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Transnational Dominican Activism: Documenting Grassroots Social Movements through *ESENDOM*

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Abstract

Dominican-descended people are one of the most dynamic Caribbean and Latin American ethnic and cultural communities in the United States. Whether in the Dominican Republic or as members of a transnational community, the Dominican population has a long and rich history of challenging the powers that be, confronting unjust acts, and opposing oppressive laws within the communities they inhabit through their civic engagement. This paper addresses one question: As Dominican society and the world have evolved, what has been the role of U.S.-based online media in sustaining, disseminating, and rescuing the long tradition of civic involvement and struggle exemplified by Dominicans at home and abroad? To answer that question, we explore the role of the ongoing online Dominican-centric magazine *ESENDOM* to demonstrate how online journalism documents activism within the Dominican community. *ESENDOM* and similar media have filled gaps that the mainstream media has failed to fulfill, as there is a media blackout on the Dominican Republic and its people. This project is one about activism. This humanistic project documents some of the most important social movements to take place in the Dominican Republic and the United States in the past thirteen years (2009-2022), coinciding with the founding of *ESENDOM* in 2009. This project will present a timeline and an attempt to chart a chronology of political dissent and social struggles within Dominican communities in the United States and the Dominican Republic.

Keywords: activism; Dominican; Dominican Republic; media; social justice

Publication Type: research article

Introduction

Whether in the Dominican Republic or as members of a transnational community, the Dominican population has a long and rich history of challenging the powers that be, unjust acts, and oppressive laws within the communities they inhabit through their civic engagement. This article addresses one question: As Dominican society and the world have largely evolved, what has been the role of U.S.-based online media in sustaining, disseminating, and rescuing the long tradition of civic involvement and struggle exemplified by Dominicans at home and abroad? To answer that question, we explore the role of the ongoing online Dominican-centric magazine *ESENDOM*¹ to demonstrate how online journalism documents activism within the Dominican community. *ESENDOM* and similar media have filled gaps that the mainstream media failed to fulfill, as there is a media blackout on the Dominican Republic and its people. This project is one about activism. This humanistic project documents some of the most

important social movements to take place in the Dominican Republic and the United States in the past thirteen years (2009-2022), coinciding with the founding of *ESENDOM* in 2009.

Dominican writers, artists, and journalists have a long history of using both the written word and audiovisual material to denounce injustice and state repression. One example is the case of Orlando Martínez Howley (1944-1975), a prominent journalist who was killed during the 12-year authoritarian regime of President Joaquín Balaguer (1966-1978), and whose murder was widely disseminated across media, especially by independent and amateur journalists. Before the emergence of socially conscience digital media websites such as *Remolacha*² and *ESENDOM* in the 21st century, Dominican intellectuals, writers, and artists used physical newspapers, pamphlets, bulletins, audiovisual recordings, literary works, and other tools to voice their opposition to those powerful ruling elites governing the Dominican Republic or to bring attention to issues affecting the Dominican population in the Dominican Republic and abroad. In addition to discussing the role of *ESENDOM* as an informal digital repository or, at the very least, an e-resource that has documented the activism of the transnational Dominican community—with a focus on the cities of New York, Santo Domingo, and Santiago—this paper will also briefly touch upon the activism work of Dominican journalists, writers, and artists in the 20th century and connect—by comparing and contrasting—their work to journalists, artists, and writers in the 21st century, but, more specifically, those in the realm of *ESENDOM* and similar initiatives.

The methodological approach of this work is ethnographic in nature. Through their writing and audiovisual tools, *ESENDOM*'s team of writers, photographers, and videographers have captured, documented, and, in some instances, analyzed grassroots social movements within the Dominican sphere using a participatory ethnographic approach. Although they may not always view themselves as activists, *ESENDOM*'s team comprises socially conscious individuals who embrace and actively engage with grassroots movements to affect societal change.

For the record, this research does not intend to be an all-encompassing work on Dominican activism. Still, it will provide a snapshot of transnational Dominican activism in the United States and the Dominican Republic. Centering Dominican activists and the particularities of Dominican activism within its political lingua franca with its own internal dynamics and contradictions and shortcomings, this project will present a timeline and an attempt to chart a chronology of political dissent and social struggles within Dominican communities in the United States and the Dominican Republic.

Digitally Documenting Latinx and Latin American-Focused Communities

Conducting a literature review and compiling a list of all Latinx, Latin American-focused, and Caribbean repositories in the United States is beyond the scope of this research. Nonetheless, it would be fitting to take a moment to acknowledge that such repositories exist. Some renowned repositories include the University of California, Los Angeles' Chicano Studies Research Center; the Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas at Austin; Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños at Hunter College; City University of New York's Dominican Studies Institute; the Cuban Heritage Collection at the University of Miami; and Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage at the University of Houston. Although a multi-institutional and international digital library and not necessarily a repository, it is also worth noting the Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC), which links to multiple e-resources and repositories. Founded in 2004, dLOC "is a cooperative of Partners within the Caribbean and circum-Caribbean that provides users with access to Caribbean cultural, historical, and research materials held in archives, libraries, and

private collections” (Digital Library of the Caribbean, n.d.).³ ESENDOM is not unique in the way it is documenting Black and Latinx communities, and a diverse pool of communities of color. Organizations, journals, and collectives such as the Black Latinas Know Collective, Taller Electric Marronage, the Afro-Hispanic Review, the Caribbean Memory Project, and Repeating Islands are all forums that document and preserve Latinx, Caribbean, and Latin American cultures in their own unique manner.

Individuals and associations such as the Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials (SALALM) have played a critical role in bringing together entities that have housed the collections of Latin American-descended people. SALALM comprises librarians, archivists, book dealers, scholars, students, and individuals interested in “collecting, preserving, and providing access to Latin American, Caribbean, Iberian, and Latino information resources in all formats” (SALALM, n.d.-c). In essence, SALALM is the preeminent worldwide association pertinent to Latinx and Latin American repositories. The most recent and perhaps the best scholarly publication pertinent to the work currently undertaken by librarians and archivists specializing in Latin American collection is the edited volume, *Latin American Collection Concepts Essays on Libraries, Collaborations and New Approaches*, edited by Gayle Williams and Jana Krentz (2019)—a book project born at the annual SALALM conference.

Some SALALM-related initiatives include the Latin America North East Libraries Consortium (LANE) and Latin American, Caribbean, U.S. Latinx, and Iberian Online Free E-Resources (LACLI) (SALALM, n.d.-b).⁴ LACLI, a collection of free online e-resources, is a project that emerged from LANE—a group of academic and research libraries in the northeastern United States that builds and maintains collections in the area of Latin America ((Latin American, Caribbean, U.S. Latinx, and Iberian Online free e-resources, n.d.). Functioning as a database, LACLI provides users with a summary and link to e-resources one can access online, including multiple digital repositories. Some of these repositories include the Latin American Digital Initiatives Repository (LADI) (Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas at Austin), the Archive of Immigrant Voices (University of Maryland), and CONEXIÓN Oral History Project (Dominican Studies Association). LACLI also contains digital repositories housed within national archives across Latin America such as the “Archivo General de la Nación. Publicaciones (República Dominicana)” in the Dominican Republic and “Archivo General de la Nación de Colombia. Sección Colonia. Negros y Esclavos” in Colombia.

