

## PART THREE: BRIDGES BETWEEN

Immigrants on arriving in Lawrence were usually too weak and disorganized to accomplish much until the end of the first decade, when they managed to found a church. In the second decade a nationality established social clubs, protective societies, cooperative stores, and organizations that cemented ties with the homeland. The third decade produced intellectual achievements such as newspapers, debating circles, and political clubs, while in the fourth and fifth the immigrants began to unite with other societies throughout the state and form hyphenated clubs. (Cole, 1963:139)

...global restructuring has altered the socioeconomic context in which migrants actions are embedded. Both in the United States and in the Dominican Republic, migrants have seen labor markets and other economic conditions change drastically. New opportunities have opened and some old ones shut down... Dominican migrants are evolving into a social group whose economic, social, and cultural territory transcends national boundaries. (Guarnizo, 1994:162)

It will be helpful to frame the discussion of community development efforts with a brief summary of the differences and similarities in the contexts for present-day and earlier transnational practices<sup>1</sup>, in order to separate out what have always been the challenges to the political and economic advancement of culturally (and often linguistically) marginalized immigrant groups from some of the newer dilemmas that face Dominicans in Lawrence today.

In previous chapters I have emphasized many of the continuities between the Dominican immigration experience and earlier immigrant groups. I have noted that repatriation—the act of returning to one's homeland—was common earlier in the century, as was circulation and seasonal employment<sup>2</sup>. Remittances have been a signature of nearly every immigrant group, even those political refugees who had little prospect of returning home. For those not barred from returning, travel and communication methods were not insurmountable barriers, as indicated by the Irish “group excursions” mentioned in Chapter Two. Finally—and perhaps most importantly—the *idea* that one's stay in the U.S. was temporary was a common one<sup>3</sup>. As Piore (1979:50) observed, “Most such migrations [labor migrations] in the beginning are *temporary*. The typical migrant *plans* to spend only a short time in the industrial area; he then expects to return home. *Staying* represents a change of plans.”

However, there are a number of important (and sometimes contradictory) differences that mark the context in which Dominican (and other) im/migrants are currently operating. Foremost

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Peggy Levitt for her insights and loan of a forthcoming manuscript in helping me clarify some of my thinking here.

<sup>2</sup> For example, as Roberts (1995:48) observes, 45% of Italians and 33% of Poles entering the United States between 1899 and 1924 had returned to Europe by 1924; many English mill workers regularly cycled back and forth between mills in England and New England

<sup>3</sup> This was perhaps more true for the French-Canadians and the Italians than for some of the Irish, who were fleeing unlivable conditions (famine, starvation) at home.

among these are: 1) As the Dominican awareness of “being here because the U.S. was there” demonstrates, the connections between sending and receiving countries are different than they were 100 or even 50 years ago. The U.S. was not responsible for the Irish potato famine or Turkish imperialism, but it has been intimately politically and economically involved in the Dominican Republic; migrations flows thus occur in a context in which national boundary lines are already less clear on a practical level. 2) In an interesting counterpoint to this, the ideological boundary lines have become more clearly drawn at a number of different levels: the historical consolidation of national identity<sup>4</sup>, the more recent re-emergence of nativist discourses that attempt to define such categories as “American” in an exclusive fashion, and the concomitant (or perhaps slightly prior) emergence of American multiculturalism as a context in which maintaining and valorizing one’s cultural traditions and identity is legitimated. 3) The restructuring of the economy on a global scale has resulted in more polarized, unstable labor markets in many parts of both the service and manufacturing sectors, offering new immigrants less opportunity for economic advancement. 4) Advances in information, media, transportation, and communication technologies facilitate more rapid and frequent back and forth movement of both people and ideas in sending and receiving communities, sustaining relationships that might otherwise become attenuated; television (as well as film and home videos) allows images of life in each place to permeate the other<sup>5</sup>.

In the context of these larger continuities and changes, aspects of which I have attempted to elaborate on in previous chapters, the adaptive transnational practices in which many Dominicans engage are part of a long tradition of similar immigrant strategies. Given the particular intersection of the City’s history and economic structure (including its place in the regional economy) with these larger forces, I will attempt to elucidate some of the implications of Dominican transnational practices for achieving political and economic power in the City. At the same time, I will touch on some of the other challenges that confront this group—challenges that have always been a part of life in the Immigrant City.

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<sup>4</sup> Although we take the nation-state and the idea of nationalism for granted, these entities are a relatively recent invention historically speaking (Anderson, 1983)—and perhaps more so for Dominicans, who experienced an intensification of this process under Trujillo. I actually think this is especially interesting considering that many of those writing about globalization and the rise of the transnational corporation have argued that the nation-state is increasingly obsolete. As an ideological construct, “the nation” is proving very problematic—which is precisely when nationalist discourses tend to re-emerge...

<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, television also allows immigrants to maintain a connection to culture or the homeland without necessarily achieving this through connections to other people in the immigrant community.

## CHAPTER FIVE IMPLICATIONS...

*Si hubiera un puente, todo el mundo vendría aquí.*  
(If there were a bridge, the whole world would come here.)<sup>1</sup>

*Yo te puedo asegurar que si hubiera un puente de aquí para allá, todos íbamos para allá... vamos y venimos diario.*

(I can assure you that if there were a bridge from here to there, all of us would be going there. Going and coming daily.)<sup>2</sup>

### ***American Dreaming, Island Dreaming: The Double Bind***

One curious aspect of the relationship between the Island and the City is the way that each place functions as a safety valve for the other. For instance, if you will recall the brief discussion of the labor organizing situation in the Dominican Republic, the fact that migration exists as an option (for those who can gather the financial and social resources) tends to dilute workers' responses to unsatisfactory working conditions. Thus, low wages and repression of union activity in the free trade zones, or blocked social mobility for politically unconnected members of the middle class, leads less to collective advocacy for change than to individual decisions to migrate to a better life in the glamorous United States<sup>3</sup>. At the same time, as we saw in Chapter Four, dreams of the life one left behind on the Island exert a powerful pull on Dominicans in the City—perhaps reinforced by the inevitable disillusionment with life in the States. Because many Dominicans, at least initially, believe their sojourn here to be a temporary measure aimed at gathering the resources necessary to be able to return, this limits the investment they are willing or able to make (again, initially) in improving the conditions of life for their community (as a whole)<sup>4</sup> in the

<sup>1</sup> Interview, 3/1/99 (Man, 50s, former Constitutionalist).

<sup>2</sup> Interview, 3/5/99 (Woman, 40s, teacher).

<sup>3</sup> Which, since it drains the country of those with both resources and initiative, can worsen the situation. In this way, the Dominican government's support for emigration is a short-sighted response to a deep-rooted problem.

<sup>4</sup> People are often significantly invested in bettering their own lives (or their families' lives), but do not always make the connection between community empowerment and individual advancement.

*Lawrence is a place that has a lot of prejudice, and people don't want any changes and people don't want to understand the reality, that the city is changing... the reality is that a lot of Hispanic kids are going to school and they're not being treated fairly. I feel so uncomfortable and I know that as part of the Hispanic community I have a mouth to cry for them, to speak up for them. My community, they're too "yes, yes, yes, I'm sorry, I'm sorry." But sorry of what? You work, you put a little piece by, you pay taxes, why do you feel so guilty? Because you couldn't get an education? My community is now moving because they are afraid, they don't want to be laid off, they don't want to confront anybody. A lot of injustice is going on.*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Interview, 4/8/99 (Woman, 40s, teacher, 25 years in the U.S.).

City. As was exemplified in the case of Pedro in Chapter Four, many of the more difficult or unpleasant aspects of life in the U.S., such as dead-end jobs or casual discrimination, become endurable when viewed from the vantage point of possible return.

