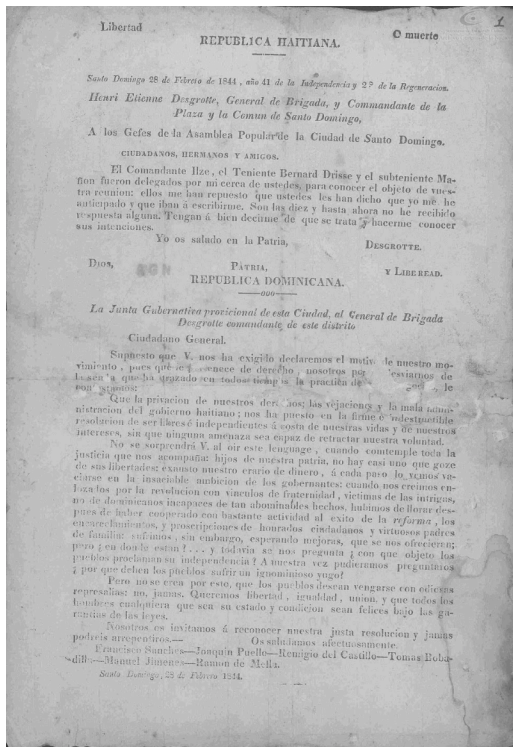


Sentiments of Separation in the 19th Century: The Origins of Anti-Haitian Rhetoric in the Dominican Republic

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The Age of Revolutions is historically characterized by the wave of independence movements dating to the late 18th and 19th centuries, often specifically as a period of colonial independence from European powers. Case studies from this era tend to focus on such examples, and thus little research has been conducted on the unification period of Haiti and the Dominican Republic beginning in 1822 and the Dominican separatist movement resulting in independence in 1844. This case study is important as one of the few examples of independence *not* from colonial domination, but willing unification, and because generations of revisionist Dominican and Western historical constructions have obscured even the most basic facts in order to posit the two countries as eternally in conflict and fundamentally opposed to one another. This idea, also known as the “fatal-conflict theory” was coined by Samuel Martinez (2013)¹ and helps to reframe misconceptions about the historical relationship between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, which originated during the unification and separation periods and were later weaponized by the dictatorship of Rafael Leonidas Trujillo to justify the cruel massacre of tens of thousands of Haitians and Black Dominicans on the frontier. This summer, I analyzed archived documents in the General Archive of the Nation to track public-facing characterizations of Haiti, according to the tenets of Martinez’s fatal-conflict theory, to analyze the potential origins of this later-weaponized rhetoric.



It was important to familiarize myself with both Western and Dominican scholarship on the unification and separation periods. This helped me gain a better understanding of the pervasiveness of the fatal-conflict rhetoric in contemporary scholarship. For instance, documents describing the unification period use words like “occupation,” as in the document to the left. I focused specifically on public-facing figures or documents, such as transcribed speeches from leaders of the independence movement and newspaper articles, avoiding in-depth analyses of personal correspondence or private documents. This is because my analysis is fundamentally tied to present-day Dominican national consciousness and identity, which is shaped through official state interactions with the mass populace of the Dominican Republic and not necessarily through private, internal interactions (although the rhetoric would most likely be similar, if not the same).

I found that the characterization of Haiti following the unification period bears many similarities to the strong anti-Haitian rhetoric that is a key part of contemporary Dominican national identity. While this rhetoric does not necessarily reflect the *truth* of the nuanced solidarity movements that have and do exist between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, it is a language that can be easily

weaponized to justify institutional atrocities and interpersonal stereotypes and biases. An essential leg in the journey towards true Haitian-Dominican unity involves uncovering this history and working towards a concrete reframing of our shared pain and oppression.

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¹ Samuel Martinez. “Not a Cockfight: Rethinking Haitian-Dominican Relations.” in *Latin American Perspectives* Vol. 30, No. 3: 80-101. California: Sage Publications, Inc, 2003.