

HISPANIDAD AS ETHNIC MYTH AND THE ANTI-HAITIAN NATION: AN ETHNO-SYMBOLIC APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING DOMINICAN IDENTITY

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Introduction

This paper queries how Dominican national identity can be understood through the theoretical lens of Ethno-Symbolism. In the 1999 book *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, author Anthony D. Smith introduces the term Ethno-Symbolism and the importance of myth and memory in the creation of national identities. He asserts that "For ethno-symbolists, what gives nationalism its power are the myths, memories, traditions, and symbols of ethnic heritages and the ways in which a popular living past has been, and can be rediscovered and reinterpreted by modern nationalist intelligentsias" (p. 9). Thus, the aim of this study is three fold. First, to render a brief analysis of Ethno-Symbolism, as presented by Smith. Second, to demonstrate how the Dominican Republic's ethnic myth of *hispanidad*, which the country has created and perpetuated intentionally to establish a national identity altogether divorced from that of Haiti, aligns with Smith's six components of nationalistic ethnic myths, which represent key aspects to Ethno-Symbolism. These components are (1) temporal origins; (2) location and migration; (3) ancestry; (4) the heroic age; (5) decline; and (6) regeneration. And finally, to conclude with critical comments regarding Ethno-Symbolism and Dominican national identity configuration. Although the specific context is not a Latin American nation in Smith's 1999 work, it is striking to note the appropriateness and accuracy with which his ethno-symbolic framework translates to the Dominican-Haitian context. Upon analyzing elements of Dominican popular culture, commonly

held stereotypes, social policies, and even aspects of the public school curriculum, evidenced is the fundamental role that anti-Haitianism plays in the Dominican Republic's various strategies for perpetuating its ethnic myth of national identity, of hispanism, *hispanidad*.

What is Ethno-Symbolism?

Smith explains that Ethno-Symbolism functions as a means to address specific limitations of modernist approaches to understanding the concept of nationalism. He writes, "I refer to their systematic failure to accord any weight to the pre-existing cultures and ethnic ties of the nations that emerged in the modern epoch, thereby precluding any understanding of the popular roots and widespread appeal of nationalism" (9). According to Smith, Ethno-Symbolism situates the role of ethnically rooted myths, memories and symbols as the true basis for a people's desire to create, explain and justify its concept of nation. This vital inclusion of myth, symbol and memory into the understanding of nationalism is exactly what separates Ethno-Symbolism from other theoretical paradigms such as Primordialism, Perennialism and Modernism¹; thus, making Ethno-Symbolism a unique and more appropriate lens through which one can examine the highly ethnicized Dominican national identity of "hispanic", or as this article explores, "anti-Haitian."

Smith continues by outlining three limitations of modernist approaches: (1) a failure to distinguish genuine constructs from long-term processes and structures in which successive generations have been socialized; (2) a concentration on elite actions at the expense of popular beliefs

and actions; and, (3) a neglect of the powerful affective dimensions of nations and nationalism (p. 9). Modernist limitations significantly diminish the degree to which social institutions and popular culture can be theorized to shape and perpetuate the emotional impact of the term “nationalism” on a people. Ethno-Symbolism allows for these more qualitative considerations to factor into the understanding of why and how a people describe themselves as a nation. In the case of the Dominican Republic, one would be remiss in neglecting to consider the culturally entrenched and often emotionally charged nature of the country’s national identity, in that, to be Dominican is to not be Haitian.

Although the focus of this piece is specific to the characterization of ethnic myths used in Ethno-Symbolism, it is important to note the eight guiding principles that Smith sets forth in his description of Ethno-Symbolism. Smith offers Ethno-Symbolism’s eight basic tenets with an explanatory quote from his 1999 work. Smith’s identified characteristics situate this article’s discussion of ethnic myths within the larger paradigm of Ethno-Symbolism and national identity. They include and are defined by Smith² as:

1). La Longue Durée: “[I]f we want to grasp the power and understand the shape of modern nations and nationalisms, we must trace the origins and formation of nations, as well as their possible future course, over long periods of time (*la longue durée*), and not tie their existence and formation to a particular period of history or to the processes of modernization.”