### *Expectations of Stay*

As Roberts (1995) notes, a "crucial aspect of immigrant adjustment" is not simply the length of time one has spent in the receiving country, but the "socially expected duration"—the *belief* an immigrant holds about the length of his or her sojourn. Because "immigration flows through social networks," this belief is rooted not only in an individual's experience, but also in his or her knowledge about the customary migration patterns of friends, family, and compatriots; moreover, it changes over time as new information about possible courses of action and outcomes becomes available. For instance, "a single unexpected event, such as a change of job, may modify an individual's expectation of stay and capacity to contribute to a household<sup>6</sup>. But it takes many unexpected events to modify or change a group expectation of how long an individual in that particular role position *should* stay or what he or she *should* contribute" (1995:54) [my emphasis]. The Dominican community in Lawrence is particularly interesting because there are signs that the group expectation of stay (and thus of the potential rewards of political action) may be changing, as I shall discuss below. However, this process of change is complicated by the fact that new immigrants continue to arrive daily, many of them (by virtue of family ties) now coming directly from the Island. As the community is constantly replenished by new members, many of whom are still operating from a (modified) "birds of passage" mindset, the belief in the temporary nature of one's stay remains a strong trend. Moreover, there is little evidence that flows from the Island will cease in the coming years; as one respondent commented, "*Es decir que cada más día habrá más inmigrantes porque hay menos esperanza*" ("it is said that each new day there will be more immigrants because there is less hope"). Insofar as migration may worsen conditions back home, by facilitating a "brain drain<sup>7</sup>," exacerbating differences between migrant and non-migrant households, or re-channeling labor militancy (among other impacts) it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

<sup>6</sup> Antonio's story, while not typical, is illustrative of this point. He came to Lawrence from the Dominican Republic with his wife in 1987 (his mother-in-law was already here) and found work as a teacher's aide in the school where his daughter was enrolled, but then the school canceled the program he had been working with. He came back home very discouraged; then, as he tells it, "something incredible happened. When I was sitting in my living room thinking on what to do, the phone rang. I picked up the phone and a man who was the boss of my son asked me for my son and then I said: "He is not at home at home" and then I hung up. The phone rang again and the man asked me: "What are you doing at home now? Why are you not working? Oh, okay, I see what happened." And then I received another phone call when he asked me: "Would you like to work at the High School because my wife is working with people at the High School who are recruiting Spanish-speaking teachers and they need one who can help teaching math." Then I told him that I was interested and this very same day I went to the High School and they hired me to work as a teacher aide... then I started to help in math teaching and then I became by myself a math teacher and then I moved to science teacher. I went to Lowell University and got the education degree and got my certification... then I was a science teacher and I have been teaching science for ten years."

<sup>7</sup> Grasmuck and Pessar (1991) have found that people emigrating from the Dominican Republic have higher levels of education and professional experience than those remaining behind.

### *The Role of Belief*

I emphasize the term "believe" because the social and economic realities of immigrants' lives often complicate this situation<sup>8</sup>, as we saw in Chapter Four. As one older resident of the City observed, "*tienen el sueño de regresar pero aquí hay gente que cada vez que piensan que van a regresar, ya que tienen la mochila recogida para regresar, tienen que echar para atrás otra vez*" ("they have the dream of returning, but there are people here who, each time that they think they are going to return, that they have their bags packed to go, have to turn back again"). The difficulties of accumulating an *economía* in light of low wages and the necessity to send remittances home can be considerable, as several people informed me; this may also be why I heard fewer tales of circular migration than one might expect from the literature on Dominican immigrant communities<sup>9</sup>. In spite of this, the dream of returning can persist even after years in the City, especially in the wake of disappointment. One woman I talked with at the Department of Transitional Assistance, who had been in the States for 25 years (first in New York, then in Lawrence), informed me that she was leaving for the Dominican Republic the following week, despite the fact that most of her family was here, citing discrimination and the instability of temporary work as her main motivations for returning.

I also emphasize the term "believe" because belief is a powerful, and often problematic (though often emancipatory), force, with ambivalent implications for community development efforts in the City. Moreover, the belief functions independently of the realization of the dream, so that (I would argue) it matters less whether one is actually moving back and forth, than that one is always yearning for and seeing as a possibility a place where the grass is somehow greener, depending on what one is lacking at the moment (not to diminish the severity of the lack that exists). In fact, *one place becomes constituted by its lack in relationship to the other place*. I cannot emphasize this enough. One of the central problems to grapple with in community development efforts within the Dominican community in Lawrence is not

<sup>8</sup> Moreover, I wish to emphasize that Island orientation and desire to return is not the only barrier to political action; the exhaustion induced by working multiple jobs, learning English or coping without it, and supporting a family are powerful obstacles to taking on other activities.

<sup>9</sup> It is important to qualify this by noting that this may also be due to the composition of my sample.

*I think a lot of people who are here now, their parents came down here with the intention of making enough money to go back, but they just couldn't go back, they just couldn't do it, because then that means going back to what you just left, and what was the main reason for you to leave in the first place. So a lot of people that came down here, they didn't have the intention of staying here. Why would you want to stay in a foreign country where no one speaks your language? They just had to stay because it's hard to go back to that, it's hard being given so much and then going back to nothing practically. Because sooner or later the money's going to run out<sup>10</sup>.*

<sup>10</sup> Interview, 3/18/99 (Woman, early 20s, nonprofit staffperson).

the fact of transnational practices—indeed, there may even be ways to build upon these practices to encourage community involvement and political action—but the framework and the emotional landscape in which they frequently occur. In the neighborhood in which I work, the people who have become most actively involved in the neighborhood association have not necessarily been characterized by their lack of either transnational ties or love for their homeland. But often they are people who identify the similarities and the connections as well as the differences between the two places, and see some continuity between their actions in each place. As one neighborhood resident and interviewee noted, “It doesn't matter if I'm going to stay in Lawrence ten days, a year, two years, I have to do something. As a community person, when I moved to Lawrence I got involved right away... How can you live in a community and not be part of it?”

### ***Negative Reinforcement***

Piore (1979:52) argues that it is in the “transition from temporary migration to permanent settlement that most of the social conflict and political problems surrounding the migration process arise.” In this light, the complaint about Dominican “transience” in the face of considerable evidence to the contrary can be seen more as an expression of fear and anxiety by older populations in the City than as an accurate assessment of the situation<sup>11</sup>. As I have continually stressed, there is a difference between transience and maintaining transnational ties, and there is a difference between desiring to return and actually doing so. It is critical to emphasize that the belief that one will or should return does not exist in a vacuum—or even simply in the social context of the Dominican community—but is reinforced time and again by the deep-seated racism and discrimination of the larger society. Nearly all of my respondents had experienced some form of discrimination or prejudice, usually (but not always) in an employment situation<sup>12</sup>, generally involving an inaccurate evaluation of their abilities or a dismissal of their ideas and input. In fact, it is this racism, more than the

<sup>11</sup> In fact, if social conflict and political problems are signs of permanent settlement, then there is pretty solid evidence of Dominican permanence... not only has the Justice Department been called in several times to prevent discrimination against Latino voters, but the Dominican campaign manager for the Puerto Rican City Councilor and State Representative is currently leading a recall effort against the Irish Mayor.

<sup>12</sup> Lest I sound totally despairing here, let me point out that several respondents also mentioned instances in which they had been encouraged and supported by Anglo employers or friends.

