988.

97. The idea that pronunciation of *perejil* did indeed serve to distinguish Haitians and Dominicans would become one of the most common features of even brief treatments of the massacre. See Alan Cambeira, *Quisqueya La Bella: The Dominican Republic in Historical and Cultural Perspective* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1997), 182–83. See also Rita Dove's poem on the massacre in Dove, *Selected Poems* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 133–35.

98. Testimony of Cime Jean, 30 Oct. 1937; and García, *La matanza de los haitianos*, 69–71.

99. Lolo, interview.

Although some Dominican frontier residents provided critical local knowledge of individuals' Haitian lineage and their whereabouts, many also protected their neighbors from slaughter. An official for the U.S. Military Intelligence Division reported after a trip to the Dominican frontier in December 1937, "In some places, native Dominicans who had sufficient disregard of their own safety are reported to have hidden out Haitian refugees, many of whom had lived among them peacefully for generations."[100] Even local soldiers attempted to help Haitians. Ercilia Guerrier recalled how the local lieutenant, "whom in a small town you know quite well," came to her house on 2 October to warn her family to flee to Haiti immediately.[101] And Emanuel Cour recalled how when he and his mother tried to escape to Haiti, "guardias from our area [who] recognized us" warned them not to take a particular route where an unfamiliar group of soldiers was stationed and were likely to kill them.[102]

Although the U.S. Military Division reported that "no Dominican civilians were involved in the massacre,"[103] alcaldes pedáneos and army officials were able to recruit a few civilians, whose loyalty and discretion they trusted, to participate in the killings. Avelino Cruz, a Dominican from Loma de Cabrera, who had occasionally been commissioned to carry out local operations for the regime, was one of those recruited. He recalled being approached in a local bodega by the alcalde who asked if he would participate in an operation against Haitians. "He asked me if I would dare to kill them. 'Well', I said, 'if it is an order, I will kill them.' Because I wasn't going to refuse and as a result have them kill me." Although Cruz represented himself as having had no choice, Cruz also indicated that others had "fled" when asked if they "dared" to kill Haitians.[104] Another civilian who participated in the massacre said he had to do so because he was very close to the supervisor of the agricultural colony in which he lived.[105] And yet that same connection to authority reportedly emboldened another civilian to refuse to kill Haitians. Ezequiel Hernández recalled that he was in Santiago de los Caballeros when, "the guardia told me . . . come here to make your debut killing Haitians. . . . But I refused because the lieutenant was a friend of my father. Otherwise they would have

100. Eager, "Memorandum," RG 165, Reg. Files.

101. Guerrier, interview.

102. Cour, interview.

103. Eager, "Memorandum."

104. Avelino Cruz, interview by author and Lauren Derby, Loma de Cabrera, 1988.

105. Anonymous, interview by author and Lauren Derby, Mariano Cestero (an agricultural colony in Restauración), 1988.

killed me along with them. And he told me, the lieutenant said, 'You're a damn coward,' and they kept on killing."[106] Even Cruz failed to follow orders completely. When ordered to kill a mother, father, and child, Cruz recalled: "The boy that the *Haitiana* had on her breast, I didn't want to kill him. So, I grabbed him and I said to . . . the son of Enrique [Cerrata], 'take this boy and raise him with your other children. He's not too dark [*es de buen color*].'" The boy's "good color" would presumably help him "pass" for Dominican or offset prejudices against him for possibly being of Haitian descent. The child was raised by the Cerrata family and later became a local schoolteacher.[107]

Although Cruz described clearly his participation in the massacre, Haitians and Dominicans overall, as well as most state documents, rarely mentioned any civilians killing Haitians. To the contrary, most Dominicans were reportedly petrified by a military campaign by the state directed largely against its own citizens. "Local Dominicans were as terrified by the proceedings [of the massacre] as the Haitians themselves," reported a U.S. intelligence official.[108] Unlike other cases of ethnic cleansing in the twentieth century, no prior state policy, local tension, international conflict, official ideology, or escalating attacks had signaled the possibility of such state-directed carnage.[109] To local residents, the genocidal rampage appeared to come out of nowhere, like an act of madness. State-led ethnic violence appeared so inexplicable to most frontier denizens that Doña María did not perceive the massacre, at first, as an attack solely against ethnic Haitians. Reflecting the integration of Haitians and Dominicans, Doña María recalled that at the time, "Everyone thought that they were going to kill us too." The result of the inexplicable violence was suffering and trauma for many ethnic Dominicans in the frontier. Doña María described her husband's condition in the aftermath of the killings: "I had a husband and this man died under the weight and sorrow of witnessing the Haitian massacre, as he had worked with many Haitians. When he went to the Haitian houses and found so many Haitians dead and their houses burned, this man went crazy, and didn't eat anything. He passed all his time thinking with his head lowered, thinking of all the Haitians who had died. He died . . . three months later."[110]

106. Ezequiel Hernández, interview by author and Lauren Derby, Mariano Cestero, 1988.

107. Cruz, interview.

108. Eager, "Memorandum."

109. For comparative purposes, see Eagle Glassheim, "National Mythologies and Ethnic Cleansing: The Expulsion of Czechoslovak Germans in 1945," *Central European History* 33, no. 4 (2000).

