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## Taino Heritage in the Dominican Republic

### INTRODUCTION

Elders, colleagues, friends, Ladies and Gentlemen: good afternoon.

Today I will speak about Taino heritage from a cultural perspective. Specifically I will give examples of cultural forms of Taino origin found in the contemporary Dominican Republic. These findings come from over three years living and working in various cities and campos mostly in the Cibao region of the Northwestern Dominican Republic.

My vision of culture, which is both anthropological and personal, is that human beings are active participants in the defining of their identities and in the structuring of their social lives. Culture is not a static list of ingredients written in a book or dictated by a national agenda, but a dynamic process of creation and re-creation by human individuals living in their communities in each present moment. In this way, every cultural form has a unique and meaningful history that has come to us through the actions of generations of ancestors. In my presentation of Taino cultural forms today, I must sacrifice detail in order to demonstrate the extent to which Taino heritage permeates contemporary Dominican culture.

I will also have to summarize my discussion of how Dominicans identify themselves to their Taino heritage. This complex phenomenon has been influenced by the past 505 years of colonization on the Taino land of Quisqueya. Identification involves issues of politics, power, and who has the authority to craft the stories of history and culture. Basically, Dominican identity, like the identities of many people living in American nations, has been driven by the actions of State control: history and culture have been defined for the people from the top down, as opposed to letting the people define their history and culture for themselves. I just mentioned that it is the action of human individuals that shapes identity and defines community. And indeed, throughout the Americas, history has shown great examples of social unity and resistance against many forms of oppression, and the brilliance of human cultural expression in the face of great adversity. This is why I must say at this moment that I feel a great honor and responsibility to be present here among you as we

take an active role in shaping the direction of Taino identity into the 21st Century.

I feel I need to give some background on how I come before you to speak about Taino identity in the Dominican Republic, because, by blood, I am neither Taino nor am I Dominican.

I first went to the Dominican Republic in 1992 to conduct dissertation research for a degree in Interdisciplinary Archaeology at the University of Minnesota. I was studying how nations manipulate history and culture in order to help sustain the ideology of its political control. This was the year of the Columbian Quincentennial so I was especially interested in seeing how the Spanish Colonial past was represented in Dominican historical commemoration. I was also interested in seeing how alternative discourses about the past were expressed, perhaps, resisting the dominant national ideology. At this time, I had no idea that there were still people in the Greater Antilles or diaspora who identified themselves as Taino.

Given what I had read in textbooks and journals about the extinction of the Taino, I was surprised to find many indigenous cultural features in daily Dominican life, especially in the campo. However I was also struck by their ironic and contradictory expression, whereby many Dominicans exhibited strong indigenous cultural forms but did not identify with them. In fact, seen as socioeconomically un-progressive, they were often ashamed by these cultural displays. Similarly, the archaeological heritage was plundered, history and culture were topics of interest only for the upper class, and there were little resources available for communities to encourage traditional cultural activities. I focused my dissertation on this subject.

Living in the Dominican Republic, the striking beauty of the land and the open hearts of the people helped to make it my home. I lived in the campo, I built a bohio, I planted a conuco, I walked mountains, and bathed in rivers. I soon began to realize how the traditional culture of Quisqueya clashed with the economic realities of the late 20th century Dominican Republic. The features of Taino heritage, those which were really at the heart of the cultural landscape of Quisqueya-- many of those which I will be speaking about today-- existed in opposition to the economic features of capitalist-inspired "modernization." In other words, development towards a Western economy meant movement away from the traditional culture.

I decided to use my role as an archaeologist to raise awareness to this social process where culture was sacrificed at the altar of economic development. I focused attention on the richness of the Taino past and to the ways the Taino lived in harmony with the land of Quisqueya so that Dominicans could make more informed decisions about what was happening to their land and culture in the present. This is, after all, the reason I believe that archaeology is a worthwhile endeavor: to learn from the past in order to better focus our paths toward the future. After

receiving my Ph.D. in 1995, I returned to the Dominican Republic and have had the opportunity to work on educational projects toward this end through my employment at the Archivo Historico de Santiago. In this time, I have also learned of the presence of the Taino in the Caribbean and in the American diaspora.