*In my first job I remember—I didn't know the meaning at the time, but I remember I had no more than a week working there, and something happened to the machine, and I called the mechanic, and in my limited English—but I could show him what was wrong ... he called the floor supervisor and I don't know exactly what he said, but I know he said “Mickey Mouse,” referring to me, “Mickey Mouse says.” They smiled and they laughed and they walked away. But the machine continued to do whatever it was doing, so the following day he came over, he apologized and said, “I guess you knew what you were talking about.”... it was hard because I could see that in some cases I was better educated than some of the people who were prejudging me... [but] I always tried to convince myself that I knew who I was, and the people who knew me knew who I was and what I could do.<sup>13</sup>*

<sup>13</sup> Interview, 2/12/99 (Man, 40s, engineer by training).

transnational practices that it can work to justify or reinforce, that I believe represents the most enduring challenge to Dominican advancement in the United States. While it is beyond the range of this thesis to enter into a complex discussion about how to fight racism in the United States, I will just mention that many of my informants felt very strongly that education was the most important priority both for themselves, in terms of studying and learning English, and for the next generation, in terms of their ability to move up the occupational ladder.

### *Asymmetries*

As I mentioned in Chapter 3, transnational practices are not necessarily emancipatory simply because they involve a certain transcendence of national borders. For example, in discussing the return migration phenomenon, Guarnizo (1997) cautions that, "Serial resettlement in more than one country is possible only for those who possess the resources necessary to come and go as they see fit. As access to these resources is unevenly distributed among classes and genders, so, by implication, are transnational practices." In this case, discrimination becomes not only an experience that can intensify the desire for connection to the imagined homeland, but also a limitation on one's ability to realize that connection. Indeed, transnational practices are experienced differently according to individual resources and context. For instance, those with more education and social ties, like Ramon in Chapter 3, experience the ability to take advantage of business opportunities in both countries as further empowerment, while those who enter the country with less skills and find themselves continually shuffled around by temporary agencies to different low-wage, dead-end jobs, may experience remittances home (while necessary) as a burden on their ability to either advance here or accumulate sufficient savings to return.

### *Critical Mass?*

It is also important to note that many of those who have been involved in the neighborhood association, as well as those who are leaders in the Dominican community, are generally those who have been in the City for longer periods of time, and are, on balance, more oriented toward the City than the Island<sup>14</sup>—though for many this was an evolving process. The

<sup>14</sup> Which, again, is not to say that they do not maintain transnational ties; just that more of their energy is focused on activities within the City rather than on the Island.

*Ahí se da una situación de los niveles sociales de los inmigrantes que estamos aquí en Lawrence. Hay un inmigrante que logra tener una economía estable, en cinco años o menos, que son los que pueden más estar yendo y viniendo. Pero la mayoría entonces no puede darse ese lujo porque va acumulando algún dinero muy lentamente... no pueden ir y venir para acá con frecuencia. Pero anualmente, o cada nueve meses, es mucho el dominicano que viaja... Ahora, la esperanza siempre es regresar, o de estar más presente en Santo Domingo.<sup>15</sup>*

<sup>15</sup> Interview, 3/8/99 (Man, 40s, here less than one year, factory worker, former professor).

“socially expected durations” of each immigrant interact with the real-time trajectory of their stay in the City, and change in the process. Whether or not a given Dominican immigrant decides to make a more or less permanent home in the City depends on a number of factors. As the Dominican migration to Lawrence is a family and political migration as well as an economic and labor migration, the complications of evolving community formation and growing social networks, when combined with the reduced savings potential that employment in the low-wage manufacturing and service sectors offers, mean that plans to leave are often postponed indefinitely. The presence of family and children, as we saw before, can also be powerful deterrents to return.

#### *Snapshot*

Of the three workers I talked with one day at a temporary agency in the City, one (who had been in the City six years) indicated that he used to go back and forth quite a bit but no longer does so (he did not indicate why); another, who had moved to Lawrence from New York a year ago, said that he planned to go back to the Island eventually (sooner rather than later); and a third, who had come directly from the Island eight days before, said that he had no plans to return.

Many of my informants seem to feel that the orientation toward the Dominican Republic has undergone a sea change in the last five or six years, and that back-and-forth movement has become less common than it was. This could be an indication that the Lawrence Dominican community is now gathering critical mass, such that while some return migration will remain a feature of community life, it will no longer be the defining characteristic. Several people interviewed seemed to feel that the growing second generation—and the third generation as well—will be the keys to Dominican political empowerment, as the first generation “still has it too much in their heads to return.” There are signs of increasing Dominican political activity in the City; in addition to the Justice Department activity mentioned earlier, there is a Dominican resident who is now a member of the School Committee, and it was a Dominican-initiated coalition of Dominican and Puerto Rican voters that put Puerto Rican City Councilor Jose Santiago in the Statehouse in 1998. However, I believe that the Dominican community must confront and overcome several challenges in seeking political power and

*Cinco o seis años atrás la mayoría de Hispanos que estaban en este país o en esta ciudad pensaban así. Trabajaban, ahorrraban dinero y se iban. Estaban aquí pero estaban pensando en su país. Pero ya hay una gran comunidad de Hispanos que han creado familia aquí: ya han echado raíces y por lo tanto ya tienen estabilidad de vivienda en este país y ya el Hispano está preocupado e está ingresado a la política. Y ya tenemos un reflejo de eso. Hemos elegido nuestro primer representante que fue José Santiago. Y en las próximas elecciones a lo mejor conseguimos un alcalde y vamos a tener muchos consejeros y un consejero at large porque ya el Hispano ha creado conciencia en este país que aquí todo es política. O sea, que todas las decisiones son políticas.<sup>16</sup>*

<sup>16</sup> Interview, 2/17/99 (Man, 40s, former doctor, here 5 years).



greater voice in the City: 1) the legacy of the patterns of participation that characterize political life on the Island, leading to corrupt and inequitable outcomes (and that in fact have been part of the motivation for emigration); 2) the “immigrant cycle” that has historically characterized life in the City, leading more established groups to redirect the discrimination that they have experienced toward newer arrivals; and 3) the traditional rivalry with the Puerto Rican community, which has often prevented these two culturally distinct groups from facing the many similar difficulties they encounter together.

### *Political Baggage*

Possibilities for and avenues of political and community participation among immigrant groups are often shaped by their experience of such activities in their country of origin. Given the strength of transnational ties in the Dominican community, and the challenges described above, it makes sense to complicate the sketch of Dominican involvement in politics offered in Chapter Three by briefly looking at a study of poor and working-class households in Santo Domingo, many of whom had a member abroad (Lozano, 1997). The bad news is that in general, Lozano found his survey respondents to be “profoundly skeptical of political action as a vehicle for solving their problems, both at an individual level and at the level of the community” (1997:176). He traces this sentiment to the situation of clientelist authoritarianism<sup>17</sup> that has long characterized the Dominican state, which leaves people more prone to “work the system” for individual favors than to struggle collectively (while, paradoxically, infusing a certain amount of liveliness into the political process, as people have the possibility of direct personal gain at stake)<sup>18</sup>. Only 9% of the survey respondents were members of a neighborhood organization, while a little over a fifth were members of a political party. Those who did

*A pesar de que nosotros  
somos unidos entre nosotros  
mismos, ya hablando en  
términos generales, entre los  
Hispanos nosotros no hemos  
logrado la unidad como se  
debe. Si tú le hablas a un  
Dominicano de un  
Portorriqueño te dice algo  
pero si tú le hablas a un  
Portorriqueño de un  
Dominicano te dice algo...  
estas dos razas siempre se  
viven tirando una con la otra.  
Al estar siempre en pugna  
una raza con la otra y al no  
unirnos, entonces no  
podemos tener poder político.  
Si nosotros todos nos  
uniéramos sin pensar en que  
el candidato es Dominicano o  
el candidato es  
Portorriqueño... Porque  
somos nosotros los que  
estamos sufriendo las  
consecuencias...*<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Clientelist authoritarianism refers to a situation in which the “popular classes”—the poor, working class, and elements of the middle class—exchange “mass acquiescence for timely handouts” (Lozano, 1997:181). Thus, as long as the state occasionally steps in to mitigate the worst conditions—for example by installing a sewage system or building a school—or as long as political party membership will ensure the occasional small favor, citizens have little experience of or context for collective political action to achieve larger goals.

