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**DEVELOPING POLITICS IN QUISQUEYA HEIGHTS:
LOCAL AND NATIONAL TRAJECTORIES OF DOMINICAN-AMERICAN
ORGANIZING**

By
ANA LUCÍA APARICIO

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
Anthropology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The City University of New York

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This manuscript has been read and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in Anthropology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

Developing Politics in Quisqueya Heights: Local and
National Trajectories of Dominican-American Organizing

By
Ana Lucía Aparicio

Advisor: Dr. Leith P. Mullings

Today's immigrants and their children work to create networks - in personal and institutional settings - and construct local politics that extend beyond strict boundaries of race, ethnicity, and nation. Contemporary immigrant groups in the United States are altering local politics and transforming the communities and cities in which they live. This dissertation examines the ways in which Dominican-Americans living in Washington Heights participate in local politics. Central to this study is the exploration of the extent to which Dominican-American community building and politics involves second-generation Dominicans as well as other ethnic/racial groups.

The character of Dominican-American community organizing has changed since the first wave of Dominican immigrants arrived in New York in the 1960s. Through the generations, local organizers have altered the geo-political focus of their efforts. That is, they have moved from sole

emphasis on "homeland politics," or the transnational sphere, to include organizing to confront locally produced issues in the city of New York. In New York, in efforts to build their power, they have expanded their organizational efforts to include other people of color, namely Puerto Ricans and African-Americans. Using data gathered through life histories, interviews, participant observation, and archival research, I argue that for the Dominican community in Washington Heights a number of factors converged in the 1980s and 1990s, allowing Dominicans to establish a foothold in local politics. First, community organizers retreated from exclusive concentration on "home politics." Following this development, Dominican organizers began to focus on establishing organizations to take on local issues. In this processes they reached out to Puerto Rican and African American activists and established leadership in New York. And, finally, a new generation of Dominican-Americans, raised and educated in public institutions in New York City came of age and solidified the new direction of Dominican-American organizing.

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This dissertation is the result of work that began long before I entered graduate school. I stand on the shoulders of many who came before me. There is an ocean of loving and sturdy hands that have kept me afloat. My first and most influential teacher has been my mother, Maria. A teacher by training, she willed open the doors of my imagination, instructing me to either see or create beauty and hope in this world. My mother was the first to ask to read my dissertation. She continues to be a loving source of strength. My sisters, Gabriela and Margoth, have also helped keep me moving; on numerous occasions they searched for statistics and organized my files. Many other family members also encouraged me to keep going. Among them are Joaq, Mauri, Tía Carmen, Tía Gloria, Wendy, Will, Karim, Ney, Neftalí, and dozens of others; I ask that they forgive me for not mentioning them all individually. As I completed my writing, my family was made more beautiful with the births of my nephew Kaeleb and nieces Sumira and Isabelle. In moments when I was ready to throw my work out the window, Kaeleb would make things fun again for this "essay girl," reminding me that it's important to enjoy learning; he also forced me to take breaks to make peanut butter sandwiches and play outside. Mama Lola and Papa

Quin, my grandparents, were among my strongest and wisest advocates. They did not live to see me finish my doctorate, but I am certain they sit alongside many ancestors who watch over me. It is to those who came before me and to those who follow that I dedicate my work.

When I began my journey through graduate school I never imagined the communities of which I would become a part. When I entered the world of anthropology, I was already a part of a community of young Latino organizers in New York. During my first semester in graduate school, I remember feeling overwhelmed as I tried to balance community organizing with the requirements of my department. I discussed this with my advisor, Leith Mullings, who suggested that I simply bring the two areas of work together. She suggested that through my research, I could become involved with community organizing at yet another level. Delmos Jones also counseled me as I began my graduate studies, reminding me that my interest and commitment to my project was crucial if I were to ever complete my dissertation. Leith and Del were my first mentors and the first to suggest that I could use anthropology as yet another tool in social justice movements. They are the activist-scholars who kept me motivated in my early graduate career. And they are among

the activist-scholars who continue to inspire me, allowing me to believe that, indeed, we can make anthropology relevant. Unfortunately Del did not live to see this dissertation completed. But his gentle wisdom continues to guide my work.

Throughout my graduate career Leith was an unfaltering and dedicated advisor and mentor, believing in my project and in me when I was less than confident. She encouraged me to think critically as I documented what was happening in local organizing efforts. She created opportunities that allowed me to explore new areas of research and organizing. She demanded excellence and made sure that I stayed on track with my dissertation work. Leith carefully combed through each dissertation draft. She edited countless revisions with great care and speed. If my dissertation makes any sort of contribution, it is due, in large part, to Leith's commitment to me and to this project. As chair of my committee, she was instrumental in the completion of my graduate career.

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Don in my final year of writing. But in those few meetings, he was able to extract a world of new ideas from the fragmented drafts I gave him, allowing me to see things in my data that I had never imagined. Within the pages of this dissertation, numerous insights are a result of Don's vast foundation of knowledge and of his astute reflections on the potential of my work.

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Throughout graduate school, when I drifted into the sea of confusion that often envelopes graduate students, numerous friends helped me find my way to shore. Melanie Bush was my persistent "dissertation coach." She was also a tremendous source of inspiration for me. Jemima Pierre also walked alongside me as I entered the last leg of this marathon. Jemima and I share similar concerns, critiques, and hopes for academia. I thank her for reading through and editing my dissertation line-by-line. I also thank Sarah Aponte, of the Dominican Studies Institute, who helped me construct a more thorough bibliography. I also thank many friends who provided invaluable support

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Carol Stack (1995) stated that, "...in the end it is the ethnographer who lays her fingers on the keyboard to play the final note on the chorus of voices." Although this dissertation was written as I painfully fused my thoughts with the keyboard, it is a result of the work of so many others. It is only because those who came before me endured hardships, sacrificed so much, and dared to struggle that I can write these words now. And it is because so many activists in Washington Heights remain committed to social justice and community empowerment efforts that I have a story to weave within these pages. It is because of all of these people that I find reason and remain optimistic about the work of anthropology. I hope

that my first steps in this field do justice to all they
continue to do for me and for this society.

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Introduction

"...focus on the visible coastline of politics and
[you will] miss the continent that lies beyond."

-James C. Scott

Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson suggest, "in the pulverized space of postmodernity, space has not become irrelevant; it has been reterritorialized... [and] it is this that forces us to reconceptualize fundamentally the politics of community, solidarity, identity, and cultural difference" (1992: 9). Today's immigrants and their children work to create networks - in personal and institutional settings - and construct local politics that extend beyond strict boundaries of race, ethnicity, and nation. Contemporary immigrant groups in the United States are altering local politics and transforming the communities and cities in which they live. This dissertation examines the ways in which Dominican-Americans living in Washington Heights participate in local politics. Central to this study is the exploration of the extent to which Dominican-American community building and politics involves second-generation Dominicans as well as other ethnic/racial groups.

The character of Dominican-American community organizing has changed since the first wave of Dominican immigrants arrived in New York in the 1960s. Through the

generations, local organizers have altered the geo-political focus of their efforts. That is, they have moved from sole emphasis on "homeland politics," or the transnational sphere, to include organizing to confront locally-produced issues in the city of New York. Dominicans have a strong history of civic participation. In New York, in efforts to build their power, they have expanded their organizational efforts to include other people of color, namely Puerto Ricans and African-Americans. I argue that for the Dominican community in Washington Heights a number of factors converged in the 1980s and 1990s, allowing Dominicans to establish a foothold in local politics. First, community organizers retreated from exclusive concentration on "home politics." Following this development, Dominican organizers began to focus on establishing organizations to take on local issues. In this processes they reached out to Puerto Rican and African American activists and established leadership in New York. And, finally, a new generation of Dominican-Americans, raised and educated in public institutions in New York City came of age and solidified the new direction of Dominican-American organizing. I suggest that behind the appearance of "co-ethnic" community organizing and empowerment lies the reality of coalition building across racial and ethnic

lines.

At the forefront of many developments toward this end are second-generation Dominican-Americans. This dissertation seeks to bridge the gap between two bodies of literature, one which focuses on first generation immigrant politics, and the other which examines the new second generation. While examining Dominican-American organizing or politics, it is important not to omit or marginalize the role of young Dominican immigrants and the second-generation in these processes.

This dissertation examines the ways in which and the reasons why some Dominican activists in New York City have developed a particular framework of identity - as Dominican-Americans and/or people of color - through their political mobilizations and institution building projects. Central to this study are the ways in which identity politics is understood and used in organizing efforts. The extent to which Dominican-American organizers build coalitions across racial and ethnic lines in this process raises questions about assumptions prevalent in contemporary theories on immigrants and the second-generation. This research then challenges several postulations common in the literature on contemporary immigrant communities. Research on immigrant politics tends to overemphasize transnational organizing,

while those writing about the second generation and segmented assimilation privilege "co-ethnic" identity and action. This study attempts to move beyond these paradigms and present a more dynamic portrait of the every-changing face of Dominican-American politics.

The Transnational Paradigm

In recent years scholars have focused considerable attention on the ways in which today's immigrants alter concepts of assimilation and identity. This scholarship encourages us to re-evaluate our assumptions about immigration, assimilation, cultural hybridity, community, and political participation, suggesting that such processes are manifested in new ways in the lives of today's immigrant communities. The role of immigrants as active agents is at the forefront of such theories. Immigrant organizations and the geo-political sites of their activities and political positioning have been at the center of contemporary literature on the "new immigration." Current theory highlights the nature of agency and activism of immigrant groups, noting the significant role immigrant organizations have on "home politics." Scholars such as Basch et al. (1994), Duany (1994), Schiller et al. (1992) have frequently defined immigrants' invariable pull to "home" as

"transnationalism," interpreting this kind of purposeful involvement with "home" as the tool [and political strategy] with which immigrants gain a sense of empowerment.

Scholars writing about transnationalism argue that contemporary immigrants are identifying and positioning themselves between "home" and "host" countries; i.e., although their daily existence occurs in their "host" country, their social, political, and economic existence continues in their "home" country. Some would argue that immigrants are reconfiguring their "place," circumventing marginalized spaces in "host" countries by building their social, political and economic capital in their "home" countries. In this process, a new sense of community and identity is created. In one recent text about Dominican immigrants in Boston, Peggy Levitt (2001) describes this new "space" as a "transnational village." According to Levitt, people on both geographic ends of this village form part of one social and political space, with most efforts aimed at developing the neighborhoods émigrés left in the Dominican Republic. These types of studies offer insights into a historically overlooked pattern of immigrant politics. However, they do not analyze the extent to which immigrants organize in ways that are not transnational. Recognizing these limitations, these authors also suggest that there is

a need for further research to determine the extent to which second-generation immigrants participate in this transnational space.

Contextualized within and beyond theories of transnationalism and community organizing, this dissertation shifts the direction of research on immigrant politics to include an analysis of relationships that immigrant organizations have with local [U.S.] politics and people of color, while re-considering scholars' interpretation of "community" and their identities and connections to "home." I explore the nature of local organizing activities, examining the roots and routes of efforts evident in the Dominican-American neighborhood of Washington Heights. Many of the organizations established by this population have, since their inception, worked to confront and change issues they face in New York: funding for public education, local environmental hazards, health concerns, bilingualism and English-as-a-second-language instruction, underemployment, representation in local government, civic participation, etc. The role of the second-generation in these organizations has been crucial for the development of community organizing. Although local organizers and the major organizations - including those on which this study is based - have their distinct missions and field(s) of

activity, they all appear to share similar goals of involvement in local and U.S. politics. These organizations have charted roads toward institution-building in Washington Heights, engaging and developing "community" and "community-building" efforts in multiple and converging ways, often invoking "home" in a manner which contradicts some of the focal points of current theory.

There are few accounts of the Dominican presence in local politics. In these studies, Dominicans are generally seen as either transnational actors (see Levitt 2001; Grasmuck and Pessar 1991; Duany 1994), or local Dominican-American actors (see Hernández and Torres-Saillant 1998; Ricourt 2002; Georges 1984). However, the transnational paradigm has been used to define the Dominican community more consistently. For example, two recent qualitative studies on Dominican-Americans and politics declare that Dominicans comprise a truly transnational village (see Levitt 2001; Grasmuck and Pessar 1991). My research suggests a rather different focus and conclusion. My study builds on the work of those who emphasize the local actor perspective.

Dominican-American organizers have established a strong local presence in New York, embarking into a new era of "power from the margins," to borrow Milagros Ricourt's phrasing (2002). Authors such as Ricourt (2002) Ricourt and

Danta (2002) and Hernández and Torres-Saillant (1998) emphasize the way Dominicans attempt to participate in local political spheres. They agree that Dominican immigrants are establishing power in politics and community development. They concur that this is a politically astute community with substantial roots in organizing and civic participation. However, most scholars examining immigrant community politics have not extended their analyses to include the role of the second-generation in local organizing. They have left the question of the second-generation, their identities, and political behavior open for further investigation.

The Second-Generation

A new body of literature has emerged under the auspices of scholars such as Alejandro Portes, Ruben Rumbaut and others. Though not addressing the issue of the second-generation's role in local politics, this new literature seeks to address questions regarding the "new second-generation," their identities and their prospects for social mobility in the U.S. Scholars such as Portes, Rumbaut, Min Zhou, and Mary Waters have developed a theory of "segmented assimilation" in their studies of this new second generation. Central to their theory is a discussion of the second generation's

identity choices. Portes and Rumbaut identify three possible avenues of assimilation which contemporary second-generation immigrants can take: they can assimilate into white America (a seemingly impossible task for most contemporary immigrant groups); they can identify with and assimilate into "native minority" groups, namely Puerto Rican, African-American and Mexican-American, a choice that will lead to "downward assimilation," or; they can remain rooted almost exclusively in their immigrant group, maintaining a "co-ethnic" identity.

Proponents of segmented assimilation theory argue that it is in the best interest of the new second-generation and of their immigrant communities to maintain an identity and a lifestyle that revolves around the "co-ethnic," their own national-ethnic group. They state that a positive prognosis can be made for those who remain attached to the "co-ethnic." Although these authors appropriately dispel any remaining fragments of a "straight-line assimilation" approach and insist that race was a crucial factor in the assimilation of earlier European groups, I argue that these contemporary analyses are limited. Implicit in their work is the assumption that people maintain strict adherence to bounded, unchanging, homogeneous communities - either that of white America, native minorities, or co-ethnic.

Furthermore, in their assessments of "native minority" groups, they present a picture of a permanent underclass populous. These contemporary accounts of the new second generation also suggest that identity choices are the most important factors in social and economic mobility for the second generation. Moreover, they have not considered the ways in which second-generation populations inhabit numerous spaces, or identities, simultaneously. As I will argue later in the dissertation, the spaces occupied by second-generation Dominican-Americans include other people of color. And this has been a crucial component of the manner in which Dominican-Americans have constructed local power and political capital.

To summarize, mainstream literature on immigrant communities in the United States, particularly when examining organizing efforts, points to the "co-ethnic" and/or "transnational" strategies utilized by both first and second-generation immigrants. This dissertation seeks to move beyond these approaches by exploring the process by which local activists became involved in local politics and the ideologies supporting their participation in these efforts.

Second-Generation Politics: Coming of Age in New York

During the period in which Dominicans became the majority population in the northern Manhattan neighborhood of Washington Heights, New York City was undergoing massive economic upheaval. Working-class New Yorkers were hit especially hard with the erosion of the manufacturing industries in the Northeast. Various studies have demonstrated that people are creative and find ways - within the context of the social, economic, and political restrictions they face - to participate and intervene in this process. It was during this period that Dominican activists began to feel that the task of organizing and obtaining resources for the community rested solely on their shoulders and that they were best equipped to represent the Dominican immigrant community in local politics. They began to participate in local civic projects to garner this power. Although such participation can constitute a form of resistance, it can also easily become a form of accommodation (Kelley 1996, Sacks 1988, Jones 1987). While most Dominican leaders who participated in this study express commitment to working to benefit the community, they have charted two distinct paths toward this end. Some have accommodated to local political machinery in order to obtain grants and other resources for local

community development and service delivery. I refer to those who emphasize this direction as the *Ethnic Entrepreneurs*. I label the other organizing trend the *Community Mobilizers*. Community mobilizers base their work on the assumption that community empowerment requires work from a grassroots level and that empowerment can only be accomplished if local residents take it upon themselves to demand resources and simultaneously challenge state policies. Both groups believe it is important to focus organizing on local issues. Both groups believe that the state must provide more resources to allow for Dominican economic, social, and political growth. And organizers in both groups understand the importance of working with other people of color. The methods and ideologies they use differ. But a critical reading of the modes of political engagement and participation would suggest that people, no matter their circumstance and position in society, struggle to have a say in their own lives, in their communities, and in the processes that affect them. And they do so using various strategies and ideologies. It is, therefore, not surprising that Dominican American activists would use varying strategies in their efforts to garner power for the community.

The questions guiding this dissertation, therefore,

include: What constitutes Dominican-American organizing in Washington Heights? With whom have they collaborated in this community-building process? How does "identity" come to bear on the manner in which they organize? How does the new cadre of Dominican activists - composed in large part by the second-generation - confront and organize local politics and how do they construct a sense of community in Washington Heights? To what extent do they work with co-ethnics, and/or with other people of color? And finally, is contemporary activism in Washington Heights grounded in specific geo-political spaces and identities? To what extent is political organizing a transnational, translocal, or New York-based?

Contrary to mainstream representation (Suro 1998), the political transformations fostered by Dominicans have proven significant and led to a multitude of local, community-based institutions (see Georges 1984; Ricourt 2002; Torres-Saillant & Hernández 1998). I examine the patterns of community organizing in the Dominican neighborhood of Washington Heights, NY particularly from the 1980s to the present, focusing on the ways that second-generation Dominicans are envisioning themselves and their communities into a new American citizenry. In this reading, the realm of politics extends beyond the formal electoral process. I

examine the numerous ways Dominican American activists struggle for power and control of the community.

Embarking on an examination of the political developments of community organizing in Washington Heights requires that we pay attention to historic, economic, and political circumstances in which this community operates. We must also begin to look at these factors as forces, or macro-level processes with which local activists and organizations are in dialogue. Community organizing does not develop in a vacuum. Dominicans who arrived in Washington Heights in the latter part of the twentieth century have faced particular social and political conditions, including gentrification and housing shortage, government abandonment of the social safety net, the erosion of the manufacturing industries in the U.S., and a racialized educational system. Local activists and organizations have gradually, though surely, come to focus their efforts on these locally produced issues. The strategies they use to organize to confront these issues and the modes of identification they call upon to do so are at the core of this dissertation. Within this reading of Dominican-American organizing I will address issues raised in the literature on contemporary immigrants: transnationalism, segmented assimilation, racialization and

community politics.

This research continues in the line of work that emphasizes immigrants and political participation through examination of local organizations. To focus one's studies on community-based organizing is to tell the story not only of these organizations and their constituents but also of the possibilities for a new democracy from the ground up. In an exploration of contemporary social movements, Manning Marable's (2002) assessment of civic participation among the working poor and unemployed is pertinent in this discussion of immigrant community organizing. He notes, "In the postindustrial cities of America... the decisive battleground has shifted from the workplace to the living space" and many disenfranchised people, "express their political activism through civil society rather than in trade unions or formal electoral political parties. These small-scale, ad hoc, grassroots organizations represent a 'great well of democracy,' an underutilized resource that has the potential to redefine our democratic institutions" (2002:222).

For this reason it is imperative that we understand contemporary immigrant organizing. Not only will we learn about the "new immigrant politics" but we also stand to learn about the new possibilities for democratic movements in this country. The issue of "the color line," as DuBois

analyzed it a century ago, resonates today. Its relevance and enduring legacy is particularly clear when embarking on a study of politics and power in the U.S. An examination of the new immigrant politics necessitates an excavation of race and racialization and of the ways in which racialized groups challenge these processes.

Ethnicity, Race, and Community Mobilizing

In the past ten years, there has been an increase in the literature that examines pan-ethnic identities and coalition building. Scholars working in this vein (see Jennings 1994; Espiritu 1992; Ricourt & Danta 2002; Torres & Ngin 1995) examine the ways in which immigrants of color broker identities with other marginalized groups in the United States. They argue that organizing around these pan-ethnic identities is done so for the explicit purpose of empowerment (Bonus 2000).

Social scientists have tended to explore identity from either a primordial or an instrumentalist stance. In an attempt to move beyond the limitations of these approaches, Rick Bonus' (2000) ethnography of Filipino-American politics highlights Rodolfo D. Torres and ChorSwang Ngin's (1995) primary thesis that when people identify themselves as one collective or when they associate themselves with other

racial/ethnic groups, they do so for political empowerment. Torres and Ngin define this as "ethnicity for itself." Torres and Ngin argue that today's immigrant and/or "native minority" groups, or "racialized Others," forge commonality under a unifying ethnic category, such as "Latino" or "Asian American," to promote and protect shared goals, to create a space of inclusion and civil rights (17), an analysis shared by Manning Marable (1994). This process is one of renegotiation and redefinition that defines the group's relationship with the dominant society. It is also a process that can lead to alliances across traditionally defined "race" and "ethnic" lines. Bonus explains that this "instrumentalist view" allows us to understand that the development of a pan-ethnic/racial identity. He suggests that this type of identity arises from the "circumstantial manipulation of identities" by individuals gathering as one to suit their collective interests. Bonus' discussion of the ways in which these processes have taken shape within the Filipino American population of California points to identity formation as a "set of claims about ethnicity and nationhood" (2000: 16). These issues, along with how identities enter local political efforts are taken up in this dissertation.

Identity and Power in the New Generation

Carlos Pierre¹, a 24-year old second-generation Dominican man grew up in Washington Heights and now works with a youth program in Quisqueya United, one of the largest organizations in the neighborhood. As a teenager growing up in New York, he attended public schools alongside Black and Dominican peers. When he was in school, he says,

"I didn't feel any connection to those [newly-arrived] Dominicans ...it's just that they were just coming here. I didn't have anything in common with them, or, you know, that's what I thought back then. They were into merengue and even bachata and I was like, woah, what the hell is this? You know, give me my hip-hop and I was good, you know. I felt that I had more in common with Blacks growing up, you know. We were here, living and growing up in New York [City]. They were coming from the island. I knew we weren't the same. There was something different with us Dominicans growing up here and Blacks, you know."²

Carlos' reflections on his identity changed as he went away to college and started working with other Latinos: "I am always identifying myself as a Dominican who grew up in the U.S., you know. Not exactly a Dominican-American really or an American of Dominican descent. It's all in there and

1 In order to protect the anonymity of all who participated in this research, I have used pseudonyms for individuals and organizations throughout this text. Pseudonyms are used for those with whom I conducted research. I use the actual names of organizations and individuals whose information I obtained via public channels - e.g., local media, public records, archival data sources.

2 Informants' words are presented as they spoke them. That is, if they delivered their thoughts in English, they are presented as such in this text. If they chose to speak Spanish, I have stayed true to their expression. In those cases, I have translated their words within the text.

I know people see that all the time." While in college, he began thinking about joining a fraternity. His first inclinations were to join a black fraternity, "...you know, I wanted to feel that community, that feeling of brotherhood." But as he started to meet and hang out with other Latinos who grew up here, in the U.S., he opted to join a Latino fraternity.

"Yeah, you know, I definitely am Black and I have a lot in common with African Americans, but I started to see that also, there was the Latino part of me that also needed a place, you know. I started to learn about Pedro Albizu [Campos] and Ché [Guevara] and Emiliano Zapata, and all these other people I had no clue about before. I knew about Malcolm X and Black leaders but I didn't know about my other roots. I became Latino in a new way then...and Dominican."

Carlos now works with young Dominicans - the newly arrived and those born and raised here. Carlos speaks so fondly of his vivid memories of being black, of becoming and belonging to a new community of Latinos, and of rediscovering his Dominican-ness. He also maintains a political/ideological connection to African Americans and other Latinos, insisting to youth in the organization the importance of seeing connections. He and other staff members of the organization have shown films on the Black Panthers, Pa'lante on the Young Lords Party, and Spike Lee's movie "X." Carlos' youthful appearance (he is often mistaken for a teenager) and his ability to "speak the language" of youth in the

organization - Dominican Spanish, Neuyorican Spanglish and *Dominicanish* (see Baez 1999), and Black English - has worked to draw many youth in the organization to the youth council, in which he is a lead staff person. His ability to identify with (and as) Latino, Dominican, and Black stands in no direct contradiction; these identities represent, as he says, "...my community of support. This is where I'm going to be. These are my people."

