

Dear Latin American History Workshop Participants,

Here are excerpts of an early draft of a chapter of my dissertation, introduced by a blueprint for the revisions I am planning in the near future. I hope that this less formal presentation to the workshop can generate fruitful discussion of the ideas in the chapter and the direction it will take. And I am happy to spare you all the labor of reading the entirety of the original draft.

My dissertation, titled “Nueba Yol: Migration, Politics, and Popular Culture in Santo Domingo and New York, 1965-1990,” deals with the evolution of a relationship -- material, cultural, and political -- between Dominican settlers in New York and the increasingly urban, impoverished society they left behind. It asks how the process of incorporation into New York City was conditioned by intellectual, political, and social events in the fast growing capital of Santo Domingo. And it asks how the Dominican experience in New York reverberated in Santo Domingo, both in the world of ideas and images and in the practice of everyday life.

The dissertation is a tale of two cities, and this chapter, chapter one, is an initial portrait of the city of Santo Domingo. I start with Santo Domingo in order to frame the story of international migration in the context of Latin American history rather than begin, as much of United States ethnic history does, with the arrival of new immigrants at the customs house. The chapter also provides some setting for audiences unfamiliar with urban life in Latin America, so that later discussions of returning migrants will not leave anyone imagining New Yorkers flying back to timeless communal villages or to deep jungle.

But beyond providing an urban, Latin American frame to the story of international migration, the history of the building of Santo Domingo provides a crucial symbolic and ideological backdrop for the story of international migration. In the middle of the 20th century the planners of the capital imagined it as a physical representation of modernity in a backwards nation. In practice, the city did come to monopolize key markers of modernity, like cars, phones, and toilets. But it also became the physical representation of the particular, uneven, and highly exclusive society that modernizers constructed. A massive migration of rural Dominicans descended on the obscure administrative outpost, building a very different city from below. This vast mobilization of the Dominican populace stemmed largely from the violent disruption that population growth and development created for older ways of life. But migration, from the countryside to the city, and later from the Dominican Republic to New York, also emerged as part of rural Dominicans’ own claims for inclusion in the advertised miracle of modern life. If the city embodied the transformation of the nation into something prosperous and wholesome, then it is small wonder so many flocked there.

The process of urbanization provided a backdrop to international migration in a very practical sense. The creation of a sprawling concrete metropolis, and the concentration of a formerly rural population within its limits, created a mobile but unincorporated populace. Modernization and migration linked the populace increasingly to the political and economic center, and once in the national center migrants established a link to the outside world. Most international migration in the 1960s and 1970s flowed through the cities of the Dominican Republic, and most of that

through the capital. At the same time, migrants to the capital invented new practices in family and social relations: remittances, messages sent home via the radio, etc. Dominicans then employed the new practices in international migration as well.

As important, however, was world of ideas shaped by the interplay between the builders of the modern capital, and the migrants who flooded to it. In the story of the building of Santo Domingo we can trace the emergence of a secular eschatology of *progreso*, used by elites and popular sectors to explain changes in the world. The idea of *progreso* places those things imagined as modern and universal in a historical progression from those things that are backwards and particular. The countryside is backwards, the capital is a sign of *progreso*. The Dominican Republic is backwards, becoming more like the United States is *progreso*. And in the popular speech of Santo Domingo's poor *barrios*, putting up a concrete block house, finishing high school, finding regular employment in the public sector, or starting a business are all seen as signs of *progreso*.

It is very difficult to determine exactly when this idea, common among liberal Dominican intellectuals since the 19th century, became the stuff of everyday social thought in the Dominican Republic. But I suggest that the mid 20th century, and particularly the building of the capital, were key moments in disseminating the idea of *progreso* and modernity for the purposes of political control. Dominican statesmen and developers constructed the core of Santo Domingo for their own enrichment. Heirs of 19th century liberals, and admirers of 20th century fascists, they also imagined the city as an emblem of the process that would move the nation from backwardness to modernity in an orderly fashion. They deployed the city itself as a political symbol of their relationship to the nation. Trujillo especially used construction in the capital, which was given his name in the 1930s, as a kind of public performance representing the power of the Dictator, his activity, and his ability to make a modern nation out of a worthless *campo*.

The migrant to the capital was the symbol of a Dominican populace still caught between the two worlds, the backward person in the modern context. Elites, statesmen and propagandists usually viewed migrants as obstacles to well ordered progress. They made a great show of constructing neighborhoods and schools to instruct and control, to impart a basic level of *cultura*. *Cultura* in Dominican terms was the proper behavior for urban living, a counterpart to material progress that was measured as comportment. But planners were ambivalent. While the urban experience might improve migrants from the backwardness and *incultura* of the countryside, modernity also threatened to corrupt the innocent *campesino* values of the migrant and the nation. Not surprisingly, both Trujillo and his successor Joaquin Balaguer settled on authoritarianism as the proper antidote to both backwardness and corruption.

In what small sliver of civil society existed, the migrant was also the object of instruction and ambivalence. (This section is to be written). Radio stations that played the preferred music of the shantytowns and popular *barrios*, and sound trucks that patrolled their perimeters, advertised soap, detergents, and other basic household products as essential to modern living. Proper hygiene and *cultura* required purchasing commercial products and dispensing with homemade ones. The personality of comedic characters like Don Cibaíto (see graphic), who also appeared on the radio, and on many print advertisements, became a representation of the nation at large. The migrant, like the Republic, was thrust uncomfortably and comically into a modern world,

vulnerable, backwards, and yet noble. And during the Balaguer regime, migrants became a powerful symbol for the opposition, victims of dependent capitalism, uprooted from the means of rural production, and superfluous to the urban economy.

Literary, political, and ideological messages projected from above were saturated with messages about *progreso* and *cultura*, about the city and the migrant. But what did migrants and their neighbors, longer term residents of the impoverished outskirts of the capital, think? What did popular sectors make of the eschatology of the modern?

I want to suggest that elite ideas about progress and civilization did permeate the popular level. They were employed by poor people to explain the process of urbanization, to understand the relationship between the city and the countryside, and as motivation for their own migrations and social movements. The popular ideology of progress, and popular claims against the promise of modernity, were not uncontested. Nor were they evenly distributed throughout *barrios*. What Marxists anthropologists call “fatalism,” the idea that poverty and calamity are inevitable, or are foretold in the prophecies of the bible, had its proponents as well. But the rhetoric of *progreso* and *cultura* was alive in the process of building and organizing poor informal neighborhoods, and in the ways that residents construct the history of their *barrios*.

Demonstrating the importance of *progreso* in the history of Dominican popular thought is difficult. Few texts produced by popular sectors themselves are left behind, and elite texts about popular sectors are suspect. They quite obviously seek to impose the rigor of modernization theory on an unruly crowd, at the expense of any consideration of how the crowd thought about modernization. Oral history in popular neighborhoods, on the other hand, shows a lot about contemporary ideas about the world, but offers little insight into their origins.

I offer two ways to gain insight into popular ideas. One is simply to provide a historical sketch of the way that the popular and marginal *barrios* of Santo Domingo were built and the way social life was conducted during their construction. I focus on the neighborhoods of Cristo Rey and el Caliche as examples of the whole cluster of neighborhoods on the northern periphery of the city. In the history of neighborhood building, I have been able to localize groups and individuals whose leadership in the process of informal urbanization was based on their engagement with ideas about modernity, civilization, and progress. Their ideology of development informed both their attempts to mobilize and control social life in the *barrios*. And it permeated their claims against the state. The promises of modernity, electricity, water, roads, schools, hospitals, should be shared with all citizens.

Second (this part to be written as well) I will analyze contemporary views of neighborhood history, told to me by these veteran organizers as well as elderly migrants in general. The rhetoric that neighborhood residents now use to explain the course of construction of the neighborhoods, from shanties, to concrete blocks, from tree-lined paths to paved roads, does not allow a historian to pinpoint a single moment when the idea of *progress* penetrated popular consciousness. It does suggest, though, that the entire process of migration and urbanization can be linked to a growing adherence to an ideology of *progreso*. *Progreso*, an ideology that was first employed to justify policies hostile to the poor, increasingly motivated the choices of rural migrants and the urban poor and helped them to explain their lives.

The construction of the city was then the construction of a new rhetoric, and a new way of understanding the world, that then informed Dominican international migration. Basic assumptions about the relationship between *campo-capital-Nueva Yol*, basic ways of describing individual and family aspirations (*progreso y cultura*), and a national identity symbolized by the migrant (uncomfortably, comically, and sometimes embarrassingly caught between the backwards and the modern) all saturated the experience of Dominican migration to New York.