<sup>18</sup> Ironically—or perhaps not so ironically, given the way that Lawrence exhibits other characteristics of the “peripheralization at the core” discussed earlier—Dominicans have come to a City where political patronage is almost as much a way of life as it is in the Dominican Republic.

<sup>19</sup> Interview, 3/5/99 (Woman, 40s, teacher, here several years).

belong to a neighborhood organization tended to be employed, as well as younger, less poor, and better educated than other respondents. On a more hopeful note, over 60% of respondents across most social categories (gender, age, income, occupation) were in favor of participation in a neighborhood or community organization, which seems to at least open the door to this kind of activity. Safa (1995:120-1) also notes that while women in the Dominican Republic continue to receive less attention than men from many labor unions and formal political parties, during the 1980s they were increasingly able to organize at the neighborhood level to protest government policies and advocate for better services.

### *Roundabout Approaches*

These philosophical meanderings are actually to say that I do not think one can tackle beliefs directly. The point is not to persuade people to change their minds, to convince them that they will or should stay (time and experience may or may not do that for them), but to discover what their abilities and needs are, and provide opportunities for them to get involved in ways that are familiar or around things that are important to them. The most successful organizing efforts in the neighborhood<sup>20</sup> where I work naturally have been built around the concerns and frameworks of people within the neighborhood. As we quickly discovered, the networks to which people in the neighborhood belong are rarely place-based<sup>21</sup>; many revolve around family. Thus, for example, efforts to organize summer activities and build a playground for neighborhood children and youth, which arose out of resident concerns that their children had nowhere to go and nothing to do after school, have garnered considerable support. On the other hand, community meetings specifically billed as "long-term planning" events have occasioned less enthusiasm—not, I would argue, because residents do not care about the neighborhood, but because the way the meetings were framed did not correlate with many residents'

<sup>20</sup> The North Common neighborhood is among the poorer and more distressed neighborhoods in the City. Over 80% Latino in 1990, it had more children, larger families, and much lower household income than the City as a whole. Unemployment was near 30%, nearly half the population was living below the poverty line, and close to 70% of adults (age 25+) had less than a high school education (U.S. Census, 1990, STF3A, Lawrence, Tract 2509).

<sup>21</sup> I mean this in the sense that residents may not think of them as primarily emanating from or tied to a particular place, although families or people from the same hometown may live in the same neighborhood.

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engañado en varias  
ocasiones piensa que quien  
venga también lo va a seguir  
engañando y la confianza se  
ha perdido. Y eso es un  
fenómeno no solamente  
Dominicano sino ya es  
Latinoamericano: de que los  
partidos políticos han ido  
perdiendo influencia entre la  
gente porque no tienen  
confianza ... si hay una  
persona con algún liderazgo  
no se le sigue con fuerza  
porque se dice: "éste es un  
político más de los ladrones"  
y ya con ese espíritu de  
ladrón la gente no le tiene  
mucho interés a la política.<sup>22</sup>*

<sup>22</sup> Interview, 3/8/99 (Man, 40s, here less than one year, factory worker, former professor).

perceptions of both their priorities and their capacity to get involved, nor did they necessarily build on already existing networks such as extended families.

### ***ABCD (Asset-Based Community Development)***

A related roundabout strategy for community development in this context draws on the recent trend towards asset-based community development—the idea that communities can best improve themselves not by concentrating on all the things that are wrong or lacking, but by shifting the focus to the resources present and the opportunities for advancement, and building on these strengths to accomplish increasingly larger projects. I believe this is a particularly attractive strategy in this context because it also begins to address the “grass is always greener” problem highlighted above—instead of concentrating on some defining lack in the City, this encourages people to reframe their perception of the place. At the same time, because a community’s biggest assets are often its people, this approach provides plenty of room for a focus on personal development that essentially says, “you can take this with you.” It might become more plausible for people to get involved in neighborhood planning efforts if doing so is a means of developing transferable skills and experience (such as leadership experience or project management) that they can apply back on the Island if they choose to do so. In addition, community members often have an intuitive understanding of such “re-framing” projects; as one local business owner put it in referring to neighborhood youth, “everyone thinks of them as part of the problem, but I think they can be part of the solution.”

### ***“Su Conocimiento Está en el Aire”*** ***(“Their Knowledge is Up in the Air”)***<sup>23</sup>

Another advantage of an asset-based approach is that it could lead towards leveraging the presence of the Dominican doctors, lawyers, professors, accountants, teachers, and civil engineers in the City, who are not working in their chosen field, but instead in low- and semi-skilled factory jobs because of their lack of English. While this group is by no means the majority of the population, they still represent a substantial untapped resource whose skills are currently underutilized and downgraded. This is not to suggest that one necessarily concentrate efforts on, for example, finding engineering jobs for Dominican engineers in the U.S., since such a process is considerably complicated by the need to

<sup>23</sup> Interview, 3/5/99.

*Por lo menos los adultos les han dicho que han sufrido mucho por no tener la preparación adecuada para poder competir con los anglosajones; no ha ocupado buena posición de trabajo por no tener la preparación. Entonces se le está diciendo a los jóvenes que tengan una preparación intelectual; que vayan al college... para que la cultura hispana signifique algo. Porque con la educación las personas aumentan... si no hay educación, nosotros, los hispanos, vamos a ser un grupo de cuarta categoría en la sociedad. No va a significar nada y todo el tiempo lo van a estar pisoteando; nos van a estar poniendo los pies sobre nuestras cabezas. Entonces la consigna, no solamente para los jóvenes sino para todos, preparémonos y estudiemos.*<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Interview 2/17/99 (Male, 40s, businessman).

obtain the certification required to operate in the States, and could easily raise false hopes regarding the ease of advancement. However, these skills could be utilized on a volunteer basis by local non-profit corporations, which would add to the capacity of community organizations and provide some immigrants with the opportunity to adapt their training to a new context. Moreover, skills are not necessarily field-specific, nor are they exclusive to people who have formal education and training. It is not only the knowledge of professionals that remains "up in the air" in the context of the Lawrence economy, but also the capabilities and potential of those with less formal backgrounds. Most of the jobs available in the regional economy to monolingual Dominican immigrants are not linked to training or ESL programs, or to career ladders. These jobs in fact represent the exploitation of certain aspects of a linguistically isolated immigrant labor force by firms *reacting* to larger economic changes, and not a forward-thinking attempt to build on the considerable strengths of this population.

### ***Stickiness and Patience***

Another major challenge for community development efforts in the City is what I would call the enduring stickiness of the cultural issue; that is, the feel-good rhetoric around cultural diversity, while well-intentioned, often glosses over the real discomfort and frustration that can accompany efforts at cross-cultural communication and attempts to build a bilingual, multicultural organization<sup>25</sup>. The difficulty of this situation has become abundantly clear through the organizing process. For example, the mere fact of holding neighborhood meetings in both English and Spanish means that residents, usually working people with families, need to spend twice as long planning events or working through problems as they usually do. While this process is beyond a doubt worth the effort, it requires enormous patience from participants in both the short-term and the long-term.

### ***Transnational Community Development?***

Finally, an interesting possibility for community development efforts arises from the suggestion made at the beginning of Chapter Four—that if planners and organizers look and listen carefully they can find cultural resources and habits that can be adapted to both their client communities and the City as a

<sup>25</sup> According to the 1990 Census, 41% of Spanish-speaking households in Lawrence were "linguistically isolated"—that is, no one in the household spoke English.