As opposed to the digital repositories noted in the preceding passages, ESENDOM is not a digital repository. Instead, it maintains digital content on a public-facing website. As such, ESENDOM is an e-resource that follows in the vein of digital projects contained within LACLI and similar resources. As of the most recent iteration of ESENDOM, much of the original content is also being digitized in PDFs to preserve the information, allow access to the material for educational purposes, and disseminate it easily, essentially web archiving this content. A specific example of this is the dossier on *Women in Translation*, which compiles articles and interviews ESENDOM conducted and published previously on the website (Santana et al., 2017). Some PDFs are made accessible via the ESENDOM website. However, all PDFs, as well as all digital content, are stored within hard drives and in the cloud. ESENDOM’s metadata is automated through a commercial web hosting vendor. Said metadata includes tags and categories.

Several prominent grassroots movements, such as #BlackLivesMatter and #RickyRenuncia (in Puerto Rico), have lived mainly on digital platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and hosted websites. Some entities do not have the funds to cover hosting costs, opting instead to post their digital

content on platforms like Instagram and Facebook; should these platforms disappear, the digital content stored on these platforms could also vanish. *ESENDOM* has aimed to capture similar grassroots movements within the transnational Dominican community. While *ESENDOM* editors do not claim that the website is a formal digital repository, digital archive, or digital library, it serves the role of an e-resource that documents the transnational Dominican community in the New York region.

Esencia Dominicana (ESENDOM)

Founded in 2009, *ESENDOM* is an online bilingual (English and Spanish) platform that documents people who trace their ancestry to the Dominican Republic by publishing articles, interviews, oral histories, photographs, and videos. *ESENDOM*'s founders met while obtaining undergraduate degrees at Baruch College. Emmanuel Espinal and Nelson Santana shared each other's ideas about creating a magazine about Dominican culture, and this is where the idea for *ESENDOM* began: Espinal baptized the platform *Esencia Dominicana (Dominican Essence)*. At the same time, Santana shortened the name to *ESENDOM*. Two *ESENDOM* collaborators who helped to transform this digital platform are Amaury Rodríguez and John Carrero. *ESENDOM*'s team of writers, photographers, and videographers have provided commentary on the political landscape and popular culture since its inception. Per its mission statement: "*ESENDOM* is a cultural magazine that blends the beauty of Dominican culture with current and past social issues that affect the Dominican community today, examining these areas of concern and putting them into perspective" (*ESENDOM*, n.d., Mission). Music, culture, and sports are among the most popular content covered by *ESENDOM*. Opinion pieces, essays, and coverage of popular culture, trending news, and academic articles tend to draw the most interest from *ESENDOM*'s audience.

ESENDOM has provided coverage of events headlined by popular figures, including Junot Díaz, Antony Santos, El Prodigio, and President Leonel Fernández. *ESENDOM* has interviewed artists, composers, dance instructors, and radio and television personalities. The focus of *ESENDOM* reflects the editors' interests, educational backgrounds, and professional interests, ranging from music (Fefita La Grande, Robert Liriano, Rafael Mieses, Aris Jackson, Jonatan Piña Duluc, Ruth Violín, Sención Minaya, Ray Chino Díaz), to politics (Leonel Fernández, Yovan Collado, Luis Abinader), to academia with a focus on the growing field of Dominican Studies (Lorgia García Peña, Dixia Ramírez, Elizabeth Manley, Zaire Z. Dinzey-Flores, Álex Gil, Lisette Acosta Corniel, Sophie Maríñez, Amarilys Estrella, Ivette Romero, Lisa Paravisini-Gerbert, Zaida Corniel), to literature (Johan Mijail, Michèle Voltaire Marcelin, Aída Cartagena Portalatín, Lorena Espinoza Peña, Raquel Virginia Cabrera, Nelson Ricart-Guerrero), and sports (Alex Rodríguez, Albert Pujols, Karl-Anthony Towns, Al Horford).

ESENDOM, in documenting and preserving Dominican culture, serves an underserved niche and fills the gap that traditional media sometimes overlooks. An example is *ESENDOM*'s coverage of playwright Marco Antonio Rodríguez's work. *ESENDOM* has been actively following and documenting the arc of his output from his first play exhibited in New York City, *La Luz de un Cigarrillo*, at Latin American Theater Experiment Associates (LATEA) to his latest work titled *Bloom* (Espinal, 2011; Espinal, 2022). *ESENDOM* has published a review of Rodríguez's play and conducted three interviews with him. Other than the occasional brief interview as part of a media tour, the traditional media have not provided consistent coverage of Rodríguez's work to the extent that *ESENDOM* has contributed of this budding artist. Effectively, *ESENDOM* has archived Rodríguez's work, thereby documenting a figure who is quickly becoming one of the most prominent playwrights of Dominican descent in the United States.

ESENDOM's team of journalists, writers, artists, photographers, and videographers have documented some of the most important social movements of the past 13 years to impact the transnational Dominican community. *ESENDOM*'s work includes articles, essays, photographic images, video footage, and oral histories of Dominican activism at events including the worldwide anti-corruption Marcha Verde Movement that led to the eventual political defeat of the Partido de la Liberación Dominicana (PLD) Party in the Dominican Republic, the anti-femicide Marcha de las Mariposas, Dominican-Haitian solidarity movements, the international #NiUnaMás movement that denounces femicides and anti-abortion legislation, and the #BlackLivesMatter / George Floyd protests in Washington Heights and Santo Domingo in 2020. *ESENDOM*'s extensive archives include videos, photographs, interviews, and articles pertinent to multiple social movements, protests, and marches both in the Dominican Republic and the United States.

Documenting, Preserving, and Making Accessible Dominican Activism

Based on commonly accepted definitions, *ESENDOM* is not a digital archive, web archive, digital repository, or digital humanities project. Yet, this critical platform allows *ESENDOM*'s custodians to document the Dominican community, filling a much-needed gap. What separates a website from a digital repository, web archive, or similar digital tool? Ordinarily, these tools are governed by established guidelines and policies aimed at planning for, managing, making accessible, and preserving born-digital or digitized content. Unlike formal institutional repositories (e.g., archives, libraries, museums), *ESENDOM* does not adhere to the types of policies that are often used to describe formal repositories. To reach their level of formality, these institutional bodies often undergo a rigorous, time-consuming process that can take years to establish the repository formally.

Because *ESENDOM* is not a formal digital repository, digital archive, or digital library, some readers, scholars, or even digital practitioners might neglect its importance as an e-resource.⁵ To the contrary, *ESENDOM* is part of a larger tradition of individuals and entities who start informal projects at a small scale that over time move toward formalization. For example, the now renowned City University of New York's Dominican Studies Institute (CUNY DSI) Library and Archives were each established in 1994 and 2002, respectively, and led by individuals who, at the time, did not possess a graduate degree in Library and Information Science or Archival Science.⁶ Chief Librarian, Sarah Aponte, obtained her degree while employed at CUNY DSI. Founding Chief Archivist, Idilio Gracia Peña, never obtained a graduate degree, and yet, his vast experience during his 50-plus years as an information professional supersedes that of many professionally-trained archivists and librarians.⁷ Many of the most important Latinx and Latin American-related repositories have their origins in informal initiatives including CUNY's own Center for Puerto Rican Studies, the CUNY Dominican Studies Institute, and Jaime Lucero Mexican Studies Institute.⁸ Similar to these three physical repositories documenting the Dominican, Puerto Rican, and Mexican communities in the United States through their archives and libraries, *ESENDOM* is also documenting the Dominican community through oral histories and audiovisual materials, and written content.