An identity and a community, as imagined (Anderson 1983) as these may be, constitute a political space. People continuously re-construct their communities and reconfigure their identities as members of that community. Some would argue that people not only alter their identities and community perspectives (i.e., who makes up their community and what community they belong to) over a span of time, but that people also change their self-ascribed identities and roles according to the situations in which they find themselves. This notion of a "situational identity" is often discussed when speaking of the children of immigrants - or second-generation - thought to live "between and betwixt" the world of their parents and the world of their adopted country. However, far from being a case of schizophrenic self-ascribed definitions, the identities around which an individual or a group organizes and/or from

which they draw collective strength are designated after prolonged study and involvement in micro and macro level processes. People can "choose" to use particular identities available to them to attain a certain goal.

In the case of organizing and contemporary politics, identity appears to have taken center-stage as people organize to confront the state (Castells, 1982, 1997; Hale 1997). Studies on identity politics demonstrate that the relationship between politics and identity is historically specific, contextual, and multilayered. It is also constantly shifting in practice and in meaning. It is from this understanding that this dissertation utilizes concepts gleaned from studies of ethnicity, race, and community building.

Guide to the Text

This dissertation is organized around key issues of identity,³ political mobilizations, and community building. Before delving into the ways these processes take shape in Washington Heights, I provide an overview of the physical

³ The understanding of identity in this dissertation is not based in the discipline of social psychology. The understanding here is, rather, one of politicized identities. I employ an understanding of the politics of identity as a social construct, the parameters of which are constantly changing. Identity shifts in this case are to be understood in the context of politics, economic conditions, racialization, and power.

landscape of the site of research. Chapter One describes the physical and social landscape of the neighborhood. Exploring Washington Heights' history, its resources, and its contemporary demographics provides the context within which local Dominican organizing operates. Chapter Two outlines the political developments in the Dominican Republic. These developments serve as the backdrop to migration trends and Dominican-American community-building and political participation. I offer a review of the literature in Chapter three. There has been a recent surge in scholarship on immigrant communities. One of the foci of this literature is contemporary immigrant politics and their transnational activities. Another focus is the second-generation and their ethnic "choices." This chapter sets the stage for understanding Dominican-American politics in Washington Heights, New York, bridging the gaps left in current literature. Chapter Four presents a chronological account of major organizing trends in Washington Heights, paying close attention to developments since the 1980s. In this chapter I question the transnational framework presented thus far to describe the Dominican immigrant community and offer a chronological analysis that explores the development of community power in concurrence with Dominican collaborations with other people of color. I

argue that a series of factors converged during the 1980s that allowed Dominicans to imagine a Dominican political space developed in consultation and in solidarity with other organizers of color in New York. Chapter Five highlights the work of the Dominican-American leadership. Today's leadership is diverse in age, gender, class background, and, most importantly in ideology. Though all the leaders discussed focus their energies on New York or U.S.-based issues affecting the Dominican community, they have generally emphasize one of two ideological paths to meet the needs and garner power for Dominicans. This chapter discusses these two ideological tendencies - Ethnic Entrepreneurship and Community Mobilizing - through the use of life histories, political statements, and community organizing events. Chapter Six delves into a discussion of the new second-generation and the ways they identify themselves, their community (as Dominican, Latino, Black, and/or people of color), their racialized place in this society, and their work in politics. The manner in which they use different identities and establish coalitions across racial and ethnic lines is a driving force in this analysis. Second-generation Dominicans are using different methods and allies to address local needs and concerns. In chapter Seven I present two projects in which Dominican-

Americans are involved. Their involvement in these inter-racial/ethnic collaborations tell us about the ways in which Dominicanness, local Dominican politics, inter-ethnic and racial collaborations and diaspora come together in the creation of a Dominican-American agenda in the U.S.

A Note on Terminology

There are numerous phrases used in this dissertation that require early definition. One of the key distinctions made in the literature on immigrant communities is that of first, 1.5, and second-generations. The first generation is commonly understood to be the group of adults who embarked on the emigration process. Their children are referred to as either the 1.5 or the second-generation. The "1.5" generation is meant to define those young immigrants who spent their formative years in the country to which their parents immigrated. Scholars such as Sanchez (1983), Portes (1994), and Waters (1996) conclude that this generation stands in a unique position, as they spent some time in another country but their teen years were shaped by life in a new land. The second-generation is a term used to refer to those born to immigrant parents in the "host" country. The term distinguishes the second generation from the 1.5ers because their entire experience

is primarily through the lens of a life lived in the U.S.

For the purposes of this dissertation, I do not distinguish between the 1.5 and the second-generation. Instead, second-generation is used to describe Dominicans who arrived in the U.S. as children, as well as those born in the U.S. For my analysis the distinction between these groups is not necessary, particularly when recognizing that as young people of color in the U.S., they face the same processes of economic disenfranchisement, racialization, and socio-political marginalization. While the ideologies they adopt may be influenced by their experiences in life in one particular society (that is, either the Dominican Republic or the U.S.), I argue that it is their experience as young people of color in the U.S. that is most pertinent in their understandings and ideologies around race and politics in the U.S.

I do, however, distinguish the second-generation from the first generation. When using the term first generation I am referring to the immigrant adults who embarked on the journey to the U.S. I also use this terminology to distinguish between the "old guard" immigrant leaders and the "new, second-generation" leaders whose politicization began and developed primarily in the U.S. I do not make these distinctions to suggest that they are disparate and

disconnected populations with distinct ideologies. That would displace arguments of the macro-level context of political developments of a community through time. Rather than see these two generations as disconnected and acting upon generation-specific ideologies, I examine the ways that these two generations have developed politics in Washington Heights together. These two generations continue to interact considerably in local and national Dominican politics. I make the distinction, therefore, only for the sake of clarifying the ages and historical trajectories of these actors.

The uses of the terms Dominican and Dominican-American also require brief definition. Dominican-American is generally used to identify individuals who employ an ideology that leads them to focus their organizing in and for Dominicans in the U.S. The use of the term Dominican is not, however, used to imply the inverse. That is, defining someone as Dominican does not suggest that they are *transmigrants* disengaged from civic life in New York. When discussing transnationalism or people involved in this process, I will refer to them as Dominican *transmigrants*. The distinction between Dominican and Dominican-American is, therefore, used to denote the strong political inclinations of said actors, with the latter identified

strongly with U.S. organizing.

Another set of terms that need clarification is that of African-American, Black, and Latino. African-American and Black are used interchangeably at times, though use of the term African-American is popularly employed to distinguish them from other Black populations. I use Black to talk about all the people of African descent in the Americas, including African-Americans, West Indians, and Dominicans. The term Latino, like Dominican-American, is used in this dissertation as a political identity. It is used to describe people with roots in Latin America or the Spanish-speaking Caribbean now living in the U.S. There is still ample debate surrounding the use of this term (see Oboler 1995). Because it encapsulates so many different national groups with distinct histories, this category can obscure many important aspects of each of the different national groups (e.g., Dominican history and immigration experience differs greatly from that of the Cuban population in the U.S. In using the term Latino one can, unfortunately, gloss over such important distinctions). Nonetheless, in this dissertation Latino will refer to people with roots in Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean now living in the U.S. As I will demonstrate later in the dissertation, this term is an important

political identity for Dominican-Americans organizing with or seeing themselves as a part of a broader body politic in the U.S.

Chapter 1

Quisqueya Heights: The Setting and Context

"...in work on a contemporary society, I think it is very often a good rule first to attempt to explain its contemporary features in terms of their contemporary function. This means to locate them, to see them as parts of and even as due to other features of their contemporary setting" (Mills 1959:154).

Before we can understand organizations established by Dominicans in Washington Heights, we must first know the neighborhood in which they carry out their work. In order to fully appreciate the histories and development of community-based organizers in any locale, one must understand the broader context with which they are in dialogue. Dominican activists developed organizations in Washington Heights during particular moments in the history of New York and U.S.; these activists had clear agendas. They consistently interacted with the local neighborhood, other non-Dominican communities, the city of New York, the larger state, and, in some cases the Dominican Republic and its leadership. In this chapter I offer an overview of the neighborhood setting - its geographic and socio-political landscapes. This includes a brief introduction to the organizations that form the subject of this dissertation.

Washington Heights: Becoming Dominican Territory

In the two weeks leading up to the weekend of February 27, 2000, Washington Heights was marked with declarations of a Dominican-American political presence. Large white poster-boards with blue and red lettering announced an upcoming conference, at which participants would draft a "Dominican-American Agenda." Walking through Washington Heights that winter it was impossible to miss the poster campaign that paved a path through the neighborhood.

Dominican Nation, a group of young 1.5 and second-generation Dominicans, had been organizing this conference for three years. That winter, groups of young, primarily male organizers from the organization armed themselves with posters and heavy-duty staplers and marched through the area to announce the upcoming conference, posting the signs on lampposts across the neighborhood. The grassroots effort aimed to bring together Dominicans from all sectors - electoral politics, community-based organizations, churches, business owners, scholars, activists, and "everyday people" - to discuss issues confronted by the community and to collectively draft an action plan to address the numerous concerns.

The goal of the poster campaign, however, was to draw in Dominican masses from around Washington Heights. And

Washington Heights, in the minds of the activists of Dominican Nation spanned Manhattan from 135th Street up to the bridges connecting Upper Manhattan to the Bronx. Quisqueya Heights, that is, the Dominican portion of Upper Manhattan, was easy to distinguish - one only needed follow the blue, red, and white road paved by Dominican Nation.

Washington Heights is located on the northern tip of Manhattan Island, atop hills and between rivers. Washington Heights is named after General George Washington, who directed the military and who lived in the area while directing the battle against the Hessian troops during the Revolutionary War in 1776. The City of New York demarcates the neighborhood by various districts: School District #6, Community District #12, and City Council District #7 and #10. Community District #12 includes the neighborhoods of Washington Heights and Inwood. In fact, people often include Inwood in their description of Washington Heights. The City of New York created City Council District #10 after the 1990 U.S. Census revealed the massive growth in the Dominican population in the neighborhood. Given the Census analysis, local leadership argued for redistricting to divide what was previously one

electoral district into two.⁴ The new district was carved through the center of Washington Heights, with the old district #7 bordering it to the East and West. The new district also includes Marble Hill, a southern section of the Bronx located just north of Washington Heights/Inwood. The new district was overwhelmingly Dominican, a fact that helped catapult a Dominican into the leadership of New York City government. In 1991 Guillermo Linares became the first Dominican to represent the neighborhood in the New York City Council.

Washington Heights' officially defined geo-political borders frame the neighborhood between 155th Street and 200th Street, and between the Henry Hudson River and East River. However, as I have already suggested everyday cultural and socio-political borders stretch the neighborhood 20 additional blocks north and south of these official dividers. This is due, in large part, to the fact that the Dominican population and their flourishing businesses share families, networks, language, and other resources across this broad physical space. Dominicans claim and transform businesses and public spaces throughout this area. Their daily activities extend into northern

⁴ For a comprehensive study of this historical juncture see Graham 1997.

sections of Harlem and all of Inwood. In a recent *New York Daily News* article, journalist Leslie Casimir traveled through the public space Dominicans inhabit in Northern Manhattan:

"On any given summer weekend, Sylvia Perez swears she's back home, surrounded by the sights, sounds and tastes of her native Dominican Republic. She can smell the pork sizzling in cauldrons of oil. She hears the lilting merengue and the nostalgic chatter of her fellow Dominicans. Perez spends many of her weekend days relaxing in a concrete lot at Riverside Park... where a merengue riverside party has been drawing hundreds of homesick Dominicans for more than a decade. ...With large stereo speakers blasting away, the area is transformed into a New York version of the popular stretch known back home in Santo Domingo as El Malecón - The Seawall. ...The crowd manages to make the best of the Dominican Republic come to life here - a joyous place far away from the cramped walkups in Washington Heights. The partygoers are miles from immigration problems and the financial stress related to supporting families on two shores. At this Malecón, the Hudson River serves as the backdrop, standing in for the Caribbean Sea. Shiny sport-utility vehicles and vans - all loaded down with musical instruments like metal guiras and bottles of the national rum, Brugal - jam the riverside. "This is a small piece of Dominican land," said Perez's son, William, 30, who was born and raised in Washington Heights. "We have created this paradise." (Casimir 2000:22)

It is clear that Dominicans utilize areas of Harlem regularly. Though not always applauded or warmly accepted by the long-time African-American residents of the neighborhood, Dominicans use and transform areas of Harlem, such as Riverbank State Park into a Dominican space. Activists and politicians also recognize parts of Harlem as

Dominican. They often practice politics across this wide geographic span of Dominican life in New York (as apparent in the poster campaign of February 2000). Throughout my period of fieldwork, organizers and youth from various organizations carried out voter-registration drives in the neighborhood, including the areas officially part of Harlem. During the 2000 Dominican Presidential elections, local chapters of the parties of Presidential hopefuls organized massive caravans through Washington Heights, often stretching the parade-like troops from 135th Street up into the heart of the neighborhood, 181st Street. In the summer of 2001, one of the leaders of Dominican Nation, Osiris Robles, organized a caravan as part of his campaign for the City Council seat Guillermo Linares was vacating. The caravan, totaling more than 70 cars began just south of the official Washington Heights-Harlem border. In this dissertation when referring to Washington Heights I include all the neighborhoods that local residents define as part of "Quisqueya Heights." Unless specified otherwise, I am referring to Washington Heights proper, Inwood, and West Harlem from 135th Street north.

Washington Heights has gone through various periods of urban development, with the most significant physical and

social developments occurring during the past century. The neighborhood remained semi-rural and sparsely populated until the end of the 19th Century. Development in the area occurred in quick spurts, with different sections receiving attention during the early and middle decades of the 20th Century, and major economic and urban re-development initiated in the past decade. Historian Steve Lowenstein cites the pre-World War I era as the time in which the southern and eastern apartment buildings were erected, and the 1920s and 1930s as the period during which most of the houses in the northern and western sections were built (Lowenstein 1989). This development in real estate coincides with other historical developments, namely, the completion of two prominent subway routes and the influx of new waves of European immigrants. The IRT, more commonly known as the 1/9 line in Washington Heights, completed in 1904 and extended into Inwood in 1906, cuts across the eastern-most sections of the neighborhood. The buildings that went up during the first two decades coincided with the movement of many of the Irish, German, and Eastern European immigrants from the southern regions of Manhattan to the north, along the IRT subway route. During the Great Depression urban development slowed in the area. However, as part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Works Progress

Administration, the city constructed the Eighth Avenue "A" subway line. This new line connected the western and remaining northern sections of Washington Heights to the city, allowing for people with a bit more financial wealth than those living in the easternmost areas to build and acquire residences in the more scenic western and northern sections. By the end of this major development era, Washington Heights was a sea of buildings, and as Ira Katznelson (1981) points out, a diverse community of immigrant groups - Greeks, Jews, Eastern European, and Irish - and class-based divisions, with the more wealthy living west of Broadway and to the north, and the working-class immigrant majority residing in the southern and eastern-most sections of the neighborhood⁵.

Washington Heights is home to a significant amount of park space; about 1/3 of the neighborhood's landmass is preserved as parkland. The City of New York's Department of City Planning lists 26 park sites, totaling 626.52 acres, in Manhattan Community District #12; all of the district's parks are maintained and supervised by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. Washington Heights houses more park space than any other neighborhood

5 For a more detailed and comprehensive reading of Washington Heights' urban development and its historical class and race-based geographic

in Manhattan: Inwood Hill Park in the north, Fort Tryon Park in the west, Highbridge Park in the east, Riverbank State Park and Riverside Park in the southwest, and various local parks and recreation spaces throughout the area. These parks provide local residents with refuge from Manhattan's perpetual traffic of people, vehicles, and general city chaos. Residents use the parks for general recreation, birthdays and other celebrations, concerts, and athletic league competitions. A more recent wave of immigrants arriving from Central America, living and/or working in the neighborhood have established soccer leagues, holding their games on weeknights and weekends, with women and children picnicking, socializing, and occasionally cheering from the sidelines. Many of the parks, including Riverbank State Park, a park that spans over the southern border with West Harlem, is home to an annual Dominican festival and other community celebrations (see Casimir 2000).

Neighborhood residents complain that the city and fellow neighborhood residents do not contribute enough of their energies and/or resources to maintaining these parks in more suitable conditions. One walks through these parks

and social divisions, see Ira Katznelson (1981) *City Trenches: Urban Politics and the Patterning of Class in the United States*.

and can easily find beautification projects next to areas of neglect and deterioration. There are sections of parks - such as Fort Tryon Park - where flower beds are evidence of attempts at beautification, yet one need walk only a few minutes in another direction to find paths paved with broken glass, garbage, and even fields of abandoned auto parts. Residents have discussed the evidence of such extremes in maintenance during monthly meetings of the Community Planning Board #12. The neighborhood's parks suffer the consequences of the city's disinvestment in its public spaces. Recently, The Parks and Cultural Affairs Committee of Community Board #12 drafted the following resolution:

"Community Board 12, Manhattan, calls upon the Mayor, the Borough President, its local Council Members and candidates for these offices to commit to allocating and spending 1% of the City's annual expense budget on the operations of parks Citywide to ensure: regular maintenance of all facilities, sufficient personnel to ensure safety and enforcement, programming to engage our youth and seniors; and the efficient and equitable use of the City's resources."

Although I have not studied issues regarding public spaces in-depth, participant observation suggests that although this neighborhood has not been able to generate private and/or individual donations necessary to refurbish the parks, the public's perception and use of the local parks has shown some signs of improvement. During the seven

years I have lived in the neighborhood I have observed more people using the parks' trails, playgrounds, and the open spaces which are ideal for large events and concerts. Many local groups - including school and youth-based groups - organize to periodically help clean portions of the parks.

In addition to natural park space, Washington Heights is also home to a variety of other resources, including: three branches of the New York Public Library, 21 day care facilities with space for 1,070 children, three Head Start facilities with space for 140 children, countless licensed home-child care centers, seven residential facilities for adults and families with a mix of 509 beds and single units, 23 food programs and drop-in centers, 9 facilities for seniors, and innumerable religious centers and places of worship. Of the quarter million people living in the neighborhood, approximately 33% are under the age of 21, most of whom are still in the public school system.

Seventeen public elementary schools, in which 16,782 students are enrolled, six public intermediate/junior high schools, in which 8119 students are enrolled, and only two public high schools, in which 3220 students are enrolled serve the scholastic needs of the area (New York City Department of City Planning 1999). One of these schools, Gregorio Luperon Preparatory School, was designed to serve

newly-arrived Spanish-speaking immigrant youth. The school's principal and staff have roots in community movements in the Dominican Republic and New York, and many teachers and staff from this school are heavily involved with events organized by Dominican Nation.

There are also a total of 14 private schools: 10 elementary schools with 3060 students, one school serving 434 students K-12th grade, and three senior high schools with 960 students enrolled in 1999. Given that most high school students of Dominican descent attend public schools, the one general high school located in the neighborhood - which serves both the immigrant and U.S.-born or English-proficient students - cannot accommodate a fraction of the resident student population. Many students travel to schools in Harlem and the Upper West Side of Manhattan. Although students in the two organizations with which I worked attended a variety of schools, the majority were enrolled in one of five high schools: the immigrant-focused high school in the area, the other public high school in the neighborhood, in Manhattan Community District #7, or one public high school in Manhattan Community District #9.

Since the early 1960s Washington Heights has witnessed the growth of the Dominican population, which is the

fastest-growing new immigrant group in the city. The population has grown considerably since the first major wave arrived in the early 1960s, in the post-Trujillo era. The Dominican population residing in the city continues to grow (see table #1 for documented recent arrival trends, U.S. Census). There are currently over half a million Dominicans living in New York City (see table #2).⁶ According to the U.S. Census, in Washington Heights the Latino/Hispanic population comprises 74 percent of the total population; Dominicans represent 72 percent of that population and 53 percent of the total neighborhood population. Even so, it is understood that these figures do not include in those who may be living in the neighborhood without documents or those who did not participate in the Census count.

Puerto Ricans still outnumber Dominicans citywide, accounting for 10 percent of the total population and 37 percent of the Latino/Hispanic population in New York City. However, despite a significant and steady increase in the Latino population in the country and in New York City, the Puerto Rican population residing in the city is dwindling

⁶ In recent years the media has drawn attention to Dominicans attempting to reach U.S. shores by boat, or yola. Given dire economic prospects in the Dominican Republic, many risk their lives in the hopes that they might build a life of self-sufficiency and opportunity for their children. Many never make it to their final destination - they

while the Dominican population continues to expand dramatically (see table #2). Between 1990 and 2000 the Dominican population in New York City grew by 200,000. This growth can be attributed to both new arrivals and to birth rate increases. Again, these numbers do not include those residing in New York as "undocumented." In fact, the estimates gathered via the Census on the number of Dominicans in Washington Heights are less than half of what other accounts indicate. The Dominican population is a relatively youthful group; i.e., those under the age of 21 account for approximately 36 and 37 percent of the population (see table #3). Many of those who comprise the second-generation are becoming increasingly important actors in local organizing: these young people are shaping the community's perspectives on race and politics.

are either caught and sent back or they lose their lives at sea.

Table #1

Immigration Trend from the Dominican Republic	
Year	Arriving in New York
1988	16,313
1989	14,625
1990	18,780
1991	16,515
1992	25,239
1993	24,667
1994	26,115
1995	19,945
1996	18,912
1997	13,410
1998	9,656

Source: U.S. Census, 2000; U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service

Table #2

Racial and Ethnic Demography: U.S., New York City, Washington Heights

Population	United States 1990	United States 2000	New York City 1990	New York City 2000	Washington Heights/ Inwood 1990	Washington Heights/ Inwood 2000
Total	248,698,332	281,421,906	7,322,564	8,008,278	205,851	216,234
White	199,819,876	211,460,626	3,831,907	3,576,385	80,970 (39%)	61,655 (29%)
Black	29,927,50	34,658,190	2,107,137	2,129,762	49,639 (24%)	28,980 (13%)
Hispanic	21,900,001 (8.8%)	35,305,818 (12.55%)	1,737,927 (24%)	2,160,554 (27%)	136,541 (66%)	159,456 (74%)
Non Hispanic	226,798,331 (91.2%)	246,116,088 (87.45%)	5,584,637 (76%)	5,847,724 (73%)	69,310 (34%)	56,778 (26%)
Puerto Rican	2,651,811	3,406,178	861,122 (11.8% of total) (49.5% of Hispanics)	813,539 (10% of total) (37% of Hispanics)	20,037 (9.7% of total) (14.7% of Hispanics)	14,411 (6.7% of total) (9% of Hispanics)
Dominican	520,151	<i>data not available</i>			88,059 (42.8% of total) (64.5% of Hispanics)	114,584 (53% of total) (71.9% of Hispanics)

Source: United States Census, 1990, 2000

Table #3

Washington Heights/Inwood "Hispanic" Population by Age Group						
Age Group	Total Number		Combined and percentage of total Hispanic population			
	1990	2000	1990		2000	
Under 5 years	12,470	12,211	24,544	95,035 (70%)	25,881	104,681 (66%)
5 to 9 years	12,074	13,670	(18%)		(16%)	
10 to 14 years	10,687	13,077	25,345 (19%)		31,449 (20%)	
15 to 17 years	6,068	7,558				
18 and 19 years	4,368	5,361				
20 years	1,987	2,738				
21 years	2,235	2,715				
22 to 24 years	7,300	8,226	45,146 (33%)	47,351 (30%)		
25 to 29 years	12,786	13,093				
30 to 34 years	13,528	13,313				
35 to 39 years	11,532	12,719				
40 to 44 years	9,894	11,868	41,506 (30%)	(30%)	54,775 (34%)	(34%)
45 to 49 years	7,865	10,607				
50 to 54 years	6,768	8,860				
55 to 59 years	4,858	6,382				
60 and 61 years	1,798	2,367				
62 to 64 years	2,272	3,115				
65 to 69 years	3,157	3,991				
70 to 74 years	1,997	3,171				
75 to 79 years	1,577	2,078				
80 to 84 years	716	1,313				
85+ years	604	1,023				
Total	136,541	159,456	136,541 (100%)		159,456 (100%)	

Source: U.S. Census, 1990, 2000

The Dominican population continues to grow in all the boroughs of New York City: particularly in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens (Ricourt and Danta 2002), and more recently the Bronx. Through their various migrations they are undoubtedly changing the physical, social, and political landscapes of the neighborhoods they adopt as their own (Duany 1994, 1998; Hernández and Torres-Saillant

1998, Grasmuck and Pessar 1991). Dominicans have established numerous organizations in their new places of residence, and in Washington Heights, organizers have founded and developed some of the largest and well-known non-profit organizations. By addressing local issues through these organizations, Dominican-American activists have begun to take their place in New York politics.