*Bueno por lo menos el que venga aquí de allá tiene que acogerse a la cultura que hay y si quiere aprender a introducirse dentro del sistema pues aquí hay escuelas que se puede preparar a aprender inglés: no un inglés perfecto pero un inglés de desenvolvimiento de la calle aunque sea. Es decir, depende de la capacidad y depende por lo menos de cuales son sus aspiraciones... Lo que pasa aquí no se le puede dedicar todo el tiempo solamente al trabajo sino que usted le tiene que dedicarle un tiempo a su persona para tener una introducción dentro de la sociedad. Porque eso de estar trabajando así a lo loco, de día de noche, usted puede sacar dos horas e ir a una escuela aunque sea para interpretar ciertas palabritas en inglés para poder introducirse dentro de cualquier sociedad poco a poco... Es bien difícil pero hay que hacer sacrificio<sup>26</sup>.*

<sup>26</sup> Interview, 3/2/99 (Male, 50s, former Constitutionalist).

whole. Thus we might ask: can we build on the strength of ties that are already strong enough to span oceans? For example, chain migration often means that a cluster of people from the same hometown are living in the same neighborhood or city. Levitt (1997) documents the activities of a "transnational community development corporation" linking the inhabitants of the village of Miraflores in the Dominican Republic with their migrant relatives in the Jamaica Plain neighborhood of Boston; members engage in joint fundraising, planning, and decision-making efforts in order to implement community development projects (such as constructing a village funeral home) in Miraflores. Once the institutional infrastructure for such efforts exists, channeling time, energy, and other resources to projects in a hometown on the Island (and anecdotal evidence indicates at least one such organization exists in Lawrence), can such an organization be adapted to similar efforts here in the City?

It remains to be seen how the 1994 decision of the Dominican government to allow dual citizenship (partially due to the enormous importance migrant remittances now play in the Dominican national economy) will affect transnational practices and political participation. Dominicans who were reluctant to naturalize and sever that symbolic tie with their homeland (as well as the right to vote on the Island) no longer have to make the choice of politically being either American or Dominican, and this may free them to become more involved in their adopted homeland. As Dominican naturalization rates have lagged behind the rates of the U.S. immigrant population as a whole, it will be interesting to see if this statistic changes over the next few years.

*Table 5.1: U.S. Citizenship Status of Immigrants*

1996	Dominican	All Immigrants
Total	515,000	24,557,000
Naturalized	24%	32%
Not a Citizen	76%	68%

Source: INS Statistical Yearbook, 1996

The preceding discussion has merely touched upon some of the implications and directions for community development efforts in the City. In the last chapter, I will summarize the story told here and suggest possible areas of further research.

*As a woman, I celebrated in my class Women's History Month. My kids interviewed two of the teachers that work with us in the classroom and we read about Mother Theresa, we read about Lady Diana, we read about Hillary Clinton, we read about Rosa Parks, Coretta King, Oprah Winfrey. We read about a lot of different women... Kids have to be able to look at role models that are good images for them to continue going. I cannot limit my class to one way, I cannot tell them the only people that are going to make it are the Dominican people... when people ask me where am I from, I say I'm from the United Nations, and a lot of people say, "Hey, you're Black, you're Hispanic, why are you calling yourself from the United Nations?" I consider myself open to everybody.<sup>27</sup>*

<sup>27</sup> Interview, 4/8/99 (Woman, 40s, teacher, 25 years in the U.S.).

## CHAPTER SIX ROADS AHEAD

### *Travels and Travails*

I began this thesis with a seemingly simple question: Why, and how, are Dominicans in Lawrence? In the course of my research on the topic, numerous interviews with community members, and work on a community organizing and neighborhood planning project in North Lawrence, I began to understand that the motives for migration, as well as the barriers and opportunities facing Dominicans in the City, depend on a complex intersection of political, economic, cultural, and social forces linking the Island to the City. In attempting to draw this picture for the reader, I have of necessity painted with a very broad brush, as my aim was more to deepen the general understanding of the Dominican community in the City (and some of the individuals and families that it comprises) than to undertake an exhaustive investigation of any one part of it.

Toward this end, I began the thesis with a brief exploration of the history of the Island, recent economic changes, and the close ties that have linked the Island to the United States for over 100 years. I argued that a history of U.S. political influence, twice culminating in military occupation, and a strong North American corporate presence have helped alter the political and economic opportunities available to Dominicans and created intense "cultural-ideological" links between the two places. I also noted that migration, which began as a response to political upheaval, has assumed an increasingly important role in the economy of the Island, and has given rise to a set of "transnational practices" through which immigrants maintain ties to their homeland.

I then traveled back to Lawrence in order to understand its traditional roles as both a planned industrial city and a destination for new immigrants. I touched upon the changing industrial structure of the City and explored how those changes—a simultaneous de-industrialization and expanding service economy—were linked to larger regional and global economic changes. I argued that these changes affected both the mode of incorporation of immigrants into this regional economy and the opportunities available to them. I also argued that, contrary to popular belief, the Dominican immigrant experience bears many similarities to the experiences of past immigrant groups to the City, and that transnational practices in themselves are nothing new in the Immigrant City.

Given the logic of the City and the way in which it is integrated into a capitalist system of production, Chapter Three began to explore the character of Dominican life in the City and the particular activities of Dominican immigrants. I observed that Dominicans in the City engaged in a broad variety of both transnational and creole practices—involving ties to the Island and cultural adaptations in the City—that spanned political, economic, social, and cultural spheres. I noted that the Dominican community in Lawrence appears to have originated as a secondary settlement from New York, although family ties have now created a direct link to the Island. This Chapter also showed that family ties, along with the particular jobs and economic strategies immigrants engage in vis-a-vis the regional economy, help explain why Dominicans continue to come to a City where socioeconomic conditions are not promising.

Chapter Four explored (albeit incompletely) how Dominicans in the City understand and contextualize their lives, in an attempt to convey some of the heterogeneity of the Dominican community and understand how the details of people's lives interact with larger social structures to change or reinforce individual and family experiences of the migration process. I touched on intergenerational and gender tensions, and discussed how the language barrier—"the tip of the iceberg of the cultural barrier"—constrains opportunities in a number of ways. I dwelt on the "transculturation" process, as many interviewees termed it, and noted the persistence of both the American Dream and the dream of returning to the Island as framing ideals for people's experience. I also observed that discrimination and racial prejudice continue to play a destructive role in people's lives.

A pair of bridge images opened Chapter Five and were meant as a defining metaphor for many of the concerns of the Chapter. The first quote, from an older man who was a political émigré from the Island in the mid-late 1960s and came to Lawrence from New York in the mid-1970s, implied a forward-looking, one-way crossing; the second quote, from a woman in her 40s more recently arrived in the City, presented an image of circulation. I went on to discuss the "double bind" that the Island and American Dreams can create for Dominican immigrants, as each place comes to symbolize the lack in the other, and touched on the ways that one's "expected stay" can evolve over time in a complex context of community and family ties, constrained opportunities, and continuing discrimination. I noted that the Dominican community in the City appears to be reaching a certain "critical mass" necessary for political power, and offered some concerns and challenges with which the community must deal in moving towards its goals. Based on my still-evolving understanding of the Dominican community in Lawrence, I also offered several broad suggestions for shaping future community development efforts in the City.