ESENDOM's team includes writers, journalists, artists, photographers, and videographers. They utilize various methods to document the Dominican community, including photography, videography, and the written word. As avid readers and consumers of Dominican media in all its manifestations, *ESENDOM* editors have placed premium importance on editing as a collective before publication. This approach ensures readability, clarity of syntax, and clear presentation. Deep down, *ESENDOM* creates content for a general audience. *ESENDOM* publishes news articles,

editorials, opinion pieces, personal reflections, and creative writing pertinent to the Dominican experience, which in turn reflects Dominicanidad and preserves its cultural heritage. Because Dominicanidad is not a concept that can always be captured with written words, *ESENDOM* publishes audiovisual content to complement the writing of *ESENDOM*'s contributors. As such, the team has photographed or recorded several events over the years. Ranging from cultural gatherings that include festivals and musical performances to miles-long protests, *ESENDOM* has documented several Dominican-led or Dominican-focused initiatives via an audiovisual lens.

Although *ESENDOM*'s founders envisioned creating a physical magazine, *ESENDOM* launched as a born-digital platform and continues to operate under this model. This model allows the editors to publish content that is cost-effective and time-efficient without the constraints associated with physical publications. Consequently, born-digital content has allowed *ESENDOM*'s contributors to present the Dominican experience in a myriad of ways whether through still images, video, or writing.

Tracing the Origins of Documenting the U.S. Dominican Community

Tracing the intellectual history of Dominican migration to the United States is an arduous task. Per Dutch archival documents, Juan/Jan/Yan Rodríguez/Rodrigues is the first-known person from Santo Domingo to arrive in New York (Stevens-Acevedo et al., 2013). Nearly three centuries after Rodríguez's arrival, close to 5,000 people from the Dominican Republic entered the United States through the Ellis Island port in New York City between 1882 and 1924 (Hernández, 2012). As noted in the cases of Rodríguez and immigrants who passed through Ellis Island, documents allow us to construct and preserve our histories. Dominicans in the United States have been contributing their *granito de arena* to document communities in the United States throughout Latin America since at least 1909, when *Las Novedades* (1876-1918)—at times referred to as a magazine and at other times a newspaper—, a periodical founded in New York City by Spaniard immigrants in 1876, transferred ownership to Dominican brothers in 1909 (Aponte, 2022). As Sarah Aponte (2022) notes, news pertinent to the Dominican Republic was published prior to the purchase of *Las Novedades* by Dominican entrepreneurs, referencing articles about the Dominican Republic published as early as 1881. Topics in *Las Novedades* included literature (poetry and prose), the socio-political climate in the Dominican Republic including the economy and elections, U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic and other Latin American nations, Dominican-Haitian relations, and the Dominican presence in New York, such as the arrival of Dominican violinist Gabriel del Orbe from Europe to New York (Aponte, 2022).

As of this moment, *Las Novedades* appears to be the first-known significant Dominican-owned publication in the United States; if this statement holds true, then one can safely assume that Dominican-related publications that came into existence after *Las Novedades* followed in the footsteps of its editors with their coverage of Dominican-related content. In the United States, multiple magazines (*Dominican Times Magazine*, *Merengue*, *La Galería*), newspapers (*Listin USA*, *Patria*), and audiovisual platforms (*Remolacha.net*, *ESENDOM*) that document the Dominican experience or discuss Dominican-related topics have been established. Some of these platforms have disappeared overtime, such as *Merengue* and *Patria*, some have gone dormant for a period of time such as *ESENDOM* and *La Galería*, and others have been forced to adapt to changing technology such as most Dominican and non-Dominican newspapers, which publish content accessible via the World Wide Web.

Some entities, however, have toned down the Dominican content or have moved away from covering Dominican-themed topics in favor of a more global or diverse audience. *Dominican Times Magazine*, for instance, has undergone multiple name changes such as *DTM* and *LatinTRENDS*. Known today as *LatinTRENDS*, this digital site originally catered to a Dominican clientele or audience interested in Dominican content. Founded on September 11, 2001, by publisher Juan Guillén and editor José Morillo, *Dominican Times Magazine*—even through its different iterations—provided a generation of U.S. Dominicans with a new, hip, magazine that revolved around Dominican culture, featuring interviews with Dominican pop culture icons such as composers and singers Raúl Acosta and Antony “Romeo” Santos, intellectual Junot Díaz, actress Zoe Saldaña, actor Anthony Álvarez, Major League Baseball player Alex Rodríguez, and several other celebrities or well-known Dominicans (Santana, 2013). Eventually, *Dominican Times Magazine* changed its name to *DTM*, while still featuring the Dominican community, but providing more coverage of non-Dominicans such as New York City-based Colombian disc jockey Alex Sensation.

Print to Digital

Dominican print culture (newspapers, magazines, bulletins, etc.) was forced to adapt to the digital revolution that started in the mid-to-late ‘90s and continued into the 2000s. Much like established periodicals such as *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Essence Magazine*, and several magazines published by Condé Nast (*GQ*, *The New Yorker*, *Wired*, *Vanity Fair*, *Glamour*, and *Teen Vogue*) that were forced to provide readers with online content or transition to a digital platform, Dominican periodicals, too, had to adapt to this new 21st century model. Because online platforms such as blogs and online periodicals provide readers with instant access to content, as opposed to print issues of newspapers and magazines that one would have to wait to arrive via mail or purchase at a store, advertisers especially began to scale back on print advertising, due to exorbitant fees charged by publishers, causing several print periodicals to shut down. Dominican print periodical, *Listín USA*, for example, appears to have shut down. However, there is an online magazine that goes by this name today, yet it is unclear whether this current online platform is a continuation of the now defunct print version.

Although the digital revolution led to the unfortunate death of several periodicals, it also allowed newcomer hobbyists and entrepreneurs with little capital to launch their projects virtually. Born in Santo Domingo, Ángel Manuel del Orbe Cruz—popularly known as Remo—migrated to the United States at the age of 8 (Peguero, 2020). He founded *Remolacha.net* in 2004 or 2005 to connect with fellow Dominicans (¡Henry!, 2020). *Remolacha* has established itself as the most popular Dominican blog in the world due to its unique content. At the time of *Remolacha*’s founding, it emulated the *Drudge Report*, a news aggregation website built on gossip-oriented news stories. Recent visitors of *Remolacha* may not be aware that the website’s initial popularity can partly be attributed to Remo posting naked images of women and links to pornographic content, especially in the mid-2000s. Over the years, however, *Remolacha* established itself as an online platform that at times advocates for political accountability and the rights of the Dominican people. The platform has also been used to bring awareness pertinent to missing people, abuse, and the promotion of fundraisers aimed at helping the poor or individuals that need a medical operation.