The Field of Dominican Politics in Northern Manhattan

Issues of identity politics, local organizing, and Dominican-American community-building were evident throughout my period of fieldwork. When I first began conducting fieldwork in the community in 1996 theories of transnationalism guided my initial assumptions; I imagined myself stepping into a community of *transmigrants*, of activists shuttling politics back and forth between the Dominican Republic and New York. The path on which local organizers would take me, however, led in a very different direction.

Dominican-American organizers have created new forms of politics that focus on building power in order to address issues that the Dominican community faces in New York and in the United States. This became clear, even to the casual observer or die-hard transnational scholar in February 2000.

On February 27, 2000 my day "in the field" began at five in the morning on the campus of University of Metropolitan New York (UMNY), a public city institution.⁷ The night before, organizers of Dominican Nation had left their office, based at UMNY, around two in the morning. Many arrived on the campus once again at sunrise the morning of the 27th. Once there, they involved themselves in a frenzy of last-minute logistical work, formal greetings and speech preparations. We were there to celebrate a national conference aimed at forging a Dominican-American "National Agenda." Dominican Nation, an organization of young Dominicans - including 1st, 1.5, and 2nd generation - had been preparing and planning this conference for three years. In the months preceding the conference, issues of community building, politics, and identity were addressed numerous ways. The Dominican Nation steering committee members had traveled to Washington, D.C. to meet with leadership from *The National Council of La Raza*, a Mexican-American policy and advocacy organization. They also solicited support from a prominent Puerto Rican political figure, the former president of New York's Hispanic Federation. This Puerto Rican organizer helped to plan Dominican Nation's national conference; he offered his

7 UMNY is part a larger system of institutions of higher learning in the City of New of York. This system spans the five boroughs of New York City and includes community colleges and universities granting

organizing experience as well as access to his expansive network of organizers, foundations, and politicians.

Dominican Nation's collaboration with this organizer from the Puerto Rican community was facilitated by the financial support of United Way of New York City. In the process of organizing their national conference, Dominican Nation also engaged in planning activities with other Dominican organizations in New York, and in places such as Rhode Island and the Dominican Republic. They communicated and solicited participation from local leaders such as Congressman Charles Rangel's office, the office of Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields, other organizations of color such as the National Council of La Raza, the Hispanic Federation of New York, and Haitian organizations such as *Movimiento de Mujeres Dominico-Haitianas* (MUDHA).

Understanding the nature of this diversity of contributors and collaborators allows us a glimpse into the multiple ways Dominicans organizing in Washington Heights, New York "use" identity and political strategies to advance their efforts of political empowerment. And as Manning Marable and Leith Mullings insist,

"Politics begins at the moment when any group recognizes for itself its specific objective interests and aspirations, and seeks agency to realize those

bachelors, masters, doctoral, medical, and law degrees.

interests" (2000: xiv)

The goals of the Dominican community in New York are numerous, though political empowerment seems to be the goal for all activists. The second-generation is becoming a central force in this project. In their efforts to become an active, empowered citizenry, they employ different concepts of politics, identity, race, and community. This dissertation explores the ways these issues arise in the Dominican community and how these affect the way in which people understand and organize politics - in the realm of the local, national, and, at times, even the trans-local.

Methodology and the Field: Establishing Involvement

I began my research with an attempt to elaborate and complicate current research on contemporary immigrants and community-building efforts. I was struck by academia's growing concentration on all that is transnational. As stated earlier, contemporary literature on immigrant communities emphasizes the transnational or "home politics" aspects of immigrant organizing, with the first generation as the focus of inquiry. I was interested in documenting the degree to which organizing in Washington Heights conformed to these paradigms, particularly given the growing population of the second-generation.

The original research design was aimed at examining the manner in which second-generation Dominicans influenced and/or altered community activism and community organizations in Washington Heights. The political nature of such participation was understood to be a given, as earlier research had already illustrated the ways in which community-based organizations in immigrant communities served as crucial intermediaries between the community and government (Gans 1962, Sanchez 1993, Handlin 1951, 1959; LaGuerre 1984). My goal was to uncover the processes by which and the reasons why the second-generation was becoming active in organizing and why they seemed to emphasize local issues. In my attempt to offer a diachronic and dynamic analysis of Dominican immigrant organizing in Washington Heights, I took on the task of researching the other side of the coin as well, i.e., examining the ways that older, first generation leadership had established organizational efforts. I had originally assumed a zero-sum game, in which I placed the first generation in the now well-known category of transmigrant *politicos*, and understood the second-generation to be focused on the local New York political environment. The fieldwork experience was to teach me more than I could have ever anticipated. When I arrived "in the field" I thought

I was operating with the "open system of thought" which David Nugent (1982) explains is crucial for anthropological analyses. However, throughout my period of work and research in the community my field of vision expanded quite dramatically.

Although the "official" period of research for this dissertation began during the summer of 1999, I had established close contact with the leadership of both organizations a few years earlier: with Dominican Nation in 1996 and with Quisqueya United in 1997.

Quisqueya United

Quisqueya United was established in the late 1980s, although the earliest discussions about establishing this kind of organization began in the mid 1980s. During this era one group, consisting primarily of those emanating from some of the radical movements in the Dominican Republic, founded organizations that would mobilize people in Washington Heights, but still retain a consciousness about changing politics in the Dominican Republic. Another group of young activists saw the need to bring all existing Dominican clubs together. Although the historical memory of various actors fluctuates, all concur that discussions to create this organization began in 1984 and that between

1985 and 1986 the core of the organization was established. Based in an initial plan to bring all the existing social, political, and recreational clubs under one large umbrella organization run by Dominicans in Washington Heights, Quisqueya United was organized. One of the founders explained,

"We saw that here's the 27 de febrero [a political/social club], here's el 30 de marzo [another political/social club], and here's this and here's that, and they all had space which went underutilized. So we thought that through [Quisqueya United] we could serve as a funnel to begin utilizing these spaces, and transforming these organizations to provide additional community services. So [Quisqueya United] was formed as an umbrella to network these organizations."

During its earliest years, staff was primarily volunteer. In 1987, after receiving its first major grant of over \$88 thousand - for a pregnancy prevention program - the current director was hired by the founding Board of Directors. This director, Cristóbal Pierino, is still the Executive Director of the organization. In 1988 the New York State Department of Substance Abuse received money to fund programs to prevent HIV/Aids among young people and awarded Quisqueya United \$50 thousand. This new grant enabled the Executive Director and the Director of Programs to hire one more full-time staff member and two young, second-generation activists, Martin Guevara and Farabundo Marquez

- 19 years old at the time - to work part time.

These two second-generation organizers started a youth after-school and leadership club in the basement of Quisqueya United office space. During these early days they brought in many young people, mostly young men. Gabriel Aponte, one of the lead directors of the after-school program today, explained,

"They were young just like us. I was 16 so you know, it was like we could relate to each other. ...we would sit there and play dominoes, play Monopoly... in those days we were at [Quisqueya United] at 12 at night..."

The organizers report that the extent to which the youth present at that time felt "at home" and surrounded by people with whom they could relate was important in helping to build this organization. Staff and constituents recognized the need to develop this area of work more. The Executive Director's work consisted of networking and acquiring additional funding to expand the organization's staff and programs. Although for some time volunteers led many of the programs in the organization, today all staff are either paid full time by the organization or by an outside agency for temporary work - e.g., The New York City Summer Youth Employment Program and Work Experience Program.

After receiving some major grants in the late 1980s,

the agency secured the four-story [narrow] building that continues to serve as its central offices. It also runs programs from three other sites in Manhattan and one new site in the Bronx. My fieldwork focused on the agency's youth programs, a particularly popular and strong area of the organization's work.

Dominican Nation

Dominican Nation was founded by a very young group of Dominican students living in Washington Heights. At the time they began meeting, these students' ages ranged from 13 to 24. The leadership of this group had close ties with the first generation of left-wing militant activists from the Dominican Republic, particularly those involved with the *Partido de Trabajadores Dominicanos* (PTD), the Marxist Dominican Workers' Party, in the late 1980s. It is important to note that these same Dominican Marxists were part of the group that founded Quisqueya United.

During the summer of 1987, some of these youth activists traveled to the Dominican Republic's capital city, Santo Domingo to meet with students on the island. The goal was to discuss the nature of youth activism and analyze the way that young people were treated in both societies. After a series of events and meetings, the New

York contingent of this bi-national youth force established Dominican Nation in New York. Organizers held informal meetings where people discussed issues they felt needed to be addressed: education, after-school and recreation programs, etc. The groups went on yearly retreats - either to a site in upstate New York or to meet with youth in the Dominican Republic - to discuss how they could work to establish programs and actions that would confront pressing issues. Since 1996 they have operated primarily out of a student union office at the campus of the University of Manhattan of New York.⁸

Although the New York chapters' activities take place, for the most part, on college campuses, the majority of the organizers are young professionals and the constituents are still in high school. One of the main goals of the organization is to show the positive side of Dominican youth's lives. The organization's unofficial motto is "*el futuro nos pertenece*"- the future belongs to us. In working towards fulfilling this prophecy, the organization established a program aimed at building an educated,

⁸ Osiris Robles, former General Coordinator of Dominican Nation was instrumental in obtaining this space for students at UMN. As a student at UMN in the late 1980s and early 1990s he was a key player in student mobilizations against UMN cutbacks. After much struggle, UMN administration granted some concessions, one of which was this office space. Osiris, along with other UMN student activists named

dynamic community in New York. Dominican Nation has developed numerous youth, community and educational programs, most of which emerged from the ideas of the organization's constituents and leadership. Although activities and initiatives have changed somewhat over the years, Dominican Nation's core programs include: pre-university curriculum, theater & arts, leadership, and athletics (primarily basketball and volleyball).

The pre-university, theater, and athletics components take place on Saturdays. The events were held at Gregorio Luperón High School in Washington Heights during the early years in Washington Heights. But during mid-November 1996, the events began to take place at the ballroom of UMNYS and, for a brief period, in the gymnasium of a neighborhood church⁹. Moving the activities to a college campus was applauded by all participants. Many students report that being around the college campus gives them a sense of possibilities. Organizers have pointed to the fact that students work in the UMNYS library, walk around the campus and are, therefore, able to see college as a viable option. Organizers note that these students are frequently

the office the Assata Shakur - Guillermo Morales Student Center. Since 1996, however, Dominican Nation has been its main occupant.

⁹Some school administrators have recognized the work the teachers do in this program, and have offered the instructors a small salary. The instructors have opted to donate these funds to the organization.

discouraged from attending college and being on the UMN campus allows the youth more resources and power so that they can ultimately make their own informed decision on this matter.

Beginning in 1997 leaders of Dominican Nation (still relatively young second-generation leadership) developed a national advocacy and policy-making agenda. During the period of my fieldwork they organized a national conference for the purpose of drafting a national agenda for Dominican-Americans. After this conference, they have maintained a perspective of community development based on a number of premises. These include participation from all sectors of the Dominican community; forging alliances and consulting with other people of color organizing throughout the city; and a new outlook to developing politics on a national level.

I came to know organizers in both of these organizations between 1996 and 1997. In 1996 I traveled to the Dominican Republic to conduct research on the issue of politics and transnationalism. I interviewed key leaders in the *Partido de Trabajadores Dominicano* (PTD) and the *Partido Revolucionario Dominicano* (PRD). Among the people with whom I spoke was the Secretary of International

Affairs for the PTD. That summer he introduced me to two teachers who were directing Dominican Nation. One of the individuals, Osiris Robles was among the organization's founders. He continues to maintain close contact with some of the leftist leaders from the old Marxist guard of the PTD. The other Dominican Nation organizer was Altagracia Santiago. Altagracia was in her early 20s. She joined the ranks of Dominican Nation after meeting Osiris as a student at UMN. This particular summer she was in the Dominican Republic with a study-abroad program organized by UMN. When I returned to New York I met with the leadership of the organization; soon after they invited me to a youth leadership meeting. During my first visit to this Friday night program, approximately 30 youth and four volunteer staff were present. After their regular meeting, I introduced myself and spoke about my interest in learning about Dominican youth and activism. Although they did not ask many questions during this first visit, they eventually asked me about my work, requesting details on the nature and goal of my research and how this might develop into something that could help community interests. I have continued as a researcher and volunteer staff for periods of time in Dominican Nation - a privilege for which I extend much gratitude.

I first met and interviewed staff and leadership of the other organization that became part of this study, Quisqueya United, in 1997. However, it is important to note that I first heard about the organization in 1994. In 1994 I was involved in organizing *Muevete!*, a Puerto Rican youth conference in New York City.¹⁰ It was the second annual conference put together by a young group of New York Puerto Rican activists. The conference addressed numerous Puerto-Rican historical and contemporary political and cultural issues such as the plebiscite in Puerto Rico, hip-hop, grafitti, Puerto Rican arts in the community, etc. Organizers attempted to attract the young Puerto Rican population. During this conference organizers publicly thanked two leaders of Quisqueya United for their contributions to the conference. This was a significant introduction into the ways in which young Dominican and Puerto Rican organizers in New York City collaborated on community-specific projects. I did not meet Quisqueya United leaders until one year later. I met the two directors of Quisqueya United's Beacon site in the summer of 1996 through mutual friends who worked with them in

10 *Muevete!* was born in 1993, after several meetings between Gina Amaro, a young Puerto Rican recently graduated from SUNY Binghamton, and the National Latinas Caucus.

solidarity efforts with Cuba.¹¹ In 1997, as part of my work with a city-funded evaluation of the New York City Beacon program, I began making regular site visits to the Washington Heights Beacon school. My role as "evaluator," though formal in nature, did not impede the creation of more informal and friendly relationships with key figures in the organization's Beacon site. Their knowledge of my history as an active contributor to various activist efforts in New York and of my network of colleagues allowed for a more congenial working relationship. After completing work for the evaluations project, I lost touch with Quisqueya United.

When I began the research for this dissertation in 1999, I re-established communication with the directors of the Beacon site. Because we had met previously and because I had been involved with efforts of Dominican Nation, they were aware of my work and invited me to meet with them once again. During my first informal meetings with leaders at

11 An interesting side-note to this early encounter is the cyclical nature of networks in Washington Heights, and in my own work. During our first meeting in 1996, I told one of the directors of Quisqueya United's Beacon site that I had become interested in doing work with Dominican political institutions. He gave me the contact information for people he thought I should speak with; among them was the principal of a local high school. As it turned out, this local leader has been a key figure in the development of both organizations with whom I have worked in Washington Heights. He has served as a member of the Board of Directors for both organizations. This local organizer also continues to direct his progressive politics beyond the Dominican

the site, they often joked that the evaluator was back, this time without the mask of scrutiny. They introduced me to their youth leadership group and, later, to their youth and community employment group. It is with the staff and membership of these groups that I had the privilege to work.

My "official" fieldwork, having begun in the summer of 1999, came to a close sometime in late spring 2001. During these two years I conducted ethnographic and archival research in Washington Heights. I also traveled to the Dominican Republic with the leadership of one Dominican Nation. The ambiguity about the end of the fieldwork period is reflective of my own political interests in the organizations with which I worked. Conducting ethnographic fieldwork with activists and organizations represented a unique opportunity to personally delve into some grassroots work, which I expect to continue in the future. My involvement in community organizations in Washington Heights has now taken a new road and I no longer take copious and exhaustive notes while "in the field," but I continue to learn from the organizations and the dedicated activists who run them.

community. In the mid-1990s, he organized a program that took New York City public school teachers to Cuba for summer training.

During the "official" period of fieldwork, qualitative approaches included participant observation, structured and semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and family and life histories. Through extensive participant-observation at various events, such as regular programs and activities, formal and informal meetings and events, weekly television programs and at conferences, I examined the foci of organizing among the generations of local Dominican activists. I conducted in-depth interviews with the directors and staff of two key organizations, open-ended questionnaires and informal interviews with membership of these organizations, and in-depth interviews with key informants. I spent much of my time working with different groups within the organizations, much of which occurred after the school day finished at three in the afternoon and on Saturdays.

I complemented the qualitative approaches with archival research. In addition to interviews with first and second-generation activists in the community, my analysis of local efforts was enriched by the collection of community documents and city data. Coupled with interviews with current leadership, this provides a comprehensive understanding of the history and continuing development of community organizations and their relationship to other

communities of color, to local, NY, national, and translocal or transnational politics.

My involvement in both Quisqueya United and Dominican Nation as a researcher was clear from the beginning, as was my commitment to contributing to organizing and youth programs. Due to the close contact I maintained with the two organizations I was able to develop relationships with staff and members with a level of trust and camaraderie that has made this research endeavor more complete and rewarding.

It is a daunting task to attempt to tell the history of activism and the stories of activists in Washington Heights. There were many times my legitimacy was challenged because, as people explained: I did not grow up in the neighborhood (I am of the Queens and Long Island Latina variety), my parents are not Dominican (to some [particularly older male leaders] this meant that I could never truly understand "Dominican politics"); and I am not a "veterana" (when I began the official fieldwork period I was 26 years old). All of these claims are true, but the extent to which they limit my ability to document and understand political activism in the neighborhood is not something I worried about. I was, and still am, more concerned with portraying "truths" in community politics,

in respectfully documenting a long trajectory of activists and activism in Washington Heights, and in presenting an analysis that will help us understand the path that Dominican-American activists are charting, allowing us to view the roads that began decades ago and will surely carry much weight in the future. My experience in the field was not what I anticipated as a newcomer to the discipline of anthropology. No one could have forewarned me of the complex nature of the processes of research and activism. I would not have understood the many responsibilities to which I had just committed myself. This project became exhaustive, complex, and enriching, extending its reach to the professional, personal, and deeply political realms of my life. In the midst of this whirlwind of activity and careful observation and maneuvering, I was able to develop one interpretation of the history and continuing development of youth and community activism in Washington Heights. It is this interpretation that I present to the reader. It is this interpretation that I hope will contribute to the eradication of malicious and/or unprofessional misreadings of the community - in both popular and academic discourse. I do not pretend to know all that has led to activism as we see it today in Washington Heights, nor do I expect anyone to take this as

the only story of community politics. This is my reading based on fieldwork and active participation in community organizing in the neighborhood.

In the process of conducting this research I was fortunate in many ways, not the least of which was finding a responsive, active, engaged, and welcoming group of people who forgave my daily intrusions, allowed me to ask questions and, in my own small way, assist them in their organizations' work. My working relationship with members of the two organizations allowed me to develop a level of camaraderie and trust for which I feel very honored. The degree to which these working and friendship ties extended into life and work beyond this research made for a very distinct (and privileged) perspective on local politics. I felt particularly grateful when I noticed that these local figures' interactions with other researchers tended to be more formal and, I suspect, temporary. The director of one organization indicated that he felt resentful toward the many researchers, particularly Columbia University journalism students, who "took information" from the organization and never returned to share the results of their research. Having established first a personal commitment to local youth organizing and then maintained a daily presence in the sites of research allowed organizers

and participants to view me differently than they did most other researchers. I was touched with the way people welcomed me as part of their organizations and their lives, allowing me to participate in their personal celebrations as well as their moments of grief. The life histories I conducted were also very personal and intensive, though they had the feel of deep conversations with long-time friends. This was possible, in part, to my extended presence, assistance, and politics in the community. At the end of one interview, a staff member of Quisqueya United said to me,

I: "You know, I'm interested to see what the final... the final paper, the final book is going to look like. I really would.

AA: I am too.

I: Because I think that you definitely bring an insight different from other people that have come here in the past. I think you're more, I'll say, grassroots, than most people who have come here. Most people will just say, well, what do you think about this issue and I've been like real. And it seems like you're more interested to find out, you know, all the angles and whatever is going on. You know, you really want to get down all the information and get people's actual, people's point of view, not just get the information and then make your own story out of it or something. You want to actually get people's perspectives and people's point of views. And I think you belong in this community too.

I can only hope that my interpretation of local organizing and politics adequately represents what was happening on the ground. In many ways, this dissertation is about my

travels with people and through a community I've now adopted as my own. In sum, my understanding of local politics is, therefore, derived from interviews, participant observation, and grassroots work in the community.

CHAPTER 2**History, Migration, and Politics: The Dominican Exodus**

Mass migration from the Dominican Republic to cities such as New York occurred within the context of major economic and political upheavals in the Caribbean region. It is not possible to understand Dominican organizing without first addressing this history. This chapter provides a brief sketch of the history that shaped the Dominican exodus from the island-country to the shores of New York City. The first major wave of Dominican immigrants arrived in the 1960s after the death of Trujillo, after the U.S. established a consulate's office to issue passports, and after the passage of the 1965 immigration reform laws. In the late 1970s and 1980s this immigrant population began to concentrate in Northern Manhattan. Today, they are clearly the majority population. Since they began arriving, they have established community centers, social clubs, and local chapters of political parties and organizations. Many who arrived as political exiles had formed part of the leftist, Marxist revolutionary groups in the Dominican Republic. When they first arrived, they were primarily involved with organizing to change the political scene in the Dominican Republic. However, with the realization that the Dominican

community was setting roots in New York, coupled with growth and influence of the second-generation in local organizing, this first generation of activists helped to establish some of the best-known organizations in Washington Heights. This chapter aims to explore the history behind these Dominican movements - revolutionary politics and the migratory waves.

The Exodus from The Dominican Republic to Washington Heights

As I noted earlier, Washington Heights has been home to various immigrant groups throughout the 20th century: the Irish, Jewish, Greek, German and German Jews, and more recently Dominicans. The majority of Dominicans now living in the United States arrived within the span of the past four decades. Various factors - namely government policies, economic trends, and mass mobilization - created the conditions for this recent exodus¹². When discussing Dominican emigration one cannot overlook the relationship that the U.S. has fostered [and/or imposed] with this Caribbean country. More specifically, we cannot disregard

12 Popular political movements in the Dominican Republic affected the way in which the Dominican and U.S. governments structured policy - formal and informal - particularly immigration policy during the 1960s and 1990s. This is obviously not specific to the Dominican case, but

the way U.S. policy has fostered external dependency of and influence over the Dominican economy and state development policy. The effects of such processes of neo-colonialism include high rates of poverty and out-migration¹³.

Migratory flows throughout the Caribbean and Latin America are integrally related to these policies and processes of exploitation and dominance (Dietz 1986, Santiago 1994).

Sugar, External Debt, and Migrations Creating the Channels for Mass Migration

Economic and political turmoil from the 1960s onward in the Dominican Republic propelled much of the Dominican out-migration. Political developments and ensuing civic responses are intimately connected to economic processes and/or prospects. The case of the Dominican Republic is no exception. The economy of the Dominican Republic once depended on its agricultural systems. And as Grasmuck and Pessar note, it is "impossible to understand contemporary Dominican society without taking into account the development of the modern sugar plantations in the latter

important to note when discussing the mass migration of this population. I will discuss this further in the dissertation.

¹³ When discussing the concept of transnationalism, one can easily view the U.S. - its policies (e.g., Operation Bootstrap, NAFTA, etc.) and sponsored businesses (e.g., United Fruit Company) - as the incomparable and ever-powerful neo-colonial transmigrant, extending its reach and influence in multiple nation-states.

part of the nineteenth century" (Grasmuck and Pessar 1991:26). Since the 1880s, the Dominican Republic had been economically integrated into the world economy by exporting sugar, cacao, and to a lesser extent, coffee. The nature of Dominican export agriculture has affected all segments of the Dominican population. With its virtual collapse and installation of a free trade zone manufacturing and informal sector, out-migration has become a means of economic survival for major sectors of the population.

Many of the essential characteristics of the Dominican sugar industry developed between 1900 and 1920. Between 1916 and 1924 this industry, one of the constant pillars of the Dominican economy, was brought under North American control. U.S. military occupation prefaced this economic takeover. From 1916 to 1924 the U.S. Marines occupied the Dominican Republic, assisting North American corporations in the appropriation of Dominican land for sugar cultivation. The U.S. military occupation also facilitated the rise to power of General Rafael Leonidas Trujillo as dictator in 1930 (Moya Pons 1995).

The U.S. occupation and economic takeover also initiated an era of sugar production that focused almost exclusively on export (del Castillo et al. 1974:151, as cited in Grasmuck & Pessar 1991:26). During this period,

land ownership became concentrated in the hands of few. Local forms of subsistence agriculture were made less possible due to confiscation of land and excessive and unequal bases of competition. Sugar industrialists had opted to import cheaper labor from freed slave societies from the Antilles (see Cassá 1982; Báez Evertsz 1978). When sugar prices dropped on the world market in the late 1920s and early 1930s, these industrialists began to exhibit a greater reliance on the even cheaper labor coming from Haiti. Haitian labor has continued to play a central role in the harvesting of sugarcane in the Dominican Republic (Sunshine 1988; Baez Evertsz 1978; Plant 1987).¹⁴ Many of the displaced subsistence farmers found themselves without land, and without adequate and steady employment.