110. Doña María, interview.

Numerous testimonies of the massacre refer to the horror not just of local residents but of the army as well. The use of military units from outside the region was not always enough to expedite soldiers' killings of Haitians. U.S. Legation informants reported that many soldiers "confessed that in order to perform such ghastly slaughter they had to get 'blind' drunk."[111] The U.S. Military Intelligence official reported that "the soldiers who carried out the work are said in many instances to have been sickened by their bloody task. A few are reported to have been summarily executed for refusing to carry out their orders, while many overcame their repugnance to the task by fortifying themselves with rum."[112] And, according to Percivio Díaz of Santiago de la Cruz, "The soldiers who participated in this all went crazy and died because their conscience told them they shouldn't have done it."[113]

On Friday night, 8 October 1937, five days after the massacre began, Trujillo finally halted the slaughter of Haitians in the northern frontier.[114] By that time, the shared frontier world of Haitians and Dominicans had been destroyed. Most of the estimated 20,000 to 50,000 ethnic Haitians in the province of Monte Cristi had been killed or had escaped to Haiti. The U.S. Legation reported on 11 October, "the entire northwest frontier on the Dajabón side is absolutely devoid of Haitians."[115] The devastating impact of this decimation upon the Dajabón parish and its Haitian-Dominican community was clear from a report filed in the log of the École des Frères in Ouanaminthe, where many ethnic Haitians from the Dajabón area had sent their children to school: "Father Gallego of Dajabón has lost two-thirds of his population, at least 20,000. In certain chapels, in Loma and Gouraba, 90 percent of the population has disappeared; instead of 150 to 160 baptisms a month, there is not even one. Some schools, which had 50 students before, now have no more than two or three. It's grievous and heartbreaking what has happened." This report also noted the impact of the killing on the children in the École des Frères: "The number of students with parents disappeared is

111. Atwood to Secretary of State, 25 Oct. 1937, no. 39, RG 84, 800–D.

112. Eager, "Memorandum." See also Prestol Castillo, *El Masacre se pasa a pie*, 24. On soldiers' resistance, see also "Slaughter of Haitians Described by Observers," *Washington Post*, 10 Nov. 1937; and Albert C. Hicks, *Blood in the Streets: The Life and Rule of Trujillo* (New York: Creative Age Press, 1946), 107.

113. Díaz, interview. For similar testimony, see García, *La matanza de los haitianos*, 56.

114. Nonetheless, some killings reportedly continued in the region for the next couple of days and erupted in various points across the Cibao, such as Puerto Plata, Santiago, and Moca, until around 20 October. See Norweb to Secretary of State, 11 Oct. 1937; Eager, "Memorandum"; and Cuello, *Documentos*, 60–85.

115. Norweb to Secretary of State, 11 Oct. 1937.

now 167 [of 267 students]. The poor creatures are all in tears. In the evening one hears nothing but the cries and wails from the houses of the whole town."[116] During the last weeks of October, the relatively few remaining Haitians in the northern frontier region and contiguous areas would emerge from hiding and flee to Haiti. Many of them would be killed in flight, with the exception of hundreds of Haitians retrieved by truck and ship after the massacre by Haitian authorities.[117]

A reported 6,000 to 10,000 refugees arrived in Haiti bereft of all possessions and without any means of support.[118] Most had lived since birth or for decades on Dominican soil. Some tried to return surreptitiously to their homes in the Dominican Republic to recover some of their lost harvest and livestock. The odds of their surviving such efforts were slim.[119] As Bilín explained, "When they [the Haitians] came back, the Guardia and the civilians killed them, because if a civilian ran into one of them and didn't kill them, the person [the civilian] would be punished. . . . They'd arrest him, because this was a law." Bilín himself participated in this ruthless campaign against "poaching." "They took me to the border [to fight Haitians]. I was just a youth, 18 years old. One had to use a machete."[120] During and immediately following the massacre, many civilian men were recruited to patrol the towns near the border, such as Dajabón. Women and children were temporarily evacuated as Dominican authorities anticipated a military response from Haiti.[121]

However, Haiti did not respond militarily to defend or avenge its compatriots. To the contrary, President Vincent of Haiti acted in every way possible to avoid a military conflict.[122] It was not only the army that Vincent held back. He prohibited public discussion of the massacre, and refused for a long time even to allow the church to perform masses for the dead. It appears that Vincent was constrained by fear of losing control to his domestic opponents. If

116. Logbook, Oct. 1937, L'École des Frères, Ouanaminthe. See also Sáez, *Los Jesuitas*, 71.

117. "Le massacre continue," *Le Mouvement*, 29 Nov. 1937 and 6 Dec. 1937; Vega, *Trujillo y Haití*, 2:344; and Norweb to Secretary of State, n.d., no. 107, RG 84, 800–D.

