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19. Dominican Migration to Europe: A Bibliographical Approach

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Introduction
This paper is an effort to provide an introduction to the small but growing literature published in English and Spanish that documents contemporary Dominican migration to Europe. This is a work in progress and a preliminary bibliographic compilation. I consulted databases throughout the United States, Latin America, and Europe. Some of the sources were obtained from the bibliographies of the materials to which I had access as well as from WorldCat, the online catalogues of the City University of New York (CUNY) Dominican Studies Institute Library, the Ibero-American Institute, libraries in the Dominican Republic, and from the following full text and abstract databases: Redial-Tesis, Dialnet, HAPI, JStor, ScieLO International, Google Scholar, CIAO, ECLAC, and Redalyc.

The CUNY Dominican Studies Institute as a Source
As the chief librarian of the CUNY Dominican Studies Institute (DSI), I have access to difficult-to-obtain materials related to Dominican Studies in general. The CUNY DSI is an interdisciplinary research unit of the City University of New York devoted to the study of Dominicans in the United States and other parts of the world, as well as in the Dominican Republic. This library is the first and only university-based research library dedicated to Dominicans throughout the world, and we strive to become a complete depository of related documents.

With regard to Dominican migration to Europe, CUNY DSI’s highly specialized materials include a collection of manuscripts, pamphlets, reports, and newspaper articles on Dominican migration to Spain donated by Juleyka Lantigua, a young and dynamic Dominican scholar and a friend of the Institute who traveled to Spain in the early 1990s to conduct research on this migration pattern. This collection is already in the catalogue and available for researchers.

The Institute continues to receive publications from around the world from scholars and organizations that are documenting and producing information about Dominicans in Europe. It has received publications by Tahira Vargas and Jennifer Petree on Dominicans in Switzerland. Many scholars and
heads of community-based organizations who publish about the experience of Dominicans in Europe have visited the CUNY Dominican Studies Institute Library. Among them are Professor Ninna Nyberg Sørensen, who lives in Denmark and has published articles and comparative studies on Dominican migrants in different European countries; and Dr. Bernarda Jiménez Clemente, a Dominican resident in Spain who is the first immigrant to be elected to serve on the executive board of the ruling Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party (Partido Socialista Obrero Español, PSOE). She is also the founding director of VOMADE-VINCIT (Voluntariado de Madres Dominicanas), an organization dedicated to offering services to migrants in Spain. The Institute has also received a visit from Lisa Boersen, a young scholar who has written on her experience as a Dominican in Holland.

Documenting Dominican Migration to Europe:
A Brief Introduction

Before sharing some of the sources found while researching this topic, I would like to give a brief and general overview of the characteristics that distinguish Dominican migration to Europe: 1) the late 1980s and early 1990s marked a record-high migration from Latin American and Caribbean countries to Europe (VOMADE 2001; Lilón and Lantigua 2004; Sørensen and Guarnizzo 2007); 2) the Dominican economy suffered major transformations from the mid-1970s to the late 1980s (Oso Casas 2009); 3) the 1980s and 1990s were periods of rapid development in the tourist industry of the Dominican Republic (Brennan 2004); 4) the largest concentration of Dominican migrants in Europe is to be found in Spain (VOMADE 2001; Lilón and Lantigua 2004); 5) this migratory experience is a primarily female phenomenon, as up to 80 percent of these migrants are women (García Domínguez and Paiewonsky 2006); and 6) individual remittance transfers from Switzerland to the Dominican Republic are larger than transfers made by Dominicans in any other remittance-sending country around the world (Petree and Vargas 2006). As with many other migratory experiences, the migration from the Dominican Republic to Europe occurs mainly for one of these reasons: migration for marriage, labor migration, or family reunification.

Spain as a Case Study of the Dominican Experience in Europe

One of the first groups of Dominican women to migrate to Spain in the 1980s was domestic workers hired by employees of the Iberia airline company who were stationed in the Dominican Republic for a period of six months. Many Iberia employees, when they returned to Spain, took these women along to continue to work for them. These women lived in upper middle-class neighborhoods in Madrid, such as Aravaca, Las Rozas, and Majadahonda. This explains why the great concentration of Dominican women were found at the Plaza Aurora Boreal, a square located in the center of Aravaca, on Thursday
and Sunday afternoons—rest days given to domestic workers. This conge-
gation was a major cause of friction with Spanish society and gave rise to
xenophobic reactions. One example of this is the case of Lucrecia Pérez who
was killed on November 13, 1992 while living at Four Roses, the abandoned
disco in Aravaca. This murder gave rise to an outcry of Spanish public opinion,
was categorized as the first xenophobic crime in Madrid, and led to a march
against racism in Madrid on November 21, 1992 (VOMADE 2007; Calvo
Buezas 1993).