The results included rural displacement and a growth in the agrarian labor surplus. Subsistence agriculture became virtually impossible for many rural landowners, and many small-scale landowners and agricultural laborers began the journey into the cities of the Dominican Republic; a select few from the elite classes also left for New York. The migration to New York, however, did not precipitously escalate until after 1961, with the death of the dictator

14 The Dominican Republic's relationship with Haiti has been conflictual. I will discuss the nature of these historic and contemporary issues later in this dissertation.

Rafael Trujillo. On May 30th, 1961 Rafael Trujillo was assassinated by military personnel; however, Ramfis Trujillo, the dictator's son took control of the country the following day, and the assassins went into hiding. Ramfis eventually rounded up all the Dominican assassins, their families and friends. Ramfis ordered the torture and murder of the assassins (with the exception of those who committed suicide).¹⁵ In October 1961, workers, financed by the anti-Trujillist National Civic Union, went on strike. Street riots erupted in Ciudad Trujillo, the name the dictator had given the capitol city. On November 19, 1961, under U.S. military guard, Ramfis Trujillo fled the Dominican Republic. As Trujillo left, the U.S. Atlantic fleet arrived in Santo Domingo's harbors. The Dominican military still exerted control over the country, attempting four coup d'etats over the course of the next three years. Popular uprisings developed into a civil war during the period following the assassination of Trujillo and on April 28, 1965 the U.S. Marines arrived in Santo Domingo and took control of the country. One year later Joaquín Balaguer, under the auspices of the U.S. government, took over the country's government, beginning a new reign that would not

15 Many scholars and activists have noted the role of the U.S. government in either planning or assisting in the assassination of Trujillo.

end until the 1990s.

Migration from rural areas to urban centers such as Santo Domingo and Santiago escalated during this post-Trujillo era, as did the exodus to the places such as the U.S. and Venezuela. Among the displaced were the families of some of my informants. Marcos Villegos, a long-time activist in Washington Heights, lived in a rural section of the Peravia Province, just west of the capital, until 1964. In 1964, when Marcos was seven years of age, one of his older sisters decided to go to school in Baní, the capital of Peravia. She took Marcos to live with her. Her education and work would, ultimately, help to support the family that remained in rural Peravia. Marcos was also expected to contribute to the family's subsistence. He remained in the city of Baní until he emigrated to New York City in 1980, at the age of 23. Although Marcos was only four when the era of Trujillo ended, he and his family lived through the economic repercussions of that period. He would also soon become involved in organizations - particularly the *Movimiento Popular Dominicano* (MPD) and *la Linea Roja*, a group that grew out of *el Movimiento Revolucionario 14 de junio* (MR- 1J4) - that addressed some of the political chaos that followed Trujillo's assassination and his successor's regime.

Fearing on onset of successful socialist or communist revolutions supported by the population, as was already the case in Cuba, the U.S. rallied its military to squash popular protests and rebellion in the island country. "'No more Cubas' became the rallying cry of the U.S. foreign policy in the 1960s. ...the United States also showed itself ready to use covert and overt action against what were seen as 'new Cubas in the making.'" (Sunshine 1988: 52). During this period, both Dominican and U.S. authorities perceived Dominican out-migration as a safety valve, a strategy in curbing political discontent and mass mobilization (Hernández 2002). John Bartlow Martin, the U.S. ambassador to the Dominican Republic at the time, took the initiative to grant wider access to visas for Dominicans to enter the U.S. Prior to this period, out-migration was nearly impossible. Few Dominicans were able to leave the Dominican Republic during Trujillo's dictatorship. Dinorah Rosa, a 27 year-old organizer from Dominican Nation, explained how her great-grandfather's role in Trujillo's military enabled her grandfather and his mother to move to New York:

"...he moved to New York when he was six [years old]. ...my grandfather's father was the head of the police and the military at different times through the years of the Trujillo dictatorship. ...his mother was one of the first people that had been allowed to move to the

U.S. and that was sort of like a political caper. ...[It was in] the early 1950s. you had to be allowed. Yeah, she was given permission."

Granting easier access to out-migration after Trujillo's reign was clearly an attempt to curb radical political mobilizations, to acquire a cheap labor force for U.S.-based industry, and to foster improved bilateral relations (Mitchell 1987; Grasmuck & Pessar 1991; Hernández 2002). In 1962 Martin established a new consulate building and appointed three extra vice consuls and a new consul in the Dominican Republic (Martin 1966). Immediately following these actions there was an increase in the number of immigrant visas issued by the U.S. consulate in the Dominican Republic; between 1961 and 1962 the number doubled, and between 1962 and 1963 it almost tripled (Mitchell 1987).

Out-migration continued during the era of Joaquín Balaguer, Trujillo's successor. From 1966 to 1978, President Joaquín Balaguer's administration introduced an industrialization strategy that was based on protectionist measures, tariffs, tax exemptions, a legal dual-exchange market, and cheap financing for the promotion of foreign-owned and foreign-run industrial activities. After 1974, given the overall worsening of commodity export prices, the national economy declined. The capital-intensive

production that promoted by the government left many Dominicans without labor and/or economic prospects. The increased unemployment rate was exacerbated by the simultaneous deterioration in the real wages of those still employed. Then in the early 1980s the severe depreciation of sugar, which was still the Dominican Republic's principal export, resulted in millions of dollars in lost foreign exchange for the struggling republic (Moya Pons 1995; Sunshine 1988). Unemployment rates continued to surge. The resulting poverty was a major causative factor in the exodus of Dominicans. The migration stream established in the late 1960s increased throughout the 1970s and rose once again in the mid-1980s. New York City has been the destination choice for many. To date this city is home to nearly half a million Dominicans.

The New Dominican Demographic in Quisqueya Heights

Washington Heights is home to the second largest population of Dominicans in the world, second only to the Dominican capitol city of Santo Domingo. When first arriving in New York, Dominicans worked in the garment industry. One of my informants arrived in Washington Heights in 1980 at the age of 23. Having fled political persecution in the Dominican Republic, he joined his wife

and infant son in New York.¹⁶ His wife helped him to obtain employment on numerous occasions. His earliest jobs were in manufacturing and in manual labor:

"[My first job was in] the textile industry. I worked as the flow boy. I would help the women. They would say bring me this and I would get it for them. From there I went to a printing press. ... From the printing press [I went] to a hat business that was the best place in terms of salary. ... By Lexington and 56 or 57 Street there is a bakery. There I used to wash the floors and wash the dishes. ... they paid me very well."

Between 1970 and 1990, manufacturing jobs in New York declined significantly (Sassen 1991), and many Dominicans are now employed in the low-wage service sector or the informal economy (Hernández and Torres-Saillant 1998; Hernández 1997; Grasmuck & Pessar 1991). These jobs are some of the least secure, less remunerated occupations. Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of Dominican households (78 percent) have a combined household income of less than \$15,000 and 87 percent of individuals have a personal income of under \$15,000. Consequently, at least 39 percent of Dominican households in New York City live below the poverty line (Hernández 1997, 2002). Despite

16 Numerous authors have documented the feminization of international migration (see for example Hernández 2002; Grasmuck and Pessar 1991). Over 50% of the Dominican immigrant population are women. It has often been the case that women begin the chain of migration for many families, as was the case with this particular informant. Although migration and gender is not an issue I address in this dissertation, an examination of such a process would shed light on the role of women in establishing the Dominican community in New York.

such economic hardships, Dominicans continue to migrate to New York, associating migration with socioeconomic advancement, or progreso, particularly for their children.

Among the earliest arrivals were exiled revolutionaries from organizations such as *MPD* (*Movimiento Popular Dominicano*), *Movimiento Revolucionario 14 de Junio*, and *Línea Roja*, like Marcos Villegos. In fact, the early Dominican progressive movement in New York was comprised of people who survived the political persecutions in the Dominican Republic in the 1960s and 1970s. And these political immigrants brought with them a drive to engage politics and create democracy from the ground-up. Marcos, one of the members of this group indicated that,

"...the majority were ex-combatants from the April War and from the Constitutionlists. The majority of these people arrived in New York between 1966 and 1968. They established a Dominican Human Rights committee here. Many organizations lasted a very long time... *Línea Roja* founded *ACDP* [*Asociación Comunal de Dominicanos Progresistas*] because it followed a very clear path, which was to establish strong vehicles for the Dominican community here in the U.S. but to serve the purposes of national liberation in the country. ...We had to organize and obtain good services for that community that is not going to leave..."

It was the latter ideology that would redirect Dominican organizing in New York. Armed with an understanding and an active history of civic participation and struggle, they developed an important form of politics on the northern-

most shores of Manhattan Island. I will turn to this ever-changing political cartography in Chapter 4.

Chapter 3

Scholarly Demarcations: New Typologies

Reviewing Scholarship: Local and Transnational Projects

Research on immigration, immigrant groups, and their modes of "incorporation" (including political incorporation) have long been a subject of social science inquiry. Some have placed their studies within the context of urban studies and globalization (Alba 1985; Muller 1993; Rischin 1962), others within the field of community studies (Whyte 1943; Handlin 1951; Gans 1962; Mahler 1995), still others have emphasized civic participation and/or transnationalism (Kasinitz 1992; Jennings 1994; Hernández and Torres-Saillant 1998; Trueba 1999; Torres 1998). This dissertation draws on all these interrelated bodies of scholarship to provide a multi-stranded account of Dominican organizing in Washington Heights. This chapter presents an outline of the major theories around which issues of contemporary immigrant communities, their identities and politics have been constructed.

The questions guiding my assessment of the literature include: What theories have social scientists constructed to explain the manner in which contemporary immigrant communities establish politics? How have scholars typically categorized immigrant organizing? To what degree

does this literature account for the ways in which immigrant communities, such as Washington Heights' Dominican-American population, enact politics located in this society? How has the literature explained race and its relevance for today's immigrant communities, particularly with respect to the second-generation? And, finally, to what extent have scholars writing about new immigrants and the second generation examined the ways these populations identify and/or work across ethnic/racial lines?

Much of the contemporary literature on immigrant communities adequately dispels the assumptions of straight-line assimilation and melting-pot metaphors to describe the "incorporation" of immigrant groups into U.S. society. Since 1965 the majority of immigrants have been people of color. They arrive from Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa in larger numbers than before. They settle in major cities throughout the U.S., facing very different economic and political topographies than earlier waves of immigrants. Racial discourse, though salient in debasing earlier southern and eastern European immigrant groups has a particular sense of permanence for contemporary immigrant groups. That is, while earlier immigrant groups were extended avenues to white privilege

through programs such as the GI Bill of the post-war era (see Sacks 1994; Ignatiev 1995), it is unlikely that institutionalized racism will permit today's immigrants the same privileges born of whiteness. Faced with marginalization, immigrant groups do not easily "melt into" the U.S., but neither do they remain passive receptors of their status in this society. Contemporary scholars examining immigrants highlight these points and analyze the strategies they believe immigrants employ under such conditions.

Transnationalism

During the past decade scholars of immigration have developed a new analytic perspective to describe the ways in which immigrants "adjust" to their new countries of residence. Their analyses center around the concept of transnationalism. Social scientists employing this perspective (see Basch et al. 1994; Duany 1994) have established working groups, created funding for a new body of scholarship, and published numerous articles and books on the subject - enough, perhaps, to call it a new wave of research, or even a new school of thought. They challenge the notions inherent in assimilation discourse, which proclaimed that immigrants eventually become part of the

great "melting pot" of the United States (Portes and Bach 1985; Basch et al 1994). Today's scholars recognize the ways in which race and racism, as well as economic and employment trends affect immigrant groups differently. Based on this understanding they posit that contemporary immigrant groups are not only unable to follow the same "assimilationist" path of earlier waves of European immigrants, but that they also make attempts to accrue power across borders by acting as *transmigrants* (Basch et al. 1994; Grasmuck and Pessar 1991).

Taking off from Gloria Anzaldua's critical political theory of borderlands (1987), researchers such as Gilbertson (1992), Duany (1994), and Schiller (1992) suggest that contemporary immigrants straddle two geopolitical regions in distinct and creative ways, that they live between and betwixt two or more nation-states. Their studies point to the ways in which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations - relations that link their societies of origin and settlement in particular ways. Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch and Cristina Blanc-Szanton state that contemporary immigrants are, in fact, "transmigrants" involved in transnational processes,

"...when they develop and maintain multiple relations - familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political - that span borders. ...the multiplicity

of migrants' involvements in both the home and host societies is a central element of transnationalism. Transmigrants take actions, make decisions, and feel concerns within a field of social relations that links together their country of origin and their countries of settlement" (1992:ix).¹⁷

This body of research displaces the assumptions of earlier work on immigrants and "assimilation." Researchers argue that today's immigrants are not bound by static notions of the nation-state. This conceptualization of transnationalism includes an understanding of the processes through which immigrants build social, political, and economic fields that cut across geo-political boundaries of the nation-state. Though this somewhat romanticized notion of "border free" movement exists only for a select, wealthy and/or powerful few (see Torres-Saillant nd.), the literature frequently portrays all immigrants as members of this new "transmigrant" class, even to the point of describing their life as existing in a "transnational village" (Levitt 2001). Silvio Torres-Saillant suggests that this reading of contemporary immigrants and state control omits the lives of many immigrants who struggle to survive economically and socially in their new home

17 This interpretation is not implying that the "sending" and "receiving" countries had not been linked in other [and in the case of the U.S. and the Dominican Republic, more exploitative and inter-dependent colonial] ways, though researchers of transnationalism rarely point out this long-standing relationship of transnational power.

countries (nd.)

Nonetheless, scholars such as Schiller et al. state that immigrants today are active transmigrants and "...take actions, make decisions, and feel concerns, and develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously" (1992:1-2). These authors identify six premises which, they explain, situate transnationalism in time, space, world systems, and sociological theory: The first is that "bounded social science concepts such as tribe, ethnic group, nation, society, or culture ...limit the ability of researchers to first perceive, and then analyze, the phenomenon of transnationalism..." (5). The second premise underlying the new theory is that the transnational reality is "inextricably linked to the changing conditions of global capitalism and must be analyzed within that world context" (5). The third element of transnationalism is that, like all cultural processes, it is "...grounded in the daily lives, activities, and social relationships of migrants" (5). The authors' fourth defining element hinges on the notion of identity constructs. They explain that transmigrants "...live a complex existence that forces them to confront, draw upon, and rework different identity constructs - national, ethnic, and racial" (5). Given this

process of identity and ideological shifts, they suggest that we must "...re-conceptualize the categories of nationalism, ethnicity, and race..." (5). This fifth element of transnationalism demands that we "...re-formulat[e] our understanding of culture, class, and society" (5). The sixth element of transnationalism rests on the understanding that transmigrants are in dialogue with "...hegemonic contexts, both global and national" (5). Transmigrants are affected by these contexts but, perhaps more importantly, they also reshape these contexts (Schiller et al. 1992).

Politics and the Transmigrant

An essential element of today's transnationalism, which would, for argument's sake, distinguish it from past eras, is the multiplicity of involvement that transmigrants sustain in both home and host societies. This framework urges us to begin to understand and document the agency exhibited by such individuals and populations.

Demonstrating this population's agency is critical when we consider the fact that immigrants are enmeshed and in dialogue with the structures created by world capitalism. The limited labor markets open to these new immigrants have made it almost impossible to secure social,

political, or economic bases in mainstream United States (see Hernández 2002). Many working-class (and working-poor) immigrants have found their employment in service sector, clerical jobs, low-wage manufacturing/garment industries, and in the underground economy of sweatshops, street vending, child labor, and piece work that offer low pay, few (if any) benefits, and insecurity (Kwong 1996; Waldinger 1989). If we take the example of New York City, where many migrants continue to relocate, it becomes apparent that economic and social "integration," or "assimilation" has not been the possibility it was for early 20th century European immigrants in the United States. Transnational theorists would contend that exclusion from better economic and social positions in the United States has led today's immigrants to opt to improve their positions and involvements in their home societies - becoming active "transmigrants."

In efforts to document immigrant agency through transnational activity, scholars have provided qualitative accounts and case studies on various immigrant populations, focusing considerable attention on immigrant ethnic and political associations (Basch 1987; Basch et al. 1994; Georges 1987; Graham 1997; Kasinitz 1992; Sassen 1987; Schiller et al. 1987). This literature often points to two

main functions of such organizations: 1-reproducing and maintaining "ethnic distinctiveness" and 2- maintaining communications and activities with the home society (Basch et al. 1994; Kasinitz 1992). For example, in his account of West Indian voluntary associations in New York City, Philip Kasinitz (1992) states that such associations have "... taken only small and tentative steps toward becoming involved in New York political affairs" (122). In contrast, Pamela Graham's work (1997) describes the ways in which Dominican [elite] immigrants have begun to involve themselves in local, New York, political endeavors. She points to the U.S. Census count of 1990 and ensuing political debates in New York City over re-districting. Her study examined the manner in which Dominicans participated in the debates that ultimately culminated in the creation of a new city council district in Washington Heights.

The dramatic growth of the Dominican population in the neighborhood sparked the citywide debate and geo-political alterations. The creation of the Dominican-dominant City Council district #10 was clearly a significant factor in the local elections of 1991, in which the first Dominican was elected into city office. Larger political and economic forces structure the experiences and activities of

this, and other, immigrant populations.

Scholars researching immigrant organizations conclude that regardless of the site of political activity, immigrant groups maintain an exclusive national-ethnic identity. Furthermore, transnational endeavors afford immigrants an empowering role in contemporary politics. However, an analysis of the history and continuing development of immigrant organizations invites an additional interpretation. Within the body of literature on immigrant organizations and enclaves, there are a number of studies that point to the heterogeneous nature of community and community politics (Schiller et al. 1987; Guest and Kwong 2000). I argue that in the past two and a half decades many Dominican-American organizers have forged alliances to build a broad network. This network includes people of color, including people identified as "native minorities" - African Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Mexican-Americans. Furthermore, many Dominican organizations have been focusing their activities around issues faced in New York. The election of immigrants to city and state government - with Councilman Guillermo Linares and Assemblyman Adriano Espaillat as the principle examples from the Dominican community - is one result of such organizing shifts. This flips the old "assimilation"

model on its head. Studies on this concept have not, however, examined the degree to which such processes reverberate in the experiences of the children of immigrants, the second-generation.

The Second-Generation

If we were to assume that the first generation focuses on empowerment via transnational efforts can we draw the same conclusion for the second-generation born and/or raised in the U.S.? Is the second-generation rooted in an identity and mode of action that extends into their parents' country of origin? To what extent are they rooted in an immigrant co-ethnic community? Do they move beyond these communities? What do the results of these "identity choices" mean for the process of assimilation today?

An emerging body of interdisciplinary research is directing our attention to the new second-generation (DeWind et al. 1997; Grasmuck and Pessar 1996; Portes, ed. 1996; Valenzuela 1999; Waters 1996). Continuing in the same line of thought as scholars of transnationalism, this new literature challenges the idea that immigrants follow set modes of incorporation and assimilation through the generations. Scholars suggest that the straight-line assimilation model proposed by earlier scholars of

immigration is not a valid tool with which to measure immigrant progress today. On the contrary, in order to achieve upward mobility - in the social, economic, and political realms - today's second-generation will have to make strategic "choices" of ethnicity. For this population, given the racial composition of most of today's second generation, assimilation into middle stratum white America is not feasible in the way it was for European immigrants (see for example Sacks 1994; Ignatiev 1995). Assimilation today must take a different route. In this case, asserting and maintaining a strong, virtually exclusive co-ethnic niche is the most productive strategy for contemporary racialized immigrants and their children (Portes et al. 1994). That is, although the second-generation cannot "blend" into middle stratum white American society, they will be able to achieve an important degree of upward mobility if they hold on to their ethnic identity and community. It is within these cultures and self-ascribed identities that today's racialized second-generation will find the social capital necessary to succeed.

Those examining the second-generation and their prospects for social mobility in the U.S. have correctly noted the significant differences - racial and ethnic -

between early twentieth century European immigrants and today's Latin American and Caribbean immigrants (Foner 2000; Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Especially important is the difference in the economic and social opportunities available to these populations. Early immigrants from Europe were initially racialized, deemed to be ignorant and inferior (Ignatiev 1995), as are contemporary immigrants. However, they were incorporated into an expanding industrial and economic system that eventually extended them white privilege and the opportunities for social mobility (Takaki 1989; Frankenberg 1993; Ignatiev 1995). Sacks (1994, 1999) provides a thorough account of the ways in which government policy - particularly the GI Bill - gave white immigrants access to the keys needed - particularly home ownership, business opportunities, and access to higher education - to achieve a place into an assimilated white populous. This is not the case for most of today's immigrants, who are predominantly people of color, arriving at a time of rapid de-industrialization and the persistent power of institutionalized racism.

In light of limited economic and social options and racial discrimination, scholars examining the second-generation suggest that this population will have to make strategic ethnic choices to overcome the barriers set

before them. Portes and Zhou (1993) assert that within this process, called "segmented assimilation," the second-generation has three options for social mobility:

- 1- "...acculturation and parallel integration into white middle-class...;"
- 2- "...permanent poverty and assimilation into the underclass...;" or
- 3- "...rapid economic advancement with deliberate preservation of the immigrant community's values and tight solidarity" (Portes and Zhou 1993:82).

Portes (1996) correctly suggests that the first option is virtually unattainable for immigrants of color. He argues that the second option leads to "downward assimilation," with the second generation grabbing hold of an oppositional identity and stance that curtails the ability of those within this subculture. He argues that it is within the third option that the second-generation will be able to create a path that leads to successful mobility in this country. Many second-generation populations residing in immigrant neighborhoods in cities such as New York live in poverty and in close proximity to "native-born" people of color - including Puerto Ricans and African-American - populations Portes and company identify as part of the underclass. To advocates of the segmented assimilation model, such circumstances of environment can easily paralyze the mobility of second-generation youth and their

communities. Maintaining a close identity with the immigrant community will allow second-generation youth to: advance in their educational careers, stay away from drugs and other vices, obey parents and become honorable and successful citizens.

In an article describing the educational success of Vietnamese second-generation youth, Min Zhou and Carl Bankston (1996) explain:

"...despite close proximity to urban ghettos and attendance at often troubled urban schools, many of these children have been able to succeed in school through the use of the material and social resources that their families and ethnic communities make available." (200)

The characteristics they believe "shield" these impoverished youth from the "ghetto underclass" that surrounds them lie within their ethnic groups and families:

"In disadvantaged neighborhoods where difficult conditions and disruptive elements often are found, immigrant families may have to preserve traditional values consciously by means of ethnic solidarity to prevent the next generation from assimilating into the underprivileged segments of American society in which their community is located. ...ethnic social integration creates a form of capital that enables an immigrant family to receive ongoing support and direction from other families and from the religious and social association of the ethnic group. Consequently, community standards are established and reinforced among group members, especially among younger members who may otherwise assimilate into an underclass subculture" (Zhou and Bankston 1996:218).

There is no question that support from a close-knit community and family unit are important factors in the life of youth (see Kozol 1991; LaGuerre 1984). And Portes correctly identifies the importance of discrimination and xenophobia (Portes 2001b). For example, Portes and Rumbaut (2001a) explain that Mexican immigrants consistently earn less than other immigrants and native-born populations with the same education and labor skills. They explain that nativist discourse and discrimination "...undermine[s] successful adaptation" (Portes and Rumbaut 2001a: 279). Second generation immigrants contend with these processes of discrimination:

"Challenged to incorporate what is "out there" into what is "in here" and to crystallize a sense of who they are, they translate themselves and construct a variety of self-identities" (Portes and Rumbaut 2001a: 190).

As they contend with external processes of discrimination, racialized youth will attempt to construct self-identities that help them make sense of the world around them.

Despite these contributions, numerous elements of the theory of segmented assimilation beg re-analysis. The assumptions underlying various aspects of this theory have already been contested in the social sciences. The concerns I have about this new literature revolve around three important concepts: the assumption of bound and

static communities; race, poverty, and the "underclass;" and the nature and significance of identity "choices" and inter-ethnic/racial identification.

Bound Communities

The literature on transnationalism suggests that transmigrant communities span two or more nation-states. Proponents of "segmented assimilation" assume that immigrants automatically belong to only one cohesive "co-ethnic" community, with the second-generation deciding whether or not to cross that identity border. Although both concepts allow for immigrant agency and individual choice in selecting the way they define their community, there is still a need to revisit the idea of community borders and cultural change.