118. Vega, *Trujillo y Haití*, 2:344–45.

119. Orlando Inoa, "Cacería de haitianos: La matanza después de la Matanza," *El Siglo*, 25 June 1993.

120. Bilín, interview.

121. Logbook, Oct. 1937, L'École des Frères, Ouanaminthe.

122. "Memoire confidentiel sur les difficultés entre Haiti et la Republique Dominicaine remis a la Legation des États Unis D'Amerique, par le Président d'Haiti," RG 84, 800–D; and Mayer to Secretary of State, 22 Nov. 1937, no. 120, RG 84, 800–D.

troops were sent to the frontier, the palace would be left vulnerable to attack.[123] But under increased domestic pressures due to growing evidence of the extent of the massacre, Vincent did eventually seek an investigation of the atrocities and mediation of the conflict by other countries. Unwilling to submit to an inquiry, Trujillo offered instead a sizeable indemnization to Haiti, while still refusing any admission of official responsibility. One can only speculate as to why Vincent so readily accepted Trujillo's offer of $750,000 (of which only $525,000 was ever paid) in exchange for an end to international arbitration.[124]

The massacre's diplomatic resolution allowed Trujillo to begin rewriting the slaughter as a nationalist defense against the putative "pacific invasion" of Haitians. The indemnity agreement signed in Washington, D.C., on 31 January 1938 unequivocally asserted that the Dominican government "recognizes no responsibility whatsoever [for the killings] on the part of the Dominican State." Furthermore, in a statement made to the governments—Mexico, Cuba and the United States—that witnessed the accord, Trujillo stressed that the agreement established a new modus operandi to inhibit migration between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The statement read, "More than an indemnization, a sacrifice to pan-American friendship . . . [this] also represents an acquisition of legal positions that assure the future of the Dominican family, and preclude the single deed capable of altering the peace of the Republic, the only threat that hovers over the future of our children, that constituted by the penetration, pacific but permanent and stubborn, of the worst Haitian element into our territory."[125] In the very signing of the indemnity agreement, the Trujillo regime, in effect, defended the massacre as a response to a mythical illegal immigration by supposedly undesirable Haitians. Trujillo thus turned a moment of international scandal and arbitration that could easily have toppled his regime into the foundational event for the regime's legitimation via an anti-Haitian nationalism. This nationalism rationalized the massacre and the state's imposition of a well-policed border as necessary to protect a monoethnic national community that the massacre had, in fact, only just established in the frontier.

The accord with Haiti, however, did not signal an end to the madness and

123. Harold Finley to U.S. Legation, 8 Oct. 1937, RG 84, 800–D; Finley to Sec. of State, 23 Oct. 1937, no. 584, RG 84, 800–D; "Haiti Unrest Reported," *New York Times*, 1 Dec. 1937; and Dorsinville, interview.

124. Father Émile Robert, interview by author and Lauren Derby, Guadeloupe, 1988; and Cuello, *Documentos*, 51–78.

125. Cuello, *Documentos*, 456, 466.

terror. In the spring of 1938, Trujillo ordered a new campaign against Haitians, this time in the southern frontier.[126] Here Haitians reportedly received warning and many were able to escape to Haiti before they were attacked. The operation occurred over several months and thousands were forced to flee. Although known simply as *el desalojo*, or the eviction, hundreds were also reportedly killed in this campaign. Word of the earlier massacre in the North had not already frightened all ethnic Haitians into seeking refuge in Haiti. Danés Merisier of Savane Zonbi, a colony established for southern refugees by President Vincent, explained, "When we lived there, we heard that they were kicking Haitians out, but we couldn't believe it was true. . . . Even when we looked around and saw the Spanish troops rounding us up . . . we didn't jump to the conclusion that they were going to kill us. . . . As a result we never thought about a strategy to deal with the situation."[127] Unlike in the northern frontier, some recalled Dominican civilians cooperating in the killing.[128] Most of these attacks, though, appear to have occurred between 1938 and 1940 after *el desalojo*, when former Haitian residents returned to collect abandoned crops and animals or to steal livestock from the deserted hills they had recently inhabited. Conflicts ensued with Dominicans who owned or now claimed this property. Trujillo ordered the military to capture and execute those who returned. Soldiers from outside the region sent to carry out the executions soon distributed rifles to "mixed patrols" composed of local officials, military veterans, and trusted civilians, especially those who had recently been involved in conflicts with returning Haitians. Ironically, then, the massacre and eviction of ethnic Haitians produced the very type of local ethnic conflict over poaching that the regime had first claimed was at the root of the killings in the frontier.[129] As in the north, the southern mountain chain, which was once dense with ethnic Haitians, was evacuated. In many sections, only the alcalde pedáneo remained.[130]

126. See Vega, *Trujillo y Haití*, 2:366; Mayer to Secretary of State, 12 Mar. 1938, no. 95, and Eugene Hinkle to Secretary of State, 10 Sept. 1938, no. 441, both in RG 84, 800–D.

127. Merisier, interview by author and Lauren Derby, Savane Zonbi, 1988.

128. Anonymous, interview by author and Lauren Derby, Aguas Negras, June, 1988.

129. Ramírez, *Mis 43 años en la Descubierta*, 63 n, 66–75.

130. Ibid., 73.

The Aftermath of Genocide

How do we write the history of such seemingly mad state violence? We will probably never know for certain what caused Trujillo to order the 1937 massacre. But we can illuminate the forces that made the massacre possible, analyze its historical impact, and deconstruct the myths it has occasioned and the histories it has effaced. Such an investigation, however, will never—nor should it—explain away the surplus of cruelty and unpredictability in the perpetration of this large-scale violence.