Here then are some excerpts from the original draft. I'll bring some maps in to the workshop to help with some of the geography discussed in the paper. I am looking forward to your comments and to your suggestions on how to revise.

Thanks,
Jesse

**Cities, Migrants, and Progress:
Popular meanings of Modernity in Santo Domingo 1950-1970.**

Presented to the Latin American History Workshop,
Princeton University, October 4, 2001
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Presidents and the Capital

The process of building a modern capital in Santo Domingo began during the first United States occupation of the Dominican Republic (1916-1924). The occupying military government attempted to justify its dominion over the resentful Dominican population with projects for modernization of roads, ports, schools, hospitals, and the military. These projects, beset by financial difficulties and the resistance of Dominican elites, generally produced anemic results in matters of health and education. But the intervention, and subsequent rise of Rafael Trujillo to the presidency through the new national constabulary, definitively shifted political power from independent regional *caudillos* to the central authority of the capital. The new system of roads, particularly the Duarte highway between the Cibao Valley and Santo Domingo, linked the bulk of the rural population to the capital city and its government. While at the same time, in a process begun some twenty years earlier, the spread of U.S. investment shifted the Republic's economic center of gravity from the Cibao, a center of agricultural production for central European markets, to sugar plantations linked to the southern ports of Santo Domingo, San Pedro de Macoris, and La Romana. From an obscure administrative outpost in a dispersed, largely autarkic, rural country, Santo Domingo emerged as the central link to national politics and to the outside world. Almost immediately its population began to grow at a rate several times that of the population at large.¹

¹ In the very odd event that you want to cite or reproduce this paper please contact me first.

If North American imperialism laid the foundations for the growing authority and population of Santo Domingo, Dominican national governments designed the sprawling steel and concrete edifice the city was to become. With the exception of brief interludes -- five years in the 1960s and eight years from 1978 to 1986 -- two men, Rafael Trujillo and Joaquin Balaguer presided over the planning and construction of the capital, transforming it into a central symbol of national advancement, presidential power, and political legitimacy. Following an ambitious map of roads and neighborhoods planned by architect José Ramón Báez López-Penha in the 1930s, these two presidents and their political allies shaped ideas about the city—its luster, its modernity, its ability to remake the nation-- as well as streets, sewers, and parks, to suit their interests. But the sharp imbalance of Dominican social organization and the exclusion of masses of poor from the central promises of the city turned Santo Domingo into something much more complicated and unruly. It became a magnet for a flood of internal migration from the countryside. Between the census of 1935 and the census of 1960 the city grew from 71,091 to 369,980. By 1993 its population was estimated at 2,025,124.² And as the city swelled it became a crucial territory for the playing out of conflict and negotiation among the authoritarian Dominican state, the growing middle and upper classes, and the country's poor.³

The growth of Santo Domingo under Trujillo conformed, at least superficially, to a strategy of strict control over population movement. In an effort to prevent internal migration the regime distributed land, seed, and fertilizers to over 100,000 rural farmers, (accounting for 36 percent of the nation's holdings) and shipped vagrants or unproductive farmers into agricultural forced labor colonies. The idea was to transform the Republic into a country of productive, settled, small-holders and to prevent the kind of unrest and social dislocation that had resulted from the growth of sugar plantations in the eastern provinces. But at the same time the Trujillo

family began investing in various industrial projects in the Capital, and planned a series of monumental construction projects there, the most famous of which was the Feria de Paz y Fraternidad, which nearly bankrupted the treasury in 1959. So Trujillo began to encourage the migration of laborers to the capital. Like their counterparts in agricultural policy, Trujillo-era city planners declared that they could absorb this labor force into a harmonious, orderly, modern city. To house the new urban working class, factory workers, tradesmen, domestic workers, transport workers and port workers, Trujillo sponsored the construction of the north-west course of the Avenida Duarte, and the rudimentary urbanization of the neighborhoods on either side of it, Villa Consuelo, Mejoramiento Social, and Barrio Obrero, as well as Los Minas on the far side of the Ozama River. This would become the crucial backbone of the Zona Norte, the popular and marginal neighborhoods of Santo Domingo in the half century that followed.⁴

Even as the regime celebrated the orderliness of its growing capital city, the dictator's land grabbing in the countryside, to build his ranching and sugar holdings, produced a wave of rural migrants much larger than the new industrial economy or the new urban neighborhoods could absorb. Trujillo's policies defending peasant access to land were strictly enforced when the offenders were his economic rivals. But they were generally ignored when they might impede his own economic exploits, including the gradual accumulation by the Trujillo family of more than 6 million hectares of productive lands. By the 1950s these migrants, many from the rural areas near the capital and the southwest, settled informally on the edges of the working class neighborhoods, on open lands near the river or on the edge of the airport. Technically these settlements were illegal, but the regime was complicit in the process. For instance when several poor neighborhoods were cleared to build the Duarte bridge, residents were permitted to resettle in shanties on the slopes east of Maria Auxiliadora, in a neighborhood called Guachupita. Urban

building projects often produced *desalojos* like these, and evicted families were dumped in unoccupied lands with building materials or a few pesos to compensate for the destruction of their neighborhood. At the same time administrators on Trujillo's cane lands north of the city began parceling off and "selling" small lots to settlers, who built shacks and planted small garden plots. The sales did not transfer ownership of the land. They were a tacit permission to build a squatter colony. These precarious settlements on the strip of land and steep fingerlike canyons that extended north from the working class neighborhoods towards the Ozama and Isabela rivers, would become the neighborhoods of Simon Bolivar and Capotillo.⁵

By the 1960s the swift growth of a poor, underemployed, urban working class began to present intractable challenges to the Dominican economic and political order, earning the ominous title of "overpopulation." During Trujillo's rule loyal intellectuals argued that population growth was a sign of the dictatorship's revitalization of the Dominican people. They cited Alberdi's famous dictum, "gobernar es poblar," and celebrated the new fertility of what had been a depleted Dominican race.⁶ Yet these assurances masked the unease with which urban elites gazed at the fertile poor. Trujillo's own Director General of the Census and National Statistics would later admit, population growth and internal migration was already "alarmantemente trastornadora para el desarrollo económico y cultural del país," in the last decade of the regime.⁷ As in other parts of Latin America, transplanting rural population into the marginal spaces in the capital produced strain not only on an economic system that could not absorb them, but also on a political system that could no longer ignore them. From Trujillo's death in May of 1961, to the United States marine invasion of April 1965 the growing urban popular sectors, along with radicalized students at the Autonomous University of Santo Domingo (UASD), became the engine of national politics. Urban demonstrations forced a democratic

transition in 1962, and poor urban voters helped elect populist presidential candidate Juan Bosch in a landslide in 1962. Bosch was quickly deposed by a military coup, but when a segment of the military rose to restore him in April of 1965 over the course of four days the residents of the working class neighborhoods and shanty towns took control of the city, blocking the advance of the loyalist military. Armed by Bosch's Partido Revolucionario Dominicano, civilian commandos comprised of young, unemployed, men from the *barrios* held downtown Santo Domingo against police, troops, and eventually U.S. Marines.⁸

The United States occupation of Santo Domingo on April 29, 1965 and a severe campaign of repression in the *barrios* known as *operación limpieza* put the lid back on the urban crisis in Santo Domingo. And the election of Joaquin Balaguer set the growth of the city in a new direction. Balaguer, who headed an authoritarian government from 1966-1978 and a fraudulent, patrimonial democracy from 1986-1996 used state investments in industrialization and urbanization to negotiate his relationship with various sectors of Dominican society including, eventually, the poor. His first order of business though was to foster the emergence of powerful private economic groups, and to secure their loyalty. Trujillo's personal control over most of the Dominican economy had prevented the formation of an independent business elite, administrators might get rich but they would get rich working for Trujillo. Balaguer, by contrast, used public investments in the city, and a legendary system of official corruption, to create new private middle and upper classes loyal to his party. Ballooning contracts for road and neighborhood construction, land grants, and rising property values resulting from state investment, transferred the temporary boom in public wealth generated by confiscated Trujillo sugar holdings, to industrialists, construction companies, real estate speculators, and newly forming financial groups all centered in Santo Domingo.⁹

The result was rapid horizontal growth and sharpened spatial segregation in the city, as the wealthy and the rural middle class moved into the capital. These classes grew and pushed out of an old center city that had been easily overrun by popular sectors in the early 1960s, into a new modern city to the west. Beginning with the site of the old General Andrews Airport the western suburbs, inherited by the state from Trujillo holdings, were transformed into landscape with large avenues, quiet streets, parks, museums, fancy social clubs, high-rise hotels and air conditioned commercial plazas. Pushing still farther west, and eastward on far side of the Ozama River, new urbanizations and exclusive condominiums, built with a combination of private and public capital, spread wide across the landscape. In between publicly built *multifamiliares*, and grids of small concrete one-family homes, housed government employees, military families, and others in the Balaguerista lower middle class. The new city monopolized land, government resources, and naturally most of the cars, telephones, and indoor toilets in the entire country. In other words it captured all the material trappings of modernity in the city and the country for the political base of the new government.¹⁰

The other urbanization.