Dominican migrants to Spain contributed to the presence of female
migratory flows in response to a demand for labor to fill unskilled and poorly
paid jobs in the service sector. It is also important to mention that, although the
largest groups of Dominicans who migrated to Spain worked as domestic serv-
ants, a group of Dominican dentists immigrated to Spain during those years
as well (Lilón and Lantigua 2004).

From those early years, the thriving Dominican community in Spain has
organized itself and includes several community and civic organizations, such
as the Association of Dominican Women in Spain (AMDE), the Voluntariado
of Dominican Mothers (VOMADE), and the Union of Dominican Women in
Spain (UIDE) to mention a few.

The literature on Dominican women in Spain has flourished in recent
years. Readers should begin with VOMADE-VINCIT’s most recent publica-
tion Mujeres inmigrantes: el corazón peregrino (2007). It includes statistics,
information on the specific conditions of this phenomenon, and the different
aspects of the Dominican experience in Spain, particularly in Madrid.

Two outstanding works on Dominicans in Spain are the book chapters
by Laura Oso Casas, “Dominican Women, Heads of Households in Spain,” in
the 2009 edited book Caribbean Migration to Western Europe and the United
States published by Temple University Press; and Domingo Lilón and Juleyka
Lantigua, “Dominican Transmigrants in Spain,” published in Dominican

Oso Casas’s chapter is enriched by personal narratives which illustrate
the struggle and obstacles Dominican women have to overcome (racial dis-
crimination, socioeconomic conditions, adaptation issues, etc.) in order to gain
a space in the receiving society. These narratives allow Dominican women to
speak for themselves. The chapter by Lilón and Lantigua provides statistical
information and reviews of the literature that introduces the main characteris-
tics of Spain’s Dominican population: their popular culture and everyday life,
which marks their social adaptation to the host country.

For early testimonials on Dominican women’s migratory experiences,
readers might start with Tres mujeres dominicanas en Madrid: sus historias
contadas por ellas mismas, published in 1993 by the Association of Dominican
Women in Spain (AMDE) and Gina Gallardo’s Buscando la vida: dominici-
canas en el servicio doméstico en Madrid, published by IEPALA-CIPAF in
1995. The narratives identify some commonalities and differences between these Dominican women and how their migratory experience has transformed their living conditions.

A pioneering study on Dominican migration to Spain is the doctoral dissertation “Sistemas de género y migración internacional: la emigración dominicana a la comunidad de Madrid,” written by Carmen Gregorio Gil who obtained her doctorate from the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid in 1996. Another important source for finding information on Dominican migration to Spain is the bibliographical essay on female immigration in Spain compiled by Gemma Aubarell: “Una propuesta de recorrido bibliográfico por las migraciones femeninas en España,” published in 2000 by Papers, where many of the works cited in this bibliography were obtained.

In addition to these sources, there are numerous newspaper and journal articles published in both Spain and the Dominican Republic that deal with the topic but are not included in this bibliography. Articles published in the Dominican magazine Rumbo and Spanish newspaper El País are important sources for journalistic accounts.

Italy

In Italy, the case of Denny Méndez, the first black Miss Italy in the history of the country, sparked much attention from the media. Eighteen at the time of her selection, Méndez was a naturalized Italian citizen of Dominican origin who had moved to Italy in the early 1990s when her mother married an Italian citizen. Silvio Torres-Saillant, in his essay “Diaspora and National Identity: Dominican Migration in the Postmodern Society,” published in Migration World Magazine in 1997, reflects upon the selection of Méndez and the place that race and ethnicity occupy in contemporary international migration from the Third World to Europe and the United States. Additional information about ethnicity in Italy and the influence of Denny Méndez can be found in Michela Ardizzoni’s article “Redrawing the Boundaries of Italianness: Televised Identities in the Age of Globalisation,” published in Social Identities in September 2005.