Parallels Between ESENDOM and Anti-Trujillo Publications

ESENDOM represents a continuity of those early attempts by the editors of *Las Novedades* to make the community visible, since the major mainstream media mostly focuses on sports, music, and aspects of popular culture such as Porfirio Rubirosa's next love conquest, or crime when it comes to Dominicans. When Dominicans took over *Las Novedades* in 1909, they expanded the coverage of Dominican-related content ranging from literature to politics, celebrities, and businesses, as well as providing coverage of Dominicans in the United States to the Dominican community and non-Dominicans alike. Similar to immigrants from other countries who migrate to the United States, Dominicans in the United States kept an eye on the politics "back home." Although *Las Novedades* shut operations in 1918—the final year of the first World War—Dominicans continued to disseminate information pertinent to Dominican politics.

One of the most invigorating times for Dominican publications took place during the 31-year dictatorship of Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina (1930-1961). Anti-Trujillo and pro-Trujillo movements clashed with one another for four decades, yet one of the most interesting and understudied battles took place via the written word. Pro-Trujillo forces commissioned biographical sketches of the dictator with a boom in the '30s, and anti-Communist books in the 1950s at the height of McCarthyism.⁹ The Trujillato commissioned several biographies that painted the Dominican leader as benevolent, a pious Catholic, and staunch supporter of the United States (Ariza, 1939; de Besault, 1936; Nanita, 1957; Ortíz Álvarez, 1937; and Secretaría de Educación Pública y Bellas Artes, 1939).¹⁰ To combat Trujillo's propaganda, anti-Trujillistas established rival associations and political parties that published bulletins, newspapers, magazines, books, and other publications as a means to disseminate Trujillo's abuses. In some instances, anti-Trujillo forces, especially those who were exiled, produced press releases and a multitude of publications, distancing themselves from the Communism of which Trujillo accused them (Santana, 2022).

Dominican exiles in the United States and abroad established journalistic networks to combat Trujillo's tentacles, which often reached the locations of Trujillo's enemies abroad: Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Spain, among several nations and territories. Some of these entities and their publications include the Asociación Reivindicadora Dominicana del Exilio, founded in the 1940s, which established the *Boletín ARDE: Asociación Reivindicadora Dominicana del Exilio*; the Partido Revolucionario Dominicano, established in 1939, founded the newspaper *Quisqueya Libre*; and the Committee for Dominican Democracy, established circa 1952, launched the publication *The Voice of the Dominican Republic*. Though not as aggressive as the exiles and political enemies of the Trujillato and afterward those against Balaguer's regime, this activist spirit remains vibrant among today's generation of Dominicans, manifesting through the works of entities including *Remolacha.net*, *La Galería* magazine, and *ESENDOM*.

Activism at its Core

ESENDOM did not emerge as an activist entity. Early on, *ESENDOM* started as a news aggregation blog, similar to *Remolacha.net* and the *Drudge Report*. But unlike *Remolacha*, *ESENDOM* covered live cultural events, photographing these occurrences with a Nikon D300 digital single-lens reflex (DSLR) camera. Collaborating with John Carrero, founder of *SalsaMerengue.com* and *Canal Urbano*, *ESENDOM* found the means to create audiovisual recordings of events since *ESENDOM*'s founders did not have a video camera. The first event covered by *ESENDOM*'s team was a party by merengue típico artist, El Prodigio, at Baruch College on March 11, 2009, nearly two weeks

after *ESENDOM*'s founding on February 27 (Santana, 2009). Cultural events documented by *ESENDOM* throughout the years include festivals (the "Dominican Arts Festival"), parades (Dominican Parade in Paterson, New Jersey), and conferences (2010 Dominican Studies Association Conference) ((Espinal & Santana, 2018; Santana, 2010b; and Santana, 2010).

Since its inception, *ESENDOM*'s founders focused primarily on cultural aspects of Dominican culture. With the addition of Amaury Rodríguez in the second half of 2009, *ESENDOM* began to tackle more social and political issues. Taking a leadership position on the editorial team, Rodríguez's involvement not only led to unique articles written by him, but during his tenure in *ESENDOM*, he has also recruited thinkers who have contributed articles, literary works, and audiovisual content to *ESENDOM*. Some of these contributors include Ecuadorian-born human rights activist, graphic designer, and artist residing in Santo Domingo, Lorena Espinoza Peña; Dominican-born writer and faculty living in Argentina, Daniel Infante; and Argentine-born artist and writer living in the Dominican Republic, Graciela Azcárate.¹¹

Since its first year, *ESENDOM* has published pieces that analyze contemporary Dominican society. Over time, however, *ESENDOM* began to immerse itself further into the political landscape, publishing editorial pieces, satire, and documenting social movements involving Dominicans and the communities they inhabit. Satirical pieces, for instance, typically focus on the president and political party in power, although satire is not exclusive to politics and members of the political party in office. Nonetheless, *ESENDOM* has served as a platform that reflects the concerns of the Dominican population both internally and abroad. Some of these topics covered by *ESENDOM* include the Arizona Senate Bill 1070 (Rodríguez, 2010; Santana, 2010a) and Women's March against President Donald Trump (Santana, 2018a). The Dominican Republic—like most Latin American nations and territories—is heavily influenced by U.S. politics, not only because of the strong marketing machinery of business entities like McDonald's or cultural influences through pop culture such as music, but also because of foreign intervention as in the case of the multiple U.S. interventions and foreign policy meddling ((Crandall, 2006; Grow, 2008; McPherson, 2014; Rodríguez, 2022; and Roorda, 1998).¹²

From its first year in existence, *ESENDOM* has documented mass mobilizations and other activist work aimed at disseminating information about the Partido de la Liberación Dominicana (PLD) and its vast network. Except for a brief period between 2000 and 2004, the once promising (PLD) turned right-wing political party governed the Dominican Republic for nearly two decades. Amaury Rodríguez notes:

As payback to right-wing electoral support, the PLD leadership have given right-wing politicians access to power including top positions in government agencies and embassies – and, most important of all, a platform that, over the years, revitalized right-wing ideology. (Rodríguez, 2019, para.1)

Writers, photographers, artists, and political activists have contributed content that analyze, critique, and document the PLD and their actions. In 2010, *ESENDOM* was one of several non-state-sponsored media outlets to report that journalist, Marino Zapete, accused the then chief of police of plotting an assassination attempt on the journalist, although this hunch by Zapete never materialized (Estrella, 2010). Following journalists' leads, *ESENDOM* publishes pieces, including satire, that shed light on the corruption in which some members of the PLD have engaged or been embroiled.

Political humor is intrinsic to the Dominican mediascape. Historically, satire has been employed by writers and dissenters to denounce wrongs in society and speak truth to power. In the Dominican case, targeting those in power has its risks, as there is a long authoritarian tradition that aims to silence any kind of political dissent. Thus, satirists in the Dominican community challenge the status quo through their razor-sharp critiques of the state of affairs. Sections within *ESENDOM* containing satire or other forms of creative expression include “Los poderosos escriben,” “Humor,” and “Diarios secretos,” often taking aim at high ranking officials of the PLD and conservative sectors of Dominican society, including Dominican presidents, Leonel Fernández and Danilo Medina; former first lady and vice-president, Margarita Cedeño; former Cardinal and Archbishop of Santo Domingo, Nicolás López Rodríguez; and politicians, Max Puig and Jaime Fernández Mirabal, among many more. Within certain circles, *ESENDOM* has been lambasted for its harsh critique of political figures and has even been deemed a sensationalist medium, especially during its earlier years. A silver lining for this platform, however, has been the eventual confirmation that *ESENDOM*’s collaborators were correct in their assessment of the Dominican Republic government’s corruption.