I believe this conference marks an important moment in Taino history. I also believe that the Taino movement of cultural reclamation reflects an important moment in world history. I hope, by looking critically at the composition of history and culture, we will free ourselves from political and economic hegemonies and provide more vision and strength for our human capacity to live together in our communities on this one earth.

### THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

The Dominican Republic has the distinction of being the only Latin American country that has a "mixed" population as the overwhelming demographic majority. While the claim is often made that Dominicans are simply bi-racial mulattos-- persons with mixes of European and African ancestries-- in fact, the Dominican Republic is a nation with a third root: Native American Taino.

In the Dominican Republic, it is difficult to attach a clean ethnic category to the whole population. The amount of historical and contemporary miscegenation between individuals of different African, Indian, and European blood has been very high, and has produced a multitude of biological mixes. There is a tremendous range of so-called "racial" features, for example, in hair texture, skin color, and facial shape. Basically, the way Dominicans recognize and talk about biology, some Dominicans look more "Black", some more "White", and some more "Indian". In this sense, Dominicans appear as a multi-biological people. On top of this, however, many Dominicans have combinations of "racial" features that make it difficult to pinpoint their exact biological ancestry. Dominicans have invented names for over 20 different physical mixes including trigueno, indio, indio claro, trigueno oscuro, canelo, pinto, etcetera. Thus, the Dominican Republic appears a "melting-pot" as well as a place of many separate biologies.

Ultimately, though, when simple biology-- the way people look-- is put aside in favor of discussions about culture-- what people do-- the Dominican Republic displays a common denominator, uni-cultural identity that has little correlation with the physical appearance of its people. Indeed, there is no such thing as a distinct Black Dominican culture, White Dominican culture, or Indian Dominican culture. Regional differences do exist, but for the most part, cultural differences appear between rich Dominicans and poor Dominicans, and between "city" Dominicans and "campo" Dominicans, and even these differences dissolve in discussions of a unifying national identity. While creolization is a large part of Dominican identity, Hispanidad is the focus of national unity.

It is true that many White "city" Dominicans represent the

group who historically have had more money and power. This has arisen from the complex phenomenon of European colonization and access to wealth. As a group, however, they represent a small fraction of the demographic whole. While their influence in controlling the production of national identity has been strong, I will be focusing on the cultural realities for the majority of Dominicans, who are poor and without access to power.

## HISTORY

The island of Hispaniola had been occupied for as many as five thousand years before Columbus, and the most advanced of the Taino chiefdom-level societies of the Caribbean lived there at the time of Spanish contact. Columbus is credited with saying, upon entering the Cibao Valley of Quisqueya in 1494, "Human eyes have never gazed on a sight more beautiful." Soon after, however, Spanish colonization imposed a new rule of violence and greed on this Caribbean landscape, entirely disrupting Quisqueyan lifeways.

Using census records, Moya Pons (1992:137) shows that during the period of early Spanish colonization a process of transculturation began to take place where "... many mestizos mixed within the Spanish population and later with African slaves, giving way to a new racial type, which contemporary Dominicans call the Indio." Since twelve years of Spanish colonization passed before a significant number of European women arrived in Hispaniola, mestizaje should come as no surprise. Indeed, census records of 1514 suggest that forty per cent of Spanish men on the island had Indian wives or concubines (Moya Pons 1992:135). Furthermore, "Miscegenation between blacks and Indians was also quite common, both among black slaves who lived and worked with Indians on plantations and in the mining zones, and in the fugitive slave or "cimaron" communities" (Garcia Arevalo 1990:275).