Many have represented the Haitian massacre as simply Trujillo's ruthless and tyrannical method for reversing the "pacific invasion" of Haitian immigrants and supposedly "whitening" the country.[131] And some elite whites may have indeed imagined the massacre as one step toward reducing popular Afro-Caribbean culture and toward at least marginally lightening the overall complexion of the Dominican population. Yet the massacre would not, in fact, significantly alter race or color in the Dominican Republic, which remained overwhelmingly nonwhite. In order to have "whitened" the population, moreover, darker-skinned Dominicans would have had to have been targeted in the massacre as well. This though was not the case.

Furthermore, the assumption that the Haitian massacre was a terroristic but logical reaction to Haitian migration collides against several realities. First, most of the "Haitian" families in the frontier were not recent immigrants, but rather had lived in the region for many years, often for several generations. Second, the Trujillo regime never sought, on any systematic basis, to deport Haitians and Haitian-Dominicans living in the frontier, nor did it make Haitian immigration illegal or prohibitively expensive until after the massacre. Instead of the prohibitive immigration fees the regime imposed on certain groups (such as Asians), legislation in 1932 merely raised the entry and annual residence fees required of all other immigrants, including Haitians, from three to six pesos. (This was a significant but not prohibitive amount of money at the time for a poor immigrant, equal to roughly three weeks of wage labor.)[132]

131. Vega, *Trujillo y Haití*, 1:392, 304–9; Michele Wucker, *Why the Cocks Fight: Dominicans, Haitians, and the Struggle for Hispaniola* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1999), 51–58; and Cambeira, *Quisqueya La Bella*, 183–85.

132. Law 279, 29 Jan. 1932, in *Colección de leyes*; and Law 250, 19 Oct. 1925, in *Gaceta Oficial*, no. 3693, 24 Oct. 1925. This doubling of the migration tax was largely a circuitous method of raising taxes on the mostly foreign-owned sugar sector, which was obliged to pay this tax for their tens of thousands of immigrant workers. See Vega, *Trujillo y Haití*, 1:133–44.

Only in 1939 was new immigration legislation promulgated. Designed by U.S. legal experts, this new law imposed a prohibitive 500-peso immigration fee on all those not "predominantly of caucasian origin" and thereby effectively barred legal Haitian migration for the first time.[133] Finally, after the massacre, Haitians continued to constitute a significant portion of the population in the Dominican Republic outside of the border regions. Neither the massacre itself nor any other official measures ever reduced the population of Haitian sugar workers in the country (unlike in Cuba, where tens of thousands of Haitian braceros were expelled by Fulgencio Batista during this same period in the wake of high unemployment during the global Depression[134]). There was only one reported instance when the country's plantation workers were attacked during the massacre, in Bajabonico near Puerto Plata (western Cibao), in one of the few sugar plantations close to the northern frontier region.[135] The rest of the country's over 20,000 Haitian sugar workers, most of whom resided in the eastern provinces near the cities of La Romana and San Pedro de Macorís, were not targeted.[136] And when Trujillo appropriated the sugar industry in the 1950s, rather than terminate or reduce the importation of Haitian sugar workers, he formalized and expanded the immigration of Haitian braceros (who were exempt from the 500-peso migration tax on non-"caucasian" immigrants).[137]

Thus the massacre followed neither concerted state efforts to stop Haitian immigration nor to "whiten" the nation. Nor did it follow from popular ethnic conflict, in contrast to the Trujillo regime's efforts to portray the slaughter as stemming from local tensions. And we have also seen that relations between the Haitian and Dominican governments were ostensibly on the best of terms in these years. After the massacre, Haitian president Vincent told U.S. officials,

133. Law 95, 11 April 1939, in *Gaceta Oficial*, no. 5299, 17 Apr. 1939; Edward Anderson, U.S. Consul, Ciudad Trujillo, "An Analysis of the Dominican Immigration Laws and Regulations," 26 June 1939, RG 59, 839.55/108.

134. Marc C. McLeod, "Undesirable Aliens: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism in the Comparison of Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers in Cuba, 1912–1939," *Journal of Social History* 31, no. 3 (1998).

135. Melville Monk, Cap-Haitien Customs, to Rex Pixley, 21 Oct. 1937, RG 84, 800–D.

136. Joaquín Balaguer to Quentin Reynolds, 9 Dec. 1937, no. 27826, RG 84, 800–D.

137. Suzy Castor, *Migración y relaciones internacionales (el caso haitiano-dominicano)* (Santo Domingo: Ed. Unversitaria, 1987); José Israel Cuello, *Contración de mano de obra haitiana destinada a la industria azucarera dominicana, 1952–1986* (Santo Domingo: Taller, 1987), esp. 36–42; Andrew Wardlaw, "End of Year Report: 1945," 14 Mar. 1946, RG 59, 839.00; Phelps Phelps to Secretary of State, no. 636, 13 Feb. 1953, 739.00 (w).

"There was no question of any nature whatsoever under discussion between the two governments. Agreement was perfect, relations excellent."[138] It is not possible, it seems, to trace a direct line from the massacre back to an escalation of anti-Haitianism in the Dominican Republic in the early years of the Trujillo regime.