Inherent in the concept of co-ethnic community maintenance is the implication that immigrant groups consist of one unified cultural body with set cultural components transferred from one generation to the next. These scholars (see Zhou and Logan 1989) frequently overlook the various class and power struggles that affect the ethnic niche or enclave and those within it (Kwong 1997; Kwong and Guest, 2000). The assumption that new immigrant groups automatically establish egalitarian,

prosperous ethnic enclaves is currently a matter of considerable debate (see Kwong and Guest 2000; Sanders and Nee 1987). For example, Peter Kwong (1997) demonstrates the manner in which key political and economic figures within the Chinese immigrant community in New York have controlled and exploited their less prosperous co-ethnics.

Early understandings of the concepts of communities and of culture assumed a homogenous, static, isolated population (see for example Mead 1949; Malinowski 1922). The idea that entire communities were bound and that they did not change permeated much early anthropological writing (Wolf 1982). However, scholars such as Oliver Cox (1948) and W.E.B. DuBois (1935) pointed out that not only were specified groups of people - or "communities" - heterogeneous and stratified, but they were in a state of constant change, often due to internal and external influences. These external influences included processes of capitalism, capitalist exploitation and institutional racism - forces that continue to shape society and local communities today (Castells 1997; Mollenkopf and Castells 1991). However, contemporaries of scholars such as Cox and DuBois presented analyses that ignored macro-level processes. The mainstream perspective focused, instead, on ethnic groups and their internal composition and function;

this perspective continued later in the work of scholars studying immigrant neighborhoods (see for example Whyte 1943; Gans 1962). The paradigm that omits the ongoing effects of macro-structural processes also predominates in today's literature on second-generation immigrants.

As early as 1969, in his introductory chapter to *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, Barth forewarned social scientists of the dangers in assuming pre-conceived, biologically based definitions of ethnic groups. In early anthropological literature, scholars frequently assumed an ethnic group to be a population which was biologically self-perpetuating, shared basic cultural values; made up a field of communication and interaction; and had a membership that identified itself, and was identified by others, as a distinguishable, separate group (Barth 1969:10-11). Barth contested this popular understanding of groups and society. He declared that this perception of ethnic groups failed to problematize or imagine a different concept of boundaries and their formations it impeded our understanding of society and culture. Instead, Barth offered a concept of ethnic groups that included analysis of how members of such groups identified themselves, *in relation to others*. From this vantage point, interaction between people came to center-stage.

Barth (1969) went on to elaborate on processes of group interaction, describing for example, the ways in which members of one ethnic group might *individually* select membership in different ethnic groups. Although Barth's work set the stage for agency in ethnic identification (choosing to "pass", accepting a "minority" status, and/or emphasizing their ethnic identity), his formulation did not leave much room for hybridity or multiple identity-formation - what I argue exists in Dominican-American organizing in Washington Heights.

Although scholars of segmented assimilation allow for the possibility of second-generation individuals to change their ethnic identity, it is implied that they would be moving from one particular and bound community or ethnic group to another. Furthermore, there is an assumption that ethnic groups share one unified culture to which all members adhere and that these ethnic communities and their cultures are self-perpetuating and remain the same.

Poverty and the Underclass

Scholars examining the new second-generation acknowledge the role that race, racism and contemporary economic developments play in shaping the dim prospects many impoverished immigrants of color confront. In the

introductory pages to the seminal text, *The New Second Generation* (1995), Alejandro Portes acknowledges that "...members [of the new second-generation] confront the same reduced circumstances in the American labor market affecting domestic minorities. Most second-generation youth are also nonwhite and hence subject to the same discrimination endured by their predecessors (Jensen, 1990; Passel and Edmonston, 1992)" (5). However, proponents of the segmented assimilation theory do not examine the long-term effects of such macrolevel processes on immigrants and the new second generation. Instead, their argument focuses on their understanding of immigrant communities' inherent cultures. Portes states that "...immigrant families and communities commonly possess material and moral resources that confer advantages on their young as they seek avenues for successful adaptation." Given the limited opportunities presented them, their social mobility "...depends decisively on the resources that their families and ethnic communities can bring to bear" (Portes et al. 1995: 5).

They posit that inherent in the cultures of immigrant communities are the tools they need to circumvent these marginalized social positions and succeed in the wider society. However, in their advocacy of a co-ethnic

identity, they fail to describe the role structural and socio-political factors might have in maintaining poverty in native minority groups. Instead, they offer a description of an underclass steeped in poverty and in a culture that limits its members' mobility, placing the emphasis of group culture, rather than structure, as the root of poverty. The authors are clear in their view that if today's second-generation identify and become part of the minority underclass culture, their communities will not gain the social or economic mobility of immigrants that came before them. Not only does this perspective erroneously assume successful social mobility of all white immigrants that came before, but it also attributes the success or failure rate on self-identity, self-esteem, and other individual characteristics.

Linking poverty to a deficient culture - as evident in discussions of the underclass - is not new in social science inquiry. Neither are the critiques of this assessment of impoverished groups. The assumptions about the underclass - which authors such as Portes (1994) identify as Puerto Rican, African-American, and Chicano - are the same as those of Oscar Lewis over four decades ago. It is, once again, "old wine in new bottles" (Mullings 1977). The idea of native minority groups and their

"oppositional identity" limiting their chances of mobility implies a kind of culture of poverty. These arguments underplay the social science data demonstrating that social conditions (rather than innate propensities) lead to differences in group behavior and life chances. So began Eleanor Leacock's 1971 critique of the culture of poverty arguments. The culture of poverty theorists based their defense on a few major assumptions. The first assumption was that an autonomous subculture exists among the poor. Second, it was suggested that this subculture and its poverty is self-perpetuating and self-defeating and that in this subculture there exists a sense of resignation and/or fatalism. Following this, culture of poverty scholars posited that individuals in this subculture are unable to plan for the future, choosing rather to seek satisfaction of their immediate needs. These [decontextualized] characteristics were then linked to and presented as though they alone caused low educational motivation/achievement and high unemployment, poverty and despair. Take for example Daniel P. Moynihan's report, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (1965). Moynihan argued that the "tangle of pathology" which characterized the Negro community,

"...was `capable of perpetuating itself without assistance from the white world.' Its basis was to be found in the Negro family, which `once or twice removed,...will be found to be the principal source of most of the aberrant, inadequate, or antisocial behavior that did not establish, but now serves to perpetuate the cycle of poverty and deprivation'"(11)

Although contemporary scholars developing the theory of segmented assimilation may not make claims as crude as those of Moynihan, their model implies similar claims about "native-born" people of color living in poverty. I argue that the main assumptions of the culture of poverty - delineated and critiques by Eleanor Leacock (1971) and others in the 1970s - are found, in a slightly revised form, in today's literature on the second-generation. While today's scholars recognize the role of lack of job opportunities in pushing youth to one identity or another, they nevertheless accept Wacquant and Wilson's (1989) thesis of the "hyperghetto," the "...veritable human warehouses where the disappearance of work and the everyday reality of marginalization led directly to a web of social pathologies. Proliferation of female teenage pregnancy, high involvement of youngsters in crime, and the disappearance of work habits and discipline are common traits in these areas" (Portes and Rumbaut 2001a: 59-60). And they warn that identification with such a culture will not benefit second-generation youth and their communities.

These authors continue to reproduce these assumptions, though theories about inter-generational poverty and social isolation have undergone radical critique (see for example Vincent 1993; Maxwell 1993). The structures that create poverty continue in a way that allows poverty to persist. In a post-industrial society where jobs are scarce, and under/un-employment increases, and where the social safety net has been nearly abandoned by the state, poverty will persist.

However, as Delmos Jones (1993) insisted, poor people attempt not only to survive through poverty but they consistently attempt to move beyond poverty. But attempts to achieve are not always positively correlated to success. Through ethnographic work, he demonstrates that this is not due to inherent flaws in the culture of the poor, who work at the local level and challenge supralocal institutions in their attempts to secure access to education and work for themselves and their children (Jones 1993; see also Sharff 1998). Many scholars have demonstrated that the idea that the success or failure of ethnic groups rests on internal family and community characteristics is very problematic. Contemporary scholars' adherence to the idea that Black, Puerto Rican and Mexican-American communities represent a subculture of poverty, with inherent pathologies is not

only flawed, but continues to portray stereotypes as scientific fact. Ideologies and theories that stigmatize people of color continue their central role in maintaining class, race, and ethnic inequality and injustice. As Mullings states in a challenge to stereotypic portrayals of black women, "...by constructing them as 'natural' rather than social and historical, these representations justify the continued oppression..." (Mullings 1997:125).

Proponents of the segmented assimilation model only briefly outline race and structural factors as elements to consider when analyzing the ways in which contemporary immigrant groups face difficult conditions. Their arguments then move into theories about the central role of culture and moral resources found (or missing) within individual cultures in determining social and economic mobility. Similar to Oscar Lewis, the structural issues they allude to early on, therefore, become virtually invisible by the final analysis. That is, although they acknowledge the way in which race denies contemporary immigrants access to assimilation into the white middle-class, they fail to examine the way in which racialization processes construct the parameters around which today's second-generation will attempt social, economic, and/or political mobility. Furthermore, although they point out

that the U.S. economic system and labor markets are not as prosperous as they were a century ago, they fail to examine the extent to which this situation significantly curtails upward social mobility for any working-class population in cities such as New York.

Identity

Another issue that one must re-examine in light of this new literature is the degree to which identity choices influence or determine social mobility. Scholars such as Portes and Waters emphasize the importance of identity selection in predicting the social mobility of today's racialized immigrant groups. This exclusive emphasis on identity choices can easily lead us in the direction of suggesting that cultures or groups of people are inherently adept or inept at achieving success in this country. Take for example the theory that identifying with Black culture will lead today's second generation to a path of downward assimilation and limited social mobility, while maintaining a strong identification with their immigrant community will lead them to achieve social and economic mobility. These assumptions ignore the role that macro-level processes have in circumscribing the experiences (and life chances) of today's immigrant groups. Many of today's second-

generation populations, with roots in Latin America and the Caribbean are racialized by society as "Black" and/or "Latino." They face institutional discrimination and contend with its long-term effects.

As I will demonstrate, given the diversity in residence patterns and daily social interactions of the second-generation in urban centers like New York, Portes et al.'s inflexible view of culture and racial and ethnic classification becomes problematic. That is, if the second-generation attends school and maintains networks that are racially and ethnically heterogeneous, how do these authors explain the ways in which members of this population retain their identity as co-ethnics, simultaneously embracing relationships and identities with members of other ethnic and racial groups -- those identified by the theories as "native minorities" or "the underclass?" Their framework does not allow for an understanding of such variance. The case of Carlos Pierre, the 24-year old Dominican organizer in Quisqueya United illustrates this point when he declares himself Dominican, Latino, and Black, seeing no contradictions in this conglomerate of social and political alliances.

How others identify you becomes an important element in the personal and the political arenas. Consider another

example: that of Jose Mendoza, a 17-year-old second-generation Dominican living in New York. He is described as "...black but not quite black enough for many African Americans, very Latino but not light enough to matter to most Hispanics, American in every way but at the same time inexorably foreign" (Escobar 1999:A21). In self-referential instances, such an individual can be Dominican, Latino, Black, Afro-Latino, American, or any combination of such identities. And I will demonstrate that in other instances, where ascribed identities affect their relationships and experiences with other groups - e.g., in encounters with the New York Police Department - self-identification may be irrelevant. Current research on the second-generation has not fully considered such issues.

Relationships and ties to "native minority" groups, an affiliation some suggest is not embraced by first generation immigrants (Waters 1996; Kasinitz 1992), may prove to be an important and empowering option for this second-generation, particularly in organizations. My research demonstrates that many Dominican-American organizers use this strategy to help inform their work. The relationships Dominican-American activists develop with other people of color - whether they take the form of momentary inter-ethnic/racial coalitions, prolonged pan-

ethnic/racial identities, or anything between these points - are an important, and perhaps essential, element of Dominican-American organizing. This possibility complicates the "co-ethnic" strategy emphasized in recent immigration literature discussing both the first and second-generation.

In sum, many of the assumptions inherent in contemporary immigration and second-generation studies have been contested in anthropology and elsewhere. Community studies scholars have challenged the idea that ethnic groups (or any group) are bounded in temporal or geographic spaces. We have also moved toward an understanding of the ways in which supralocal institutions and macro-level processes affect the lives of people in all locales, an understanding particularly relevant for immigrants and people of color (those identified as "native minorities" by Portes). And scholars examining grassroots organizing have noted the important possibilities that inter-ethnic/racial collaborations present to all involved. Nonetheless, social theorists writing about the second-generation assert that maintaining a strong, virtually exclusive co-ethnic niche is the most productive strategy for contemporary racialized immigrants and their children, allowing them to

capitalize on otherwise unavailable material and social resources.

In a 1964 position paper, Anthony Leeds laid the grounds for a revised conceptualization of community, or locale, studies. He advanced the underlying arguments which DuBois (1899) and Cox (1948) had set forth decades earlier - in analyzing any site, we must develop models that allow us to view "... (a) the institutions of the territorial state, (b) the social unit - the community, and (c) the human-geographical unit - the locality, in a single frame of reference and as a single, systemic totality" (Leeds 1973). This analysis focuses on the link between the microcosm and the macrocosm, and on the relations between local populations and larger economic, political, social processes. Not only are local units connected to these processes, but their interactions (and at times, their direct interventions) can significantly alter the locale and affect what happens in "external" institutions as well. In fact, we must focus our attention on the interactions within and between localities, and the ways that "supra-local" institutions affect the locale and the

opportunities available to its members.¹⁸ When studying immigrants in cities today, we need to look at the ways they are affected by and/or interact with: global economic and political developments, state institutions, local institutions, and other local populations.

It now goes without saying that a highly complex web of contested and ever changing relationships - individual and institutionalized - characterizes any given locale. They constitute the base from which a locus of power forms. Such local power can either be used in cooperation with external agencies and institutions or as a tool with which to resist "...against the encroachments of the supralocal institutions. It is also the basis for the emergence of the true community" (Leeds 1973:24). In response to their relationships with these, and other forces, people in distinct communities - based on race, geography, or "imagined" solidarity (Anderson 1983) - have forged social

18 Leeds defines the supralocal in the following manner: "... supralocal structures confront any locality, any socio-geographical subunit of the total system or its subdivisions, with uniform, generalized, organizational and operational norms or equipment. Supralocal institutions refers to principles and manners of operation of supralocal structures. Any structure whose form is not governed by, or related to, a given locality, and which confronts a number of localities identically, is a supralocal structure operating with supralocal institutions" (Leeds 1973:27). The state operates as a key set of supralocal institutions, "...first, because it is a channel and coordinator for the rest of the supralocal institutions of society at large, and second, because it does not necessarily depend directly on the masses for its resources but can exercise control over resources, numbers, and organizations by virtue of its public polity purposes, in a relatively autonomous and indirect way" (Leeds 1973: 30).

movements to combat oppressive forces and/or to create paths leading to access to much-needed resources. Although scholars of the "old left" have focused on social movements fashioned by the proletariat, others such as Piven and Cloward (1977) have targeted the many ways that impoverished communities mobilize to act in response to state policies. Contemporary scholars (see Castells 1982, 1983, 1984; Gregory 1998, Hale 1997; Jennings 1994, 2003; Kelley 1996; Sharff 1998) have now turned their attention to the ways that people in grounded geographic "communities" struggle to create grassroots mobilization aimed at altering the physical landscape of their communities, the communities' access to resources (employment, housing, government funding, etc.), their relationships with larger state and federal institutions, and the impositions of various macro-structural processes in the lives of their communities (see Kelley 1996).

Those who advance these conceptualizations and utilize an historical, processual analysis (Rosaldo 1993) afford us the opportunity to understand how communities and their efforts at mobilization change over time. This particular framework is crucial in any study of immigration today. As historical and political climates change through time, so too do communities. The theories concerning the creation

of the nation-state, of contestation, malleability, permeability, and imagined community and cohesion are easily adopted in studies of local immigrant communities. Scholars have looked at how people in one locale consider themselves part of a larger community, how they create differing notions of community, and how, through constant renegotiation and conflict their community continually changes. In various articles about community organizations in New York, Delmos J. Jones (1982, 1987, 1993) outlined the way that people organize themselves as a political community to demand resources for members of their neighborhoods. Ida Susser has analyzed similar processes of institutionalization and local agency through her work with mothers in a New York summer lunch program.

People continue to work to affect change within and outside the regulated parameters established by these institutions (Beck 1982; Cloward and Piven 1971). Jose E. Cruz writes, "...empowerment begins when the perception or experience of social, economic, and political inequity leads citizens to organize and mobilize" (1998:12). In what ways are Dominican activists in Washington Heights engaging in this process? What role does the second-generation play in this endeavor? And to what extent do they change how the Dominican-American community, particularly its organizers,

identifies itself - vis-à-vis other communities of color in New York? It is to these questions that I will address the next section of this dissertation.

Chapter 4

Building a Local Presence: Dominicans Building Community and Expanding Networks

In this chapter I present a chronology of organizing in Washington Heights' Dominican community, with a special emphasis on the 1980s and 1990s, the pivotal years of Dominican-American community-building in New York City. Stretching back to politics and patronage in the Dominican Republic, organizing in Washington Heights has changed along with external political developments. Having endured Trujillo, Balaguer and ensuing economic and civil disruptions, many early immigrants arrived in New York with the idea that they would earn money and return to the Dominican Republic. But what they brought with them helped them create and develop political and social capital in Washington Heights. They arrived with a history of involvement in grassroots organizing and civic participation. They established organizations almost immediately. Initially, they organized clubs and associations whose goals revolved around building a democracy in the Dominican Republic to which they could return. I review the factors that led to the erosion of this ideology among local organizers and a strong interest

in developing community based organizations aimed at combating local issues.

I argue that in addition to local activists' ability and interest in fostering civic engagement in New York, Dominican-American community development took off only after: 1- local organizers reached out to local institutions and politicians, 2- organizers built a network to include people of color, 3- young Dominicans, including the college-educated second-generation became more involved in civic life in Washington Heights, and 4- political figures and institutions outside the community offered resources (particularly financial). I argue that the existence, activities, and power of today's Dominican-American organizations are in large part due to the convergence of all these factors.

Larger political, social, and economic forces have, to an important extent, structured the experiences and activities of the Dominican immigrant population. Government policy - in both the Dominican Republic and in the U.S. - has had a direct affect on the nature of the organizing shifts in Washington Heights, particularly in the earlier decades of organizing. The development of community activism and organizational activity in the Dominican community has changed accordingly.

Within the myriad of local activism occurring in Washington Heights during the mid to late 1980s, various organizations were established to address the needs of the ever-growing Dominican population residing in the neighborhood. Local community boards and city government promoted the growth of various youth and community initiatives. Having established that their community was in dire need of services and advocates, first and second-generation Dominican leadership founded some of the most active organizations in the neighborhood.

It was young first and second-generation organizers who paved the way for the proliferation of local grassroots and social service provision organizations in Washington Heights. The roots of organizational growth emerged from the community's strong desire to become involved in local organizing and in exerting some influence over decisions made in and/or for the community. Many began their political careers on the local school board. Some then advanced under Mayors Ed Koch and David Dinkins. Additional developments in the 1980s and 1990s created unique developments in Dominican organizing. Among the organizations established during this era were the two organizations on which this research is based - Dominican Nation and Quisqueya United. This chapter discusses the

history of organizing trends in Washington Heights, a chronology that situates contemporary organizations in the neighborhood's activist lineage. The historical accounts presented in this chapter serve to explicate the nature of the emerging grassroots-level politics in the community, and the growth in inter-ethnic/racial collaborations. There is no question that Dominicans, as a community in Washington Heights, have declared their arrival in local politics. Local organizers work hard to garner resources and rights for Dominicans. But, as I will demonstrate in this chapter, the backdrop to this growth of Dominican-focused political activity is complex. It involves a growing involvement of the second-generation, an ideology that permits - and at times advocates - inter-ethnic/racial collaborations, and a network that includes elected officials and other political power brokers.

Organizing Across Borders in the Early Years: Dominican Immigrants and Transnationalism

As I discussed earlier in the dissertation, the mass exodus of Dominicans from the Dominican Republic to New York occurred after the assassination of dictator Rafael Leonidas Trujillo, coinciding with the creation of a U.S. Consulate's office in the Dominican Republic in 1962, which

issued passports¹⁹ and visas in order to eliminate potential unrest and militancy in the country. The U.S. Immigration Reform Laws of 1965 also created the conditions under which emigration would occur. Many Dominicans who arrived at this time did so for economic reasons. Others arrived as de facto political exiles, remaining in close contact with political organizing efforts based in the Dominican Republic. As one local organizer recalled:

"El movimiento progresista en el movimiento de dominicano organizado en Estados Unidos ... la base originaria de ese movimiento todos fueron compañeros sobrevivientes de las persecuciones y de los atropellos en la República Dominicana. ...tenían una organización [en Nueva York]: Asociación Dominicana. Tenían una asociación que se llamaba María Trinidad Sánchez. Tenían una que se llamaba Enriquillo. ...No puedo dejar de mencionar a Alfredo White. Alfredo White estableció el primer centro comunitario de dominicanos aquí en Washington Heights, pero la mayoría de los dirigentes de esos grupos aquí fueron, la mayoría fueron ex-combatientes en la guerra de abril del lado de los Constitucionalistas y la mayoría de ellos ... llegaron aquí a raíz de que Balaguer llega al poder. O sea, la mayoría de ellos llegaron aquí entre 1966 -68. Entonces establecieron un comité dominicano de derechos humanos, el comité de dominicanos del comité dominico-haitiano de amistad. ... Había un movimiento aquí bastante activo. De nuevo, su mística era de organizar a la gente no solamente para jugar domino pero organizar a la gente para que la gente se movilizara."

"The progressive movement within the Dominican movement in the United States ... all those who made up the foundation of this movement were comrades who survived the persecutions in the Dominican Republic.

19 Prior to this moment in political history only a select few from the elite sectors of Dominican society under Trujillo were granted passports from the Dominican government.

...they had an organization [in New York City]: Asociación Dominicana. They had another called Enriquillo. ...I can't forget to mention Alfredo White. Alfredo White established the first Dominican community center here in Washington Heights, but the majority of the leaders of those organizations here were, the majority, they were ex-combatants of the Guerra de Abril [the April War] from the side of the Constitutionals and the majority of them... they arrived here [in the U.S.] once [Joaquín] Balaguer came into power. In other words, the majority arrived here between 1966 and 1968. At that time they established a Dominican Committee for Human Rights, a Dominican Committee of the Dominican-Haitian Committee of Friendship. ...There was a very active movement. Again, their ideology was to organize the people not just to play domino but to organize the people so that the people would mobilize." (translation by author)

Two organizers - Marcos Villegos and Emiliano Luis

Montenegro - who helped to establish some of the most prominent organizations in Washington Heights were part of this militant Dominican émigré population. Both Villegos and Montenegro formed part of the leadership of the radical Marxist *Línea Roja* in the late 1970s and 1980s. Both fled the Dominican Republic due to poverty and political persecution. Both men, like most political refugees of the time, arrived in the U.S. as young adults in their late 20s. And they arrived with a leftist, community-based orientation to civic participation. This political capital helped to shape Dominican community organizing. Many from the current ranks of local leadership arrived at this time (and entered the New York City public education system), or

are children of those who emigrated during these years.

During these early years of mass migration, many Dominicans - including political activists - assumed that their stay in New York was temporary. They believed that after saving money and/or after political upheaval on the island-country abated they would return to their homes in the Dominican Republic. Armed with this belief, many sought employment and enrolled their children in New York schools but continued to receive news about politics in the Dominican Republic, and mobilized accordingly.

By the beginning of the 1970s, the Dominican population living in Washington Heights - and on the Upper West Side²⁰ - had significantly expanded. As the population grew during the 1970s, there was a proliferation of all kinds of organizations: social clubs, hometown associations, recreation clubs and political clubs. In 1973 Ira Katznelson conducted a survey in Washington Heights, in which he found that 14 percent of Dominicans interviewed belonged to one or more social or political organizations. The more visible and active groups at the time were political clubs, whose emphasis continued to be

20 During the 1960s many Dominicans resided in buildings located on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, joining the Puerto Rican population living in that neighborhood. Soon after, the gentrification process effectively pushed the new arrivals into a niche on the northern-most tip of Manhattan, Washington Heights and Inwood.

directed toward influencing politics in the Dominican Republic. Many activists were also involved in political efforts that extended to various Latin American countries, namely Cuba, Nicaragua, and later in the decade, El Salvador.