Meanwhile the fall of Trujillo brought an end to all restrictions on internal migration, including vagrancy laws and forced labor colonies, while aggravating the subsistence crisis of Dominican farmers. The Alliance for Progress and the Balaguer government advertised land reform as their solution to rural poverty. But in fact the consolidation of large land holdings and the dispossession of peasants sped considerably between the fall of Trujillo and 1970.¹¹ This land pressure, growing rural populations, and the increased use of Haitian migrant labor in

capitalist agricultural production, fed a mass rural exodus toward the cities, especially the capital. In the 1960s and 1970s the frontier of informal urban settlement in Santo Domingo spread north and west into the steep canyons and marshlands unclaimed by new development. Piecemeal a rudimentary process of urbanization spread behind this frontier. Migrants with few economic or social ties to the mainstream economy, built their own crowded city in the Zona Norte, the core of old working class neighborhoods and shantytowns, and the surrounding pockets of unprotected state lands. By the time Balaguer gave up office in 1978 nearly 74 percent of the city's population lived crowded into these neighborhoods, and an assortment of outlying pockets of marginality, accounting for approximately 35 percent of the residential space in Santo Domingo.¹²

Understanding the distinctions among poor neighborhoods is crucial to understanding the social perceptions and motivations of residents. Income was one key variable, with the *popular* neighborhoods relatively well off compared to *marginal* ones. But during the years of austerity that followed Balaguer's election in 1966, modal incomes in all of the marginal and popular neighborhoods ranged between 100 and 150 pesos per month, well below the line of extreme poverty determined by the Dominican Central Bank. In 1977, in the poorest settlements, 15 percent of families earned less than 50 pesos a month. And in the more established neighborhoods, which often bordered on middle class areas, 24 percent of families earned between 300 and 600 pesos a month, a level considered "popular" rather than "marginal" by the Central Bank. Only about 7 percent earned this much in the worst off neighborhoods. Typically these income figures represented different relationships to the formal economy. In better off families at least one member had formal employment, either for the state or in the private sector, or owned a successful small business, that could be supplemented by other household members.

In the poorest families, household heads were fully unemployed, depending on children to shine shoes or clean car windows for survival. Everyone else organized informal neighborhood economies that supplemented and re-circulated the money that came into the *barrio*. Women, men, and children washed, ironed, made, rented, sold, transported, or built, anything that could bring in a few pesos. Sometimes these odd jobs led to long-term employment or grew into a small business, a fruit stand or a *colmado* as local markets were called. But more frequently odd jobs remained what was known as *chiripeo*, constant economic improvisation with no safety net beyond the credit offered by the *colmado* on the corner.¹³

There were clear social differences too among and within neighborhoods. And the ways residents understood these differences offers key insight into the experience of modernity for poor people in the Dominican Republic. At the core Zona Norte, where most poor neighborhoods were built, were the old neighborhoods along the Avenida Duarte and Avenida Maximo Gomez, built by Trujillo, and a newer string of settlements along the east-west course of the Avenida Nicolas de Ovando and Avenida 17. These had acquired a basic outline of regular blocks, street names, and wooden or concrete houses “más o menos bien” in an unbroken line facing the street. In a few of these neighborhoods, Ensanche Espaillat, 24 de abril, and Maria Auxiliadora, substantial numbers of residents legally owned their own homes. In Villa Juana, Villa Consuelo, Barrio Obrero, and Mejoramiento Social most rented, but their landlords held legal title. The homes on the main streets were often shared by multiple families, and the rear patios and other interior spaces of the blocks were crowded with ramshackle constructions, a “traspatio de miseria” that became a favorite metaphor for critics of the relationship between the *barrios* and the center city. Balaguer, for instance, was famous for building a single row of

concrete apartment buildings on either side of a new avenue built through the Zona Norte, to hide the abject misery of the surrounding neighborhood behind a modern face.

In a ring around this core lay a sprawl of informal settlements where residents owned only the wooden and concrete structures they built, not the land. The blocks and homes often had no regular aspect, just a jumble of wooden and concrete structures along muddy alleys or *callejones*, with constant streams of filthy water running through them. These neighborhoods started out as shantytowns, but their history was a project of piecemeal modernization.

Sometimes neighbors created their own basic grid of numbered streets hoping that someday the city government would pave them. Resident tapped illegally into city power lines, creating a tangled fan of electric cables from rooftop to rooftop. Daily power shortages, though, created endless, unpredictable blackouts, reminders that modernity was only borrowed.

In a still wider ring outside these settlements, and in the deep sandstone arroyos that cut through them, the terrain sloped steeply downward towards the river. There the informal settlements continued, now clinging precariously to the sides of deep canyons or soggily to marshlands at the river's edge. The most famous of these settlements la Ciénaga was built in the shadow of the Sanchez and Duarte bridges in the middle of the 1960s. Many of the residents who settled in la Cienaga after the conflicts of 1965 were *desalojado* for the construction of the Avenida Francisco Rosario Sanchez, others came directly from the *pueblos* of the southwest. To reach the neighborhood of Guachupita, and the rest of the city, they climbed from their homes in the mud and marshes at the river's edge on a narrow path up the steep unstable bluffs. By the late 1970s all of the poor neighborhoods on the northern rim of the city, and many of the newer middle class neighborhoods, contained large pockets of extreme marginality, usually linked to neighborhood life by steeply plunging pathways or alleys. All the neighborhoods had their *hoyo*,

or *puya*, or *cañada*. But because it was visible to anyone crossing the Duarte bridge, La Cienaga became emblematic to Santo Domingo residents who commonly referred to any marginal settlement as “debajo de un Puente.”¹⁴

Imagining a city

Ideas about the city, particularly ideas about the relationship between urban growth and modernity, drove and legitimated the process of urbanization from above, usually in ways that hurt or excluded the poor. But at the same time these ideas constantly intervened in the lives poor urban settlers themselves, and were transformed into a popular ideology that explained, above all, the experience of migration. If these neighborhoods were in some ways marginal to the growth of the modern city, the idea that progress meant living in a modern city was nonetheless central to the individual and collective actions of *barrio* residents.

The goal of progress -- that is of establishing a modern social and political order based on national independence, economic growth, and international trade -- was one already largely accepted by the Dominican intellectuals who rose to power with the Azul party at the end of the 19th century. In the Dominican context of political chaos and *caudillo* rule the blueprints for liberal export economies and strong, repressive states, so successfully implemented in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico lived mostly in the imagination of a cadre of thinkers from wealthy tobacco exporting families in the Cibao, and their allies in the Cuban and Puerto Rican independence movements. Yet these thinkers lay the groundwork for a Dominican nationalism based on plans for economic growth that spread among early 20th century intellectuals. Still Dominican politicians did not attempt to mobilize the loyalty of poor Dominicans with ideas of

national advancement until the advent of the profoundly illiberal Trujillo dictatorship. The difference was not that Trujillo believed more strongly in the idea of progress. The change was rather one of political style. As in the populist regimes that emerged around Latin America in the 1930s, under Trujillo, for the first time the Dominican masses were addressed directly by their president. For the first time resources of the state, including important new technologies like sound amplification, inexpensive photographic reproduction, and radio, and widely dispersed popular songs, were directed at creating an image of the dictator and a symbolism of the regime that could be personally consumed by even the desperately poor.¹⁵

To an unusual degree the Dominican government managed to transform the entire intellectual class raised in the 1920s and 1930s into a public relations machine for the dictator. True to the tradition of liberal nationalism in the universities of Dominican Republic, at the heart of their message was an idea of national progress, molded to fit the new political strategy of pseudo-populist authoritarianism. Trujillo, they wrote, was the father of a new national identity that would transform Dominican backwardness into a productive and modern civilization. And construction projects, always inaugurated with huge demonstrations and speeches, became the public performances that brought the virility and tirelessness of the dictator into full view of the *pueblo*. “Gobernar” Trujillo told the Dominican people time and again, “es construir.”