Over the years, *ESENDOM* journalists have provided coverage of talking heads, both famous and non-famous, who have expressed their opinion on the state of Dominican politics. In addition to *ESENDOM*, established journalists, such as Nuria Piera and Marino Zapete, have provided coverage of the PLD’s corrupt political machine. Referencing PLD Senator Félix Bautista, in 2018, the U.S. Department of the Treasury communicated the following through a press release:

These actions are part of our continuing campaign to hold accountable government officials and other actors involved in human rights abuse and corrupt activities. Senator Bautista used his position to engage in corruption, including profiting off of humanitarian efforts related to rebuilding Haiti. (*ESENDOM*, 2018; United States Department of the Treasury)

Bautista’s case mirrors that of several politicians. In a news report from 2010, reputable journalist, Nuria Piera, drew attention to Bautista’s rags to riches personal story, noting that Bautista, similar to many Dominican politicians, transformed himself, having accumulated an abundance of wealth upon entering politics (Myvideodellkilsy183, 2010; *ESENDOM*, 2018a; and *ESENDOM*, 2018c). Prominent individuals are polled in the video, including lawyer, Cándido Simó, and television personality, Domingo Bautista, with nearly all of them confirming Félix Bautista’s appearance in a music video filmed in New York in the mid 1980s. “Plátano maduro” (1984), a song popularized by “El Varón” Nelson Cordero, led to a music video, which provides a snapshot of the Dominican migrant experience in New York. One of these snapshots involves Dominicans at a bodega, with Cordero purchasing plátanos. The employee in the video responsible for charging the lead singer/customer bears a striking resemblance to Félix Bautista. Bautista’s appearance in the video is the talking point in Piera’s news story, with Piera questioning Bautista’s humble beginnings and pondering how he built wealth during his time as an elected official. At the time of the news report, Bautista had a program on network television, which remains on the air. *Iluminando el camino* features Bautista and documents his “humanitarian” efforts, wherein he makes donations to economically challenged Dominicans. Donations vary and, in the past, have come in the form of a house or for defraying the cost of a medical operation.

Music artists and television personalities have played a critical role in Dominican politics, with many enjoying political clout. Following in the footsteps of previous Dominican presidents before him, Danilo Medina (2012-2020) did his best to recruit three celebrities: Santiago Matías

“Alofoke,” Bolívar Valera, and Aquiles Correa. Although the three prospects were honored to be recruited and early on expressed their interest in becoming elected officials, word of the initiative quickly spread and several of these public figures backtracked due to criticism received from the public court (Santana, 2019a). Politics provides individuals with opportunities not available to those on the outside looking in. Individuals, including music artists, Raulín Rodríguez, Sergio Vargas, Héctor Acosta “El Torito,” and the late Johnny Ventura, are among several music artists who have held posts as elected officials. Elected the first mayor of the town of Santa María, Monte Cristi, under the PLD banner, Rodríguez has been accused of using his political power to enrich his pockets. Among the complaints raised against Rodríguez by members of the Frente Amplio de Lucha Popular (FALPO) are that Rodríguez has stolen land from agricultural workers and impoverished constituents in his community, using the National Police as personal bodyguards to intimidate members of his community (Santana, 2018d). Some socially conscious artists and musicians have run for office, condemning political corruption. One artist who regularly uses his voice to bring attention to corruption and injustice is affectionately known as El Torito. In 2019, music legend and elected official, Héctor Acosta “El Torito,” used social media platforms, urging fellow artists to denounce political corruption (Espinal, 2019). Not one to shy away from calling out elected officials, El Torito’s social media post went viral, receiving praise from fellow musicians and non-musicians alike.

One Catalyst of Marcha Verde: A History of Police Repression

In contrast to mainstream media in the Dominican Republic and the United States, *ESENDOM* has taken an independent stance, disseminating news from a people’s perspective. This digital online project has evolved as a response to traditional practices within Dominican media. A major movement *ESENDOM* has covered since its inception in 2017 is the Marcha Verde Movement (Green March Movement). For more than three years, the movement produced mass gatherings of people who were disillusioned with Dominican politics. Dominicans became weary of the 16-year rule of the Partido de la Liberación Dominicana (PLD), which lasted from 2004 to 2020, but extends even further when one considers Leonel Fernández’s first presidential term (1996-2000). During the PLD’s 20 years in power, only two men served as president: Fernández (1996-2000, 2004-2012) and Danilo Medina (2012-2020).

Like other nations in Latin America, the Dominican Constitution has seen several changes, revisions, or previous versions have been entirely replaced by a new constitution. Although praised by scholars and journalists as a progressive president who had been “governing quite well” (Castañeda, 2008, p. 133), the truth is that during Fernández’s tenure as president, in 2010, the Dominican Republic enacted one of the world’s most conservative constitutions, reversing human rights in the Dominican Republic. Article 37: Right to life notes “The right to life is inviolable from conception until death. The death penalty may not be established, pronounced, nor applied in any case.” Article 55: Rights of the family stipulates that “It [the family] is formed by natural or legal ties, by the free decision of a man and a woman to enter into marriage or by the responsible willingness to conform to it.” Articles 37 and 55, respectively, ban abortion and marriages that are not between parties that the State denotes as a man and a woman (Dominican Republic Const., 2010 art. XXXVIII; and Dominican Republic Const., 2010 art. LV).

Fernández’s 12 years in power are sometimes paralleled with Joaquín Balaguer’s second presidential reign, which lasted 12 years (1966-1978). Balaguer is a unique case in Dominican history, as his presidencies spanned multiple decades: 1960-1962, 1966-1978, and 1986-1996.

Balaguer's first presidential term occurred during Trujillo's 31-year dictatorship (1930-1961). Balaguer's infamous 12-year reign came to be as a result of political turmoil due to Trujillo's *ajusticiamiento* (assassination) in 1961, Juan Bosch's ouster as president—February 1963 to September 1963—due to collusion among conservative Dominicans and the United States who branded Bosch a Communist in 1963, and the Dominican Republic's Civil War of 1965. Although milder, the Balaguerato is at times viewed as a continuation of the Trujillato, wherein those who opposed Trujillo or Balaguer's governments, were often the recipients of severe punishment which included imprisonment, torture, or death. Several opponents of the Balaguerato, including journalists and intellectuals, disappeared while he held office. Some of the disappeared include journalist, Orlando Martínez Howley (1975), and university professor, Narciso "Narciso" González (1994). Even though a select group of scholars do not brand Balaguer a killer, the majority agree that he was complicit in the deaths of political adversaries. As noted by Emilio Betances (2005), page 333 of Balaguer's memoirs is blank with a message stating that the contents of what Balaguer wrote "will remain mute, but it will speak one day so its voice can be heard by history" (p. 45).¹³

Police repression in the Dominican Republic is as active in the 21st century as it was during the 20th century. Like police repression during the Balaguerato, many instances of police violence have taken place since the arrival of the PLD. Per eyewitness accounts, Juan Almonte Herrera disappeared after being taken into custody in Santo Domingo on September 28, 2009, during Leonel's third presidential term (Amnesty International CZ, 2012; Metro, 2012).¹⁴ Joining organizations like Amnesty International and media outlets not sponsored by the State, ESENDOM has joined the efforts of independent journalists aiming to disseminate news of people and groups who have suffered from police repression. One example is the case of Ney. It is alleged that in 2015, artist Nelson "Ney" Rafael Díaz Henríquez was viciously murdered by the National Police. ESENDOM's journalists communicated with Ney's loved ones, resulting in English and Spanish articles that aimed to spread awareness about Ney's death, a tragedy that has mostly been ignored by the media (Santana, 2018b; Santana, 2018c). Mental health is still taboo in many circles. Therefore, it is plausible that the taboo surrounding mental health in Dominican society has played a role in the lack of coverage paid to Ney's death, as Ney was naked when the police intercepted him on Avenida 27 de Febrero in Santo Domingo.