2). National past, present, and future: These periods in a nation’s history should be examined as “recurrence, continuity, and reappropriation.”

3). The ethnic basis of nations: “Ethno-Symbolism claims that most nations, including the earliest, were based on ethnic ties and sentiments and on popular

ethnic traditions, which have provided the cultural resources for later nation-formation....”

4). The cultural components of ethnies: “[T]he pre-existing components and long-term continuities of ethnic communities and nations are cultural and symbolic rather than demographic. The *differentia specifica* of *ethnies* and nations, as well as their continuities, appear in the myths, memories, symbols, values, and traditions of an ethnic community which regards itself as ancestrally related, culturally distinct, and linked to a particular homeland.”

5). Ethnic myths and symbols: “Myths of origin and descent constitute the primary definers of the separate existence and character of particular *ethnies*...Symbols of territory and community take a variety of forms. They include emblems of difference (flags, totems, coins, ritual objects), hymns and anthems, special foods and costume, as well as representations of ethnic deities, monarchs and heroes....”

6). Ethno-history: “By *ethno-history* is meant the ethnic members’ memories and understanding of the communal past or pasts, rather than any more objective and dispassionate analysis by professional historians.”

7). Routes to Nationhood: Ethno-Symbolism seeks “...to identify *patterns* of nation-formation, depending on the initial ethnic starting point.”

8). The longevity of nationalism: “Nationalism is a modern ideological movement, but also the expression of aspirations by various social groups to create, defend or maintain *nations*—their autonomy, unity and identity—by drawing on the cultural resources of pre-existing ethnic communities and categories.”

The Dominican context offers a wealth of opportunity to appropriately apply Smith’s tenets, in relationship to his framework of Ethno-Symbolism.

Fundamentally, the Dominican Republic's ethno-history reflects an identity of native island-born *indios* that is meant to supplant much of what the country shares with Haiti, an African heritage. Through the vector of ethnic myths, which function to foster emotional alliance to *hispanidad*, many Dominicans have conflated their sense of Dominican identity with a fervent allegiance to an anti-Haitian nation.

Six Components of Ethnic Myths

Examples taken from commonly held stereotypes about Haitians, social and political policies and the public school system offer evidence that Dominican *hispanidad* is an ethnic myth that is essential to the Dominican Republic's definition of its own national identity. With these many examples, one can begin to address Smith's central questions about nationalism—questions that spurred the development of Ethno-Symbolism. "Why is it really necessary to return to the past in order to legitimate present actions? How does unearthing archaic epochs satisfy the desire for a blueprint for the future? ...Why, in short, root society and politics in culture and biology?" (61). Within the context of Dominican-Haitian relations, Dominicans answer this series of questions in stark black and white terms, figuratively and literally. Haitians are black Africans and Dominicans are white Spaniards. Being Dominican means not being Haitian; thus, designating an ethnic myth of *hispanidad* as the foundation of an anti-Haitian national identity. The following sections will connect Smith's six components of ethnic myths to various manifestations of Dominican *hispanidad*, powered chiefly by pervasive anti-Haitianism. A citation from Smith's observation will frame the discussion for each component discussed.

(1). Temporal Origins: When We Were Begotten

One of the main tasks of nationalist historians is to date the community's origins,

and so locate it in time and in relation to other relevant communities. (63)

Every nation must have a birthday, or at least some point in time used to mark the beginning of its own kind, or the beginning of its uniqueness. The Dominican Republic's birthday of choice is February 27, 1844. On one hand, it is not surprising that this date was chosen because it does mark the country's independence. On the other hand, it is rather surprising that February 27, 1844 marks the Dominican Republic's independence from Haiti and not from Spain. However, "El Día de la Raza", also celebrated as Columbus Day elsewhere, is a nationally recognized day of celebration in the Dominican Republic.