These large public events were saturated with the language of progress and modernity, as part of a public culture that sought to tutor the populace in ideas about modernity, and as the most florid form of regime worship. Biographies of the dictator and histories of national decadence and rebirth were also distributed also to low level Dominican Party officials in *pueblos* and *barrios*, who served as the intellectual intermediaries between popular sectors and the state.¹⁶ Dominican composers, under the patronage of the regime, wrote hundreds of

merengues chronicling the dictatorship. Trujillo's greatness and the benefits of perpetual reelection were the predominant themes of these songs, as well as anti-communism in later years, but many too introduced the idea that Trujillo brought progress.

These songs and speeches did two things, they justified the actions of the government in terms of a universal abstraction – national progress, and they established a set of symbolic markers to explain exactly what progress was. Progress was Trujillo, progress was construction, it was bridges and airports, and buildings. In a 1933 Luis Revera and Chiquitín Payan wrote in stylized Cibaeño dialect, “Poi el aire poi la tierra y poi ei mai se conoce ya ete hombre tan bragao en su lucha poi jacei no progresai ha llevao lo javione atai Cibao¹⁷ Other merengues told and retold about the building of bridges, roads and neighborhoods. A 1958 merengue called “La Epopeya” told listeners, “Todo buen dominicano que piensa y tenga criterio no dejará de estar viendo el progreso que tenemos. Hay carreteras y puentes hay edificios modelos y tantas obras modernas que engrandecen a Quisqueya.”¹⁸

The symbolic elision of Trujillo, modernity, progress, and the capital city began months after he took power, when the hurricane of San Zenon raised Santo Domingo to the ground, leaving thousands dead and tens of thousands homeless. In Trujillo's first feat of widely publicized heroism, and as a grand allegory for his progressive transformation of the national spirit, Trujillo piled tons of cement and steel into rebuilding the capital city. The dictator, his loyal biographers wrote, worked tirelessly among the huddled masses of *capitaleños* to alleviate their suffering and to restore the most ancient outpost of civilization in the New World to its rightful glory. “Ahí está Trujillo como todo un hombre, haciendo que quiten los escombros y de esos escombros levanta Trujillo una ciudad nueva,” as one of dozens of merengues told the story.¹⁹ In 1936 Trujillo's supporters orchestrated a plebescite to rename the city after him, out of

thanks for his efforts to restore it. For the remainder of the regime Ciudad Trujillo, its barrios its, monuments, its bridges, and its hotels came were erected as symbols of all that was modern, productive, clean, and well ordered in the new Dominican nation.²⁰

This idea of the city as the representation of national progress drove migration and urban marginality in a practical sense. It concentrated the economic activity of the state in construction and industrialization projects in the capital, creating an economic pull to the center. And it helped legitimize a regime that dispossessed thousands of *campesinos*, and ignored the basic needs of the poor while wasting public resources on monumental construction projects. But the propaganda efforts linking the construction and the city to the idea of national progress and material well being also shaped popular ideas about where progress could be found, and what it meant. The idea of the city, as the site where the nation would be made modern, the highly publicized constructions that embodied dynamism and economic promise, pulled Dominicans from the countryside even when there was no work to be found. Well being, they came to expect, resulted from integration into the dynamism of progress, not the preservation of established resources and survival strategies. And the idea of progress, disseminated from above, as the work of the central state on behalf of the poor, as the merengue “El Progreso no se Detiene” explained that progress was “barrios bellos que construyen para el humilde.” This structured *barrio* residents’ own vision of how their neighborhoods should look, and their claims against the state for their own piece of *progreso*.

The popularization of the idea of progress did however not end with Trujillo’s death. To the contrary the public relations officials in the United States Information Service went still further in broadcasting their pro-U.S. propaganda to the Dominican masses. The Alliance for Progress, a Kennedy Administration program for development and military aid, contributed, as

many scholars have noted, to a “revolution in expectations” in the Dominican Republic and many parts of Latin America. U.S. officials spread the message that poor Dominicans could expect material progress in return for friendship with the United States.²¹ But these messages did not portray the city as the embodiment of well-being. The public relations officers employed by the Alliance for Progress rather held up the blueprints of North American society to the candle of Dominican aspirations. Anthropologists studying rural to urban migration in the Dominican Republic in the late 1960s found to their surprise, that migrating to the capital was a lesser mark of personal progress for Dominican *campesinos* than the ultimate goal of migration to New York City.²²

When Balaguer returned to power in 1966 public construction in the capital immediately became his primary political activity, even against the wishes of his North American allies who preferred rural development projects. The new president justified his construction policies as a form of jobs creation. But even more important big public projects were a form of easily understood propaganda for his government, and for government in general. If cement was being mixed, and trucks were carrying steel rods, this was a public theater proving that Balaguer was doing something. As it had been under Trujillo constant building provided a "sense of movement" in a country characterized by political corruption and stagnation. As Trujillo had done, Balaguer projected this movement as a reflection of his personal benevolence and effectiveness. One observer noted, “One cannot live in the Dominican Republic a single day without seeing an active, personable president opening up a new housing development, presiding over the ground-breaking for a new school, inspecting a dam project, handing out a land deed to an appreciative peasant.”²³

While Balaguer modernized and beautified the center city with avenues, parks, museums, and monuments for the benefit of a few, he used the language of civilization and progress to make his spending seem equally beneficial to all Dominicans. At the same time he resurrected a rhetoric about the poor *barrios* as sites of danger and chaos. It was no coincidence that the *barrios* were where the bulk of his political opposition lived. Trujillo had celebrated a harmonious, orderly capital, in contradiction to a reality of informal settlements and abject poverty. Balaguer targeted the informal settlements themselves as an affront to civilized living. The *barrios* were a “casería frentoso,” disorganized, unhealthy, promiscuous, and illegal settlements “al margen del progreso y de la civilización.” His infrequent projects for sewers, street construction, or local schools in the Zona Norte were thus explained as a charitable distribution of modernity to citizens portrayed as “desvalidos.”²⁴ But at the same time the very backwardness, anarchy, and illegality of these neighborhoods was a justification for policing them brutally and tearing them down when the space they occupied was required for his ambitious urbanism. The *desalojos* in Cristo Rey, Guachupita, Honduras and other informal settlements, in order to build public housing projects called “multifamiliares” in the 1970s were defended in this way. The new units were distributed to political allies and public employees, and the original settlers relocated “debajo de un Puente,” but Balaguer claimed to be civilizing the dangerous illegal settlements.

The characterization of poor neighborhoods as uncivilized, dirty, promiscuous, and illegal helped in the project of recapturing valuable state lands from squatters, who were after all obstacles to the modernization and beautification of the city. But negative images of the *barrios* also bred fear among the middle class and helped justify the brutal policing of the Zona Norte. The Dominican police, rigorously retrained by the United States in tactics of counterinsurgency

and riot control after the 1965 scare, arrested, beat, and assassinated thousands of constitutionalists, leftists, students, union organizers, and other local leaders in the Zona Norte well into the middle of the 1970s, under the banner of fighting “delinquency” in the capital. This was a continuation of the loyalist rhetoric during the 1965 war, denigrating the constitutionalists as *tigueros* dangerous young men from the *barrios* threatening Christian civilization in the city.²⁵ Road construction also frequently targeted enemy neighborhoods, as with the building of the Avenida México through the heart of two working class neighborhoods that had staunchly resisted the advances of North American troops in 1965. Here the ostensibly neutral project of civilization, modernity, and beautification was all the more clearly deployed as a weapon against specific residents of Santo Domingo.

Development from the Bottom up: El Caliche and Cristo Rey

The ideas of progress and modernity, as they have historically been deployed by colonists or state builders, and certainly by Dominican politicians, are at their core an attempt to cloak the interests of a few in the mantle of universal improvement. Among the many voices that rose to promote or contest development policies in the Dominican Republic in the 1960s and 1970s, the poor rural masses were nearly always seen either as obstacles or as victims of the expansion of capitalism and the growth of the country. USAID and the Balaguer regime saw them as obstacles and heavily funded birth control programs in the countryside, hoping to curb the growth of “surplus population.” Many left wing critics saw population growth and marginality as an internal contradiction of “dependent” development that would eventually lead to revolution, national liberation, and social justice. They wrote opposing birth control, and even

international migration, as policies designed to protect imperialism and prevent reform. And increasingly, since the rise of peasant studies in the mid-1970s, sympathetic scholars have emphasized the many forms of resistance that local victims invented to protect themselves against the onslaught of unequal or “dependent” development.