Over the years, a poor, but landed, peasantry developed from the original group of mixed Indians, Africans and Europeans, and continued to share bloodlines and culture, developing their own communities in the campo. And, as they were engaged in a struggle to live on the land of Quisqueya, they used their repertoire of cultural knowledge to best survive in their environments. Naturally, the Taino cultural heritage they had, which represented many generations of knowledge, tradition, and oral history about the land, spoke strongly to their ability to survive. In many ways, this is still true for present-day Dominicans.

Today, there are particular families and regions with a stronger sense of their Taino past, however, there is not the concomitant feeling of identification that we see in Puerto Rico and Cuba. Further, the cultural heritage appears relatively uniform throughout the country whether in an "Indian" region or elsewhere. Perhaps, though, like Cuba and Puerto Rico, it may just be a matter of time before a Taino identification is similarly re-

claimed.

## TAINO HERITAGE

Two important studies addressing Taino heritage in the Dominican Republic have been published, and my work builds off these. They are Bernardo Vega's (1981) *La herencia indigena en la cultura dominicana de hoy* and Garcia Arevalo's (1988) *Indigenismo, arqueologia, e identidad nacional*.

### Linguistic Features

The Dominican Republic often uses its indigenous name Quisqueya as a common referent. Dominicans like to call themselves "Quisqueyanos"; the name even appears in the first words of the Dominican national anthem: "Quisqueyanos valientes..."

The Spanish language has several hundred words that come from the indigenous Arahuan language of the Caribbean. These words go beyond names of objects, place-names, flora, and fauna that did not have a name in the Spanish language, like canoa, hurican, hamaca, caiman, barbacoa, tabaco, maraca, marimba, iguana, and manatee. There are also many words and expressions that are indigenous in origin that are used instead of their Spanish names. Examples include: mabi, a natural juice; macana, a policeman's club; and macuto, a handsack. The Taino phrase "un chin" or "chin-chin" means a small amount in Dominican Spanish, and is as common as the Spanish phrase "un poquito." The use of these words suggest not simply the effect of one culture borrowing or appropriating names for things they did not know, but a more complex interplay between two cultures.

Many, if not a majority of Dominican cities, campos, rivers, and mountains have indigenous names, including: Amina, Bani, Bao, Bonao, Cotui, Cutupu, Dajabon, Damajagua, Guajaca, Guayubin, Inoa, Jacagua, Janico, Licey, Magua, Maguana, Mao, Nagua, and Samana. The majority of rivers have Taino names, including Haina, Maimon, Ozama, Sosua, Tireo, and Yaque. Most native trees and fruits have Taino names, including Anacajuita, Caimito, Cajuil, Cana, Caoba, Ceiba, Cuaba, Guacima, Guano, Guao, Guayaba, Guanabana and Guayacan. Beyond flora, indigenous insects, birds, fish, and other animals with names of Taino origin may list into the hundreds. They include the Bibijagua (ant), Comejen (termite), Carey (sea turtle), Hicotea (river turtle), manatee, and Guaraguao (Dominican hawk).

Due to the process of mestizaje, whereby the Spaniard male colonists took Indian wives, it is not surprising that no Taino surnames have survived to the present. Still, Dominicans use historical Taino names in the contemporary naming of children. Examples include the prominent politicians Caonabo Polanco and Hatuey Deschamps, and jazz great Guarionex Aquino.

Many Dominicans can distinguish a Taino name by its sound, though not reliably. It may be that the Cibao rural dialect's transformation of words ending in the Spanish suffix "-ado" into the Arahucan sounding "ao" is a vestige of Taino pronunciation (e.g., colorado becomes colorao). Regardless of its true historicity, it is certain that there exists a romanticized Indian association with these campo pronunciations. Another example is the use of the "I" with words ending with an "R" (Que calor! becomes Que calo-i!).