Some political exiles led chapters of leftist political parties from the Dominican Republic. Organizers from *Linea Roja* met in New York, forming a chapter of the radical group in their new home. They elected leaders and representatives to meet with comrades in the Dominican Republic. This group remained active until the mid-1980s. When Marcos Villegos, a local organizers and founder of Quisqueya United, arrived in New York in 1980, his first stop was to the home of Emiliano Luis, a fellow *Linea Roja* organizer in New York. In 1981 he was named one of the leaders of the New York chapter. The purpose of the political clubs was to keep those living in New York abreast of affairs in the island country and rally support - political and economic - for causes of the island compatriots. These clubs also kept people in close contact with each other while adjusting to life in New York - a mechanism of social support.

Political unrest continued after the 1965 U.S. invasion, until 1976 and 1977 when the Partido

Revolucionario Dominicano (PRD) took control of government of the Dominican Republic. Overt repression of revolutionaries in the country diminished. Although many activists - in the Dominican Republic and the United States - protested the PRD's signing of an economic development agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the military continued to assassinate young militants in the Dominican Republic, uprisings on the island subsided. After this period Dominican activists living in New York began to talk about developing a political base in New York, to empower the Dominican community in New York through active participation in grassroots mobilization around local issues such as housing and representation in the local school system (Georges 1988; Linares 1989). Many key political figures, however, still had their lens directed toward the Dominican Republic. Although an interest in "homeland politics" remains an important aspect of many organizations, one cannot overlook the reasons for the specific political agendas and orientations of the early political clubs in Washington Heights' Dominican community. As one organizer indicated,

"..these [clubs] were our refuge. We had a role in helping to democratize the island. We were here, but our hopes for revolutionary change in the Dominican Republic could not die. It just couldn't."

The political situation in the Dominican Republic propelled Dominicans to organize these clubs. The 1960s and 1970s were particularly difficult times for leftist movements in the Dominican Republic. As one political exile explained,

"...eran difíciles momentos, difíciles en el periodo del '72 al '78. ... en esa época los principales dirigentes estudiantiles fueron asesinados, y más de 4,000 personas en las cárceles, aproximadamente unas 70 o 80 personas desaparecidas. ... hoy en día los jóvenes no creen que criticar y ejercer el derecho a pensar [es cosa grande]. ...[Ellos creen] que es algo natural y debe ser así. Yo me alegro que piensen así. Pero en mi tiempo pensar tenía un precio muy alto. Hasta de la manera que te vistiera [tenía peligro]. Por ejemplo, si te ponías un pantalón negro y una camisa verde simplemente porque te lo regalaron y no tenías mas nada ibas preso y cojía bastante palo y te torturaban para que tu digieras que tu conocías los del 14 de Junio. Si te ponías un pantalón negro y una media roja te hacían lo mismo para que digieras qué era lo que tu sabías del MPD. Y cuando ocurrían luchas entre grupos del ejercito, ellos mismos mataban a un compañero, pues esta pendiente que un grupo de jóvenes caillan preso y cumplía sentencia. Un compañero de trabajo de la escuela que cumplió siete años, siete años que cada vez que habla de eso llora. Hace un montón de tiempo pero son siete años de su vida por haber hecho nada. Lo agarraron, lo hallaron en la casa, llevaron la supuesta evidencia. Le dieron una arma, que encontraron supuestamente en la casa. Con esa arma fue que mataron a un sargento en San Francisco de Macorís, y él pago por eso, algo que no hizo."

"...the period between 1972 to 1978 was difficult. ...during that time the principal student leaders were assassinated, and more than 4,000 people were in prison, and approximately 70 or 80 people were disappeared. ...today young people don't think that to criticize and to use the right to think for oneself [is a big thing]. ...[They believe] that it's something natural and it should be that way. I'm happy that they think this way. But in my time, thinking had a

very high price. Even the way that you dressed [could be dangerous]. For example, if you put on black pants and a green shirt, simply because someone gave it to you and you didn't have anything else, you would be arrested and you would get beaten up and they tortured you so that you would say that you led, that you knew people from [the movement] 14 de junio. If you put on black pants and red socks they would do the same to you so that you would say that you knew about the MPD. And when there were fights between military groups and they killed [one of their own], well, be ready that a group of young people would be imprisoned and serve a sentence. A comrade here at work in the school served seven years in prison, seven years, the mention of which brings him to tears. That was a long time ago but that was seven years of his life [he lost] for nothing. They grabbed him, they found him at home, and they took the supposed evidence. They gave him a weapon, which they said they found in his house. It was with that weapon that they had killed a Sergeant in *San Francisco de Macorís*, and he paid for that, something he did not do." (translation by author)

Stories and events like these reached Dominicans living in Washington Heights. They were part of the *raison d'être* of political clubs.

Community organizations have a long history in Washington Heights. As the Dominican population in New York expanded through the early wave of migration, so did the need for social clubs and organizations. Scholars have drawn attention to the many ways throughout history that immigrant groups establish these "home-town associations" and social clubs as a means through which individuals can maintain contact with co-ethnics and with their "home" country, and simultaneously, help them to "adjust" to U.S.

society. Those who emphasize the transnational relationships of immigrants suggest that this is a way in which immigrants, denied power in the political mainstream of the "host" country, bypass state regulations and establish a different kind of power. Disenfranchised from the political discourse in the host country, they may choose to maintain some engagement with "home country." Hence, politics serves as a tool for regaining a sense of power and control. In fact, the character of Dominican organizing in New York City in the 1960s would support the "transnational" or "home politics" theory. However, crucial to an understanding of Dominican "transnationalism" is an analysis of the political climate in the Dominican Republic at the time this organizing was most fervent. It is also important to assess the political ideologies of the activists involved in transnational politics; many were also involved in solidarity movements in multiple countries throughout Latin America, regardless of their own country of origin. The literature on transnationalism has not sufficiently highlighted this broader context of transnational politics. Political developments would later alter the sense of urgency with which this community addressed international solidarity issues.

Political and social clubs still operate in Washington Heights, often attracting the newly-arrived. In the spring of 2000, when Dominican presidential campaigning was in full swing, New York-based offices of political parties organized caravans, fundraisers, and speaking engagements throughout Washington Heights. There is no question that island politics have a space in Washington Heights. However, Dominicans in Washington Heights have also developed organizations to empower, to provide services, and to obtain resources for Dominicans living in New York City.

Becoming New York Locals

The shift from organizing for home politics to organizing to empower Dominicans locally spanned the better part of the 1980s. The 1980s was a decade that proved to be a turning point for Dominican-American community-building in New York (Georges 1984; Ricourt 2002; Torres Saillant 1998). Its development rested on the convergence of a series of factors. First, upon wrestling with the "aqui-alla" debate, a large contingent of Dominican community organizers let go of "home" and began orienting their work toward New York-based issues. They establish locally focused organizations. Secondly, many young

organizers began to graduate from New York City public schools and the University of Manhattan of New York. This new, second-generation of activists took the networks and political experiences garnered in these institutions into their organizing in Washington Heights. Third, Dominican-American activists established local organizing and connected to other people of color in New York, primarily Puerto Rican and Black organizers and elected officials. And finally, established leadership and external institutions began to offer resources to organizations in the Dominican-American community of Washington Heights; this included the Dinkins Administration of the late 1980s and early 1990s. These factors helped channel Dominican organizing in a new direction. This developed into a critical era of activism for the Dominican community.

Sojourners No Longer: Dominican-Americans Organize Locally

Even as two decades had passed since the first wave of Dominican emigrants arrived in New York, many organizers still believed that their stay in New York was temporary. But as revolutionary prospects diminished in the Dominican Republic, local residents and activists debated the

permanence of the Dominican community in the U.S. and began to alter their organizing efforts.

Along with local Dominican residents of Washington Heights Dominican activists debated the issue of "return migration." Was the Dominican immigrant population going to return to the island-country or did activists need to plan for another scenario? In local organizations and in everyday settings, residents and activists debated prospects for this community and projections hinged on the realization that this population was not a group of "transient sojourners" that would return en-masse to the Dominican Republic. Local activists - from the first generation of radical émigrés and the second-generation raised in New York - began to accept the fact that the Dominican population in New York was setting roots in the United States and it was their duty to secure a degree of civic participation and empowerment for this population in the United States. One informant explained that guiding their efforts in these early days was a political ideology that included questions of inclusion and exclusion and racialization in the U.S.:

"During that time it was en vogue to discuss Stalin's book, *The National Question*. We discussed if Dominicans living here were part of the multinational nation or if we were a minority exploited in the United States. That caused a division in the group.

There was one group that said we Dominicans are here, we're staying, *y pa'l carajo con la República Dominicana* [to hell with the Dominican Republic]. The other sector, to which [Emiliano Luis] belonged, said there's a group that will stay but there's also a group that will go back. We have to be responsible for both groups. The first group was more firm, and they left *Línea Roja*. ...they founded ACDP... the focus would be organizing the community, the tenants. That was going to be the focus."

But intent alone did not catapult Dominicans into major organizations. Initially, Dominican organizers attempted to gain entry into pre-existing organizations in the neighborhood of Washington Heights. Although there were many community-based organizations providing services to residents of Washington Heights, Dominican activists felt that existing organizations did not adequately address or meet the needs of the newly arrived Dominican population. As one local activist explained, the organizations established by others in the early 1980s did not include Dominicans in their boardrooms or in their program development.²¹ The issues that activists addressed included the nature of "Dominicanness" and of "belonging" and entitlement in the U.S. Michael Ocampo, one of the founders of Quisqueya United and current director of a community development program explained:

21 This seemed to follow a trend in the city's ethnic and racial political divisions, a product of a long history of politics in New York and Mayor Ed Koch's overtures to solidifying divisions along racial lines (see Mollenkopf 1992)

"Something was emerging at the time. ...There was an obvious community presence ... in [Washington] Heights, needs coming up, young people coming out of college looking to make their mark on the day... The first manifestation was some people ran for school board and won. ...they had a presence for the first time. So the community had begun to show its face. ...I was painfully aware of something called the Washington Heights Inwood Task Force that was formed in the late '70s by [Mayor Ed] Koch. Everyone but Dominicans [was included], there was one Latino there, but he was a landlord. There was also a task force and a lot of committees. Early on in that work, or as a result of that work there were three things done in this community, which is the part that is really a milestone ...in the development of this community. Three agencies were formed in 1978,1979: Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, the Washington Heights Inwood Development Corporation, and the Washington Heights Inwood Coalition. ...they were formed to address really discreet stuff [such as housing and social services]. [Dominican activists were worried] that these were things set up with interlocking boards and that these agencies were gatekeepers ...with interlocking boards [of directors]. It was amazing the same people were on the boards...so we [Dominicans] ended up organizing [our own organizations]."

When Dominicans attempted to secure space for their fledgling organizations they felt a level of hostility from the local white leadership who led the existing institutions. Ocampo explained the way the local community board of the late 1980s - comprised of the old white leadership of the neighborhood - attempted to stall the progress of Quisqueya United as they requested office space:

"[In order to get the space] the Housing Authority had asked, because that was community space, ...they asked for some show of support. We had to go before the

community board and ask them for, would you give us a letter of support, or a resolution of support or what have you? ...[the] Housing Authority said what they wanted was more or less a formality and it was a very small space. ...a chunk of it someone had already committed it to the Heisman Foundation and they were going to do childcare and this little space was going to be [Quisqueya United]. From where these people [i.e., the Heisman Foundation] came is a mystery. It turns out they were never able to do stuff there. ...they didn't do it. They didn't even know how to run a childcare center. And [Quisqueya United] couldn't get that space because it had already been committed. Anyway, when we go that night to the community board meeting, to get support... as we were making our case in the public session... in comes this person who ...created massive confusion by asking for this same space."

I asked Ocampo why this person, someone he recognized as non-Dominican, wanted this space.

"They wanted it, they heard we wanted it. ...I ended up on community board floor making some quick alliances with the non-Dominicans. And managed to get the support ...it was quite a scene. ...it was a good indication that people just did not want this to happen. Not letting it happen. So we navigated that struggle. (and got some space...) But it was a given we were gonna get it [from the Housing Authority] but it shows you a lot about the process what happens with racism..."

In a pro-active manner local leaders of the Dominican community began to map out political routes in New York City.

By the 1980s some of the more prominent community activists had curtailed their organizing around politics in the Dominican Republic- the "transnational" political emphasis - and agreed that they needed to organize and

address some of the issues they confronted as New Yorkers (hyphenated or not). One Quisqueya United leader explained:

"We made a conscious decision that we were going to focus here, because in the mid 80s there was a very strong awareness and somewhat of a debate in the community, so were we here permanently or temporarily as a group, because if we were here temporarily then obviously the agenda had to be different, we had to prepare to leave. And many of us knew that we were here permanently. That meant we had to create institutions that could support our permanent presence."

These organizers analyzed the nature of existing community organizations in Washington Heights and concluded that although there were many, none represented - nor attempted to represent - the Dominican presence and none attempted to serve the needs of the Dominican community. There were many social and political clubs but these did not address New York-based concerns. Local activists began to meet to discuss how they might contribute to the development and empowerment of the Dominican population residing in New York City.

The new generation of U.S.-educated activists joined with fellow activists who had been involved with organizing for "home" politics in discussing the future of the Dominican population residing in New York. Younger Dominican activists were first to recognize the need to structure their own programs that would address the needs

of the Dominican community. The issues raised during this time - the near-exclusion from established institutions - led many activists focused on building routes in the U.S.

In the early 1980s a young 20-year old Dominican man, Miguel Amaro, approached the leaders of the old guard of Dominican activists - those who were part of *Linea Roja* - with the idea of organizing an annual Dominican Parade. One activist who was present recalled, "He said I want to talk to you in secrecy but I have a plan to organize here and I want you to be the guiding force." The old guard agreed to meet, explaining, "...we did it because he was a young leftist militant." One activist present during one of the initial meetings stated that when this young man left the room, everyone present thought he was misdirecting his efforts:

"We really believed he was crazy. [We believed] the Dominican community wasn't about that. The Dominican community was into organizing itself to go back. But Miguel [Amaro] was able to understand the feelings of the community before us, the famous leftist leaders. He understood where the community was going and saw that one thing that brought a sense of pride and a sense of patriotism was organizing a parade. And he did it."

In 1981, this 20 year-old Dominican founded the Dominican Day Parade, then known as el Festival Dominicano, with its first realization as a march down Audubon Avenue in the month of August. Hundreds of people arrived to celebrate

Dominicanidad in the streets of Washington Heights. The effort to build a force in the U.S., however, would also need the support and political savvy of the older guard of first generation activists. The turning point for those old guard activists who believed they would return to the Dominican Republic was the 1984 Dominican elections. As one activist explained:

"...the turning point for the mentality of the community was in 1984. [It occurred after] the disaster of the government of the PRD [Partido Revolucionario Dominicano]. Because with the government of 1978 we didn't have much hope...because the most conservative of the PRD rose to power. But in 1982 the number of people that came from the militant left [in the Dominican Republic] ...there were dozens of companeros and companeras that went back because Salvador Jorge Blanco represented the intellectual side of the party. With him there were people with berets with stars on the front demonstrating their respect for Ernesto Ché Guevara and what he symbolized. And so all these young intellectuals from 1982 rise to power [in 1984] and this was the government, probably the most corrupt that has been seen in the history of the Dominican Republic... the external debt shot up, the [Dominican] peso lost so much value and approximately 11 or 12 ministers in the government divided amongst themselves what [former President and Trujillo cabinet member, Joaquín] Balaguer typically divided between 500 generals or wealthy families in the country. So during the government of Salvador Jorge Blanco, 10 or 11 people were able to gather thousands of millions of pesos. Some of the young poor people that we used to see and organize with in the university were among those in the government ...traveling to buy Arabian horses and with a Dominican plane at their disposal. ... Those were our compañeros. ...the hope we Dominicans had that there would be a positive change in the country and that we would return, well that diminished."

At this point, many activists began to imagine the permanence of the Dominican community here. This ideology was advanced by the rising second-generation coming of age in the Dominican community.

The Second-Generation and UMNYS Enter Local Organizing

In the 1980s a new generation of young Dominican émigrés and children of immigrants attended public schools in the city. Many went on to public universities in the City of New York, primarily the University of Manhattan in New York. This public education experience afforded this generation a unique experience. In addition to friendships fostered with people of color, Dominican-Americans became student activists and began to organize with other students of color about common causes, primarily public education funding, or more precisely, government disinvestment in public education. Osiris Robles, a Dominican Nation organizer, attended UMNYS during the late 1980s and early 1990s. During his tenure at the university he was one of the most active student leaders organizing against budget cuts. He worked alongside other students of color. One of the fruits of their struggle was the establishment of a student office space in 1989, named Assata Shakur-Guillermo Morales Student Center, after Black and Puerto Rican

militant revolutionaries. Osiris Robles played a key role in securing this space, a center for the Dominican Nation, as well as other student-centered activities.

The young Dominicans raised and/or educated in NY, who were at the forefront of much of the new activism, extended the reach of already established community-based organizations. They served as cultural and financial brokers, connecting Dominican associations to established Puerto Rican leaders, many of whom they met in the UMN system. It is at this very moment that the Dominican community began to appear as a local political force. Although a number of Dominican individuals were, by this time, in positions of leadership in city government, local Dominican activists felt that the general population of Dominicans was still disproportionately disenfranchised.

The second-generation, along with those of the first generation who were now focusing on New York issues, began to make connections to other Latino and Black activists in New York schools in their attempts to gain access to power and resources. Mariana Bidó, one of the activists involved in Linea Roja and the early years of Asociación Comunal de Dominicanos Progresistas (ACDP) became involved with *La Ligua Por la Lucha Revolucionaria*, or the Revolutionary League, in which Amiri Baraka was one of the principal

figures. The League was involved in a movement to liberate political prisoners in the U.S.

At the same time this was occurring, a series of young organizers - ranging in age but all younger than 30 - frustrated with the poor education and police brutality young Dominicans are subect to in New York, established local, grassroots, activist organizations in Washington Heights. The two organizations at the center of my fieldwork were established by this population of youth; these youth were between 13 and 30 years of age when they became active organizers. It is important to note that these individuals were first, second, and the so-called "1.5" generation.

During the 1980s and early 1990s Dominicans of both generations came together to establish some of the most well-known and influential community organizations in Washington Heights. These organizations have, from the time of their incorporation as non-for profits, focused on confronting issues in NY. Although it may appear that organizing focused primarily on the Dominican "co-ethnic" community, the organizers were clear that they must reach out to other organizers of color more consistently in order to build stronger institutions, political capital in the

city, and, for some, a stronger grassroots movement for social justice.

Building Bridges, Working with Other People of Color

In the mid to late 1980s, Dominican-American grassroots organizers, particularly those organizing Quisqueya United, began the search for funds to develop their organizations. Their networks with other people of color would become especially important at this time. For example, some Dominican-American organizers were educators and formed part of the Puerto Rican-Latino Educational Roundtable. This experience helped them expand their network. Their efforts to this end were deliberate and strategic.

Mariana Bidó, who was in her early twenties during the 1980s was a member of *Línea Roja* in New York. Upon graduating from UMN, she worked as part of the volunteer staff of ACDP, an organization established by *Línea Roja* members to address local issues. Soon after obtaining funding for the agency, Mariana left the agency in Washington Heights to work with El Puente, a public school, in Brooklyn. El Puente began as a community-based organization. Puerto Rican organizers in the area were working on a number of community-empowerment programs at

the grassroots level. One of the areas of focus was education for Puerto Rican and Latino youth and the development of a local school. El Puente was a fruit of this project. Mariana left ACDP to work with El Puente because, as she stated, she believed that the Brooklyn organization was working on social justice and empowerment issues more directly at the time. She believed she could contribute, learn from, and advance grassroots justice better via this institution.

Ties to Puerto Rican and Black organizers and organizations - such as Bido's tie to El Puente and, earlier, to Amiri Baraka - were important. In fact, Puerto Ricans signed the incorporation papers of one organization, ACDP because first generation Dominican leaders of the organization could not sign the paperwork that would grant them 501C3 status because they were not yet citizens of the U.S. Obtaining 501C3 status was crucial given that this organization, along with many others, believed it was necessary to secure funding from external agencies.

Securing Resources and Political Capital: Elected
Officials, Institutions, and Funding Organizations

During this era, the Dominican community began to target local politics as well. After various demonstrations and

organizing strategies that addressed school reform, parents and local leaders demanded that city government include Dominicans at the policy table. One of the first areas in which Dominicans began to move into positions of power was on the local school board.

Through efforts at the school board level and in other grassroots organizing, Dominicans began to gain recognition in local politics. They did not (and still have not) achieved control over the boards and institutions that dictate policy and resource distribution to the community, but they began to achieve a presence in local political spheres. In 1982, the Mayor and the Governor of New York recognized Dominican Day and now the Dominican Day Parade takes place up Manhattan's Sixth Avenue every August. For many, this marked a new era. With the New York political machinery recognizing their arrival as a vibrant community and with all institutions coming together to organize and/or participate in this major event people began to feel the permanence of the Dominican presence in New York. This recognition would also extend into official appointments of Dominicans in city government as well.

In 1983 Governor Cuomo appointed a Dominican to the Advisory Council on Hispanic Affairs, and seven Dominicans

were elected to the Area Policy Board #12, which distributed anti-poverty funds to local organizations. This gave rise to the creation of a new activism, of new kinds of organizations focused on obtaining resources for the Dominican community.

The era of funding and the growth of service-provision in Dominican community-based organizations came into its own in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The degree to which Dominican organizers were able to obtain and maintain funding depended, in large part, to the networks they established beyond the community earlier in the decade.

In some of the very early discussions regarding the need for a Dominican presence in local organizing in the early 1980s, Dominican leadership in Washington Heights looked to establishing agencies that would provide specialized services to the Dominican population. As indicated earlier, they felt that the three major organizations in the Washington Heights neighborhood - Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, the Washington Heights Inwood Development Corporation, and the Washington Heights Inwood Coalition - did not sufficiently represent or serve the Dominican presence. As Michael Ocampo noted, these organizations, run by white-ethnics, had interlocking boards and did not include Dominicans.

Quisqueya United's earliest attempts to secure space and support in the neighborhood met unrelenting roadblocks and resistance from established white leadership. The local community board was the site of one of their first attempts. Dominican organizers approached the board about finding physical space for the new organization. The community board had rejected early requests, granting space to the Eisenhower Foundation for Child Care instead. One of Quisqueya United's founders recounted the strong resistance the community board had toward the new Dominican group; in one interview he claimed that local leaders were actually trying to halt the development of the fledgling agency, "We didn't understand how they could stop us, or why they tried. We finally got space in a church. ...It was difficult to start something when all established political leadership wanted to see you fail."

Dominican-American organizers began envisioning new methods of organizing movements in New York. Once they established community organizations, some leaders focused their energies on funding. Concerns about funding were a major reason why the founding Board of Directors of Quisqueya United hired Cristóbal Pierino as Executive Director:

"[Cristóbal] was one of those people that was found to help us. [Cristóbal] was the person with more experience with [getting funds]. But [Cristóbal], at the beginning [Cristóbal] never demonstrated any intention or interest in directing [becoming Director of Quisqueya United]. The director of [Quisqueya United] and the one that everyone saw as the head of [Quisqueya United] was [Michael Ocampo]. What happened with [Michael] was that he has a different temperament than [Cristóbal]. You have to give him the millions in his hands for [Michael] to function. [Cristóbal] is the kind of person to whom you give the idea and he goes out in search of the millions. ...When someone said, here's the money, the \$80 thousand, \$88 thousand to be exact, actually \$89 thousand that HAICA gave us... that's an organization that works to prevent pregnancy, a consortium of organizations. That was the first project that [Quisqueya United] got. [Cristóbal] entered into an agreement that I found out about years later. It was between him and [Rodolfo Riomar, a founding board member] that he would accept coming here, accepting a salary cut, but only if [Riomar] would guarantee him that with any subsequent grants that he would get he could raise his salary to the level at which he was before and the two of them agreed. Then that's how [Cristóbal] wound up being the Director, the Executive Director of [Quisqueya United] and I the Director of Programs, because I was the one that had the base in the community. [Cristóbal] deserves credit for having organized to get the funding. But I established all the workshops for [Quisqueya United], all of them, because I was the one that knew this community. I lived in this community. I've always lived in this community. And so, [Cristóbal] no, he lived in Brooklyn and didn't have much interaction with people here but he did have a vast relationship with people down there [with other organizers, politicians, and funding agencies] and he and I, that combination was perfect for the start of [Quisqueya United]."