In this vein scholars have, on the one hand, documented the painful dislocation, destruction of family bonds, and erosion of traditional cultures that urban migration forces on rural people. While others have pointed out that many migrants to the city are actually part of a broader strategy in which rural households resist the erosion of their traditional lifeways. Money sent back to the countryside by migrants helps maintain families living on small farms that no longer can support them. And one cultural anthropologist has argued convincingly that the rustic musical form known as Bachata, developed by migrants to Santo Domingo in the 1970s, is a form of resistance to the cultural prejudices of the capital’s middle class.²⁶ These are important contributions to the understanding of the relationship between migrants and modernity, but they largely ignore the extent to which the idea of progress, and corresponding notions about culture and civilization, shaped the aspirations of the migrants who built the Zona Norte of Santo Domingo. In their hands progress could be turned into demands for inclusion in the incredible growth and prosperity of the city. And progress, either its absence or its slow unfolding, is often the key variable to their understandings of the history of their own neighborhoods.

The story of the building of Santo Domingo can, with the help of local memories, be told from below, not simply in terms of resistance, but in terms of a frustrated search for inclusion in the promise of modernity, as ideas about progress filtered down to the poorest of Dominicans. In 1963, for instance, the ruling Triumvirate uprooted a group of families living at the edge of the Aeropuerto General Andrews in order to make space for the new Olympic Stadium and adjacent

residential areas. The families were resettled on an abandoned gravel mine that had been used to build Trujillo's cement monopoly, and now belonged to the state. Many neighborhoods were founded or destroyed in this fashion, police or hired thugs might arrive, tear down a settlement, load residents into a truck and dump them somewhere else, with ten or fifteen pesos for each home destroyed or a pile of new building materials to start over again. Because it had been a Caliche mine, the new treeless encampment on the hard, chalky, clay was called el Caliche, and later el Caliche de Cristo Rey. The settlers carried water into the neighborhood in buckets from public spigots in nearby urbanizations. In rainy weather the mud was so thick, that residents walked barefoot to the single path that led up to calle 41, and put their shoes on at the bus stop there. To the east lay the abandoned site of the Trujillo's notorious prison "La Cuarenta," which later would become a neighborhood as well, and to the east a small creek, with restaurants and cafes, where families from the city came on weekends to swim in the 1940s, later converted into the Parque Zoologico.²⁷

The settlers in el Caliche were largely abandoned by the heralded processes of development and urban growth. But neighborhood leadership, intent on bringing a semblance of religious organization, material progress, and culture emerged there as in most of the new barrios of the city. Missionaries and social activists from the older popular neighborhoods in the city had already begun to spread the project of religious and social development to hardscrabble settlements just to the south in Cristo Rey. In the early 1960 and 1961 young volunteers in the Juventud Obrera Catolica, based at the Parrish of San Juan Bosco, began visiting the scattered settlements called la Cuadra, Corea, and Jarro Sucio. In Padre Andres Menem's small Chrysler they navigated the tangled alleys and steep ravines, built a wooden chapel that served during the week as a one-room school. By the mid 1960s, a second priest, Padre Ignacio, had organized the

communal construction of a Parrish house and had baptized the whole district with the new name Cristo Rey. He earned a reputation as a “Padre Constructor,” which made perfect sense since Trujillo had long established the link between construction and social advancement. The Parrish, with the help of local families and powerful allies outside the neighborhood, built a larger grammar school organized a mutual aid society, youth groups, and a protest campaign demanding water from the city aqueduct. And in 1964 they offered their help to the miserable settlement of el Caliche, in creating neighborhood organizations.²⁸

Padre Ignacio and the neighborhood activists who flocked to him, were not the only ones with the idea that construction, social development, and religious instruction could create progress in the neighborhood. And between 1963 and 1966 local organizations split in several directions. The Cristo Rey Parrish, like much of the Dominican church stood staunchly against Juan Bosch, the populist elected president in 1962 but soon overthrown by the military, and detested the growing radicalism of many young activists in Cristo Rey. These youngsters were pushed away from church activities, accused of communism, and even imprisoned under the Triumverate that replaced Bosch. The Peace Corps also briefly opened an office in Cristo Rey. Through its project to build a school, the vanguard of the United States’ Alliance for Progress, became attempted to shape the local politics of development, keeping tabs on local leaders and, some in the neighborhood swear, collaborating with the police to arrest potential troublemakers.

If the cold war, and the politics of international development were already permeating local projects for neighborhood improvement, the uprising of 1965 produced a clearer split. The fighting was fiercest across the Avenida Maximo Gomez, in neighborhoods like Capotillo, Villa Juana, Villa Francisca, and San Carlos. But the effects of the fighting were felt locally, especially in the form of hundreds of corpses brought to the cemetery that bordered El Caliche to

the west and Cristo Rey to the North. There were no local uprisings in El Caliche and Cristo Rey, and no attacks on police or military households, but some residents traveled out of their neighborhoods to join the fighting. Others walked for miles over rough paths to get food and supplies distributed by the United States military at the Fairgrounds.

In the wake of the Guerra de Abril, young leftists in the church, the university, and the Marxist parties began aligning themselves with local development projects through youth clubs. The church backed Balaguer, and many of the younger clergy, influenced by the experience of the French “worker priests” in the 1950s, supported the revolution and chose risk their relations with the church in order to work in the *barrios*.²⁹

Two radical Lasallista priests for instance, Hermanos Miguel Domínguez Paula and Antonio Cabeta created the Institute for Social Promotion, to train local leadership and organize construction projects in a string of neighborhoods north of the city including Puya de Arroyo Hondo, Ramón Cáceres, La 42, and la Zurza. In el Caliche Hermano Miguel found a local organization already headed by a young married couple, Luis Reyes and Ramona Baez. Reyes and Baez, anti-Trujillistas who transplanted their family from Villa Juana to el Caliche in 1964, emerged as leaders in the local development movement staging protests for electrical service before the war. In the late 1960s, under the tutelage of the Lasallistas, he became president of the newly formed Comité para el Desarrollo Social del Caliche, and she was elected to lead the Asociación de Madres el Calvario. With the help of a youth club called los Siete Diamantes these groups secured pipes from private donors, dug up the streets, connected to the public water supply, and installed running water in all the homes in the neighborhood. They also built a school taught by members of the local youth club, several nutritional centers attached to Caritas.

Balaguer deported Hermano Miguel and Hermano Antonio in 1971, along with a cohort of foreign-born progressive priests.³⁰

The antagonism of the government to independent organizing, the scarcity of resources, and the constant influx of new, desperately poor, migrants meant that local development projects would always be dwarfed by local underdevelopment. But little by little most of the neighborhoods in Santo Domingo formed small groups dedicated to social progress at the local level. The leadership of the local church groups, clubs and juntas, were often transplanted from older city neighborhoods, and often created a missionary relationship with more recent, less organized, rural migrants. But their messages of social progress resonated with the realities that drove the migration, and the building of neighborhoods in the first place. A “padre constructor” like Father Ignacio, or the Development Society started by Reyes and Baez, or dozens of other neighborhoods organizations were an attempt to fulfill empty Trujillista messages of urban construction and progress, of “barrios bellos para el humilde.”