### *Debts to the Literature*

While no one theory can adequately explain the Dominican community's presence in the City, the insights and theories of many authors have profoundly influenced this thesis. Piore's work on temporary labor migrations, while an inadequate explanation for the Dominican presence in Lawrence, was nevertheless invaluable in helping me understand the incorporation of Dominican immigrants into a changing regional labor market. Sassen was key in uncovering some of the larger economic structures within which both the City and Island operate, and Waldinger was useful in looking at Dominican entrepreneurship patterns as responses to both group characteristics and specific historical conditions. Portes was a treasure on immigration in general and a constant reminder that immigrants are the wellspring of this country. Roberts' work on socially expected durations provided a way to get a handle on the "double dream," while Ramos was a welcome invitation to remember that people exist along a number of axes, of which ethnicity is only one. Safa's insightful work on Dominican women gave me food for thought about the issue of labor militancy and withdrawal. Mitchell was instrumental in deepening my understanding of the political origins of Dominican migration to the U.S. Cole's meticulously researched treatise on the Immigrant City was also a treasure, and fun to read besides.

In terms of empirical studies, Grasmuck and Pessar's seminal *Between Two Islands* (as well as their other works) was a constant reference and helped me shape my interview questions (such as they were). Bray was highly useful in understanding earlier migration, although I believe the

class composition of the Dominican immigrant flow has shifted somewhat since his study. Guarnizo was invaluable in introducing me to the concept of transnationalism, although my findings do not indicate the extent of narrow transnational activity that his do. And speaking of narrow (and broad), Itzigsohn et al. were perhaps the most helpful in sorting through my thinking about transnationalism—how I would know it if I saw it, as it were. Lozano provided critical depth to my understanding of Dominican political involvement.

I also owe thanks to both Peggy Levitt of Wellesley College and Ramona Hernández of UMass Boston for pushing me to clarify my thinking and inquiries on this topic.

### *Limitations*

As I mentioned back in the Introductory Remarks, there are several limitations to my research findings, which I should once again acknowledge. The class and educational background of my sample is not reflective of the entire Dominican community in the City, skewed as it is towards those with a greater amount of education or training (there is certainly some class variation in the sample; the reader will undoubtedly have noted a strong working-class political consciousness in several of the quotes). Moreover, the average length of time in the City among my interviewees is probably well over ten years, which may account for some of the perceptions that the orientation toward the Island has been shifting in the past few years. Finally, my sample does not at all capture the voices and experiences of more recent female immigrants to the City; this is a key shortcoming as the Dominican migration has become increasingly female over the last few years.

## **II. FURTHER RESEARCH**

This document is only a beginning; as a broad and necessarily incomplete study, it naturally raises more questions than it answers. The following are areas of potential further research suggested by some of the issues and concerns raised in these pages:

1) In describing the earlier Puerto Rican migration to the United States, Ueda might easily have been characterizing elements of the current Dominican flow:

...many were poor workers in the early stages of their earning cycle. The close contact they enjoyed with their homelands encouraged persisting Spanish usage that complicated their efforts to take advantage of opportunities calling for contact with English speakers. The cumulative process of intergenerational investment in the host country was limited by their transfer of earnings home and disrupted by the frequency of return. (1994:92-3)

Moreover, Torres and Bonilla (1993): in touching on the Dominican community in New York, note that the initial experiences of Puerto Ricans in the States closely parallel Dominican patterns: a similar process of labor market incorporation, the development of a number of bodegas and businesses serving an economically constrained ethnic market in the barrio, and a tradition of heavy remittances and profit repatriation, leading to the eventual retirement or relocation back to the Island of entrepreneurs. During the last 20 years Dominicans in New York have been following much the same social trajectory as Puerto Ricans before them, and by many



measures their situation has been getting worse, as indicated by increasing levels of poverty and welfare dependency. Unlike Puerto Ricans, Dominicans are not born U.S. citizens, which creates a time lag in their ability to “convert residential concentration into voting power”; in addition, their “greater African heritage” makes Dominicans more vulnerable to the still deep-seated racism of American society. In light of these conditions, it would be useful to conduct a comparative study of the Puerto Rican and Dominican communities in Lawrence focusing particularly on patterns of settlement, modes of adjustment, changing fortunes over time, and relations between the two groups (this last topic is particularly important in understanding and addressing historic sources of tension between the two nationalities).

2) Talk of the dream of returning begs the question of whether or not transnationalism is a first generation phenomenon, the longing for the old country and attachment to the home culture that has become a truism about all first generation immigrants. Are there extensive transnational practices among second generation Dominican-Americans? Some authors indicate that the problems facing the second generation have more to do with the segmented assimilation than transnationalism—that is, that the second generation is not maintaining ties to the Island, but neither is it experiencing substantial upward mobility or integration into “mainstream America.” Moreover, Roberts has argued that a transnational ethnic community “whose culture and commitments are neither wholly oriented toward the new country nor the old” is “most disruptive of intergenerational co-ethnic cohesion” (1995:64). A comparative study of first and second-generation Dominicans and Dominican-Americans in the City would be very helpful in determining trends in immigrant adjustment and the fortunes of the community.

5) While this thesis touches briefly on issues related to changing gender relations in the Dominican community, much more work could be done using gender as a central component of analysis. Particular areas of interest might include the composition of the Dominican workforce and whether there exists a gendered division of labor in the regional economy, possible differences in attitudes and strategies around migration among men and women in the City, and—as Itzigsohn et al (1997:334) phrase it, “whether and how transnationality is changing gender relations among Dominicans.”

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*Snapshot: Migration to the U.S., 1996*

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	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Median Age</i>
<b>Dominican</b>		
<i>Male</i>	47.5%	25.4
<i>Female</i>	52.5%	26.5
<b>All U.S.</b>		
<i>Male</i>	46.2%	27.8
<i>Female</i>	53.8%	29.4

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Source: INS Statistical Yearbook, 1996

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3) The presence of transatlantic civic organizations, as well as substantial populations from specific towns or *campos*, provides an opportunity to conduct a much more in-depth study of transnational practices, especially as they pertain to creating the community development infrastructure for local development efforts in the City. As anecdotal evidence indicates that sizable settlements from Tenares, Altamira, Bani, and Bonao are present in the City, further

research on the practices of these groups, and the specific ties they maintain to their hometowns, would enhance our understanding of the ways that transnational practices shape immigrant lives and choices in the City.

4) On a related note, projects that conducted primary research in one of these communities in the Dominican Republic as well would enable exploration of what Hendricks (1983:375) has referred to as the "total social field." This would undoubtedly deepen understanding of the lives of Dominicans in Lawrence and the ties between Island and City.

5) The lack of recent, reliable quantitative data has presented certain barriers to supporting qualitative findings with statistical information. Once the 2000 Census has been completed, it will be interesting to track poverty levels, educational attainment, and occupational structure of both Dominicans and Latinos to note any trends or dramatic shifts in behavior.

6) Immigrant groups change within themselves. Will this change the City? Will Dominicans stay and improve the city or move up and out, making room for the newer groups from Southeast Asia? Will the City, as it has to date, maintain its structural role as a magnet for the most recent immigrants coming in—Southeast Asians and Middle Easterners replacing Dominicans in the same sort of jobs?

7) The extent of undocumented Dominican immigration to the City is anybody's guess right now, as are potential differences between documented and undocumented immigrants in labor market incorporation, use of social networks, and engagement in transnational practices. While collecting data on this traditionally hard-to-reach population presents difficulties, it would provide a more complete picture of the Dominican community in Lawrence.

8) Available research on industries in the Lawrence region does not indicate whether informal sector strategies, such as homework, are appearing in response to changes in the industrial structure—as they have in other areas of high immigration and changing economies (e.g., Los Angeles, New York). Are temp agencies filling this role in the region/

9) What are the opportunities in Lawrence for larger-scale transnational economic development strategies that build on the entrepreneurship abilities and social ties of current immigrants?

10) As Lawrence seems to have been settled by Dominican immigrants leaving New York for the relative tranquility of the Merrimack Valley, it might be interesting to compare the two communities to see if there are substantial differences in immigrant characteristics, activities, demographic composition, employment and income outcomes, etc. between the Big City and this second-level Dominican Diaspora.