Noticeably absent from the Dominican Republic's calendar of holidays are past attempts to annex itself back to Spain and then to the United States, both occurring after the country lost its status as an official Spanish colony. The Dominican Republic's prime argument for seeking recognition in the international community reflects the country's desire to validate the ethnic myth of *hispanidad* and whiteness even beyond its own borders. Rayford Logan notes in *Haiti and the Dominican Republic* (1968):

During the late 1840s the Dominican government appealed to the United States for recognition, largely on the ground that it was a 'white' nation. But American special agents, even after counting 'white Negroes' and 'Negroes with a white heart' were unable to find enough white people to justify recognition. One agent, obviously seeking to support the request for recognition, guessed in 1845 that there were 40,000 Negroes, 90,000 coloured people, and 100,000 whites. (13)

It becomes clear that the Dominican Republic is not solely responsible for maintaining its ethnic myth. As an ethnic myth, *hispanidad* is only as credible as other nations will allow it to be, and due to its own historical circumstances, the

United States has had a role in its perpetuation.

(2). Location and Migration: Where We Came From and How We Got Here

Not all ethnic communities possess a fully elaborated myth of spatial origins, but all have some notions. Space is, after all, the other dimension necessary for a framework of self-identification, and assumes special importance where claims to 'territory' are being pressed. (63)

By looking at a map of the Caribbean, one can plainly see that Haiti and the Dominican Republic share opposite ends of the island of Hispaniola, and one can accurately calculate the physical distance between the two nations. However, what the map does not show is the tremendous psychological, cultural, and ethnic distance from Haiti that the Dominican Republic has chosen to create. Dominicans popularly understand their arrival to their piece of land to mean that God himself guided Columbus, a European, to the island of Hispaniola, which by extension brought them, also being European themselves, to the island. Furthermore, it was God himself who came to the aid of Dominicans, not to Haitians, in past battles over territory, especially in the border region.

Anti-Haitian sentiment also served to create an imagined need to "Dominicanize" the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic; and, in October 1937, Rafael Leónidas Trujillo Molina proved to be just the dictator for this dubious task when he ordered the execution of "Operation Parsley." Residents of the border region who were suspected to be Haitian, which for all practical purposes meant having skin that Dominican soldiers thought was simply too dark to be Dominican skin, were demanded to pronounce the word *perejil* when a soldier held the herb their face. The "suspects" who could pronounce *perejil* in a convincingly accurate Spanish accent were largely unharmed by the

soldiers. However, Haitians and dark-complexioned Dominicans whose pronunciation carried any trace of Haitian Creole, especially showing difficulty with the Spanish intervocalic phoneme /r/, were executed on the spot by the soldiers. The massacre of "Operation Parsley" has been well documented by the governments of the Dominican Republic and Haiti, and also by numerous historians of both countries, although the exact number of victims is still a longstanding point of dispute. The gruesome events near the Dominican town of Dajabón, in October 1937 have also appeared in fictionalized form. Haitian-born writer Edwidge Danticat sets her 1998 novel *The Farming of Bones* in the border region in 1937, and personalizes the bloody episode through the leading Haitian characters Amabelle and Sebastian. In the scene below, Danticat describes an attack on Amabelle and Yves, a Haitian sugarcane cutter who is fleeing to safety with Amabelle, by a group of Dominican men who are testing the pair's pronunciation with the herb acting as a shibboleth. Danticat writes:

At that moment I did believe that had I wanted to, I could have said the word properly, calmly, slowly, the way I often asked "Perejil?" of the old Dominican women and their faithful attending granddaughters at the roadside gardens and markets, even though the trill of the *r* and the precision of the *j* was sometimes too burdensome a joining for my tongue. It was the kind of thing that if you were startled in the night, you might forget, but with all my senses calm, I could have said it. But I didn't get my chance. Yves and I were shoved down onto our knees. Our jaws were pried open and parsley stuffed into our mouths. My eyes watering, I chewed and swallowed as quickly as I could, but not nearly as fast as they were forcing the handfuls into my mouth. Yves chewed with all the strength in his bulging jaws. At least they were not beating us, I thought. I tried to stop listening to the voices ordering the young men to feed us more. I told

myself that eating the parsley would keep me alive. Yves fell headfirst, coughing and choking. His face was buried in a puddle of green spew. He was not moving. (193)

