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Interpreting The Latin American Past
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This paper analyzes the long-lasting conflict between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, focusing on political and social factors and examining race's position in the discordance.

The Dominican Republic and Haiti both occupy the island of Hispaniola, located in the Caribbean; historically, the relationship between these nations has been tense despite their proximity. Spaniard colonizers were the first to land on the island in 1492: Christopher Columbus called it the island of Hispaniola (Alexandra Sylver). The Taino people initially inhabited the island called Quisqueya. Two centuries later, the Spanish gave up a portion of the island to the French in what became Saint Domingue, now known as Haiti (Sylver). During the colonization period, Europeans began importing enslaved Africans through the transatlantic slave trade, hence the death of natives due to the treatment received and diseases brought by the Europeans.

Following numerous slave revolutions in 1804, Haiti gained independence from the French. In 1822, after a diplomatic attempt to unify the island, Haiti invaded the Dominican Republic, conquering the island for 22 years (Sylver). The Dominican Republic became independent in 1844 (Sylver). It was marking the beginning of the turbulent relationship between them. Europeans colonized both countries; however, their cultural and ethnic make-up differ. The presence of Spaniards in the Dominican Republic, who inevitably mixed with natives and enslaved Africans, resulted in a mixed race called Mulattos; therefore, the country's make-up consisted of whites and blacks but mostly mulattos who adopted Spanish as the native language. Meanwhile, Haiti's population consists of black slave descendants and mulattos, with the native

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language being French and Creole. Mulatto is no longer used to describe race as it is considered offensive.

Haiti and the Dominican Republic's economic and democratic struggles lasted for many years. According to Sylver, "The Spanish took back the Dominican Republic in the early 1860s, and for periods during the 20th century, the U.S. occupied both nations, supposedly to restore order but also, in the face of European threats, to assert its influence in the western hemisphere". The social stratification settled by the Europeans deeply scarred these nations, fragmenting them not only by skin color and class but also by gender. Such instability between these nations constituted the foundation for the current struggles.

A period that further deteriorated the relationship between these nations was the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo. "1930-1961" (Anayah Hogue). During his dictatorship, he tried to fulfill his anti-Haitian agenda. His goal was to repatriate the Haitian people to their native land without considering how intertwined the Dominican and Haitian people were, particularly at the border where many Haitians and Dominicans lived together. His unsuccessful deportation attempts led him to grow angry, leading to one of the most brutal massacres in Dominican and Haitian history. "In the 1930's. Rafael Trujillo led Dominican troops to commit a mass genocide of Haitians over a six-day period. Over 20,000 Haitians were murdered during this time period, which is now referred to as the Parsley Massacre. This violent massacre still shapes the ideas of the Dominican people and government and encourages racism and prejudiced sentiments towards Haitian, Black, and dark-skinned people to this day" (Hogue).

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In Haiti, Francois Duvalier was succeeded by his son Jean-Claude Duvalier under the regime that started in 1957(Diana Roy. Rocio Cara Labrador). The Haitian people were depleted of essential resources. "Their twenty-nine-year rule was characterized by corruption that drained the nation's coffers and human rights violations that left an estimated thirty thousand people dead and missing. Few countries have struggled with development like Haiti. The Caribbean state has weathered multiple foreign interventions, chronic political instability, social unrest, and devastating natural disasters" (Roy. Labrador).

Haiti's political instability and poverty led its people to seek a better life in other countries. The steady growth of the Dominican Republic made it a good place for some to start over. According to Carrie Gibson, "Haitians have long been migrant workers, with many finding seasonal employment in sugar cane fields or other low-wage work." However, Allie Stein stated, "Despite both cultures having African ancestry, Dominicans have openly discriminated against Haitians because they perceive them to be more black." The Dominican government has made continuous efforts to eradicate the Haitians, constituting an anti-Haitian culture amongst the Dominican people.

Most recently, "In 2010, when an earthquake devastated Haiti, the Dominican Republic was quick to its aid and provided food, water, and rescue workers" (Allie Stein). The Dominican Republic, among other countries, aided Haiti and provided refuge in efforts to help with the devastating natural disaster that left millions without a home. Nevertheless, Gibson explains that three years after the earthquake, "The goodwill seems to have dissipated and old tensions resurfaced. The Dominican Republic's highest court ruled to revoke the citizenship of children of

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illegal Haitian migrant workers - a measure to be applied to anyone born after 1929." This constitutional court decision seems to be based on the long history of prejudice and discriminatory practices against the Haitian people.

Following the citizenship revocation ruling in 2013, "The Dominican military reported it sent away some 47,000 Haitians in the past year, up from 21,000 the year before" (Gibson). This unfortunate situation has left many Haitians who consider themselves Dominicans stranded back in a country they have no family in or know nothing of, Tension between these nations has created a hostile environment for Haitian residents living in the Dominican Republic, creating violent outbreaks (Stein).

Last year, in 2023, Haiti began a humanitarian crisis, enduring political, economic, and security challenges that have extended into this year: gang violence in the streets and against public institutions has left over 2500 dead and hundreds of families displaced: the precarious and dangerous situation has incited ("Deadly Violence in Haiti at Record High"). "For the urgent deployment of the Multinational Security Support Mission authorized by the 15-member body in October 2023" (Deadly Violence in Haiti at Record High").

These events have cited security concerns for the Dominican Government, which has decided to increase its military surveillance across the border (Hogue). according to Hogue, "The Dominican Republic made a move to close its borders to Haiti. This was a calculated decision influenced by multiple factors, but at the forefront of these considerations are heightened concerns over immigration."

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The differences in framework and resources, combined with the monetary disparities, have left a complicated relationship in which the dreams of Haitians in search of a better life frequently intertwine with Dominican national interests. The Haitian people have suffered immense neglect and instability at the hands of their government, but also at the hands of a neighbor whose discriminatory practices have failed not just Haiti but the Dominican people as we share so much history. To address the security concerns and immigration issues, the international community must support and assist Haiti, focusing on promoting stability, economic development, and good governance. Collaborative efforts between the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and other countries can help create opportunities for Haitians, improve border management, and foster a more cooperative relationship between the two nations.

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