## EPITAPH

... speaking (or writing or reading) one's 'mother tongue' is no longer taken for granted... one becomes aware of how naturally it flows compared to one's not altogether painless efforts to use other languages... one's intellectual distance to it grows as certain things seem to be better said in other languages...

(Hannerz, 1996:88)

En el proceso de escribiendo este tesis, la comunidad Dominicana de Lawrence me ha dado un regalo enorme: la oportunidad de aprender y crecer a través de mis esfuerzos de expresarme en otro lenguaje, y de saber algo de la barrera del lenguaje del otro lado. Quiero dar mis gracias por la paciencia y generosidad de muchos miembros de la comunidad. Ha sido un placer hacer este trabajo, y espero que ellos puedan encontrar algo de sus voces y experiencias en estas páginas.

A sus órdenes.

## APPENDIX 1

### TRANSLATION OF SPANISH QUOTES

#### *Chapter 1*

Page 21: We say “transculturation”... this is not a current phenomenon, it comes from before Columbus. We have a synonym: “Guaguacanari Complex.” Guaguacanari was one of the five chieftains who inhabited the island when Columbus arrived... When Columbus arrived, they looked upon him [and his men] as gods... Guaguacanari surrendered part of his territory to them so that they would help him fight against the other chieftains. We have always had this complex... I will say Guaguacanari Complex to you when you want to give something so that someone might help you, but giving up part of what is yours in the process. This happens when you grow up here from when you are very small. Then you have customs that one doesn't have in the home country... and the customs you have here, you put them in practice there.

Page 23: There are different Dominicans here that walk toward different horizons [on different paths]. Each one with his cause. My cause... in my country I participated in a military struggle (a civil war)... then after participating in this civil war, we who participated, who confronted those who were against the people<sup>1</sup>, were obliged to emigrate against our will... the war happened when they destroyed the 1963 Constitution... The Dominican Republic, with such a democracy as it might have had—in 1965 the country began to put in practice the Revolution it needed—the return of the 1963 Constitution. And so it was that the fighting began. I participated with the liberal fighters, and the others were on the side of the corrupt ones, of those who still today continue to exploit the people and continue to make away with the riches of the country.

Page 25: In the sense of work the Free Zones were and are a salvation for the Dominican Republic, because they involve a great quantity of people in working directly. Then, indirectly there is another great quantity of people that are joined to this project because they go on Thursdays and Fridays to sell things to those who work there, revitalizing economic activity between workers and vendors... On the other hand, workers are not permitted to have unions...

Regarding the Free Zones, this is what they are: a disaster. That is what they call a parallel customs that the Dominican government has. A customs, with the pretext that the merchandise they carry gets discharged because it is for the Free Zones, but it's a lie. It's to avoid their own taxes... Contraband goes through there... They are organized mafias.

Page 26: There is social injustice, perhaps since the arrival of the Spaniards... a very marked social inequality, a breach between one group and another that gets worse all the time, and I belong to a large group that has very little material goods because of the maldistribution of wealth... where more than 90% of the Dominican people don't have enough to decently improve their economic situation, and a very small group has most of the wealth concentrated in their hands... One tries to remain in one's country, then it's not possible because they close the doors in many places. In my case, with the academic background I have—one finds that one can't

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<sup>1</sup> The word “pueblo” translates literally as town or village but in this case means the common people.

make use of what one knows... because if one doesn't belong to the party that's governing at this moment, one can't be in a position where one can contribute what one knows.

Page 29: It's not like people say, no, that you only come here to work and carry dollars back to your countries... if one begins to accuse, the United States would come out the loser. Because it's not just one, two, or three countries where the U.S. has interfered, and they don't only take money, but leave the country such that those who can, go... that is, it's not like you just come and go... when you intervene militarily in a place... you are taking things from there to bring them here; there are many countries where this has occurred. And this is a vision that I've made many North American friends see. It's not just that you might say I do this—well, I have family there that I have to maintain as well, or at least help them; I'm not going to let them die. I have to send them dollars and when I go I have to bring them money so that they can survive there.

### *Chapter 2*

Page 32: One of the reasons so many Dominicans have immigrated to Lawrence is the peace and quiet. You know that Lawrence is small and outside of the large urban centers. It more closely resembles our neighborhoods, our towns; the children can play in the streets, they can be outside until late (above all in the summer); this wouldn't be possible in other cities. The tranquility is what attracts us to come here.

Page 33: It is hard when you come without knowing the language. I began to work in a factory where they make shoes. This was my first work experience here... after that I went to work in a laundry... I was there for about six years... I began to do sewing, repairing clothes, and then I began to sell clothing to my co-workers. I formed a large clientele. I went to New York and after that I decided to settle here... there are people who have been here much longer than me and haven't been able to become independent. They are still working in the factories... It is very different when you are working in a factory. Working on the line. There are many people who have come here and progressed, but for the great majority it is not so easy.

Page 37: The rich person does not want the poor person to learn, because that brings him problems. When a poor person succeeds in opening his eyes, when he succeeds in going to school and learning, he says, ah, but you were abusing me... it is not convenient for the rich that the poor progress... while the people are maintained in ignorance they can always be exploited, all their lives... but if this would not occur, for example with Affirmative Action programs, which have helped many Latinos—if these programs disappear, this is like saying, let me keep you in the dark so you don't learn and I can continue to abuse you. This is what all the politicians are doing: stay in the dark, so that I can be your light. I will be your light, but I am not going to bring you much light—I'm going to bring you a little reflection of light so that you think, well, that is the light.

Page 39: The Dominican is a very hard worker... s/he will go where s/he can earn money. We have a saying there—you know our peso, the value of a peso is Duarte, who is our main national hero. Thus we say, "wherever Duarte may be we look for him." Here we would have to say, "wherever Washington may be we look for him." Thus we can work anywhere. The majority work in factories, others work as cooks in restaurants, as dishwashers, others cleaning the schools or with cleaning companies... Thus you would not be able to say to someone [another

immigrant] from the countryside, who is doing the same work as you, that although he might not have the same training [or education] as you, he must be the one to pick up the garbage. You have to unite and you have to look at the situation as equals.

### *Chapter 3*

Page 47: A family established itself because Lawrence has a lot of industry, and made a connection with others and brought them here and so they came: all of them one after another because they knew that here were the conditions for working and living.

This all happens because there is a family, a relative who emigrates, who comes to this country, undertakes a lot of work, perhaps learns to speak a little English, or settles into a factory where they permitted or spoke more Spanish, and has lasted ten, twelve, twenty years in this factory... This person comes and begins to bring his son, his daughter, and if they are married they are going to bring their spouses, and they create a chain where the first person always passes more work to the rest.

Page 49: This part of the culture is very present... the greetings, the human relationships, all of these values inside of you... in the Dominican Republic you carry them with you from here to there; so one is always homesick... It is not because you don't want to keep living here, but that there is all that culture... those friendships that one maintains at home and that also tie you to the country... our culture embraces all these forms of enjoyment, of living, and that is what makes me want to return quickly in spite of the fact that I haven't completed one year here... We are grateful that you open the doors to us... but there is all this culture weighing on us. That is, the culture is like the gloves of a boxer; whoever boxes has to carry his gloves in his knapsack from there to here.

Page 50: The Dominican who comes to this country—and many sacrifice, building their savings for when they go to their country bringing the best they can buy here... through this business I realize that the majority of Dominicans are always gathering things for when they visit their country... they don't enjoy the best here; they bring it to the Dominican Republic to enjoy it there. Thus when people there see that people come from here with so many pretty things, with new clothes, gifts, things to wear, they just get enthusiastic and they think, how easy, but they don't know all the sacrifices that those people have made in order to bring those things there. So they deceive themselves that here there is everything, that they can obtain things easily.