Marcha Verde and (Momentary) Fall of the Partido de la Liberación Dominicana

ESENDOM's video, photographs, and interviews with activists document the Marcha Verde events both in the Dominican Republic and the United States that protest political corruption and police repression. This worldwide anti-corruption movement led to the eventual political defeat of the PLD in the Dominican Republic's presidential elections of 2020. How did we get here?

On January 22, 2017, Dominicans and allies took to the streets in the Dominican Republic and across the globe to voice their disdain for the Dominican government's history of repression, corruption, and impunity. Tens of thousands of people—dressed in green as a symbol of hope—marched in Santo Domingo from Avenida 27 de Febrero and Calle 30 de Marzo to the Parque de la Independencia. Participants walked, demanding transparency, that government authorities take action to curb corruption, and bring to justice those involved with repression and political corruption.¹⁵ Using the party model theoretical framework developed by Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair, social scientist Jacqueline Jiménez Polanco branded the PLD a "party cartel" due to the PLD using state resources to maintain its position of power (Jiménez Polanco, 2016, Katz & Mair, 1995; and Katz & Mair 2002). A heterogenous movement, Marcha Verde participants include

working- and middle-class people, students, children, informal workers, people with disabilities, artists, feminists, LGBTQIA communities, left-wing activists, religious groups, non-profit organizations, intellectuals, professionals, Dominicans of Haitian descent, migrants across the globe, celebrities, and people from all walks of life. This major, monumental march in Santo Domingo was replicated across the globe, with Dominicans and allies spearheading similar protests in places with a significant and passionate population of Dominicans like Germany; Spain; Washington Heights, New York; New Jersey; and Puerto Rico. Although the *Marcha Verde* movement alone did not result in the political defeat of the PLD, it contributed to a watershed moment in Dominican Republic history: the temporary end of the PLD with the election of Luis Abinader as president in 2020.

Documenting Dominican Activism on a Transnational Scale

Mobilizations Against the Political Elite

Documenting the Dominican community via literature and audiovisual content has been the essence of *ESENDOM* since its founding. Through written and visual lenses, *ESENDOM* has captured mobilizations against government corruption, anti-femicide protests, and Dominican-Haitian solidarity, among notable activities within Dominican activism.

ESENDOM is fueled, in part, by citizen journalism, as opposed to traditional media. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook have led to an explosion of citizen photojournalism in service of social justice. Taking full advantage of these tools, *ESENDOM* has an account with the aforementioned social media platforms, incorporating posts into articles. YouTube plays a crucial multi-part role in *ESENDOM*, as this platform makes accessible videos produced by *ESENDOM* and hosts them. Furthermore, this style of capturing and documenting the Dominican community allows *ESENDOM* to provide a first-hand account of events that may not be available to scholars who typically analyze events “once the dust settles.” Although sociologist Emelio Betances (2020) is correct in many of the assertions he makes about the *Marcha Verde* movement, his analysis is not completely accurate. Betances (2020) is correct in writing that the political parties that supported the movement were only interested in weakening the PLD. He is also partly correct in asserting that, thus far, the movement has failed to bring to justice those responsible for the Odebrecht corruption scandal (Betances, 2020).¹⁶ However, Betances’ (2020) analysis notes the Odebrecht scandal as the main catalyst of the movement, which is not completely accurate, since the Odebrecht scandal—spanning multiple Latin American nations and countries across the globe such as Angola and Mozambique—is one case in a line of noteworthy examples of corruption in the Dominican Republic. Betances’ (2020) article focuses on the Medina administration (2012-2020), disregarding the presidencies of Hipólito Mejía (2000-2004), where the Odebrecht scandal can be traced, and Leonel Fernández’s last two presidential terms (2004-2012). Mobilizations in cities outside the Dominican Republic are also overlooked in the analysis provided by Betances. Complementing *ESENDOM*’s rich audiovisual content, writers published articles that reported on the Odebrecht scandal and several cases of corruption (*ESENDOM*, 2017a; *ESENDOM*, 2017b; *ESENDOM*, 2018a; *ESENDOM*, 2018b; *ESENDOM*, 2018c).

Documenting the *Marcha Verde* movement and related protests, *ESENDOM*’s team of journalists and photojournalists attended multiple events across the cities of Santo Domingo and Santiago in the Dominican Republic, as well as New York City. Some *Marcha Verde* and anti-corruption marches covered by *ESENDOM*’s team include the July 16, 2017, march in Washington Heights, New York; *Marcha del Millón* in Santo Domingo on August 12, 2018; and *Marcha del Cibao* in

Santiago on July 14, 2019 (ESENDOM & Espinoza Peña, 2018a; Santana, 2017a; Santana, 2017b; Santana, 2017c; and Santana, 2019c). *ESENDOM*'s archives includes videography of the marches as well as interviews with common people and public figures such as archeologist, Ángel Caba Fuentes; Mario Fernández (president of the non-profit Santiago Somos Todos); and journalist and writer, Sara Pérez (Santana, 2017a; Santana, 2017b; Santana, 2017c).

ESENDOM made a connection between two monumental occurrences that took place in the summer of 2019: the resignation of Puerto Rico's Governor, Ricky Roselló, and Danilo Medina's announcement in which he declared that he was no longer going to campaign for a third consecutive presidential term. A third consecutive presidential bid would have required modifications to the Dominican Constitution, as presidents can only serve two consecutive terms per the current iteration of the Dominican Constitution. Although *Marcha Verde*'s focus and that of massive mobilizations in the Dominican Republic tend to hone in on Santo Domingo, the Republic's capital, Santiago's *Marcha del Cibao* on July 14 played a key role in Medina's decision. Scholars like Betances, as well as political elites and major media outlets in the Dominican Republic have called the efforts of *Marcha Verde* a failure, and yet there have been triumphs, as captured by *ESENDOM*.

As noted in the previous section, *Marcha Verde* is not a homogenous movement, as it also includes right-wing elites, political elites, and elected officials. Betances (2020) notes that *Marcha Verde*'s call for President Medina's resignation divided its members, as some moderates felt the electoral process was the proper way to decide the fate of the next administration. This is a critical piece that has not received the attention and analysis it warrants, and, in fact, scholars of *Marcha Verde* have failed to connect the *Marcha del Cibao* with the occurrences of the Ricky renuncia protests in Puerto Rico during the summer of 2019—a connection made by *ESENDOM* upon Medina's admission that he would not seek reelection (Santana, 2019c). *ESENDOM* argued two points: 1) The resignation of Governor Roselló after massive protests by Puerto Ricans prompted Medina to rethink his election bid. 2) The aforementioned resignation coupled with the activism of Dominicans during the *Marcha del Cibao*, in which a unified heterogenous coalition demanded that Medina not seek a third presidential term, led to the end of the PLD's consecutive 16-year rule in office.