It is interesting that several Taino words that are used in other parts of the Antilles, are not used in the Dominican Republic. Examples include using the Spanish word lechosa instead of the indigenous papaya, the Spanish word pina (pineapple) instead of the indigenous yayama, and the Spanish cotorra (parrot) instead of the indigenous higuaca. However, for all these words, many people are aware of their indigenous names as well. There are several instances where both indigenous and Spanish words are interchangeable, for example, the Spanish word tarantula and the Taino word cacata are used equally.

Some indigenous words have changed their meanings over the years. For example, a batey, which originally described a Taino ceremonial ball court, today refers to the residence location of Haitians on sugar plantations. Guacara, originally referring to a cave or cavern, now describes a place or thing of antiquity.

### Agriculture

Many Dominican agricultural terms have Taino origins. The word conuco, while its meaning is lost as a mixed-crop method of agriculture similar to the mainland indigenous milpa, has retained the concept as a plot of land used for farming. Unfortunately, Dominicans have not retained the Taino use of montones, or raised mound agriculture, and suffer from one of the worst records of topsoil depletion in the Caribbean (Ferguson 1992). So too, unfortunately, Dominicans have overused the Taino technique of slash and burn (swidden) agriculture.

Many Dominican farmers use what they call the misterios, or the spiritual secrets of agriculture, including planting with the lunar cycle. This practice is documented for the Taino as well. Agricultural knowledge is reported to be passed on from generation to generation. It is interesting to note that in some regions, particular days of the week are considered bad times to plant. This practice may be a creolized Catholic/Taino manner of understanding the spiritual division of the human world. Dominicans have a similar conception for the lottery system, where numbers and dates never appear random, but divinely ordered phenomena. One final agricultural item from pre-Columbian times is the use of the coa, the indigenous word for a digging stick, which is still employed for planting, though today with a metal point.

### Yuca and Casabe

The starchy vegetable tuber yuca is a central part of contemporary Dominican diet. Sweet yuca is a staple, boiled and served for breakfast and dinner, often with eggs or a small meat accompaniment. Yuca is well-matched to Dominican soil and lifeways, whereby it can grow in semi-arid climates and on hillsides, and can conserve for several months in the earth without rotting. It was the key to Taino survival and it is no surprize that Yucahu was one of the principal dieties. So too is it identified as the most Dominican of the viveres.

The baking of casabe bread from bitter yuca flour is a Dominican tradition that has strong ties to the Taino past. While common at the household level only generations ago, casabe production is today available principally from family bakeries and small factories, who truck the casabe to local stores throughout the country. The technology of casabe production has not changed much over the years, and most of the terminology is the same. The yuca is grated with guayos (today sharpened spoons peel the yuca and mechanical metal graters are used for grating), leechd of the poisonous starch (anaiboa or almidon) in canoe shaped receptacles (canao), strained, and dried into flour (catibia). Then the flour is spread with the help of a circular iron mold, and baked on the top of an oven (buren) for about twenty minutes until solid. Casabe can conserve in its cooked form for several months without spoilage, making it an important food product in the tropical environment. Casabe is always served during Christmas and Easter times, and its presence on the Dominican table is expected. It is important to note that in recent years the availability of bread made from wheat flour have led to a diminished use of casabe in Dominican diets.

Alternative uses of yuca flour have declined in their importance over the years, however several food products are still made. Panesico are baked logs of yuca flour and pork fat, and are considered a specialty of the Cibao region. Dominican empanadas, deep-fried dough pockets stuffed with meat, are only made with yuca flour. Bola de yuca are deep-fried balls of yuca flour. Jojadra are powdery ginger cookies made of yuca starch.