Nonetheless, anti-Haitianism in the Dominican Republic and, at very least, distinct Haitian and Dominican ethnic identities did play a critical role in this history. They help to explain how the Haitian massacre could be organized and political stability maintained despite such extreme, unprecedented, and unanticipated state terror. For one, Trujillo knew that he would be able to draw on the zealous support of several prominent anti-Haitian intellectuals, such as acting Secretary of State Joaquín Balaguer, to justify the massacre as an act against the "pacific invasion" of putatively barbarous Haitians. It seems doubtful the massacre would have occurred had intellectuals like Balaguer not provided the powerful anti-Haitian ideologies of the time, which served to legitimate the slaughter. Also, prejudicial Haitian images doubtless facilitated military compliance with the massacre and rendered plausible Trujillo's violent division of humanity into "Haitians" and "Dominicans." These prejudices similarly may have contributed to Trujillo's decision to kill rather than forcibly evict the Haitian population in the frontier.[139] Moreover, the fact that the group that Trujillo ordered killed was distinguished as "Haitian" meant that most of the population outside the frontier areas was not directly or vitally threatened by state terror. And pretexts casting blame on the Haitian victims, however weak, problematic, and after-the-fact these rationalizations were, seem to have permitted most Dominicans to make some sense of the killings. It is doubtful, in other words, that Trujillo could have ordered the death of 15,000 ethnic Dominicans with a similar absence of ideological preparation, clear provocation, or prior justification and nonetheless managed to secure the support of key state figures, the passive acceptance of many others, and the overall participation of the army.

Anti-Haitianism, however, like racism in general, is not in itself an adequate explanation of historical phenomena. Racist ideologies are products, not just causes, of history, ones that vary profoundly in meaning and significance

138. Enc. to Ferdinand Mayer to Secretary of State, 9 Dec. 1937, no. 13, RG 84, 800–D.

139. For official U.S. and Haitian views that it would have been feasible to expel Haitians from the Dominican frontier, see Eager, "Memorandum"; and Enc. to Mayer to Secretary of State, 9 Dec. 1937. See also Balaguer, *La palabra encadenada*, 300.

across time and space as a result of different historical conditions that themselves need to be elucidated.[140] What is so striking in the case of the Haitian massacre is that the Trujillo regime's anti-Haitian discourse was the product of rather than the precursor to state terror. Prior to the massacre, the state's primary concern with the "pacific invasion" had not been Haitianization—though this was also a concern, particularly among the elite—but rather that Haitian settlers would support claims by the Haitian state to what was considered Dominican territory. In the 1930 to 1937 period, the dictator's participation in anti-Haitian and racist discourse appears unexceptional within Dominican history. Only following the massacre did the Trujillo regime sponsor virulent anti-Haitian rhetoric decrying supposed Haitian backwardness and savagery; effectively prohibit Haitian migration through the 500-peso immigration fee; and frequently and bitterly condemn the history of a "pacific invasion" by Haitian migrants in culturally racist rather than simply territorial and political terms. The regime took traditional elite prejudices against popular Haitian culture, excoriating its "Africanness," creolized French, and, above all, the "superstitions" and "fetishism" of Vodou, and circulated them as official ideology.[141] This racist discourse was spearheaded by prominent anti-Haitian intellectuals such as Balaguer and Peña Batlle.[142] And although it varied in intensity in light of Haitian-Dominican relations after the massacre, the Trujillo state continually spread anti-Haitian propaganda throughout the country in speeches (by teachers, officials, and local figures), in the media (newspapers, radio, and eventually television), and in new laws, books, and historical texts used in school.[143] Indeed, the relative weakness of popular and official anti-Haitianism

140. Thomas Holt, "An 'Empire over the Mind': Emancipation, Race, and Ideology in the British West Indies and the American South," and Barbara Fields, "Ideology and Race in American History," in *Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward*, ed. J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982).

141. See V. Díaz Ordóñez, *El más antiguo y grave problema antillano* (Ciudad Trujillo: La Opinión, 1938); Ana Richardson Batista, "Dominicanización fronteriza," *La Nación*, 24 May 1943; J. R. Johnson Mejía, "Contenido racional de la política de dominicanización fronteriza," *Boletín del Partido Dominicano*, 30 July 1943; and Manuel Arturo Peña Batlle, *El sentido de una política* (Ciudad Trujillo: La Nación, 1943).

142. See San Miguel, *La isla imaginada*, 82–95; Baud, "'Constitutionally White,'" 132–39; and Derby, "Histories of Power."

143. Frank Moya Pons, "La frontera política," *Rumbo* 5, no. 271 (1999); Bernardo Vega, "Variaciones en el uso del anti-haitianismo en la era de Trujillo" (paper presented at the Latin American Studies Association, Washington, D.C., Sept. 1995); and Derby, "Histories of Power."

before the massacre and the increasing virulence of it afterward suggests how this violence contributed to cultural racism and an ethnicized national identity (including in the frontier) more than vice versa. Violence was a catalyst, not simply a consequence, of racism and identity formation.[144]

Still in the moments immediately following the massacre, the leaders of the regime expressed state interests primarily in eliminating Haitians from the frontier zones and in political concerns over border formation rather than in eliminating Haitians from the entire country. On 15 October 1937, the newly appointed secretary of state ad interim, Julio Ortega Frier, explained to the U.S. Legation that he was