A year earlier, on the morning of August 13, 2018, government officials published pro-government advertisements on the front page of major print news outlets (e.g., *HOY*, *Listín Diario*, *El Día*, and *Diario Libre*), highlighting the "positive" work being conducted by Medina's administration. The tactic aimed to blackout coverage of the previous day's massive demonstrations, drawing hundreds of thousands of protestors (Rodríguez & Santana, 2018). Not only did *ESENDOM* provide an analysis, but it also shared images and social media posts from that Sunday's demonstrations as evidence to debunk lies pushed by the PLD-led administration where they vehemently claimed that the previous day's demonstrations were an utter failure.

Dominican Blackness and Dominican-Haitian Solidarity

Dominicans are often demonized and labeled anti-Black by scholars and authors unfamiliar with Dominican Blackness. *ESENDOM*, however, has engaged with several aspects of Dominican Blackness as well as the concept of anti-Blackness. U.S. media and some U.S. authors such as scholar, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and journalist, Michele Wucker, often depict Dominicans as anti-Black and anti-Haitian. Using a U.S.-centric view on Blackness, these scholars and content producers resort to making broad generalizations that demonize Dominicans and depict

Dominican and Haitian people as warring enemies, without providing a nuanced, balanced analysis of the relationship between Haitians and Dominicans. In her book, *Why the Cocks Fight*, Wucker (1999) provides her account of the history between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, analyzing this history through the prism of cockfighting, noting “[t]he cockfight is not about the roosters. It is about the men. That is the essence of the symbol of Hispaniola’s two countries, where cockfighting and life imitate each other” (p. 26). Through her analogy, Wucker (1999) relegates Dominicans and Haitians to animals—warring roosters, a common theme that colonial-dominant classes often imposed upon people of color. Wucker’s (1999) continuous use of Papa Doc and Baby Doc to reference former Haitian presidential father-son strongmen, François Duvalier and Jean-Claude Duvalier, is in fact, indicative of the lackadaisical respect that some thinkers have toward Haitians and the overall Caribbean population.

Wucker is a non-person of color and accomplished author, whereas Gates is a Black scholar with a distinguished career in the Black diaspora. Gates, however, lacks background expertise in Dominican-Haitian relations and Dominican Blackness, which comes across in his perspective on Dominican race relations. In the first episode of his renowned documentary and book, *Black in Latin America*, Gates (2011) explores the historical relationship between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Soundbites and unfounded simplistic arguments prevail as, according to Gates (2011), Haitians embraced their Blackness, as opposed to Dominicans, who historically have done everything possible to negate their Blackness by embracing European culture and eradicating the legacy of their African ancestors. One who watches the documentary or reads Gates’s book (2011), also titled *Black in Latin America*, and is unfamiliar with Dominican Blackness, may easily believe that all Dominicans are anti-Haitian and anti-Black, with no sense that Dominican culture (religion, music, quotidian life, etc.) are all influenced by their African heritage. Although there are individuals from outside a culture who have produced stupendous scholarship and non-scholarly work, including both Gates (2011) and Wucker (1999), the work as outlined here may at times lack the sensitivity needed to discuss the nuances of a culture that is new to them, leading to the dehumanization of Dominicans while simultaneously promoting division among Haitians and Dominicans. At the same time, both Gates (2011) and Wucker (1999) erase the long history of solidarity on the island. One cannot deny that tensions exist among people who trace their ancestry to Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Yet, there also have been several instances of collaborations, as captured by ESENDOM’s team.

A closer look at the concrete reality facing ordinary people in the Dominican Republic runs counter to the idea that Haitians and Dominicans are engaged in a permanent conflict. One instance of Dominican-Haitian solidarity revolves around the TC/0168 ruling, viewed rightfully by many as an anti-Haitian political tactic. On September 23, 2013, the Constitutional Tribunal of the Dominican Republic ruled that Juliana Pierre, born in the Dominican Republic to Haitian migrants in 1984, was not a citizen of the nation because her parents were not in the country legally (Hintzen, 2014; Perdomo Cordero, 2016; Shipley, 2015; “Stateless,” 2011). Although many Dominicans and most elected officials in the Dominican Republic supported this ruling, a large number of Dominicans within the Dominican Republic and abroad vocalized their disdain for the ruling, participating in public acts of defiance that included protests and panels.

Through its photographic and video lenses, ESENDOM documented several events that not only captured protests opposing the TC/0168 ruling, but Dominican-Haitian solidarity. In an event organized by Anthony Stevens-Acevedo, a longtime educator and community activist of Dominican descent, activists marched from 207th Street and Seamen Avenue in Inwood, Manhattan, to the Consulate General of the Dominican Republic in Times Square. Organized

approximately two months after the TC/0168 ruling and taking place on November 16, 2013, the march's purpose was twofold: 1) to bring attention to what many perceived to be a racist ruling targeting people of Dominican and of Haitian descent and 2) to deliver a letter opposing the Dominican Government's TC/0168 ruling to an official Dominican government entity. Continuing with the momentum of this march, *ESENDOM* documented the "(Un)Making a Dominican" panel discussion held at the Graduate Center of The City University of New York on December 5, 2013. Co-sponsored by We Are All Dominican (WAAD), the event drew a large crowd and featured several speakers including activist, Rocio Silverio (Dominicanos por Derecho); historian, Dr. Edward Paulino (John Jay College of Criminal Justice and Border of Lights); documentarian, Miriam Neptune (Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees); anthropologist, Dr. Samuel Martinez (University of Connecticut); lawyer, Angela Fernandez (Northern Manhattan Immigrant Rights Coalition); and lawyer, Nassef Perdomo who resides in the Dominican Republic.

Nearly seven years later, *ESENDOM* interviewed Amarilys Estrella, a leading member of We Are All Dominican (WAAD) (Rodríguez & Santana, 2020). When *ESENDOM* first met Estrella in 2013, she was a doctoral student at the Graduate Center of CUNY; today, she holds a doctoral degree in Sociocultural Anthropology. In this interview, Estrella discusses her recent article on denationalization and racist policies implemented by the Dominican government that affect Dominicans of Haitian descent as well as the rising grassroots activism in Dominican society. In addition to capturing moments of Dominican-Haitian solidarity as well as conducting interviews and writing about Dominican-Haitian relations, *ESENDOM*'s team has mounted panels and workshops. Editor, Amaury Rodríguez, organized the panel, "Hispaniola in Revolt: Critical Perspectives on Haiti and Santo Domingo Panel Discussion." Panelists included France Francois, Mitch Abidor, and Virgilio Oscar Arán. Panelists:

looked at the current Haitian political crisis and popular revolt; the Haitian revolution, its emancipatory legacy of liberation and contradictions; the lessons of the 1946 and 1986 revolts in Haiti; race and class in Santo Domingo; the 1965 Dominican revolution as well as prospects for cross-border and international solidarity and revolution on the island and beyond. (*ESENDOM*, 2020)

Mobilization against Femicide and Violence Toward Women

More recent mobilizations documented by *ESENDOM*'s team are protests and demonstrations that bring attention to violence against women. Dominicans in the Dominican Republic and cities with large numbers of Dominicans—such as New York—have spearheaded events that bring attention to femicide, and the overall acts of violence committed against the bodies of girls and women. Dominican women and their experiences have paved the way for days of remembrance that bring attention to violence toward women. November 25th has been adopted as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. This date forces the world to remember the brutal assassination of the three Mirabal sisters (Patria, Minerva, and María Teresa) whose lives were ended by Trujillo's forces on November 25, 1960.¹⁷ Another tragic event occurred on September 26, 1999, when Gladys Ricart, a Dominican woman from Washington Heights, was murdered by a former boyfriend. Since September 26, 2001, activists have organized the annual Gladys Ricart and Victims of Domestic Violence Memorial Walk/Brides' March to raise awareness about domestic abuse.