The Balaguer government, despite its political antagonism to many in the poor neighborhoods, and its lack of concern for the poor in general, played a disproportionate role in neighborhood expectations for development. The state had inherited the huge estates left behind by the Trujillo family, including much of the territory occupied by informal *barrios*. And its many projects for clearing and developing that land rarely benefited the poor and often unfairly removed them from their homes. But the projects usually brought promises for new housing, paved streets, or other local development and in the stagnant economies of the Zona Norte, any major state initiative was presented new opportunities for family survival. Residents of the *barrios* therefore rarely resisted the public construction projects that periodically sliced through their neighborhoods. They and their advocates rather protested the government’s slowness and

the irregularity in carrying out projects that had been promised. Some neighborhoods, like Los Farallones in Cristo Rey, were cleared decades before new housing was built. This left residents indefinitely in temporary housing, long rows of plywood cubicles with no bathrooms, kitchens, or ventilation. Like the old slave quarters they so resembled these were known as *barracones*, and conditions in these buildings often sparked protests. In other neighborhoods like Pablo Sexto in Cristo Rey, and most famously La Cienaga, a *desalojo* was rumored or announced and residents spent years, or decades, in limbo, waiting to be moved. Since residents were usually paid for the value of the *mejoras* or improvements they had put into their homes, estimated in a neighborhood census, a police garrison was stationed in la Cienaga to prevent any new construction. Improvements in the *barrio* came to a standstill but the *desalojo* never came.³¹

The new *multifamiliares* the government built in Cristo Rey, Simon Bolivar, Honduras, and Guachupita were symbols, the government announced, of the modernization and civilization of the city. But these concrete apartment complexes gained little applause from activists in the *barrios*. They were an imported architecture of modernity that eliminated the old neighborhood organization around patios and open doorways. This undermined community life and offered no space for socializing or informal economic activity. And the several hundred new units rarely ended up in the hands of the thousands of *desalojados*.³² But to poor residents struggling for survival the prize of a concrete apartment in one of the new *multifamiliares*, even if it was a long shot, was too good an opportunity for such objections. Some people invested remarkable energies trying to position themselves for an apartment, often intentionally moving to areas slated for *desalojo*.³³ Others who owned two or more *mejoras* in an area scheduled for clearance quickly recruited friends or family to pose as owners in what had really been rentals, splitting the compensation among them.³⁴ In reality few of the original residents a cleared area

ever received an apartment in exchange for their lost homes. Either their homes were valued below the entry price of the apartments, they were renters and so had no right to compensation, or they needed the money right away and took cash for their lost homes. And of the few who ever ended up with keys to a new apartment, many sold or rented their rights to live in the apartments, investing the proceeds in some crucial element of survival, a passport, a tricycle, an iron, or a fruit stand. Most ended up in some other informal settlement, either outside the city limits, or in some precarious corner of the neighborhood not yet occupied.³⁵

In the end the idea of progress that emerged in the *barrios* was in no way limited to collective projects for local development, or government slum clearance and construction. Progress might mean the transformation of urban space, new buildings, roads, and bridges, as President Balaguer proclaimed. Or it might mean the gradual transformation of a neighborhood from a muddle of shacks to a concrete grid with sewers, a school, and a church, as *barrio* leaders and their allies outside the neighborhoods argued. But mostly *progreso* became something that pertained to individual households. It became shorthand for a new Dominican dream of social mobility. Starting a *colmado* or other small was the most common expression of this dream, but moving from the country to the city, or to New York, building a concrete house to replace your wooden *rancho*, getting a degree, or becoming a professional these were all examples of how individual Dominicans could “progresar.” And this was the most powerful message that emerged from decades of propaganda about national progress, and the growth of a glamorous modern center city. Survival remained the primary concern for most poor Dominican families, but just over jumbled horizon of the slums, was the well being their presidents and the United States had promised for decades. The lure of social mobility appeared ever clearer on the television screens, billboards, and radio broadcasts of the modern city. In Santo Domingo

vernacular *progresar* came to mean migration across the boundary of marginality, into the heart of the imagined cities of Santo Domingo and New York.³⁶

Cultura and Corruption in the Barrios

The project of national modernization, the construction of the capital, and the instruction of the Dominican populace in the niceties of modern life responded in large part to the long history of skepticism about Dominican popular culture. Turn-of-the-century essayist José Ramón López and other liberal thinkers had long considered the Dominican poor to be a degenerate, lazy and promiscuous drag on the nation. The national mythology of the Dominican Republic, forged by the intellectuals of the Trujillo regime, confirmed this view of the racial degeneration the Dominican populace. But, their new mythology decreed, when divine Providence bequeathed Trujillo to the Dominican people, he provided the tool to regenerate the national character. The Trujillista state would remake the populace “desde las necesidades más elementales, como la de comer, bañarse, andar con zapatos y llevar ropa adecuada, hasta las de una cultura cónsona con el progreso de la época.”³⁷

Giving the pueblo *cultura* meant many things, from the creation of a high culture of ballet, museums, classical music and fine arts, to the rudimentary instruction of the public in the trappings of civilization. And, under Trujillo, the politics of *cultura* made good use of populist and nationalist gestures. In changing the habits of the poor, Trujillo was to be the defender of

true Dominican national *valores*, the defender of the honest, Christian, *campesino*, against the corruption of foreign influences. This was a populism that imagined the Dominican Republic to be a rural province of Spain not a settlement of free slaves and mulattos. Nationalist intellectuals asserted vehemently that Dominican degeneracy was the result of “cultural penetration” from Haiti, which perverted the true Hispanic traditions of the Dominican peasant. At the same time the corrupting influence of modernity, secularism, materialism, the erosion of patriarchy, and communism threatened to corrupt Dominican peasant identity from without. Modernizers were torn between a desire to awaken *campesinos* from their supposed slumber, and a nostalgia for a set of national folkways that were comfortingly rural.

The idea of a threat from modernity resonated too with the contemporary ideology of fascism admired within the regime. As Trujillo announced at the inauguration of several hundred homes in one of the working class *barrios* of Santo Domingo, his regime, through orderly urbanization, protected them from the “crisis universal que angustia a la humanidad y revierte sus nobles y viejos valores.” Harshness in maintaining social order, distribution of land in the countryside, and construction of well-ordered working-class neighborhoods in the Capital, strict control over foreign travel and the mass media, all of these measures, Trujillo argued, would guide the Dominican people through the treacherous waters of modernization. *Valores Dominicanos* had to be defended too against the unraveling of modern social life. Trujillo called for “una purificación interior que conmueva a los hombres y que cambie su actitud materialista y escéptica en una vibrante energética emocional.”³⁸

The reality of *cultura* in the *barrios* was of course completely divorced from this nationalist rhetoric. *Barrios* were extremely difficult places to police culturally, and it is unclear that either Trujillo or Balaguer were sincere about their plans to bring culture to the masses. The

building of schools and churches, while much ballyhooed aspects of national progress, were never much of a priority for Dominican governments. In the *barrios* migrants from four distinct regions of the country, and from Haiti, each with local variations in ethnic makeup, skin color, linguistic patterns, and local musical and religious traditions settled together in the close quarters of the Zona Norte. Together they created a popular culture that ranged from ardent religiosity, to the boisterous nightlife of cabarets, brothels, gambling, and the music known as *bachata*. Many had little relationship with official Catholicism, did not marry, formed matriarchal households and continued their popular and Afro-Dominican ritual practices and music. Priestesses, known as *servidoras*, set up altars to favorite saints in the popular barrios, and other city residents (including many who ventured in from middle class neighborhoods) consulted them for cures to common ailments as well as spells for luck, love, or protection from evil.³⁹ In the 1960s modern cultures perceived as corrupt and threatening, like rock music, foreign clothing, and even drug use crept into the *barrios* (though much slower than in middle class neighborhoods). Modern ambitions, like the desire for social mobility, an awareness of the consumption habits of the rich, and social organizations like unions spread in the *barrios*. For all their prejudices and talk about civilizing popular culture, and insulating it from modern corruption, Dominican culture in the *barrios* was a mish-mash of competing influences that looked little like the rural nostalgia of elite imagination.