Fictionalized in Danticat's *The Farming of Bones* is the trace of historical violence enacted by Dominicans in an attempt to protect their physical location by policing the "borders" of ethnicity, color, and pronunciation and curtailing the immigration of Haitians into the presumed Dominican space. Relative to Smith's assertions about spatial origins, one is led to wonder what exactly it is that the Dominican Republic is attempting to demarcate from its neighbor. The notion of Dominican space is seemingly jeopardized by the encroaching physical proximity of its Haitian neighbor. By extension, by "cordoning" *hispanidad* from Haitian influence at its most vulnerable point, the east-west border region between the two nations, the Dominican Republic is better able to protect and perpetuate its ethnic myth.

(3). Ancestry: Who Begot Us and How We Developed

A sense of common ancestry confers sentiments of prestige and dignity through an 'ethnic' fraternity, one based upon alleged kinship ties; and herein lie the seeds of that transformation, through a biological or genetic interpretation, by which the 'ethnic community' becomes the "race." (65)

Many Dominicans consider themselves to be the Caribbean remains of white, Spanish, Catholic colonists who with the long extinct Taíno Indians gave rise to the Dominican people. Often absent from this short list of ethnic ancestry is Africa and the descendents of slavery on the island of Hispaniola. Certainly, this is not by accident but rather by careful design, and the design is very specifically the handiwork of Rafael Trujillo and one of his most trusted statesmen, Joaquín Balaguer.³ While in power from 1930 to

1961, the Trujillo administration found itself with a seemingly impossible problem to solve: How can Dominicans be convinced that their dark skin is inherited from Taíno Indians, and that the Haitians' dark skin is inherited from Africans? During this period, the vast majority of Dominican citizens found themselves suddenly and officially labeled by the Trujillo government as *indios*, which also included a corresponding spectrum from *claro* to *oscuro*. By requiring most Dominicans to self-identify as an Indian, with the possibility of adding a qualifier of either light or dark, Trujillo's regime had provided an acceptable explanation for the Dominican Republic's far from alabaster national complexion.

With respect to the abovementioned, one must remember that the motivation for such re-labeling is rooted in anti-Haitianism. Embodied in such thought is the practiced belief that Dominicans are white, Spanish, Catholics and Haitians are black, African practitioners of voodoo. Despite the fact that the institutionalization of anti-Haitian sentiment was put into motion over fifty years ago, its legacy is still alive and well in the nationally standardized curricula of the public school system, specifically in recent editions of the second and third grade social studies textbooks by Danilda Pérez et al.⁴ In the second grade textbook, a lesson introducing and describing various occupations depicts manual and less skilled laborers with dark skin. These pictures include the butcher, the mechanic, the police officer and the welder. Interestingly, the one illustration that does not reflect a specific profession is of a yellow-haired, fair complexioned male who is wearing a graduation cap and gown and holding a briefcase (54). The third grade textbook contains a lesson titled "Somos Dominicanos", which explicitly outlines Dominican ethnicity and directly ties it to national identity. Drawings of an orange-skinned man and woman with long, narrow noses and

straight hair are labeled as Spanish and white. Drawings of a purple-skinned man and woman, with animal bone jewelry and large afro hairstyles are labeled as African and black. Later in the lesson, students are asked to write down which group of people best describes their classmates, their teacher, their friends, and their own family members. The students are also asked to self-identify according to the drawings (153-54). As could be predicted, the children largely identified with being Hispanic.