Following the tragic deaths of the Mirabal sisters and Ricart, Dominicans across borders continue to raise awareness pertinent to domestic abuse, advocating for women's rights. Two events

documented by *ESENDOM* include the international #NiunaMás movement on November 26, 2018, and Marcha de las Mariposas that took place on November 25, 2019, with both events commemorating International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women in Santo Domingo (*ESENDOM* & Espinoza Peña, 2018b; *ESENDOM* & Espinoza Peña, 2019). During the #NiunaMás protests in 2018, activists demanded the legalization of abortion, as well as laws that punish femicides and guarantee social equality. Images from both events are courtesy of Dominican-Ecuadorian activist, Lorena Espinoza Peña, an *ESENDOM* correspondent residing in the Dominican Republic.

Conclusion

During the early years of *ESENDOM*, some scholars scoffed at the project. A mentor of one of its founders once referred to *ESENDOM* as “*una porquería*” (a piece of crap). Internalizing the experience, this founding member disconnected from the project for several years, sporadically contributing content—a decision that led to a dormant period for this online cultural magazine. Fast-forward to 2017, when *ESENDOM* relaunched, and through 2022, many of *ESENDOM*’s interviewees and featured content include scholars and academics. The aim of this article was threefold: 1) to provide a snapshot of transnational Dominican activism through the lens of *ESENDOM*’s writers, photojournalists, and videographers; 2) to argue that *ESENDOM*, although not a formal repository, is an electronic resource that documents, preserves, and makes accessible content pertinent to the transnational Dominican community, thus fulfilling a need that structured entities and more formal institutions may be unable to fulfill; and 3) to center 21st century Dominican digital activist journalism as a significant tool to raise awareness about the abuses committed by the governments of Trujillo and Balaguer. While *ESENDOM* can be viewed as an informal digital repository or an e-resource, the authors do not engage with the literature or best practices in the realm of digital repositories or related areas, such as digital preservation or web archiving. Although *ESENDOM* is documenting the transnational Dominican community, its founders may want to strongly consider transforming the platform into a more formal digital repository to ensure the preservation of the community they are documenting.

Endnotes

¹ <https://esendom.com>

² <https://remolacha.net/>

³ Although not an exhaustive list, partners include Archives Nationales d’Haïti, Biblioteca Nacional Aruba, Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat, Caribbean Studies Association, Florida International University (FIU), Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra (PUCMM) in the Dominican Republic, University of The Bahamas, and Universidad de Oriente in Venezuela.

⁴ As per its website, “The Latin America North East Libraries Consortium (LANE) is formed by a group of academic and research libraries in the northeastern United States committed to building and maintaining Latin American studies collections.” Similarly, “LACLI is a collective effort to create a warehouse of online free e-resources with Latin American, Caribbean, U.S. Latinx, and Iberian full content.”

⁵ Although *ESENDOM* is not a formal digital repository, one of its founders and current editors is a professionally trained librarian and archivist with more than 10 years of experience.

⁶ The CUNY Dominican Studies Institute was founded in 1992, its Dominican Library in 1994, and the Dominican Archives in 2002.

⁷ Retiring from the CUNY DSI in 2022, Chief Archivist, Idilio Gracia Peña, served as commissioner of the New York City Department of Records and Information Services (DORIS), director of the New York City Municipal Archives, and project archivist for the Center for Puerto Rican Studies Archives. Although he made his mark in the archival world, he started his distinguished career as an information professional in the library while serving in the United States military. For more information about Idilio Gracia Peña, see CUNY Dominican Studies Institute (n.d.).

⁸ CUNY is also home to the Haitian Studies Institute (HSI). Similar to Centro and CUNY DSI when they were first established, HSI is in the early stages and does not yet have its own physical archives and library.

⁹ Contrary to popular belief, initially, Communists were allowed to organize in the Dominican Republic during the early years of the Trujillato. As time progressed with John McCarthy leading a witch hunt against alleged Communists in the United States, Trujillo's forces quickly mobilized to distance themselves from Communism, going as far as branding political enemies Communists. They also published several anti-Communist books including the *White Book of Communism in Dominican Republic* (1951) published by the Dominican Republic Ministry for Home Affairs and *La democracia en función de éxito; democracia al comunismo* (Lamarque Henríquez, 1951).

¹⁰ Some biographies were commissioned, others were written by personal friends or associates.

¹¹ *ESENDOM* has provided a platform for some of its regular writers. Although *ESENDOM*'s collaborators publish articles in multiple sections, some writers have their own sections within *ESENDOM*: "Diario de una tesis en proceso" includes writings by Daniel Infante, while Graciela Azcárate has reworked previously published essays, sharing these with *ESENDOM*'s audience in the section titled "Historia de vida."

¹² These are some of several works devoted to United States foreign policy and interventions across the world, particularly in Latin America.

¹³ Balaguer published multiple books, but the memoirs Betances is referencing is Balaguer, J. (1988). *Memorias de un cortesano de la era de Trujillo*. (2nd ed.). Editorial Corripio.

¹⁴ It could be the case that those who abducted Herrera were criminals dressed in police garb with no connection to the National Police. There is precedent of criminals passing as members of the National Police.

¹⁵ There are multiple green movements across the globe. The original, non-related Marcha Verde that took place in 1975 is part of the decolonization struggle. This event involved a mass demonstration coordinated by the Moroccan government in relation to a territory dispute with Spain in the Sahara region in Africa. Similarly, there is the Marea Verde movement in Latin America—a feminist movement intertwined with reproductive rights activism that appeared in Argentina in 2003. In addition to police repression, corruption, and impunity, Dominicans who have participated in Marcha Verde have joined millions across Latin America (and beyond) to protest the Odebrecht scandal involving multiple Latin American governments including those in Argentina, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, and Brazil—where the conglomerate is headquartered. For more information, see (Rodríguez, 2017).

¹⁶ Few members of the PLD appear to have been brought to justice under the incoming administration of President Luis Abinader, who is a member of the Partido Revolucionario Moderno (PRM). One critique is that those arrested have been low-ranking politicians and their

allies. One ranking official, former Attorney General Jean Alain Rodríguez, however, was prevented from boarding a plane from the Dominican Republic to Florida and was subsequently arrested.

¹⁷ In 1981, activists organized the first Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encuentros Conference in Bogotá, Colombia, where they subsequently marked November 25 as the day to raise awareness about violence against women. Entities such as the United Nations and the Dominican Republic government adopted November 25 to commemorate and bring awareness to International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

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