> studying a plan whereby Haitians residing in the communes along the Haitian-Dominican frontier would be moved to other parts of the Dominican Republic . . . and [an international accord] to prevent any further infiltration of Haitians into the communes comprised in a zone of 50 to 100 kilometers in width along the Haitian-Dominican frontier. This agreement would not only prevent the entry of Haitians into the Dominican zone but would establish a similar zone on the Haitian side of the frontier from which Dominicans would be excluded. Lic. Ortega Frier was of the opinion that if it were possible to conclude such a reciprocal agreement with the Haitian government, no further incidents would occur along the frontier.[145]

The primary objective of the Dominican government's proposal was not to diminish the overall number of Haitians in the Dominican Republic but rather to eliminate Haitians from the Dominican frontier—and indeed Dominicans from the Haitian border areas as well—where they posed a problem for drawing a clear political, social, and cultural boundary between the two nations.

The overall history and consequences of Trujillo's Haitian and border policies thus suggests the massacre's relationship less to state anti-Haitianism in general, as has understandably often been presumed, but rather to anti-Haitian objectives specifically in connection to the Dominican frontier, and ultimately to state formation and national boundaries. The efforts of the Dominican state to eliminate Haitians were directed essentially at the frontier provinces, not throughout the country. And in terms of its lasting impact on

144. See also Lauren Derby and Richard Lee Turits, "Historias de terror y terrores de la historia: La masacre haitiana de 1937 en la República Dominicana," *Estudios Sociales* 26, no. 92 (1993): 65, 75.

145. Atwood to Secretary of State, 15 Oct. 1937, no. 25, RG 84, 800–D.

the Dominican Republic, the Haitian massacre materially altered only the frontier, not the nation as a whole. The massacre did not eliminate Haitians from the Dominican Republic, but it did destroy the Dominican frontier's fluidly bicultural and transnational Haitian-Dominican communities.

As a result of the massacre, virtually the entire Haitian population in the Dominican frontier was either killed or forced to flee across the border. In addition to the unspeakable violence that this inflicted upon Haitians, the genocide destroyed the frontier's preexisting economy, culture, and society. The way of life for the remaining Dominican civilians who had once lived side-by-side with Haitian neighbors and who had frequently married and had children with Haitians was buried and became a haunting memory. Many of these Dominicans were now armed by the state and ordered to kill their former neighbors if they returned. Instead of free and constant movement between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, the state established a regulated border between the two countries for the first time, one that was well patrolled via a proliferation of new military command posts.[146] For Dominican ranchers who had herded cattle on landholdings that crossed an erstwhile invisible border, the closed border now sealed the demise of their centuries-old cattle trade with (and in) Haiti.[147] From now on it would be relatively dangerous to traverse the border outside of official checkpoints and without proper authorization. Also, without a large population of ethnic Haitians who lived on more or less equal terms with Dominicans, the influence and certainly normativeness of Haitian cultural practices would be continually reduced over time. Certainly the boundaries between Dominican and Haitian culture would always remain especially blurry in the frontier, and trade, contraband, and interpersonal and military contact across the border inevitably continued to some extent.[148] And despite the mythical attributions of Afro-Dominican practices solely to Haitian influence, their roots were deeper and wider, dating back to the early colonial period in this mostly Afro-Caribbean nation. The state could not simply divest ethnic Dominicans of their culture and worldview

146. Eugene Hinkle to Secretary of State, 7 July 1938, no. 373, RG 84, 710-Haiti; Ellis Briggs to Secretary of State, 19 Aug. 1944, no. 232, ibid, 710–30; Julio Ibarra to Secretary de Estado de lo Interior, 15 May 1957, no. 480, and related documents in AGN, SA, leg. 903, 1957; and Francis Spalding to Secretary of State, 29 July 1957, no. 44, RG 59, 739.00.

147. Ernest Charles Palmer, "Land Use and Landscape Change along the Dominican-Haitian Borderlands" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Florida, 1976), 103.

148. For an interpretation that emphasizes this continuity, see Paulino Díaz, "Birth of a Boundary," chaps. 4–6.

overnight. Yet, the relative equality and bicultural community of ethnic Dominicans and Haitians, as well as the ease, safety, and frequency of border crossing, terminated with the 1937 genocide.[149] The idea of an ethnically homogenous nation gained plausibility even in the Dominican frontier. The border, once a porous and somewhat artificial division to frontier denizens, had become instead a deep and horrific scar.

This seismic transformation was precisely what elite Dominican figures had fantasized about for decades. Instead of seizing the postmassacre moment to try to eject Trujillo when he was uniquely vulnerable, the country's ministers and state lawyers rallied behind the dictator and vigorously defended the regime from international scandal and what at first was likely foreign intervention.[150] In some cases, frustrated elite Dominicans were seeing for the first time perhaps the advantages of Trujillo's despotic rule. By eliminating Haitians and fluid transit across the border, the massacre imposed the traditional elite vision of a Dominican nation constructed in opposition to Haiti even in the once bicultural frontier.