Page 52: I came to Lawrence from New York because the party I belong to, the Dominican Revolutionary Party, at that time was conducting a political campaign to install Antonio Guzman Fernandez as president... So they sent me to Lawrence from New York to work on this campaign—to the district they have here called the Mirabal Sisters<sup>2</sup>, to work on the campaign of Guzman who was trying to fix [to improve] some things over there... then I belonged to the Democratic Party here—I work with Congressman Marty Meehan and support his campaign every time there is an election. I work on the Kennedy campaigns too. Any democratic senator that comes to improve the situation of the Hispanics, well then there I am in the thick of politics.

<sup>2</sup> The Mirabal Sisters were four sisters who were very active in the movement against Trujillo. They were well-loved by many Dominicans for their commitment to freedom and justice. Trujillo had 3 of them killed.

Page 54: Listen, in the Dominican Republic there is a town called Janico that is said to be the second New York because almost all the people who live in Janico are residing in New York. They live here but they have family there, and so it happens that the same life that is being lived here is also being lived in Janico: with stores, discos, radios, cell phones, television antennas, huge satellite dishes... That is, they live the life of, as we call it there, the rich.

Page 56: When I arrived in Patterson, New Jersey, I worked in a factory for six months... the week of starting to work I still didn't have papers... So I said to the American [boss], "*I am doctor in Dominican Republic, you have something good for me?*" And he made me a supervisor. I was supervising a department of 40 women; I lasted there six months, because after that I got a job in an electronics company. So I went to the supervisor there and he said to me, "do you know how to work with [microchips]?" And I said yes although I didn't even know what they were, and he nearly died laughing, because he said to me, you don't even know what they are, and I said, fine, it is true that I don't know what that is but if you teach me I will do it.

#### Chapter 4

Page 65: In my ten months residing here I have had to work in six places; none of these had anything to do with the academic background that I have from the Dominican Republic, but these jobs have permitted us to keep surviving here. In the different industries in which I have been working, English is a necessity—to know it, to master it, in order to be able to stay in communication with others. Since I arrived I set myself to studying and I have gone about it with great determination, because every day I realize more what a necessity English is...but then one develops through necessity... Whoever believes that life exists without necessity will develop little... Language is the bridge by which one can know the spoken culture, at the least, and the greater part of culture is spoken. If one doesn't speak the language, s/he is not going to know anything.

Page 67: I always say that the United States is a cancer. And do you know why I say this? Because after the cancer enters your body it is very difficult to stamp it out. After we come here and see the comforts that we have it is not true that we are going to go back there [to the Island]. Returning is always on our minds. But we go for vacation and spend a month and we want to return because we don't have the same facilities there. One is always homesick for one's country, one is very nationalist. But... you know that if you work here it is very difficult to be able to save enough to be able to go back. If we have children that have grown here and they don't want to [go back], if we still have the will to keep working, we can't go because we can't afford to lose our work here. This is why I say to you that the U.S. is a cancer. Because you get accustomed to living here, and it becomes difficult to return.

Page 69: Speaking of the Latino immigrant's cultural penetration of North American culture is not easy... as we know of the cultural penetration of North America towards the Dominican Republic, because of your economic clout, your political clout, your social clout, makes it so that there is more North American influence... Latino culture is present here, it is not that it is crushed, that it doesn't exist, but you don't notice it as much because our economic power is limited in this country... in only one of the factories in which I worked did one of the bosses try to dance a little bachata [Dominican folk music] with a group of us that were there. But the

Latino, for example the Dominican, dances salsa [Puerto Rican], dances the corrido [Mexican]... among ourselves we quickly make a cultural mixture.

Page 70: The factory for me was horrible, because I never in my life had done that kind of work... in my household I worked with my father in the business but it was different, you see. Yes, I was working in agriculture, but I never did factory work; but I look at it positively because it was an experience; life is a school and every activity you do is another experience in your life... I don't see it negatively, I see it very positively, because I learned to make furniture, I learned to make electronic things, and this is something, it is another bit of knowledge.

Page 72: Immigrant (poem)

I have seen the roads and footsteps of the immigrant.  
His steps fill us with happiness, dreams, and sweat.

At night I have contemplated the stars  
and the sky, obscured by darkness  
Behind, the messenger doves sleep.

I am an immigrant like the first one.  
I want to walk through the entire world,  
without the vile racial hatred that separates us.

Do not call the immigrant a stranger.  
I am not a stranger to this world.  
The immigrant lives growing.  
The universe is his bed, his poetry and food.

The immigrant has a friend, his friend smiles,  
embraces me, sings, looks at me and says...

His eyes scatter tears.  
Like the dew in nature.  
My life is here and my roots in my country,  
others wait for the first immigrant,  
on roads and in fields someone awaits them,  
the flag is the first one.  
Today the immigrant and the dove are messengers.

(With apologies to Juan Gabriel for no doubt butchering his beautiful poem.)

### Chapter 5

Page 79: Well you know this is a situation of the different social levels of immigrants in Lawrence. There are immigrants who have succeeded in having a stable *economia* [savings, nest egg], in five years or less—they are those who can be going back and forth more. But the



majority cannot give themselves this luxury because they are accumulating money very slowly... they can't come and go so frequently. But every year or nine months, many Dominicans travel... the hope is always to return, or to be present more in the Dominican Republic.

Page 80: Five or six years back the majority of Latinos that were in this country or this City thought like that—work, save money, and leave. They were here but they were thinking of their country. But now there is a large community of Latinos that have built families here; they've already put down roots and for the most part have a certain stability in this country, and now the Latino is thinking about and entering politics. Already we have a reflection of this. We have elected our first representative, Jose Santiago. And in the next election we'll probably get a mayor, we are going to have more councilors, and a councilor-at-large, because now the Latino has become aware that in this country everything is political—that is, all decisions are political.

Page 81: Although generally speaking Dominicans are united among ourselves, among Latinos we have not succeeded in uniting as we should. If you speak to a Dominican of a Puerto Rican he'll tell you one thing, and if you speak to a Puerto Rican of a Dominican he'll tell you another... these two groups are always fighting with each other. When one group is always at odds with another and we are not uniting, well then we will not be able to have political power. If we united without thinking about whether the candidate was Dominican or Puerto Rican... Because we are the ones suffering the consequences...

Page 82: If a Dominican has been deceived on various occasions he thinks that whoever may come along is also going to continue deceiving him, and he has lost trust. This is a Latin American as well as Dominican phenomenon: the political parties are losing influence with the people because the people don't have trust in them... if there is a person with some leadership they don't follow him/her very passionately because they say "s/he is one more thieving politician," and in this spirit they don't have much interest in politics.

Page 83: At the least the adults have said to [the young people] that they have suffered a lot by not having adequate preparation to compete with the Anglos, they haven't occupied good work positions because they weren't as prepared. Thus they are saying to the youth, prepare yourselves intellectually, go to college, so that Hispanic culture might mean something. Because people grow through education... if there is no education, we Latinos will be a group at the fourth level of society. We won't amount to anything and the whole time they will be trampling on us, they will have their feet on our heads. Thus the watchword, not only for the youth but for everyone, is prepare and study.

Page 84: Well, at the least, someone who comes here from there has to make use of the culture here, and if s/he wants to learn to become part of the society, well there are schools where one can prepare oneself to learn English—not a perfect English, but a more informal English, as it may be. It depends on one's capacity and at the least their aspirations. What happens here is that you cannot dedicate all your time to work; you also have to dedicate sometime to yourself personally, so that you can have an introduction into the society here. This habit of working like a lunatic, from day to night—you can take out two hours and go to school, so that you can learn a few words of English and become integrated into life here little by little... It's very difficult, but there have to be sacrifices.

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