Dominican sociologist and historian Franklin Franco Pichardo cites another example of anti-Haitian bias in public school textbooks in his 2003 book *Sobre racismo y antihaitianismo y otros ensayos*. In the chapter "El problema racial dominicano en los textos escolares," Franco Pichardo describes a corrupt system of textbook selection at the national level that prioritizes staying in the good graces of Spanish publishing houses over developing appropriate content. He asserts that these publishing houses produce tragically misrepresented images of blackness within the pages of its books. Even attempts to correct and "Dominicanize" the texts are part of a poorly veiled scheme by some national-level education officials to perpetuate the Dominican Republic's skewed racial ideology of hispanism and to line the pockets of the country's elite who have "author" friends who will give a Dominican rubber stamp of approval to textbooks that are actually written and published abroad.

Lo primero que tenemos que apuntar es que no hay en la República Dominicana textos auténticamente dominicanos... Por cierto, en los últimos años, se ha puesto de moda un procedimiento que en los medios educativos natives se denomina, "adaptación" del libro extranjero, al ambiente dominicano. El trabajo que se ha realizado en ese sentido no merece siquiera el nombre adaptación... Se trata pura y sencillamente de un sucio negocio de las grandes empresas editoras

españolas, que frente a las críticas reiteradas del magisterio nacional a sus libros, se han dado a la tarea de comprar profesores amigos de funcionarios de la Secretaría de Educación, para lograr así la circulación en nuestras escuelas de textos escritos por autores españoles ... La oligarquía de nuestro país—que es en última instancia la que tiene el mando en el aparato del Estado y en sus instituciones, influida de profundos prejuicios raciales, de sentimientos esquizofrénicos prohispanicos—se siente feliz con ese situación. (117).

Smith's explanation of ancestry clearly connects to the work of the Dominican public school system. *Hispanidad* is such a vital element to national identity that it cannot be left to individual interpretation and perpetuation by the younger generations. *Hispanidad* must be codified, sanctioned by the government and given a means of perpetuation. To that end, certain public school materials have served as tools to specifically situate and often propagandize an anti-Haitian biased interpretation of Dominican ancestry on the island in an attempt to affirm officially "who begot us and how we developed."

(4) Heroic Age: How We Were Freed and Became Glorious

Heroes provide models of virtuous conduct, their deeds of valour inspire faith and courage in their oppressed and decadent descendants. The epoch in which they flourished is the great age of liberation from the foreign yoke, which released the energies of the people for cultural innovation and original political experiment. (65)

This aspect of the myth of *hispanidad* reinforces the popular notion that God prefers Dominicans to Haitians because Dominicans are Catholic, which also means Spanish, white, civilized, educated, clean, etcetera. The converse argument is that Haitians are all but abandoned by God because they are black, African practitioners of voodoo who eat children

and secretly hope to reclaim the Dominican Republic as their own and to gain control over all of Hispaniola. Again, the imagined historical view of dominant triumph over Haitian control reinforces this point. To this end, Dominican studies scholar and political science professor Ernesto Sagás writes in *Race and Politics in the Dominican Republic* (2000):

One of the most common myths present in traditional Dominican history texts is that of messianism. For example, Juan Pablo Duarte, the nation's leading hero and intellectual author of Dominican independence, is glorified to extremes. Joaquín Balaguer even compares him to Jesus Christ. [Here, Sagás quotes Balaguer.] "The father of the Fatherland had a conscience enticed by the figure of Christ and made in the image of that sublime redeemer of the human family." (74)

Interpreting Dominican military victories over Haitians as a result of Dominicans' preferred status with God and as the initiation of the country's heroic age, makes the presence of, if not the outright need for, anti-Haitianism increasingly apparent. Brave and right-minded Dominicans were made heroes by God when he led them to victory over the black savages of Haiti. Dominicans see themselves as "freed" from Haitian influence during this "heroic age" and able to live in what many Dominicans would consider God's "glory."