From Trujillo's perspective, though, the benefit of the massacre may have been not only strengthening the border specifically to eliminate Haitians but also of eliminating Haitians so as to strengthen the border and state formation in general. The failure of the regime's efforts to police the border and nationalize the frontier prior to 1937 had thrown into relief the impediments to expeditious state formation posed by this bicultural and transnational region and therein reinforced the implicit linkage of political control with the construction of a monoethnic nation. The most obvious means by which the state could justify greater control over the border to the local population was anti-Haitian nationalism and official racism. But in light of the relatively cohesive, multiethnic character of the frontier, official discourse to ethnicize national identity and existing communities fell on deaf ears.

Yet by means of the Haitian massacre the Trujillo state violently established a new world in the frontier, a world in which a closed border could now be imposed and legitimated. From the state's perspective, the massacre represented the elimination from the frontier of a well-integrated but distinct ethnic group that was linked to and associated with the nation on the opposing

149. See F. Ducoudray, "Los secretos del vodú," *¡Ahora!*, 7 Apr. 1980, and "Los conucos de Yesí Elá" *¡Ahora!* 14 Apr. 1980.

150. Atwood to Secretary of State, 5 Nov. 1937, no. 54, RG 84, 800–D; Roorda, *The Dictator Next Door*, 135; Cuello, *Documentos*; and H. C. R., "Memorandum: Conversation with Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi," 26 May 1943, RG 84, 702–711.

side of the country's border. From the perspective of most Dominican residents then living in the frontier, the massacre embodied inexplicable horror. However, by violently excluding Haitian peasants from Dominican frontier communities in which they had been relatively equal members for generations, the Trujillo state imposed, in practice and then in ideology, the elite construction of a monoethnic nation-state on this extensive transnational and bicultural zone. The slaughter—and the memories of this slaughter—established for the first time a profound social division, clear hierarchy, and increasing cultural distance between the populations in the Dominican and Haitian frontiers. And over time this rendered official anti-Haitianism plausible at the popular level, which in turn legitimated as "protection" state control over the frontier and an impermeable border with Haiti.

One elderly Dominican peasant from Loma de Cabrera, Avelino Cruz, expressed decades later a virulent anti-Haitianism, albeit in paradoxical fashion, that appears to embody the transformation in ideology and identity that the massacre brought on for some in the frontier. Cruz's prior connections to the regime's repressive apparatus led him to become one of few civilians to participate in the killings. In a most extreme and even incoherent interview, Cruz first described in animated fashion his contentment with life prior to the massacre. He explained that he had been married to a Dominican woman when he began another relationship with a Haitian woman, with whom he had two children: "We treated each other well in our relations. My wife and *la Haitiana* both lived on the same plot of land, in separate houses, but very near. And they cooked together. And also both nursed the children. In other words they got along very, very well, like two sisters." Yet the very relations that Cruz nostalgically recalled as harmonious—and of course the two women may have had memories that differed from his—were destroyed by the massacre in which he took part. When asked about the killings, Cruz transmogrified into a seemingly different person. He recounted in lurid detail the ways in which he had slaughtered Haitians. When asked why he had participated, he explained, "I was roused by an order I had nothing to do with. If it had been necessary to kill my Haitian wife, I would have killed her also. Fortunately she was already in Haiti at the time of the eviction [the massacre]. Because I wasn't going to let them kill me [for disobeying]. But God willed that I didn't have to kill her." His discourse transformed even further when we asked why Trujillo had ordered the massacre. "If Trujillo hadn't done this, the Haitians would have eaten us like meat. Already there would be no Dominicans here."[151]

151. Cruz, interview.

In the wake of the massacre and the diffusion of anti-Haitian ideologies, some ethnic Dominicans in the frontier, such as Cruz, appear to have embraced the idea that, prior to the "eviction," they had been engulfed by Haitians and were becoming Haitian—a variant on the "pacific invasion" theme (although few went as far as Cruz did by using a cannibalistic metaphor). From this perspective, the massacre may have destroyed their world and, to some extent, their identity, but it had also prevented them from being lost to "Haitianization" and its supposedly retrograde character. This shift in perspective was further illustrated by Percivio Díaz from Santiago de la Cruz, a wealthy self-described Trujillista. Díaz condemned the massacre as "an act of absolute barbarism." "Here," he recalled, "everyone cried after [the massacre]." But while Díaz opposed the killings, he also contended that "we needed to escape from the Haitians, even though in some other way, like arresting and deporting them . . . because by then they were invading us, and we really had to do something about it." Díaz concluded that "*el corte* was necessary. Because if we didn't do this, we would be Haitians. . . . Already in the frontier we had become Haitians." The massacre, Díaz implied, severed ethnic Dominicans from their immersion and participation in Haitian-Dominican norms and therein constituted them as what he now considered genuine Dominicans. He also stressed that his view had changed in the decades following the massacre: "But it's only now that I realize . . . [that the massacre] was a necessity . . . now that I am older, and I see what is still happening, that they are invading us in the capital. There are more Haitians there than here [in the frontier]."[152] Thus, in addition to being swayed by the force of state anti-Haitianism, Díaz was reading life in the 1930s frontier through the lens of subsequent and quite different conditions in other regions, where Haitians have played the role of cheap and often illegal laborers.