Still the regime of relative cultural tolerance that an informal and marginal existence bestowed on the *barrios* was permeated by racism and cultural condescension projected from above. In the *barrios* nearly everyone had some mixture of African and European ancestry, so racial differentiation, in the North American sense of relatively discrete social groups, was absent (with the exception of some Haitian migrants in the city). But the upper classes who

occupied the Presidential palace, and the new air-conditioned shopping plazas were generally whiter than popular sectors. Whiteness was associated with wealth and power. And the cultural prejudice against “Haitian” or “African” traits, manufactured by Trujillo and his intellectual henchmen, took on a strange significance in *barrios* where most people had dark skin and Afro-Dominican religious beliefs. Light-skinned children born were generally held to be more beautiful. Tightly curled hair was simply “pelo malo” or bad hair and straight hair was “pelo bueno,” good hair. Witchcraft, middle-class values dictated, was only practiced by “personas incultas.” In the *barrios* visits to the *bruja* were made in secret. Neighbors knew where the *servidoras* and *curanderos* lived on their block, but when they needed a consultation they went to a practitioner in some other *barrio*, where they would not be recognized.⁴⁰

In the relationship between the poor neighborhoods and the modern capital the idea of *cultura* could mean many things, from the promised schools and churches to scattered folklore troops. But in the everyday speech of the city, it came generally to represent a middle class notion of urban refinements. At its pinnacle, culture resided in the new museums, libraries, and theaters erected by Balguer in the Plaza de Cultura. But every day it was the practice of “buenas costumbres” and visible symbols of progress such as clothing, food, or housing. This idea of culture was particularly important in the flexible racial scheme of the Dominican capital. Economic mobility could lighten dark skin and blur humble origins, but only if a person also erased any traces of the uncivilized *barrio* or *pueblo*. That process was the acquisition of culture. To be sure many in the *barrios* resisted the pressure to conform to abstract notions of respectable urban behavior, either by maintaining their secret rituals, or loudly playing the shantytown musical style known scornfully by the middle class as bachata. For others the path to wealth and refinement were far out of reach, leaving only the Trujillista *valores* of respeto,

work, Catholicism, quiet, and decency. And for many these elements became the cultural analogues to local projects for square blocks, paved streets, water, electricity, and sanitation. *Cultura y progreso* went hand in hand.

In the early 1960s, as church groups and local organizers began their movement to organize and modernize *barrios* like el Caliche and Cristo Rey, they began campaigns for decency and *buenas costumbres* as well. In 1964 letters from *barrio* leaders demanding government action against *desequilibrios*, *intraquilidad*, and *corrupción* were so common that the Secretary of Public Health and welfare released a statement denying that his office was responsible for intervening in neighborhood culture.⁴¹ Their complaints resonated with official Trujillista rhetoric about government authority maintaining decency in poor *barrios*. But these were not campaigns against witchcraft, or cockfighting. They were rather attacks on the intrusions of a modern, amplified music, and urban social life, into the concentrated social space of their neighborhoods. In the city the traditional spaces where poor Dominicans listened to music -- religious festivals, country-dances, and performances of municipal bands -- were replaced by cabarets, juke boxes, radio, and even television. Neighbors crowded into the few homes with sets to see broadcasts of national and international artists. Sometimes those with televisions even charged admission. *Colmados*, or corner stores, began to put in radios and used, 78 rpm, juke boxes, to attract the men and boys who collected at local streetcorners to “hacer esquina,” talking, drinking, playing dominos.

Commercial radio, especially Radio Guarachita which catered to the musical tastes of rural migrants, served in many ways to acculturate new *barrio* dwellers into urban life. Advertisements marketed commercial soaps and detergents as essential elements of civilized life. And disk jockeys made constant reference to the date and the time of day, imparting a new

schedule to informal lives. But, complained neighborhood organizers, who would teach these *campesinos* not to turn their radios up so loud? Since there were no supermarkets and few public street markets the *barrios* supported hundreds of these small businesses, tucked in among the houses, with a door or window opening onto the street or alleyway. Money was scarce so most residents made separate trips to the *colmado* to buy supplies for every meal. Merchants accommodated their clientele by selling on credit or *cheleando*, selling a few cents worth of any item a scoop of tomato paste from the can, a slice of salami, or a half cup of oil. The *colmados* were central public spaces in neighborhood social life, and by the early 1960s they were beginning to turn the *barrios* into exceptionally noisy places.

Neighborhood improvement associations and church groups regularly appealed to the police to clamp down on jukeboxes and radios in the *colmados*. In 1964 for instance a group of representatives from Villa Juana, Villa Consuelo, Villa Duarte, Villa Francisca, Gualey, San Carlos, and Mejoramiento Social wrote to the government that some corners in the neighborhood have two or four juke boxes playing simultaneously, “es algo así como la antesala del infierno.” What was worse, they wrote, some neighbors “agresivos que viven tan solo separados por una división de madera y desde el amanecer ponen sus radios a cierto volumen que despiertan el vecindario.”⁴² These kind of complaints became standard fare in *barrio* life. In Santo Domingo neighbors who played loud music, or gathered loudly at *colmados*, represented “falta de cultura,” and the developers of new middle class housing complexes schemed mightily to keep “incultos” out.⁴³ Little by little noise became an accepted evil of *barrio* life, though working class neighborhood leaders periodically appealed to the government to help them enforce some peace and quiet in the *barrios*.

Noise was a constant nuisance, but the most noxious offenders to *barrio* culture were cabarets -- places for drinking, dancing, sexual liaisons, and prostitution -- that sprang up in the *barrios*. Complaints to the police often referred to these night spots in neighborhood shorthand, as centers of corruption and perversion. Again *barrio* leaders made their demands in a language familiar to the authoritarian police captains. They denounced “atentados a la moral, la decencia, y a las buenas costumbres.” On Calle Domingo Savio, in Maria Auxiliadora, residents begged to police to crack down on a cabaret run by a former police private where suspicious women were constantly coming and going. We are raising our voices, they wrote, “para que este escandaloso y bochornoso negocio de corrupción desaparezca de un barrio que vive con toda la humildad de sus moradores pero dentro de un ambiente decente dentro de las leyes morales inherente en la persona humana.”⁴⁴

One Colombian-American anthropologist who conducted fieldwork in these neighborhood nightspots in the 1980s has objected to the tendency of middle class Dominicans to associate them with prostitution. And indeed the language of corruption used by neighborhood campaigners against cabarets tells little of what kinds of popular culture existed within these spaces. Cabarets and noisy colmados proliferated in the *barrios*, becoming central aspects of a new urban popular culture. But neighborhood residents conformed to a rhetorical convention that described these spaces as “centros de corrupción.” According to this convention schools, churches, and clubs -- the opposite of cabarets -- were “centros de cultura.”⁴⁵ This apparent inconsistency is actually one of the key elements of *barrio* cultural politics, continual tension between permissiveness, shame, and condescension. In the 1950s, for instance, a group of mothers in Villa Francisca named their block “las honradas” to distinguish themselves from the prostitutes who clustered in a settlement a hundred yards away. But, as in many

neighborhoods, las honradas and their children actually coexisted peacefully with the prostitutes. Many earned their living washing clothing for their disreputable neighbors and many consulted them for advice in love.

In this way neighborhoods created their own moral geographies that were no less powerful for their inconsistencies or their complete unenforceability. Similarly, groups of young unemployed men who occupied certain public spaces in the *barrios* were drawn into local geographies of danger. Called *tígueres*, a dominicanism for the Spanish word *tigres* or tigers, these youngsters and the alleyways they patrolled, were feared by neighbors. But when the neighborhood was threatened from the outside, the *tígueres* were often the first line of defense.

Note to readers: here end the selections I have included.

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¹ This process had begun some decades earlier during the Cuban wars of independence as tobacco exports slackened and Dominican and foreign capitalists began investing in sugar. Moya Pons. *The Dominican Republic*. pp. 255-263, 336. Calder. *The Impact of Intervention*. Chantada. *Del proceso de urbanización a la planificación urbana*.

² See census data tabulated by Duarte. *Capitalismo y superpoblación*. p. 211 and for adjusted estimates of the 1993 census see Ramirez. *El Censo del 93*.

³ For maps and details of Trujillo era urban planning see Vargas Mera. *Evolución urbanística*. Many of these maps are reproduced in Chantada. *Del proceso de urbanización a la planificación urbana*.

⁴ Historians critical of Trujillo have often taken the history of the South and Southeast, where foreign and national sugar holdings displaced much of the peasantry, as typical of the land policies of the dictator. For a detailed analysis of Trujillo's land policies that refutes this view see Turits. *The Foundations of Despotism*. For the an apologetic perspective on the regime's strategy restricted migration to the city see "El Desarrollo de las ciudades en la República Dominicana" Garcia Bonnelly. *Las obras públicas*. pp. 130-137. For insight on the social tensions over the disorderly presence of *campesinos* and poor people in general in the center of old Santo Domingo, in the first years of Trujillo's reign, see Derby. *The Magic of Modernity*.