### Foodways and Tobacco Use

Besides yuca, many fruits and vegetables of indigenous origin have remained staples in the Dominican diet. They include the guayaba, guanabana, pina, lechosa, yautia, name, mani, and batata. Other indigenous fruits and vegetables that are eaten but are becoming less common include the anon, mamon, caimito, jagua, jobo, and mamey. Ajies (peppers) are an essential part of daily bean preparation. The popular Dominican salcocho (stew) may be derived from the indigenous pepper-pot or ajiejaco, and arepas (corn-

fritters) may also be of indigenous origin. Certainly both these dishes have native connotations surrounding them. So too is seasoning with bixa (annato seed), although this spice's use has dwindled with the availability of packaged seasoning and canned tomato sauce.

Cooking in earthenware pots, similar in style to Taino ceramic ware, while becoming more and more rare, is known as a way of making beans more flavorful. Vega (1987:100-101) documents the use of another indigenous root, guayiga in the making of a bread-mush called cholo, popular in the south. Another root, guayaro, appears wild throughout the Cibao. The terms mabi and cacheo describe non-alcoholic drinks with indigenous origins that are still locally produced from fermented palm. Finally, the Taino word bucan describes the technique of spit-roasting, an important element of a barbecue (Taino word barbacoa).

Tobacco (tabaco) has a long history of use in the Dominican Republic, especially in the campo. Tobacco is an integral part of santeria ceremonies, where cigar smoking is used in spirit offerings and possession rituals. Besides being big business for export, tobacco is ubiquitous as a smoking product throughout the Dominican Republic. People smoke locally-made cigarettes, as well as cigars and pipes. Many traditions of tobacco use include rolling cigars (tubanos), or smoking a compacted tobacco leaf plug called andullo in a pipe (cachimba) or rolled in cigarette paper (pachuche).

### Medicinal Knowledge

Dominican natural medicinal knowledge makes use of many indigenous plant species and healing techniques. Many remedies have a Taino association to them, and it is probable that this association is not coincidental but was handed down over the generations as seen in Cuba (Barreiro 1989). Examples of natural medicine using indigenous products are numerous and include the use of calabaza leaves for toothaches and swelling, ingesting maguey juice for the flu, and eating guayaba for nausea. There are herbalists and curanderos in every campo, and it is often common to see greater reliance on natural medicines further away from industrialized city centers (Weeks et al. 1994). However, due to the increased use of pharmaceuticals, natural medicine has also declined in recent years.

### Fishing Techniques

Fishing techniques of indigenous origin have been well documented by Vega (1987:105-106). These include the use of fishing corrals, the temporary poisoning of small rivers or pools (sometimes with the almidon leached from bitter yuca), the use of fiber fishing nets (nasas), and techniques for localizing fish and shellfish in shallow waters. The following fish and marine animals



all have Taino names: carite, menjua, cojinua, jurel, dajao, guabina, macabi, tiburon, guatapana, lambi, burgao, carey, juey, hicotea, and jaiva. Fishing has become a less important food procurement strategy in recent years, as dams, soil erosion, and pollution have dramatically lessened the quantity of fish in rivers.

### Crafts and Technologies

Locally made ceramics use basic forms with transculturative origins. Most popular in contemporary campo use today are tinajas, large amphoras used for water storage, and rounded cooking vessels called oyas. With the availability of imported plastic and metal containers and cooking pots, however, the use of ceramics in Dominican culture is waning.

While the Taino had a strong tradition of woodworking, Dominicans seem to have been progressively losing their woodworking skills. This may be, in part, due to deforestation and the unavailability of many of the fine woods like caoba (mahogany). There is, however, in the contemporary Dominican Republic, industrial production of fine furniture. Rocking chairs are well-known as Dominican cultural items and chairs are available for guests in even the poorest of households.

Bateas are flat wooden containers that are used to carry fruits. Their origin is Taino, and often associated with their use for washing gold in rivers. Indeed, bateas are still used for this purpose today, for example in the Rio Chacuey. Bateas, like ceramics, are becoming less and less used, with the importation of cheap alternative plastic containers and receptacles. Many traditional makers of bateas have had to use less durable trees in recent years, making their products of cheaper quality. Some have expanded their product line into the tourist market by making decorative wooden spoons and forks. It is interesting to see that the word batea has been extended to the ponchera, the Spanish word for a large plastic bowl.