(5) Decline: How We Fell Into a State of Decay

...[N]ationalism stresses the reality of retrogressions and the role of human volition. The tree never grows straight, the river always meanders, even turns back in erratic loops. But, if seized with ethnic consciousness, men can unbend the tree and set the river back on course. Then, of course, the golden age will be renewed and the heroes will return. (67)

Based on the analysis and interpretations rendered thus far, one can reasonably surmise that getting rid of Haitians, their black skin and their voodoo ways is truly the focus of the Dominican Republic's Heroic Age. Thus, it is not difficult to infer what, more accurately whom, many Dominicans will identify as responsible for what some perceive as the country's decline. Smith writes: "But how did that glorious age pass away, why have the heroes become the generations of the oppressed? Because the old virtues were forgotten, moral decay set in, pleasure and vice overcame discipline, the barbarians burst through" (67). Hence, the immigration of Haitians into the Dominican Republic threatened the idealized identity of a civilized society.

In his book *La realidad dominicana: Semblanza de un país y de un régimen* (1947), Joaquín Balaguer points the collective Dominican finger of culpability directly at Haiti. Sagás reiterates this point in his translation of Balaguer:

Incest and other practices no less barbaric and antagonistic to the Christian institution of the family are common among the lower classes of the population of Haiti and give testimony of its appalling moral deformities...The Haitian immigrant has also been a generator of sloth in Santo Domingo. The Ethiopian race is indolent by nature and applies no special efforts to anything unless it is forced to obtain subsistence by that means. (51)

Balaguer's insistence that Haitians are the cause of all evil, misfortune and any perceived decline in the Dominican Republic is also echoed in the contemporary comments of Dominicans. In his 2000 text, Sagás conducted several interviews in which he asked a range of Dominicans to respond to questions about Haitian immigration to the Dominican Republic. The range of representative responses reflects the primary sentiment that the Dominican Republic is being invaded by Haitians who are preparing to take over the country.⁵ Sagás' findings

show that Dominicans feel that their location, the physical space of the Dominican Republic, is being jeopardized by what they see as astronomically high numbers of Haitian immigrants. However, these comments do not seem to acknowledge the issue of economic dependence. Silenced, or not addressed is the debate that the Dominican government itself, along with the owners of large-scale sugarcane plantations, actually depend upon and encourage Haitian immigration to the Dominican Republic during harvest season.

(6) Regeneration: How to Restore the Golden Age and Renew Our Community as "In the Days of Old"

...[T]hese notions can only represent ideal states, unattainable in an imperfect world; given the nature of social and geopolitical relations, they must always remain unfulfilled. Psychologically compelling if logically incoherent, they present the 'drama' of nationalism and its quasi-messianic promises alongside other quite realistic and concrete goals.... (68)

Dominicans who are convinced that Haiti is responsible for Dominican decline are also convinced about how to get the country back on the "right path." The dominant ideology is that if there were no Haitians in the Dominican Republic, then the country could finally begin its ascent toward "regeneration," to use Smith's term. Again, anti-Haitianism burrows its way deep into the vision of how Dominicans see the possibility of regeneration. Smith points out that regeneration marks a shift in the previous five components of ethnic myths of nationalism. He writes: "Here we move from the sphere of explanatory myth to that of prescriptive ideology: from an idealized, epic history to an account of 'required actions', or rationale of collective mobilization" (67). Smith's quote is reflected in the present-day Dominican context in more data collected by the Sagás interviews, where he

provides explicit evidence that Dominicans know what needs to be done to begin the regeneration of their country:

Every illegal Haitian should be sent back to his country. [Because] that nation has no friends. It is an evil nation. They [Haitians] are animals... Every twenty-seventh of February, the [Dominican] government should kill at least 500 Haitians. (85)