Besides Méndez’s unique case, Dominican migration to Italy has been documented in the book Immigrant Women and Feminism in Italy, in which Wendy A. Pojmann includes a speech delivered by Mercedes Frias, the first Dominican elected to be a Member of the National Parliament, in Italy’s Tuscany constituency in 2006.

Research Needs on Dominican Migration to Other European Countries

The first point of departure for those interested in reading further should be Ninna Nyberg Sørensen’s papers and publications. Her edited books—Beyond Home and Exile: Making Sense of Lives on the Move (Roskilde University,
2002) and Living across Worlds: Diaspora, Development and Transnational Engagement (International Organization for Migration, 2007)—discuss migration of Latin American and Caribbean women to Europe (Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom, Denmark, and the Netherlands).

Not much has been written about Dominicans migrating to other European countries. For Dominicans in Switzerland, Jennifer Petree and Tahira Vargas’s Dominicans in Switzerland: Patterns, Practices and Impacts of Transnational Migration and Remittances Linking the Dominican Republic and Switzerland (2006) is an original contribution to the topic. The study discusses data gathered through in-depth interviews involving Dominican migrants, migrant-sending households, and key informants in both Switzerland and the Dominican Republic. According to the study, “the growth of international tourism in the Dominican Republic and the subsequent transnational relationships formed between Dominicans and Swiss citizens brought the first wave of Dominicans to Switzerland in the early 1980s.” The growth of the cabaret dancing industry was another migration “pull factor” that attracted many Dominican women to Switzerland.

Dominicans in the Netherlands seem to be addressed only in a paper presented by Lisa Boerson in a 2001 conference organized by the CUNY Dominican Studies Institute and the Rockefeller Foundation in New York, later published in Desde la orilla: hacia una nacionalidad sin desalojos (Manati and Libreria La Trinitaria, 2004). This essay describes Lisa’s journey as the “only Dominican who grew up in Holland, at least of her age.”

This section began by challenging the existent research on Dominican migration to other European countries (besides Spain). For example, for Dominicans in Germany I found information only in a chapter of Denise Brennan’s book What’s Love Got to Do with It?: Transnational Desires and Sex Tourism in the Dominican Republic (2004). It was a challenge to find publications that document the lives of people like John Castro de la Cruz, a professional Dominican who has studied and lived in Germany since the early 1980s. Like many other Dominicans in Germany, he has actively organized and participated in Dominican-related events. He has been involved in organizations such as the Asociación Dominicana en Alemania, Instituto Duartiano en el Norte de Alemania, as well as the Council of Dominicans Living Abroad (Consejo Consultivo de la Presidencia de los Dominicanos en el Exterior). Likewise, I could not find information that documents the life of the Dominican scholar Anna Lockward, who is writing her doctoral dissertation at the Universidad de las Artes de Berlín, or information about Miguel D. Mena, a Dominican scholar and writer who has lived in Berlin for more than twenty years.
Conclusion

In conclusion, the Dominican population in Europe is growing and its presence is becoming palpable. Scholars should become aware of the importance of analyzing this community in a more careful and detailed fashion. Eventually, more bibliographic tools will be developed spanning the life of the community. Besides the great work that the Ibero-American Institute is conducting in Berlin, is there an effort to document and compile information about Dominicans in Europe?

The main purpose of this bibliographic overview was to compile, organize and make available information on the small but growing literature that documents Dominican migration to European countries. What follows is a preliminary list of the Spanish and English language sources I have found so far, and which will serve as a starting point for another scholar who would like to expand this bibliography, especially with regard to sources in other languages.

NOTES

1. While every attempt has been made to collect as much data on the topic as possible, I would like to emphasize that this bibliographic collection is not a truly complete compilation, especially when dealing with materials published in European countries in languages other than English or Spanish.

BIBLIOGRAPHY ON DOMINICAN MIGRATION TO EUROPE

Spain

Publications of Dominican Organizations in Spain and Conference Proceedings

AMDE


VOMADE


Other Conference Proceedings


Books


Book Chapters


Articles


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Doctoral Dissertations and Theses


Fernández Melo, Soirée Cristina. “Análisis jurídico del flujo migratorio laboral entre República Dominicana y España.” PhD diss., Pontificia Universidad Católica
A Bibliographical Approach

Madre y Maestra, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic (PUCMM-RSTA), 2004.


Italy


Switzerland


The Netherlands


Germany