Dominican boat craft are still made along the coast, but have lost much of the technological features used in making Taino canoas and cayucos. The method of making a canoa from a hollowed-out royal palm as a feeding and watering trough for cows is still found in some campos. This technology is becoming increasingly rare due to the limitations put on the cutting of larger trees, on the number of craftsmen who still know how to make a canoa, and on the increasing availability of used tractor tires as watering troughs.

Calabashes, called higuero, made of various sizes and shapes, are still used by rural Dominicans as water receptacles, bowls, and food containers. Macutos, handbags of guano or cana fiber are also still made, but are less prevalent due to the availability of plastic and paper bags. Baskets (canasta) made of bejuco (vines), palm, cana, guano, and other native fibers are used for clothes

hampers and food containers, but are of relatively poor quality. Cabuya fibers are still used as cordage for ropes and whips, but synthetic fibers have become more popular in recent years. The use of native cotton (algodon) has all but disappeared with the importation of woven fabrics. Hamaca (hammocks) are today made with nylon cord mostly for sale to tourists. Beds have wholly replaced the hammock for sleeping. Finally, the use of large lambi (Strombus gigas) shells, called fotutos, by butchers to advise people what meat is being slaughtered by the number of blasts on the trumpet has indigenous origins, but is also disappearing as a cultural form.

### Architecture

The word bohio describes a country house, often with a cana roof and yagua palm siding, that has Taino origins. It also describes the prevalent ranchos, patio or field structures with cana roofs used to shade the sun. Bohios are built like the circular indigenous caney, or in a rectangular manner. Cana is used for its availability, its ability to withstand water, its durability (lasting up to twenty years in a tropical climate), and its breathability. Cana is also appreciated for its decorative beauty, and is often chosen for discotheques, restaurants, and cock fighting rings (galleras). The only negative element of using cana is it is not good for rainwater collection. Bejucos (vines) are sometimes still used to bind together ranchos, although nails are much more common.

### Folklore and Religion

Folklore and religion have many associations with indigenous heritage. Taino Indian spirits are commonly reported to dwell in rivers and caves throughout the country. Many sites of natural beauty or geological rarity have become associated as Indian places or sacred sites. Pools in rivers are often named "charco de los Indios" as are caves "cueva de los Indios", even if there is little artifactual evidence of indigenous use or occupation. Folklore often surrounds these places as spiritually dangerous or as sites where healing may occur, and are used accordingly.

Folk syncretic religions like santeria combine Indian imagery and spirit blessings into their ritual and belief systems. Herbal shops, or botanicos, often sell Indian statues and candles which are thought to bring good luck and fortune to a person using them. Indigenous herbs and flowers like copey are burned in spiritual contexts. Small bracelets are worn by new-borns for protection. Indigenous axe-heads or "piedras de rayo" are sometimes put into tinajas to protect a house from lightning.

Many stories about supernatural beings have indigenous origins, including the Ciguapa, a woman-beast with long hair and

inverted feet.

### Art, Poetry, and Literature

In the field of the arts, poetry, and literature, Dominicans have made great use of indigenous themes. Work by Cibao artists such as Luis Munoz, Bottin Castellanos, and Gina Rodriguez use Taino imagery and technology in their artistic expression. Indigenous themes also appear in works of poetry and literature, theater and modern dance. Merengero Juan Luis Guerra uses many indigenous themes in his music; a recent album of his was titled areito. Many Dominican folksongs, as well, make reference to Indians of Quisqueya, including the caciques Enriquillo and Anacaona.

### Popular Identity

Perhaps the greatest association with the indigenous past comes with the biological feature known as the "Indio" skin color. While some official identity cards use the term "trigueno" to describe the majority of Dominicans, "Indio" is the commonly held concept for the color of Dominican skin, and the "race" of the Dominican people. The term skirts the issue of Native American inheritance, which is referred to by the word indigena, and has simply defines the physical manifestation of being mixed race.