⁵ On Trujillo's monopolistic economic activity see Cassá. *Capitalismo y dictadura*. Crassweller. *Trujillo..* On the effects of Trujillo's "Primitive Accumulation" on internal migration to the capital see Duarte. *Capitalismo y superpoblación*. 139-145. On the construction of working class neighborhoods see Chantada. *Del proceso de urbanización a la planificación urbana*. pp. 152-165, Vargas Mera. *Evolución urbanística*. and "El Plan de Mejoramiento Social del Generalísimo Doctor Rafael L. Trujillo Molina, Benefactor de la Patria."Garcia Bonnelly. *Las obras públicas*. . Neighborhood histories for Simon Bolivar and Guachupita come from an unpublished untitled manuscript by Jorge Cela a noted anthropologist and Jesuit priest, written based on fieldwork in poor neighborhoods of the capital in the 1970s. For a similar story in nearby Los Guandules see Guandules. *Un barrio estudia a si mismo..*

⁶ Balaguer. *Dominican Reality*. pp 46-53.

⁷ Garcia Bonnelly. *Sobrepoblación, subdesarrollo y sus consecuencias*. p.129.

⁸ For analyses of the political and social turmoil in Santo Domingo from 1961-1966 see Gleijeses. *The Dominican Crisis*. For the role of the *barrios* in the civil war and "operation cleanup" see Moreno. *Barrios in Arms*. Also Rene Fortunato's Documentary Films *La Herencia del Tirano Abril: La Trinchera de Honor*.

⁹ For the public construction policies, and the rise of real estate finance during the first Balaguer administration era see Chantada. Los mecanismos del crecimiento urbano. especially pp 171-220. Moya Pons. *Pioneros de la banca..*Moya Pons. Quid Pro Quo. Hartlyn. *The Struggle for Democratic Politics*.

¹⁰ Chantada. Los mecanismos del crecimiento urbano.

¹¹ Duarte. *Capitalismo y superpoblación*. pp 146-147.

¹² Padco-Borrell. *Estudio*. pp. 102-115

¹³ Padco-Borrell. *Estudio*. p. 93

¹⁴ Flores. . find cites for Hoyo de Chulín, El 70.

¹⁵ Turits. *The Foundations of Despotism*. found for instance hundreds of letters sent directly from Dominican peasants to Trujillo asking for help in securing land.

¹⁶ Derby. *The Magic of Modernity*.

¹⁷ Translation to Spanish "Por el aire por la tierra y por el mar se conoce ya a este hombre tan 'bragao' que en su lucha por hacernos progresar ha llevado los aviones hasta el Cibao." In the final verse the singer says he is going to work hard, bring in a good harvest, and spend the money to fly to the capital and congratulate Trujillo. "Avione Pa' el Cibao," Rivera Gonzales. *Antología musical*. vol 3 p 20. Other examples are "Progreso y Felicidad" Papa Molina and Aura Chavez de Pérez 1958 p 176 vol 3, which equated progress with "bienestar" or wellbeing. And "El Progreso en Marcha" Juan Francisco Garcia and Sergio de la Mota 1944 vol. 1 P 68.

¹⁸ For hundreds of newspaper articles announcing ribbon cuttings and inaugurations of public projects see Nación. *Obras de Trujillo*. Bienvenido Bustamante and Alfonso Asenjo "La Epopeya" 1958 V. 1 p 28. Luis Rivera and Sergio de la Mota "El Progreso no se Detiene" 1956. See also Bienvenido Bustamante and Felix López. "Trujillo Arquitecto" 1959. There are literally scores of other merengues celebrating bridges, roads, and the Feria de Paz y Fraternidad. See for instance Vito Castorina and Luis Alberti "Los Dos Puentes" 1936. J.D. Cerón and Alejandro Camacho García "Vamos a la Feria" 1955. Rivera Gonzales. *Antología musical*. V 1 p 28

¹⁹ For the retelling of the hurricane and rebuilding in popular songs see J.D. Cerón and Toño Abreu "El Ciclón" 1930 Rivera Gonzales. *Antología musical*. V. 2 p 8.

²⁰ For the mythology of Trujillo's relationship with the capital see Garcia Bonnelly. *Las obras públicas*. pp. 43-96 an account of the hurricane of San Zenon see and 97-120 for the renaming of the city. For a scholarly discussion of Trujillo's symbolic use of the capital to represent modernity and the regime see Derby. *The Magic of Modernity..*, Mateo. *Mito y cultura..*

²¹ See for instance Walter Lefebver's classic critique of the AFP *Inevitable Revolutions*. For evidence of the use of a Puerto Rican public relations firm see DEPARTMENT OF STATE. SECRET. [No issue date] (Probably 1962). Declassified. August 1, 1990. Sanitized. CDROM Id: 1991050101374. Fiche#: 1991-135

²² Gonzalez. Peasants Progress.

²³ Kryzaneck. Diversion, Subversion and Repression. p. 87, 89.

²⁴ Balaguer. *Mensajes Presidenciales*. p. 84

²⁵ Cesar Perez, Tahira Vargas??

²⁶ Pacini Hernandez. *Bachata*. For kinship and migration see Georges. *The Making of a Transnational Community*. Get cites for tearful accounts. Bachata itself is a derogatory name chosen by elites to describe a music they associated with brothels and the urban underworld.

²⁷ Interview with Doña Ramona Báez viuda de Reyes, El Caliche de Cristo Rey, May 15, 2000. Interview with Doña Pirín, Parroquia de Cristo Rey. May 5, 2000.

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- ²⁸ Interview with Sr. Polanco, Cristo Rey, July 5, 2000. Sr. Felix, Cristo Rey, May 11, 2000. Interview with Doña Ramona Báez viuda de Reyes, El Caliche de Cristo Rey, May 15, 2000.
- ²⁹ Moreno. Precursores de la teología de la liberación.
- ³⁰ Interview with Báez. Moreno. Precursores de la teología de la liberación.
- ³¹ Ducoudray h. . Amparo Chantada “Cronica de una muerte por desalojo anunciado.” *Perfil*. 1992. pp 45-55?? Informal interviews with residents of Pablo Sexto, May 2000. Interview with Rafelito and Don Ramón, Los Farallones de Cristo Rey, July 2, 2000.
- ³² Cite articles from Ciudad Alternativa, Chantada thesis, and Cela.
- ³³ Informal with residents in Pablo Sexto, Cristo Rey who moved there in the early 1970s “buscando desalojo” and with Sr. Polanco who lives in the Cristo Rey *Multis*.
- ³⁴ Interviews with Doña Melliza and neighbors, *Multifamiliares* de Cristo Rey, June 2000.
- ³⁵ Many of the former residents of the part of Cristo Rey cleared for the extension of the Avenida Ovando ended up in the canyon known as El 70, on the northern edge of the neighborhood. Polonio and Paulino G. *Renovación urbana y desalojos*.
- ³⁶ On the dream of owning a colmado see Cela dissertation and Murray. *El colmado*., otherwise this conclusion is based on upstreaming of participant observation in 1999-2000, and from the frequency of this usage of progreso in newspaper sources from the 1970s. I need to figure out how to confirm exactly when it began to take on this meaning in the *barrios*, or figure out how to avoid committing myself.
- ³⁷ Peña Batlle. *Política de Trujillo*. p. 192.
- ³⁸ This is quoted from the text of a speech given in the innauguration of the neighborhood of Mejoramiento Social in Santo Domingo in January of 1946. Reprinted in Garcia Bonnelly. *Las obras públicas*. 215-218.
- ³⁹ See Dagoberto Tejeda *Cultura Popular en Santo Domingo*. Observation and interviews with *barrio* residents.
- ⁴⁰ Interviews with Pedro Ubiera. January 12, 2000. Marcos Villaman March 30, 2000. Nicolas Guevarra April 5, 2000. Jose Ceballos April 6, 2000.
- ⁴¹ Secretaría de Estado de Salud Publica. Announcement. 1964 AGN-SEIP Legajo 5718.
- ⁴² De la Cruz, C. M., F. del Villar, et al. Letter to Miembros del Triumvirato que Gobierna la Republica. July 7, 1964. Santo Domingo. AGN-SEIP Legajo 5718.
- ⁴³ Intevie with Maria Mora, president of Cupido Realty, Santo Domingo April 12. 2000. Ms. Mora worked on one of the first “closed condominium” complexes in Santo Domingo in the 1970s, a neighborhood called Residencial La Alameda.
- ⁴⁴ Moradores de Maria Auxiliadora. Letter to General Belisario Peguero Guerrero, Jefe de la Policia Nacional, April 24, 1964. Santo Domingo.
- ⁴⁵ For a unique defense of cabarets and their culture see the excellent ethnographic work in Pacini Hernandez. *Bachata*.. The widespread acceptance in the *barrios* of an opposition between centers of culture and corruption in the 1970s Personal Communication Jorge Cela.