Certainly, some of Sagás' interviewees have a rather gruesome "To Do List" of sorts before *hispanidad* can be realized in the Dominican Republic. Sagás' findings suggest that, in the mind of many Dominicans, Haitians must be expelled from the country, and/or eradicated; and just as importantly, erased from the Dominican gene pool. However, is the eradication of any Haitian element really what the Dominican Republic needs in order to maintain its ethnic myth of *hispanidad*? I suggest that this is a case of "Be careful what you wish for" because it is in Smith's sixth and final component that the Dominican Republic may recognize its profound anti-Haitian sentiments and also recognize that they could not be Dominicans themselves without having Haitians present as a point of polarity from which to describe their own identity, their ethnic myth of *hispanidad*. Overlapping factors inherently problematize such a "regeneration" toward *hispanidad*. The Dominican Republic's pervasive deficit model attitude toward Haiti and blackness superficially seems to have an easy solution. One could be led to believe that an absence of Haitians means no blackness, which means that the "heroic age," in Smith's terms, could be reattained. This flawed logical chain fails to acknowledge that a Haitian presence in the Dominican Republic is precisely what creates a perceived need to assert Dominican national identity manifested as *hispanidad*, an ethno-symbolic approach to Dominican identity that feeds on a

definition of the Dominican "self" in light of the Haitian "other."

Conclusion

Through the lens of Anthony D. Smith's Ethno-Symbolic approach to nationalism, one can see that Dominican national identity is inextricably linked to its ethnic myth of *hispanidad* not by sheer will alone, but rather by institutionalized anti-Haitianism. Smith's six components of ethnic myths provide a framework for analyzing not just what Dominicans say about who they are, but also offer insight into how their sentiments perpetuate a popularly maintained "myth machine" of anti-Haitianism. While the six components of the "myth machine" may not add credence to much of what many Dominicans offer as evidence of their Hispanic ethnic identity, it does deepen the understanding of how being Dominican primarily means not being Haitian.

The entrenched anti-Haitian bias that largely characterizes Dominican identity is, in fact, being forcefully challenged by a small but active population of Dominicans living outside the country, primarily in the Washington Heights neighborhood of Manhattan in New York City. Dominican-born artist and writer Diógenes Abréu rejects the anti-Haitian paradigm that defines *dominicanidad* and chooses to assert a new version of Dominican national identity that embraces the common experience of blackness that Dominicans and Haitians share as new residents in the United States.⁶ Offering a new path for the future that does not base itself in the ethnic myth of *hispanidad*, Abréu proudly proclaims:

Soy dominicano y no aceptaré ser excluído de la nacionalidad y los espacios socioculturales que me pertenecen y ocupo. Cualquier intento de exclusion lo confrontaré exhibiendo con orgullo y firmeza mi version de dominicanidad diferenciada del antihaitianismo y la nación-Perejil como

proyecto monolingue, monoterritorial y monoteísta. (200)

Abréu gives a powerful voice to a burgeoning shift in attitude toward Dominican-Haitian relations, blackness and ethnic allegiances. Here, one can sense that Abréu simultaneously embodies Smith's six components of ethnic myths and Ethno-Symbolism while also rejecting their impact on his reconfigured ethnic identity, possibly imagined as "Anti anti-Haitianism." Despite being a product of the Dominican Republic's ethnic myth of *hispanidad*, Abréu brings forth the possibility that *dominicanidad* can exist outside the parameters of anti-Haitian propaganda and mistrust, and function as an accurate representation of ethnic identity that situates blackness in the spectrum of Dominican national complexion without bias or "myth."

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Notes

¹A continued discussion of Primordialism, Perennialism and Modernism as compared to Ethno-Symbolism can be found Smith's (1999) "Introduction."

²Taken from Smith (1999) pages 10-18.

³Balaguer's outlines his Euro-centric view of Dominican identity and the negative impact of Haitian immigration on Dominican society in his 1984 book *La isla al revés: Haití y el destino dominicano*.

⁴A detailed study of Dominican social science textbooks is given in: Wigginton, Sheridan. "Character or Caricature: Representations of Blackness in Dominican Social Science Textbooks." *Race Ethnicity and Education* 8 (2005): 191-211.

⁵Remarks paraphrased from Sagás (2000) pages 80-81.

⁶An in-depth exploration of Dominican and Haitian immigrant life in the United States can be found in the New Americans series by LFB Scholarly Publishing.

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