Grassroots activism continued through the end of this decade: anti -drug marches, protests against sexual harassment in a local school, rallies against police

brutality, and mobilizing around education reform. Dominicans wanted to have more control on the local community board and on the school board (Lescaille 1992; Ricourt 2002). Education was the issue that raised the most concern and rallied the most community support during the 1980s. Disenchanted with the overcrowding in local schools and with the lack of a Dominican presence in decision-making, residents struggled to have their voices heard and their community represented on the local School Board #6. In 1986 local Dominican teachers and parents registered 10,000 parent voters to participate in the 1986 elections - a number that, according to one local leader, represents half of all registered parents in the entire city. As a result Sixto Medina was elected to the board by a predominantly Dominican voting constituency. Medina became the first Dominican elected onto this board. This election was possible because in New York City, non-citizens can vote in local school board elections, allowing many Dominican parents to cast their vote. Particularly in School District #6, where Dominican students formed the majority of the public school attendees, parents expressed the sentiment that Dominicans needed to have a voice in decisions made about their children and their education. As one mother and former school board member recounted:

"It wasn't easy to get there. But we had to do it. Who else was going to just give us a seat? No, we had to work to get that. We do it not just for our kids but for our community. Where would we be if we didn't try to create vehicles for power?"

During the 1990s the Dominican community of New York deepened their roots in New York and broadened their routes into national politics. The early 1990's saw the election of a Dominican to City Council, another to New York State Assembly, and a dramatic proliferation and financial growth of local organizations, many of which now focus on direct service-provision and youth programming.

In 1991, Guillermo Linares won the bid for City Council in the newly created City Council District #10. Linares was among the new generation of Dominican-American organizers who had attended and graduated from the University of Manhattan in New York. He then became a public school teacher. He also became involved with ACDP, one of the organizations created by first generation activists of the Linea Roja and PTD in New York; Linares became the organization's Executive Director.

In the early 1990s, when the issue of redistricting reached Washington Heights, local organizers started thinking of ways to run a successful campaign for a Dominican leader. For grassroots organizers such as those involved with Linea Roja and the PTD, building this local

leadership was becoming a primary focus. After having successfully helped to establish two key organizations in the neighborhood, they focused attention on electoral politics. For them, "[Guillermo] Linares was a clear candidate. He knew people in the community, he was from the community at that time, and we had to get behind him to win this election." Osiris Robles, one of the organizers in this campaign, felt that, "era un deber de nosotros tener un tipo de representación y trabajar para lograr esa meta [it was our duty to have some kind of representation and to work to reach that goal]."

Linares believed he could win the support of the local voting community - Dominican and Puerto Ricans - and obtain a seat on the city council. Members of the old left guard, particularly those from the *Línea Roja* and the PTD, and the new organizers from Dominican Nation joined local Puerto Rican leaders and Linares in building a grassroots campaign. Central to his campaign was establishing an individual connection with local residents. One of the ways he attempted to do this was by arranging meetings in the homes of local residents (Ricourt 2002; personal communication with Linares' former campaign organizers). These meetings - which also served as fundraisers - were organized by the residents themselves. Puerto Ricans and

African Americans were among those who participated in these house meetings. Prominent African American leaders organized house parties. Linares also received the support and active endorsement of the city's black leaders, such as David Dinkins.

In addition to organizing Dominican candidates' campaigns - namely those of Linares and Adriano Espaillat - Dominican organizers also began to work for the campaigns of non-Dominican candidates. Perhaps one of the most significant campaigns of support, the one that significantly benefited local organizing, was for David Dinkins, an African-American who had served as Assemblyman and President of the New York City Board of Elections. Dinkins' campaign and his subsequent Mayoral Administration was a unique and significant point in history for people of color in New York and for the city of New York in general.

In 1989, after serving as Manhattan Borough President for four years, David Dinkins launched a campaign for the Mayor's seat. In his successful campaign against Mayor Ed Koch for the Democratic primaries and against Republican candidate Rudolph Giuliani, Dinkins sought the support of the city's black, Latino, and white populations. Among those who answered his call were Cristóbal Pierino, Director of Quisqueya United, Rodolfo Riomar, founding

Quisqueya United Board of Directors member, and Guillermo Linares. Dinkins ran a successful campaign, becoming the city's first black Mayor. Dinkins' arrival as Mayor came at a time when New Yorkers - black, Latino, immigrant, and liberal white alike - had grown disenchanted with Mayor Ed Koch's divisive and corrupt form of governance. At a time when New Yorkers were grappling with fiscal crises and racial tensions, Koch made few attempts to resolve these issues. In fact, his business and political entanglements implicated him in massive corruption schemes.²² And his comments in the days after incidents of racial violence - including the murders of Yusuf Hawkins in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn by a group of 30 white males and of Michael Griffith in Howard Beach, Queens - fueled racial tensions. In 1988, Koch further crippled his chances for re-election with commentary on Jesse Jackson's presidential primary campaign. He attempted to dissuade white voters from supporting Jesse Jackson's run for President in 1988, saying that Jews "would have to be crazy to vote for Jackson." Tired of Koch's actions and divisive politics,

22 During Koch's third term as Mayor, he and his associates were investigated for gross abuses of political office and financial misconduct and corruption. Hundreds of people from his administration left in disgrace or were indicted and imprisoned. During this time it was revealed that Koch's close friend and business partner Donald Manes, the Borough President of Queens, had looted millions from the city's Parking Violation Bureau. In 1986 Manes committed suicide

New Yorkers - including the hundreds of new voters of color the Jackson's campaign registered, and those who believed in Jackson's Rainbow Coalition - were ready for a change in city leadership (see Day 1990:166; Sanjek 1998). Dinkins garnered the endorsement of Blacks, Latinos, and whites; more than 10,000 people volunteered to campaign on his behalf (Day 1990: 160). He also had the support of political heavyweights such as Jesse Jackson and Governor Mario Cuomo during his campaign.

Perhaps more than any New York political figure before him, David Dinkins was able to create an inter-ethnic, inter-racial network in mainstream city politics. And, as Barbara Day (1990) said, "Dinkins's victory was earned by an alliance of organized labor, African-Americans, Latinos, prochoice women, lesbians, and gays" (174). Kasinitz (1992) also notes the manner in which the Dinkins campaign reached out to the West Indian communities, resulting in an overwhelming majority of voters' support in both the primaries and in the general elections. These communities celebrated the end of Koch's New York, believing in the "mosaic" and innovation Dinkins promised.

Dinkins' success was also a success for local

rather than face investigators' conclusions as to his own involvement in city corruption.

Dominican organizing. Dinkins selected Rodolfo Riomar, a Dominican doctor, organizer, and co-founder of Quisqueya United, to lead his transition team. Guillermo Linares also served on that team. In his reading of the city as a "mosaic" of peoples, Dinkins sought to create an administration that included people of color in a way very different from that of his predecessor, Ed Koch. Dinkins appointed a number of Dominicans to different high-level offices, including: Zenaida Mendez as head of the Office of Hispanic Affairs, Michael Ocampo as Assistant Commissioner for the city's Department of Employment, and Rolando Acosta, who, as Deputy Commissioner became the highest-ranking Dominican in city government at that time. Acosta, Riomar, and Ocampo had formed part of the group that founded Quisqueya United. Their connections to the Dominican community of Washington Heights remained important as they served under Dinkins.

In 1991 David Dinkins established the Beacons Initiative. Conceived as a community-based organization partnership with local schools, these programs would establish programs and provide services to communities throughout the city. In the first year eight organizations were selected to lead Beacons programs. Each lead organization received half a million dollars from the city

for this program. Quisqueya United was among them. Michael Ocampo stated, "In the Dinkins administration those of us that were on the inside worked very much to strengthen what was on the outside." The growth of Quisqueya United and other programs throughout the city could not have occurred had Dominicans not established a working partnership with David Dinkins and other black politicians. This conclusion is supported by consideration of Rudolph Giuliani's actions after his mayoral defeat of Dinkins in 1993. Giuliani slashed the budgets for youth programs, including the Beacons initiative, drastically reduced city funds going into communities such as Washington Heights, and initiated an investigation into Quisqueya United's accounts while simultaneously slashing its city funding by half.

Grassroots community activism has continued since that era of massive growth under Dinkins, but with a revised concept of community empowerment that includes making inroads in established electoral politics and Congressional lobbying. Linares' entry into the city council and Espaillat's successful campaigns for State Assembly are indicative of the community's growing strength and political aspirations. In the late 1990s Dominican

organizations began to envision organizing at the national level for the purpose of influencing national policy.

Among the organizations taking the lead in this direction were Dominican Nation and the newly established Dominican-American National Roundtable.

The late 1990's and the year 2000 witnessed the growth of national-level efforts, led by the young and the now not-as-young 1.5 and 2nd generation raised and/or educated in the U.S. During the course of my fieldwork, in the year 2000, I witnessed an historic moment for the Dominican community in the U.S. marked by the grand success of a national conference aimed at constructing a National Agenda for Dominicans in the U.S. - again, an initiative led by the second-generation of activists in the community, with the first generation serving as advisors.

Since the 1980s, when grassroots organizers laid the foundation, Dominican organizers and their organizations have reached a level of political maturity and power that demands recognition. The earlier efforts have allowed Dominicans to be recognized in local politics. Numerous non-Dominican politicians running for offices throughout New York State recognize the power of this community. Politicians such as Governor George Pataki, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, and Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton have all

worked with Dominicans and traveled to the Dominican Republic while they campaigned for office. In February 2000, just months before declaring her 2001 run for New York State Senate, First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton visited Washington Heights to speak with the Dominican community at a conference organized by Dominican Nation. It is important to note that the meeting was arranged, in large part, by a local Puerto Rican organizer, Antonio Mir. Mir's networks extended into places such as the Hispanic Federation, United Way, the New York City Council and other local governance, and federal governance. This was the first time a First Lady came to meet with Dominicans in the neighborhood of Washington Heights. This visit not only suggested that she understood the rising importance of Dominicans in New York politics, but that Dominicans had begun to realize their potential for political leverage in politics outside the immediate neighborhood.

A 27-year old organizer, Gabriel Aponte, has been a part of Quisqueya United since its inception. He began as a participant and is now the Assistant Director of the organization's Beacon Center. His rise in the organization has paralleled the growth of Dominican-American power in Washington Heights. He recognizes the important trajectory local politics has taken:

"Since I've been with the agency [a lot has changed]. Definitely. Number one is we got our Dominican Councilman. You know, we got our Dominican Assemblyman, you know. Our people have started to, to get into positions of power where you know in the 80's, way before that and before that we were nowhere near there, you know. Okay, you had a couple of you know Puerto Rican brothers and stuff like that, but as far as Dominicans, you know, seeing Dominicans up there, Dominican faces and especially in this community where it was mostly white men running this and saying where the money goes and where this goes and where that goes. ...to see Dominicans there, I mean, I think that was the major step ...to see Dominicans on the School Board and even being President of the Board. That's important for the community. Very important. ...The fact that the community is more involved as far as you know things happening the community, the way they come out and speak, the way to let their voice be heard. But before things were happening, it was like, you know, who's going to listen to you or the community is actually more involved politically in the community, they're more involved in the schools, they're joining, you know, trying to join PTA's and stuff. Even though it's still low, it could be better, but it's starting to move along, little by little so as far as changes in the community, it has been better. There are more Spanish-speaking and Dominican-focused offices in the community and before there were you know white, Italian, Irish, we still have some here you know but you have a lot more of our offices now."

Though new organizers may not recognize the role that inter-ethnic/racial collaborations played in developing Dominican power, all local residents witness the fruits of that labor. Today, Dominican-American organizers are trying to use all the skills and networks established during the 1980s and 1990s to secure a place on the national political scene. In 2002 Guillermo Linares ran

for New York State Senate. The Dominican-American National Roundtable has secured offices in Washington, D.C., and organizations such as Dominican Nation continue to build a local voice in these developments. Cristóbal Pierino explained these national efforts:

"We have a yearning and a need to be in Dominican communities throughout the United States that don't have the level of support that are required. So we're looking a lot now toward organizing nationally, organizing us as a community. We may surge now as the third largest Latino community in the nation, I think we will actually after the Census. So that means we have to really begin to organize from a national perspective."

*Conclusion: Mobilization, Political Empowerment, and
Institution-Building Across the Generations*

Tracing the histories of Dominican-American organizing trends and leadership we can see the ways that changes in the local and national political climates altered the strategies and foci of these activists' efforts. Also evident is the important role of the second-generation in re-locating Dominican politics in New York. That this occurred in consultation and with the support of other organizers of color is another crucial element of Dominican-American politics. What began as grassroots mobilizing aimed at solidarity with "home country" politics shifted when Dominicans residing in New York began to deal

with another series of concerns, centered on their lives in Washington Heights. Their development into one of the more vocal communities in New York began with grassroots rallies and gatherings and led to educational and political organizing, institution building and entry into local and national (U.S.) electoral politics and civic participation.

The individual and community histories I have outlined thus far present an interpretation of the expanded participation of Dominicans in New York political discourse. Although there are other paths and other political trends in the community, the organizations and activists I have highlighted represent the most significant organizing trend. They represent some of the largest organizations in Washington Heights and are among the most well known.

The matter at hand is the way we come to understand the causes and development of organizing. This history suggests that as political mobilization throughout Latin America declined in urgency for these activists now residing in New York, they began to focus on what was happening to their own community in Washington Heights. As the anti-poverty programs of the 1960s and 1970s were implemented in New York, it was not a surprise that local activists would begin to tackle policy and funding, trying

to redirect federal and state resources into their neighborhoods, for the Dominican population. But acquiring these resources did take some time and it involved networking with established communities of color in New York. And this community-building agenda required a network of organizers to focus their attention on local issues. It was in the 1980s, within the context of Reagan's war on drugs and the ensuing mass media focus on drugs in the Dominican community, that grassroots activism increased. The 1980s were also marked with a new trend in philanthropy based on a preventive, or deficit/deficiency model, with a strong focus on youth programs. Dominican-American activism and local organizing then shifted to securing much-needed funding. Sprouting organizations were able to use the language of mainstream media and philanthropy to their advantage. If society wanted to see a change in what they perceived to be the Dominican, youth or immigrant problem, these organizations argued that they were the best equipped to take on this task because their staff that were of the same background as the target client-base. Thus, Dominicans were strategic as they worked to develop local organizations.

Dominican-American organizers learned from and worked with other organizers of color to develop a Dominican entry

into local politics. Far from automatically pushing Dominicans into a path of "downward assimilation," as Portes would suggest, working with other people of color - particularly Puerto Ricans and African- Americans - was an essential element of early Dominican political developments in New York City. As a result, Dominican-American youth and educational organizations grew in number, scope, and funding in the 1980s and 1990s.

By the 1990s, many organizers and academics began to speak of the "Dominican-American" and what needed to be done to gain some real power in the U.S. It would no longer be enough to obtain resources from the mainstream institutions. It was also necessary to find a way to influence policy that affects the Dominican community residing in the U.S. As I will demonstrate in the following chapter, in their attempts to achieve this goal, Dominican-American leadership has taken two different, though not mutually exclusive, paths.

To simply assume that these developments constitute a natural development of immigrant communities' political maturing does not give sufficient attention to the historical specificity of the local and national political contexts at different points in time - in the U.S., in the Dominican Republic, and in New York - nor to the ways in

which larger processes affect community organizing in general, and immigrant community organizing in particular. As indicated by scholars of contemporary immigration, not only is "straight-line assimilation" nearly impossible and improbable for immigrants of color, it has never actually been a useful model for describing immigrant "incorporation" (see Sacks 1999). Numerous variables, namely racialization processes and politics, determine the extent to which immigrants can attain economic and/or social mobility in the U.S. The Dominican-American organizers with whom I worked are continuing to develop their networks with other people of color in efforts to confront (and change) local politics and policies.

To summarize, during their early years of large-scale participation in local politics, the young Dominican population reached out to other, more established communities of color for support. Leaders of these various populations had met in New York City's public schools, including UMN. By creating alliances with Puerto Ricans and African-Americans in the early years, the Dominican leadership was able to gain a degree of political mobility. White groups still residing in the neighborhood of Washington Heights - Greeks, Jews, and Irish - fearing displacement from this growing population of immigrants,

had united in opposition to Latinos and Blacks (Katznelson 1981). However, Dominicans' long-developing activism and their association with Puerto Rican and African-American elected officials and institutions allowed the early entry of Dominicans in the city's political machinery.

I am suggesting that relationships and ties to "native minority" groups was an important and empowering option for the Dominican community in their early years of political growth in Washington Heights. Alliances with Puerto Ricans, and key leaders in the African American community continued after the 1970s and 1980s. These relationships continue to be activated for major events (conferences), fundraising, and political support.²³ I am not suggesting that all Dominican-American organizers follow this same path, rather that for some activists this inter-racial/ethnic organizing is an important and empowering component of organizing. The history of activism, particularly their strategic use of networks of people of color, directly challenges the assumptions central to Portes et al.'s segmented assimilation model. That is, not only are second-generation Dominicans moving beyond strictly defined ethnic group boundaries, but their work

23 This alliance is rarely utilized to establish collaborative institutions. However, recently there has been a surge in the anti-War

with "native minorities" proves crucial for their political mobility in the U.S.

Dominicans who established and developed organizations in Washington Heights have long been witnessing the emerging significance of the second-generation - or, U.S.-born and/or U.S. educated - in local institutions. This generation sees itself and its future rooted and routed in the United States; they constantly confront and organize around issues such as underemployment, government disinvestment in public education, police brutality, and the lack of political power. Their activities center on educational, economic, and political empowerment in the United States, with "home-country" issues raised only occasionally and at key moments (such as the recent Dominican Presidential elections) by the older leaders of organizations. People are concerned with issues they face in the U.S. and they continue to work to develop political empowerment in this country. The older, first generation may discuss and organize for politics in the Dominican Republic, but their emphasis is also on the issues they confront in New York. As one organizer reveals, Dominican activists work with the hope that some day their political

movement, in which Dominicans are organizing with progressive black, Latino and white constituents.

power will be such that they can tackle any issue and be heard.

There has been some difference in the degree of participation in island politics between the generations, although they have come together over the past two decades. Their dedication to establish political routes in the U.S. continues to flourish, as the growing youth population takes up the reins. As the director of one local Dominican organization stated,

"There's always been some organizing in the community. [However,] activism in and of itself is not enough. There's a role and a purpose for activism. But I've always been clear that activism has to lead toward infrastructure. And the role of activism is to create conditions to increase resources to deal with issues."

Dominicans in Washington Heights have been doing this in Washington Heights; sometimes through social service delivery and other times through grassroots and/or electoral politics in the City of New York. The roots of this activism dates back to the 1980s.

It is important that we re-examine and consider the very powerful and dynamic way that generations of immigrants participate in U.S. politics. We should also document the extent to which collaborations between people of color exist and analyze what these collaborations mean for the different communities under investigation. To

demarcate the boundaries of political mobilization and citizenship primarily in the realm of the transnational or the co-ethnic and eliminate consideration of the national and the inter-ethnic/racial relations fostered in the U.S. misses a significant understanding of the powerful and multiple ways in which immigrant populations are re-constructing communities throughout the U.S. Dominicans have been racialized into a marginal sector of this society's social and economic hierarchy. In a city like New York, where unemployment, racism, gentrification, and police brutality touch the lives of people of color in specific ways, Dominicans do not remain unaffected. In attempts to discuss and confront these issues, Dominicans have responded in various ways, one being the creation of a series of community-based organizations. It is clear that they are concerned over issues such as police brutality in Black and Latino communities, welfare reform, and exploitation of Latino immigrants in this economic and political system. In Chapters five and six I will further explore the ways in which other second-generation Dominican organizers tackle some of these issues. In 2000 Dominicans marched in Washington for Latino rights, and over the years they have organized around City Hall to protest cases of police brutality in their communities; in their protests,

they raise issues of race, class and immigration.

Dominican Nation youth talk about why this is important to them as a group:

"If I don't get up and say something, they could get me tomorrow. No, we need to stand up and do something. Things in this country aren't good for Latinos. The government isn't going to do anything until they know we mean business."

"They think we immigrants from Latin America come here and don't do anything. We just take from them. We take their money. That we take their jobs. And they see us as lazy, only making problems. But they cause the problems for us. Most of us wouldn't be here if they didn't cause problems.

[On one organization] It's a good place for us to get together. We learn about things in a big group. This way we all support each other. We try to better ourselves, to succeed as a group."

Chapter 5

The Leadership

Most Dominican-American leaders I interviewed in Washington Heights share a number of beliefs. First, organizers must work to empower Dominicans. Secondly, Dominicans must focus their energies on issues they face in New York. And, finally, in order to build a stronger political and financial base Dominican organizers and leaders should work with those outside the Dominican community as well. Nonetheless, as Dominican-American leadership moved from being solely transnational organizers to local political actors, they developed differing ideologies and practices around this new form of politics. People began to change their perspectives on community empowerment and development. These ideologies - all of which center on obtaining resources and power for Dominicans living in Washington Heights - would ultimately inform the ways organizers began to envision the community, as well as how they built "bridges" with other people of color in NY and in the U.S.

This chapter explores the Dominican leadership of Washington Heights. I examine two factors in particular: 1- the ways the leadership worked with and/or imagined themselves allied to other people of color, and 2- the

ideologies around community development and the ways leaders used their networks and ideologies in Dominican-American organizing. This analysis includes descriptions of both the "old guard" and the "new guard" of leadership.²⁴ I analyze the manner in which local organizing began to develop in two contrasting directions. Although most organizers work on behalf of the community and all believe they are working in the best interest of the community, they do so with distinct ideologies. I argue that these different modes of organizing have led to different views of what constitutes community development and, consequently, different kinds of collaborations in organizing and politics.

Leaders in this community have developed their activities with reference to one of two tendencies. Organizers in both categories act as political (and at times, social service) brokers between the Dominican community and supralocal institutions and politicians outside the community. However, one set of organizers focuses more on harnessing this relationship for the

24 In discussing the two generations of leaders simultaneously, I am not suggesting that they are distinct entities with their own ideologies. This would suggest that political and ideological differences were due primarily to generation-based gaps. As I demonstrate in this chapter, organizers from both generations can be seen operating as ethnic entrepreneurs or community mobilizers. Their

purpose of obtaining resources and social capital for organizations and programs while the other seeks to broaden its base of power.

Ethnic Entrepreneurs make up the first category of organizers in Washington Heights. They are involved in the race to secure resources and provide social services in the community. Their alliances with other people of color are created, in part, as an attempt to secure grants and political favors for the community. The second category privileges a grassroots base and aims at mobilizing community members. I call this category of activists the *Community Mobilizers*. They reach out to other people of color in grassroots efforts, often to challenge policies and practices of the state. Many of the activists who helped to establish some of the prominent organizations in the neighborhood - including those with whom I worked - also participated in leftist movements in the post-Trujillo era in the Dominican Republic. These actors and their ideologies can still be found operating among those who work at the grassroots level. This analytical distinction is not meant to imply a zero-sum game in which organizers are either one type of leader or the other, rather that two

modus operandi is not necessarily contingent on their place of birth nor age of migration.

tendencies exist among Dominican-American organizers. People may identify with one ideology or utilize the strategies of one tendency more than the other, but they can, and do utilize both modes of organizing. In addition to biographical accounts of the individuals and organizations that make up these different camps, I offer examples of events in which the two trends of organizing became evident.

Two New York Activists

Cristóbal Pierino arrived in New York City when he was 10 years old. His mother left the Dominican Republic for New York two years prior. Upon arrival they lived in the neighborhood's area known as Hamilton Heights, where Pierino attended public schools. However, in the early 1970s, fearing gang activity and violence, his mother moved the family to Brooklyn. It was as a teenager in Brooklyn that Pierino began to develop his network with community-based organizations. At the age of 17 he participated in the New York City program called "City As School." He spent his senior year of high school not in classrooms but in organizations throughout the city learning about the work carried out at the community level. Sparked by much of what he saw in organizations, he enrolled at UMN's

Brooklyn Campus, entering the School of Contemporary Studies. In a manner somewhat reminiscent of his days in "City As," community-based organizations throughout the city became his focus of study. During this time at UMN he got involved with two new organizations, an involvement that would catapult him into new directions of community development. He helped in the early years of "The Door" - a multi-service youth development program located in lower Manhattan - and "El Puente" - a Puerto Rican community and school program in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. This provided him with the experience he needed to take on a job with the New York Urban League, where he said he was, "learning about the African-American community and how it organizes itself from a national perspective." He then spent five years providing technical assistance to community organizations through two city agencies: Progress and the Community Service Society.