Dobal (1989:25) writes about indigenous physical qualities, temperments, and sexuality of taino origin, and suggests that the long, straight-hair, large brown eyes, and soft skin of campesinas is Taino in origin. While such observational criteria appear straight forward, subjective traits have proven to be unreliable in making larger cultural generalizations. So too, is it problematic to use early Spanish descriptions of physical beauty to generalize what the Taino looked like. However, it is acknowledged that biological "racial" features are recognized by members of a cultural community and often form the basis of assessing cultural difference. Dominicans, certainly, would agree with Dobal's description of Indios.

Dobal further suggests that the Dominican has inherited the indigenous love for liberty, the appreciation for the esthetics as opposed to the functionality of objects, the lack of ambition or greediness, and the love for their homeland and place of birth (Dobal 1989:26). Indian strength and bravery is often a quality assumed by many Dominicans, and many campos which are known for the courage of their people are cited as places where there is a lot of Indian blood. Matrifocality is a cultural trait described in ethnohistoric documents about the Taino, and can be tied to some degree to the present. Perhaps, it is a matrifocal love for homeland, that Dobal comments on, a love to be in the place where you were born and raised.

## Capitalist/ Nationalist Culture

Finally, Taino imagery is often found in a romanticized form in various elements of Dominican capitalist and nationalist culture. Strong Taino caciques, who appear portrayed as national heroes, appear on stamps and coins. Indians are found as sculpture and bas-relief on buildings, often in positions of subservience or in chains. Indians are often denigrated to the level of mascots hawking the following products: Enriquillo soda water, Guarina saltines and cookies, Siboney rum, and Hatuey soda crackers. The name "Taino" adorns businesses from pizza parlors to delivery services. A popular beer is called Quisqueya. For many Dominicans these product names are their most familiar association with the Taino past.

While nationalist Hispanic imagery has had a constraining effect on how Dominicans view the Taino past, there are also unofficial alternate expressions that resist the dominant discourses. For example, many Dominicans claim that it is bad luck (fuku) to say the name Christopher Columbus aloud and that La Isabella, one of the first Spanish settlements on the north coast of the island, is haunted by Spanish ghosts. These may be considered signs of struggle against dominant history and rejections of official ways of speaking about the legitimated glory of the Spanish past. During the Columbian quincentennial a large multi-million dollar lighthouse monument was built in the Dominican capital of Santo Domingo. Surrounding it is a tall stone wall that blocks poor barrio residents from crossing the Faro's grounds. This wall, built to hide the realities of Dominican poverty from the visiting dignitary or tourist, is known by everyone as the Muro de la Verguenza, or the Wall of Shame. It is an apt metaphor for the official national vision of Dominican identity represented by the Faro: available only to those who have the power and wealth to access it.

With the murder of human rights lawyer Rafael Ortiz during a quincentennial protest march, attention was called to the repressive, manipulative way the government was controlling the celebration of its national history. Ortiz' assassination proved to be a successful governmental tactic to quell further resistance to official quincentennial activities. Posters and simple graffiti reading "No al Quinto Centenario!" became the only visible form of organized resistance. Several critical articles in national newspapers did appear but had very little influence on the national quincentennial programs.

The quincentennial alternative Peregrinaje por Dignidad Humano was held on 5 December 1992 as a protest against the official Columbian celebrations. Literature distributed at the march read "... vamos a conmemorar la resistencia indigena, negra y popular en el dia de la llegada de Colon..." On this pilgrimage from Santiago to Santo Cerro (La Vega), various banners were unfurled with anti-governmental imagery. One banner satirized the typical San Miguel

Hombre Dominicano, Santo Domingo.

1987 Santos, shamanes y zemies. Fundacion Cultural Dominicana, Santo Domingo.

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