That much of the anti-Haitian sentiment in the Dominican frontier today is a product of the massacre and subsequent history is further suggested by the greater (and seemingly less contradictory) anti-Haitianism evident among younger Dominicans. A transformation in local anti-Haitianism across the generations was portrayed in the testimony of Evelina Sánchez, an elderly local historian from Monte Cristi. Sánchez replied to our query about whether some Dominicans responded positively to the massacre, "The people did not think this was a good thing. The one who found it so was Trujillo. They say he wanted to make the Haitians pay for their massacring of children in Moca [during an unsuccessful attempt by Haitian President Jean-Jacques Dessalines

152. Díaz, interview.

to seize control of Santo Domingo in 1805, then under French control]. . . . That's the same reason my son used to say that he wanted to be el Jefe [Trujillo] so that he could get rid of all the Haitians." Simultaneous with her expression of condemnation of the massacre and of her sense that her contemporaries also condemned the killing, Sánchez implied that her son had come to perceive all Haitians in the Dominican Republic as outsiders and anti-Haitian violence as legitimate.[153]

Difference had been transformed into otherness and marginality. After the massacre notions of ethnic difference between Dominicans and Haitians that had existed in a well-integrated frontier community evolved into a widespread and often intense—though also still paradoxical and inconsistent—current of anti-Haitianism. This new mode of racism emerged as a result of state terror and the official anti-Haitianism that followed it and served to rationalize the massacre. Popular anti-Haitianism may have been further amplified by fear of the state and the need to distinguish oneself from the targets of its violence, or by collective interest in justifying the slaughter with which Dominicans were inevitably somewhat associated, even if it had been perpetrated by a brutal dictator. Also, anti-Haitianism may have gained some acceptance because it was propagated by a state that was simultaneously developing substantial popularity in the countryside as a result of its agrarian policies.[154]

The production of Dominican anti-Haitianism would be furthered as well by other socioeconomic factors in the postmassacre decades, including a severe new ethnic division of labor. After 1937, Haitians in the Dominican Republic were relegated almost exclusively, and in increasing numbers, to the role of plantation workers at the bottom rung of the labor market.[155] The state and the sugar companies would consistently and flagrantly violate Haitians' human rights, subjecting them to slavelike material conditions with which they became associated. In this new context and in the context of the Dominican Republic's growing economic and military superiority over Haiti after the massacre, Dominican notions of Haitian ethnic and somatic difference would be transformed into a new mode of racism rendering Haitians into inferior and permanent outsiders that prevails still today. This is not to say that these notions completely restructured the sentiments, practices, or even discourse of all Dominicans.[156] It is notable, for instance, that in contrast to the regime's agrarian policies, the massacre and official anti-Haitianism in general were

153. Evelina Sánchez, interview by author and Lauren Derby, Monte Cristi, 1988.
154. See Turits, *Foundations of Despotism*.
155. See note 137.
156. See Baud, "'Constitutionally White'," 140–41.

rarely praised during interviews I conducted in 1992 with elderly peasants throughout the Dominican Republic.[157] Among subsequent generations, though, anti-Haitianism appears to be far more accepted. And overall it became a salient part of everyday discourse in a way that contrasts sharply with the premassacre frontier world.[158]

The impact of the 1937 Haitian massacre was ultimately on the character more than the magnitude of the Haitian presence in the Dominican Republic. The main consequence of the bloodbath for Dominicans was the destruction of the Haitian-Dominican frontier world and the transformation of popular meanings of Dominican identity, culture, and nationality. The Trujillo regime thus created through genocide a new reality that legitimated the state's long-standing impetus to harden the border and police the frontier. In the immediate aftermath of the massacre, Trujillo reportedly boasted to one of his subordinates, "Now let them say that we have no borders."[159] Through this slaughter, a socially and culturally meaningful border was established and a rigid political border therein facilitated. And anti-Haitianism was officially rewritten as a timeless sentiment among virtually all Dominicans.

An essentialized opposition between Haiti and the Dominican Republic is often imagined today as constituting Dominican national identity across time, space, and class. But this construction of Dominican nationality rests on historical amnesia of the premassacre frontier world, of its culturally pluralist nation as well as its transnational community. It also rests on a problematic interpretation of the Haitian massacre as a reflection of (rather than an impetus for) the widespread anti-Haitianism that exists today in the Dominican Republic. In 1937 Dominican frontier residents had to bury the Haitian members of their community. And in so doing, they also buried their own way of life, and ultimately the memories of their collective past. To the extent that a comparatively small number of Haitians would again enter and remain in the Dominican frontier in subsequent decades, they would be marked as permanent outsiders. The massacre had imposed a new national community and culture in the frontier—one imagined for the first time without Haitians, except for the ghosts of Trujillo's victims.

157. These interviews with 130 elderly peasants from throughout the Dominican Republic were conducted as part of my research for *Foundations of Despotism*.

158. Anti-Haitianism today, as in the early twentieth century, is clearest among elite Dominicans. See, for example, José Gautier's piece in *El Nacional*, 19 Nov. 1987; Luis Lajara Burgos, "Dimensión," *Hoy*, 23 July 1991; and Luis Julián Pérez, *Santo Domingo frente al destino* (Santo Domingo: Ed. Taller, 1990).

159. The pronoun "they" is ambiguous. It may refer to Haitian leaders, Dominican critics, or frontier denizens. Robert Crassweller, letter to author, 19 Jan. 1988.