Pierino is now the Executive Director of Quisqueya United. He was hired by the founding Board of Directors after the agency began to receive major grants.²⁵ The Board

25 Cristóbal Pierino often says he is the founding Executive Director and that he created Quisqueya United. Numerous accounts - newspaper and city accounts primarily, but also a few academic accounts - place Pierino in this position. He is to be credited for developing the organization into a multi-million dollar, multi-service non-profit organization in Washington Heights. It is, in fact, the largest Dominican-run organization in the state. The founding Board of

of Directors recognized the social and political capital he had acquired throughout his trajectory in community-based organizations and city institutions over the years.

Sitting in his office one afternoon I asked him why, given all the experience he had in so many organizations, he decided to work with Quisqueya United, a position in which he has remained for over 10 years. He responded:

"It's a Dominican Mecca. *The Dominican Mecca.* This is it. This is the most important Dominican community in the United States. It's the largest - historically, spiritually, emotionally. It's a community that I have deep roots in. ...And if you want to be relevant to the Dominican community in the United States, this is the place to be. And I came to the point in time when I realized and it became increasingly important for me to focus all the knowledge and skills that I have developed over the years to focus it on the Dominican community. I worked in the Puerto Rican community. And they have national organizations. The Black community has everything. They have nothing and they have everything. It's all relative, of course. But we didn't have anything. And still the Dominican community is huge and growing by leaps and bounds and we only have four organizations that deliver services in our community, or Dominican organizations. That's obviously not enough organizational infrastructure to make a change and sustain an impact."

Pierino's history in community-based organizing granted him a unique experience in grassroots politics with people of

Directors hired him to build the organization. However, the founding Executive Director, Michael Ocampo, was part of the original group of organizers that established the organization. Ocampo resigned shortly after the organization began to acquire funding. Ocampo is now a board member of the local community planning board and is the founding director of an economic development organization in Washington Heights

color. He transformed this political capital into a perspective on community development that focused on infrastructure, funding, and service-provision. He believes that it is through these channels that one will "make a change and sustain an impact." This, Pierino believes, is what community organizing and empowerment entail and he operationalizes this belief in Washington Heights. His work with other communities of color is meant to move this agenda forward. Pierino typifies the Ethnic Entrepreneur.

Joaquín Alexander Robles has had a somewhat parallel, though slightly different trajectory than Pierino. Born and raised in Washington Heights, Alexander was still a young teenager when he helped to found Dominican Nation. He remains an active member and leader of this organization. Upon graduating from college (where he organized a Latino club) he worked on developing Dominican Nation's community empowerment campaign as well as its new national focus.

Because Dominican Nation is still primarily a volunteer-led effort, Alexander has consistently maintained both a job and his role as a leader in the organization.

(a program fashioned in concert with the Empowerment Zone project that has transformed Harlem's 125th Street).

Alexander's first job after graduation was with Air Lingus, an airline company. But his interest was in urban planning - he received a Bachelor's of Science degree in Professional Studies on Urban Planning - and community organizing. He then worked with the Community League of New York as a community liaison/organizer. During his tenure in this position he provided technical assistance and advocacy services for different communities throughout New York City. In 2000, he made the transition from employment as an organizer to a legislative associate at the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC). During his time in college and through his work with the Community League and the NYIC, Alexander worked with and for Latinos, immigrants, people of color, and the working poor. He established a foundation in community work and advocacy that recently became the base for his selection as a community liaison for the Office of the Manhattan Borough President, C. Virginia Fields. Throughout his academic and employment careers, Alexander has remained an active organizer of Dominican Nation. In planning for the organization's 2000 national conference, he served as one of three outreach coordinators. He used his extensive network with other organizers and advocates, working with people of color and/or in immigrant communities.

His work in Dominican Nation has focused on creating a space where youth and other community members can come together, share collective political space, and create and foster their own plans for social change. He explained why maintaining this kind of (volunteer) role in the Dominican community is important:

"...you go from the community stating the issues, stating the needs, to a more powerful political machine, or force, saying that we're here, we're going to stay, these are the issues, we are going to change those things. But we need the community to get involved in order for these changes to happen. ...I think that it's ok to provide public service but it has to go beyond that. It has to be going beyond offering someone \$20 to buy [groceries]. ...It's kind of like the saying that when someone's hungry - teach them how to fish. People are our greatest asset in this community. We just need to come together collectively to make change happen."

Alexander's perspective is one that privileges grassroots mobilizing for community participation. He advocates a grassroots approach to achieving social and political transformation. His example of giving someone \$20 for groceries was a direct indictment of service-providers, suggesting that by emphasizing service-provision they are maintaining a level of status quo in this society. Alexander believes that although services are needed and service-delivery organizations have an important role, a real change in the conditions that affect Dominicans and others will only come about if local residents are provided

the tools that allow them to take the reigns of local politics. Alexander typifies the category of Community Mobilizer.

The differing perspectives to which leaders such as Pierino and Alexander subscribe influence local organizers to pursue different visions of community development. I am not suggesting that the two kinds of local organizers and their modes of action are mutually exclusive. Although people generally utilize one or the other ideology, they usually recognize the importance of the other perspective in the life of Dominican politics. Neither am I implying that one perspective or form of organizing is necessarily "better" than the other, nor that one group of actors is necessarily more "wholesome" than the other. Rather, in the Dominican-American community of Washington Heights, these two ideologies have led organizers to envision different paths of community empowerment. It has led them to identify with and/or as people of color in a different manner and for somewhat different goals. While the ethnic entrepreneur is most interested in obtaining economic resources and political favors for the community and reaches out to people - including people of color in leadership roles - who can help them obtain these, the

community mobilizers seek to bring local residents together with those whose plight they share - including people of color - to demand changes in policy and practice from the state. While ethnic entrepreneurs create a vertical network of solidarity - i.e., one that extends upwards to people with some degree of power - community mobilizers create a horizontal network of collaborators.

These differing patterns of organizing and political ideology are not unique to Dominican-Americans. Much has been written about the political heterogeneity of other groups as well. Manning Marable and Leith Mullings (1995, 2000) have analyzed the ways in which African Americans developed three differing political ideologies during the periods of slavery and emancipation. They identify an "integrationist" trend, a "black-nationalist" tradition, and an ideology based on radical transformation of the society. The integrationists believed that the goal "...was to bring Negroes into every profession and to ensure their full participation in voting, serving on juries, and running for elective office" (2000:xix). The black-nationalists believed that in order to achieve any degree of economic and social security or integrity, black Americans had to develop autonomous institutions and communities. The third group "...advocated a radical

transformation of the United States based on a fundamental redistribution of resources" (2000:xx). Although these three modes of thought were quite different, Marable and Mullings note that they were not mutually exclusive. These ideologies were "broad, overlapping traditions." And "...organizations and individuals may have exemplified one tendency or the other, [but] organizations and movements usually displayed a spectrum of views" (xxi). It is, therefore, difficult and impractical to categorize one organization or institution solely in the tradition of one political ideology. It is also counterproductive to pigeonhole individual actors into one mode of thought only. That is, individuals change their political perspectives and positions over time, as do organizations. And it is pertinent to point out that in the case of the three modes of thought Marable and Mullings lay out, they all addressed the same concern, that of "...the possibility of black Americans achieving equality within America's racialized social body" (Marable and Mullings 2000:xviii). These arguments are germane to the study of Dominican-American organizing as well.

Scholars examining contemporary immigrant populations and immigrant political participation have also recognized community heterogeneity (see Kwong 1979; Guest and Kwong

2000; Schiller et al. 1987; Kasinitz 1992). Kenneth Guest and Peter Kwong (2000) have argued against essentializing immigrant communities. They critique Portes and Bach (1985) for suggesting that immigrant enclaves are homogeneous communities whose members work with a shared sense of ethnic solidarity and camaraderie. Schiller et al. (1987) note the degree to which class and regional identities affected Haitian immigrant organizing from the 1960s through the 1980s. The development of Haitian organizations and politics was marked by class tensions and rivalries, making it impossible to describe Haitian-American organizing with one single broad stroke. Describing New York's Chinatown, Kwong (1979, 1996) and then Guest and Kwong (2000) document the political tensions that exist between the Chinese elite business owners and the Chinese immigrant workforce. The interests of both groups lead each to develop a different view of community development and social mobility. Kwong and Guest note that it is erroneous to overestimate ethnic solidarity and homogeneity when discussing immigrant groups.

It is imperative to recognize and understand the heterogeneity and complexity of any group's political development. In the discussion that follows I will address the manner in which two differing ideologies - that of the

Ethnic Entrepreneurs and of the Community Mobilizers - have created differing forms of Dominican-American organizing and inter-ethnic/racial collaborations.

Claiming the Neighborhood Through Service-Provision: The Case of Quisqueya United

From Grassroots Action to Institutional Development

As noted in the first chapter, Quisqueya United was established in the late 1980s. Some of the old guard progressive leaders began conversations to establish organizations that would work for the Dominican population that intended to remain in the U.S. From these conversations they fashioned organizations such as ACDP and Quisqueya United. Michael Ocampo, a founding member of Quisqueya United explained:

"There was an obvious community presence created in the Heights. Needs coming up, young people coming out of college looking to make their mark on the day, the '70s, you know, the radical '70s. People were fighting how to change the system. Of course, some of [the] others not were swept away by the political developments. The fact that our community was being squeezed out from the Upper West Side, there was this problem of settlement up here, being that there were very little efforts available to help folks with that. We knew that the agencies around us were not addressing those needs. So, we're talking about organizing right? We're talking about organizing Dominicans here."

In the early years the organization took part in community rallies - such as those protesting the murder of José "Kiko" García, and of the abuse of a little girl in a local school. Marcos Villegos, a member of *Linea Roja* and the *PTD* and founding member of Quisqueya United, worked to attract and mobilize community members during these years.

The staff was fully volunteer until they obtained a pregnancy prevention grant. Michael Ocampo, the founding director of the organization recalled that in the 1980s, with respect to social services for Dominicans, "there was nothing happening. Nothing." In attempts to deal with this, founding members, "gravitated towards a social service, a community service society." When they began to obtain some funds for other programs, the new director, Cristóbal Pierino, along with Rodolfo Riomar, a founding member of the organization, re-structured staffing arrangements as well as the focus of the organization's work. The new goals of the organization revolved around service provision. As things began to change more drastically toward this end, community mobilizers who formed part of the organization, such as founding member Marcos Villegos, left to pursue other projects. The ethnic entrepreneurs who remained, particularly Cristóbal Pierino, turned this organization into one of the largest service-

provision organizations in the city. They have secured many grants, developed a budget in the millions, and have established collaborations with city institutions such as the Agency for Children's Development, the Legal Aid Society, and the Human Resources Administration. These developments are deliberate attempts to secure resources for service-provision that benefits Dominicans. Quisqueya United leaders were able to do this after networking with people in positions to help them achieve these goals.

Reaching Outside the Community for Funding

A sense of urgency permeated all actions this organization, and many others that developed in the 1980s. Cristóbal Pierino, the current Executive Director of Quisqueya United stated,

"We have always been an activist organization. In fact, the very first thing that we ever did ever was organize a march against drugs in our community at a time when people were really afraid to come out. ... we had to organize the community."

However, given their new perspective on the goals of community organizing they took an interesting step after initiating local mobilizations. After they organized to confront the issue of drugs in the community, the director sought and secured city funding to further this work, with the organization now targeting drug prevention among youth.

Pierino explained:

"After we finished organizing around drugs, I immediately, it was so successful, it involved so many people, the community spoke out. I took that and I went to the city and I said, 'look we have a drug problem and we don't have a single drug program in our community and people are acting on that. That has to be addressed.' And that developed into the only drug treatment program in the community targeting one of the neediest populations, which is women with small children. So it wasn't just enough; the activism for me has to lead to somewhere."

The "somewhere" to which Pierino refers is funding and service-provision. Much of what Pierino and other Quisqueya United organizers were able to obtain in the early years was done through networks they had established earlier. As noted in Pierino's work history, his network extended into the Puerto Rican community and city institutions. In 1989 he made a decisive move to also collaborate with African-American politician, David Dinkins. Other leaders in Quisqueya United also worked with Dinkins. Staff of the organization had also worked for Congressman Charles Rangel, another African-American politician representing Washington Heights.

These working relationships helped when Quisqueya United applied for funding in the early 1990s. The most important source of funding they received came through Mayor Dinkins' Office for his newly established Beacon program, as discussed in Chapter four. Michael Ocampo,

another founding member of the organization, headed the Department of Employment under Dinkins. He explains:

I went into an agency that contracts money. And boy did we contract a lot of money. And we contracted a lot of money ... we went from \$700,000 for a youth program. Under the Dinkins Administration it was \$7 million for all kinds of programs for youth up here. That coincided with the stimulus package, summer jobs... a lot of resources [were] coming into the community [at that time].

Definitions of and every-day forms of "activism" began to change in the organization as the organization's funding and professional networks expanded. The current director stated,

"The activism has to lead to somewhere. I'm not an activist for activist sake, I'm not a rebel for rebellion's sake, so to speak. It's a very targeted way to put pressure on the system, to organize people so that their point of view has a vehicle to express itself and to articulate it's own agenda and move that forward. That's what it's always been leading to. In all the activism we have done, we've tried in some shape or form to channel that information towards resources to the community."

Leaders of the organization believed they shared this goal with other key leaders of color:

"Well, we have the same agendas. As Latinos [our] variations don't even come close to the similarities in terms of what we have to do and the barriers that we have to deal with. In education, for example, all Latinos have major issues to deal with. So I think that's why. And the same thing, the African-American community is a torchbearer for so many things. They led the Civil Rights movement in this country. So we have a lot to learn from them. And we have similar agendas. We really do. (which?) In every area we

find ourselves in the same statistical pool that's usually not fantastic, great news. Which means we have to climb out of the same whole in many ways. Even with a few variations here and there. But whether it's health, whether it's education, economic development, we're trying, we're living in communities that have similar problems that require similar solutions. And so it makes more than enough sense for us to pool our resources together. And work together. And now, today, for example [Quisqueya United] works very closely with a lot of organizations in Central Harlem. We're responsible now, believe it or not, for example we have the contract from the state to register all children in Federal Child Health Plus Program, including Central Harlem. And there's a Latino organization that's been accepted in Harlem by groups there and can play that role and can play leadership in that area of reaching out to the community around health issues in Central Harlem. So working with other people and getting the resources under our control has always been a theme.

Modeling Community Development from the Top Down

As it currently exists, the overarching strategy of the organization is threefold, as explained by the director:

- 1- We've got problems in the community that need to be addressed, resolved. And that people who are plagued by those problems can't move forward without it. ...A lot of the things we do are geared towards resolving some of those issues. There are social services. Support services, and without that kind of support [people] won't go forward.
- 2- ...We gotta find a way to promote development... and that's why we have a lot of development things going on ...the most important [being] youth development. That's what youth development is all about, these are services that are provided, activities that engage young people in a way that does not bind them or is not defined by their deficiency.
- 3- Where activism comes into play is that we also unfortunately, have to defend the community because

this community is constantly under attack. In all sorts of ways, for example, I found out when I first developed [Quisqueya United] that the Department of Youth Services [now the Department of Youth and Community Development] in the city registered Washington Heights as having the highest number of young people in the city of New York, and gave us the smallest allocation of funds. So I took that piece of information, I ran to the city and made a big stink of it and slowly we increased the amount of youth dollars coming in. So the third major function becomes defense. ...And somebody had to stand up for the dignity of the community and defend it. ...All of the programs and events fall under those three categories."

Guiding much of the work of this organization are issues of entitlement and belonging; i.e., resources allocated to Dominicans in Washington Heights are still less than what activists believe should be the case. The disrespect organizers felt in the early days of institution building, of being shut out of funding and policy-making, prompted them to create their own organizations. In this effort, they have established impressive non-for-profits that work primarily with the Dominican community. Over the years Quisqueya United has developed a multi-million dollar service-providing focus. Its programs receive funding from major sources such as the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, The Fund for the City of New York, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, the National Institute of Health, and the City Of New York. One of its major programs is an after-school

program run out of a local public school; it is part of the City's Beacons initiative.

Quisqueya United's Beacon site works around three clusters: Education, Culture, and Recreation, with a strong emphasis on family participation. In 1994 the staff implemented a service integration model (SIM). The site director, Martin Guevara, supervises the 10 family programs that fall within this model. These SIM programs and their foci are as follows: 1) Attendance Improvement and Dropout Prevention (AIDP); 2) General Youth Council, which comes out of the AIDP project. This group meets every day as an educational and social support mechanism through which new programs for youth are also discusses; 3) HOPE, which focuses on AIDS & HIV by providing: gay men's volleyball training, ESL classes, leadership training for all participants, a support group for men living with AIDS and for drug addicts, and a support group for family members of people with AIDS; 4) Family Center, offering a mental health referral clinic (Monday through Thursday), parents' support group, men's support group (for ex-batterers), teen parent support group, and literacy class; 5) Immunization, where one staff member provides immunization and lead abatement screening once a week; 6) Family Preservation Project, with case managers offering entitlement

counseling, weekly ceramics and artesanía classes for adults (some staff say this serves as a release mechanism for participants), economic development, domestic violence group workshops (people have been mandated by courts to get bilingual domestic violence training or workshops - they generally average 15 couples per session); 7) Day Care; 8) Center for Rehabilitation, Education, and Orientation (CREO) and Family Assistance Program (FAP), where the focus is on work for Latino and African-American women addicts, work with those who have cases with the city's Agency for Children Services, who have had children taken away by courts, domestic violence workshops, support groups for children that come from homes with domestic violence; 9) START, within which a caseload of 20 young adults receive case managers to work with parents and young adults, home visits, support group, and one-on-one counseling; 10) VISTA volunteers. These individuals provide volunteer services such as college preparation services, citizenship training, environmental awareness, and anti-smoking. The volunteers receive a federal stipend. Quisqueya United's central offices manage their time.

It is clear to even the casual observer that this organization is involved in a great deal of program development that benefit local residents. What I wish to

point out with this long description of the programs, however, is the ideology behind this kind of community organizing. As evidenced through the programming, the organization is involved primarily in service provision. Staff members are there to provide services and support for local residents. There is no question that this work is important, but the degree to which this has developed into a top-down approach toward community development and empowerment is the issue at hand. As Quisqueya United's former site director explained,

"We assess our community by what our community brings to us. We work with their concerns, issues, and needs. We provide for their concerns, issues, and needs. You need a lawyer? We give referrals. You need action for youth support? We provide it. If anyone comes with a problem, we accommodate them, respect them, and deal with it. We respect who they [community members and Beacon participants] are, offer them confidentiality, don't judge, and have empathy. We don't just relate, we relate and provide services. When providing resources, we're keeping in mind all the resources we can provide."

As one staff member stated, "all the activism we have done, we have tried to channel resources into the community." The goal is to "...provide services that empowers people." This ideology of power through service-provision is very different from the way in which community mobilizers envision Dominican political empowerment.

Enacting Leadership From the Grassroots: The Case of Dominican Nation

• From Youth Programming to Community Activism

A group of very young Dominicans - ages 13 through 21 - founded Dominican Nation in the late 1980s, around the same time Quisqueya United emerged. The idea for the organization was inspired by a conversation among student organizers in 1987 in the *Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo* (la UASD), a major university in the Dominican Republic. Osiris Robles, one of the young New York leaders, remarked that something had to be done about the way that young people living in Washington Heights were treated. The conversation held at la UASD revolved around military and police abuse of young students in the Dominican Republic. Osiris, and other youth in New York, felt that this was also a concern for youth living in Washington Heights. They also felt that no organization was focused on this issue. In response, he joined other young Dominicans in New York City - 1.5 and second generation - to create an organization that would focus on youth issues, with youth serving as the principal organizers.

When the organization was founded, youth met weekly to discuss a specific issue or concern. It was a social space

for the youth, but it was also a very political space. From many discussions emerged plans for action. After discussion and reflection, Dominican Nation members often became involved in grassroots action: working for Guillermo Linares' campaign by doing outreach and reaching local residents; organizing rallies to protest the NYPD murder of "Kiko" García; and protesting a local teacher's abuse of a young Dominican student (and the School Board's failure to take action). Lenora Ríos, one of the organization's youngest members in its earlier years, spoke about why she participated in the organization and in its activities:

"There really wasn't anyplace I could go where I'd be able to say something. We had, we faced a lot of things. For example, in my school we didn't even have enough desks in the class for all of us. I think parents were trying to do something about this, but why shouldn't we say how we feel also? I don't know who else was out there, but we were a youth movement. We did what we wanted and we said what we wanted. And we did a lot. It made me feel really good about all of us [young people]."

Dominican Nation has continued to privilege a community-forum style of planning and grassroots organizing.

Community participation and street action is not only a possibility embraced, but also seen as a necessary tactic in their vision of community empowerment.

In 2000, Dominican Nation transported this ideology into their new, national effort. Although their constant

and strongest programs were still with Dominican youth, they developed an agenda to address Dominican-American concerns nationally. They organized a very well attended and well-received national conference in February 2000. In preparation for this conference, they held weekly community forums and annual community conferences to gauge what community members felt were the most important issues needing to be addressed and why. It was from these grassroots voices that they were able to draft the skeleton of a national agenda. This style of community activism privileged collective action over securing funding for services.

Reaching Outside the Community for Action and Justice

In their efforts to develop grassroots action, Dominican Nation organizers have reached out to other people of color. Because of the relatively young age of this cohort of local Dominican American activists, their work with other people of color has been primarily in movements in UMN and around issues of police brutality.

Osiris Robles, a key founding member of the organization attended UMN in the late 1980s and early 1990s. He was one of the key student leaders in 1989,

protesting Mayor Ed Koch and Governor George Pataki's assaults on public education. He explained:

"El trabajo era eso con otros grupos Latinos, Afro-Americanos, Asiáticos... creo también que me dio una oportunidad de trabajar con grupos de otras preferencias sexuales. Y eso no se ve en los países de uno. ...los diferentes frentes de trabajo en los cuales yo e estado participando me a permitido a mí valorar el trabajo con todos los grupos étnicos y tener en cuenta que lo fundamental es identificar el objetivo que uno piense alcanzar, y no somos tan diferentes.

"The work was with other Latinos, with African-Americans, Asians... I also think that this gave me an opportunity to work with people with different sexual preferences. ...The different organizing I've participated in has allowed me to value the work done with other ethnic groups and to keep in mind the goals one wants to attain, and we aren't really all that different." (translation by author).

Although this understanding of shared plight with other people of color is one that is shared by ethnic entrepreneurs, community mobilizers' actions differ. That is, while ethnic entrepreneurs use networks with people of color in positions of power to obtain resources for service-provision in the community, but community mobilizers from Dominican Nation believe that Dominicans must work in solidarity with other communities of color to alter the system that distributes resources and power. Through his involvement with other student activists on UMN's campus, Osiris Robles helped lead the student takeover of an office on campus in 1989. After much

negotiating, the students were able to keep the space. They named it the Assata Shakur-Guillermo Morales Student Center. Though Dominican Nation had been the office's primary tenant, it has shared the space and programming with other student organizations on the campus.

Dominican Nation has maintained its street activism with other people of color, particularly around the issue of police brutality. During my period of fieldwork, they participated in rallies in support of Mumia Abu-Jamal, in protest of NYPD, and of city government's financial disinvestment in impoverished communities of color. One leader explained why this kind of work is important:

"Hoy yo e llegado a la conclusión de que se tiene que trabajar en networking. Hay que trabajar en conjunto con los demás grupos étnicos. O sea, la superación de nosotros como comunidad dominicana no se va lograr separada de la superación de la comunidad puertorriqueña. La superación de la comunidad Latina no se va a lograr separada de la comunidad afro-americana. Y yo creo de que en este momento eso requiere, tiene mucho más valor, hacer un esfuerzo de eso, de que tenemos que trabajar en networks requiere hoy, o tiene mucho más valor por la tendencia del crecimiento demográfico en los estados unidos. O sea, todas las proyecciones te dicen que la llamada minoría será la mayoría. Y si no hayan grupos de personas que tengan la visión de entender que nosotros no podemos permitir caer en actitud de divisiones, vamos seguir en lo mismo, o quizás peor, como comunidades. ...si no hay un entendimiento claro y hacer un esfuerzo de compartir nuestras experiencias, trabajar en conjunto, permitimos ser divididos por un tercer grupo. Entonces yo creo, el trabajar con diferentes grupos étnicos le facilita a uno abrir una mesa de intercambio, una mesa de conversación, donde podamos

buscar las cosas en comunes que tenemos nosotros como la llamada minoría. ...tenemos que planificar al largo plazo."

"Today I have reached the conclusion that we must work on networking. We have to work in collaboration with other ethnic groups. That is, the advancement of the Dominican community will not happen separately from the advancement of the Puerto Rican community. The advancement of the Latino community will not happen separately from the advancement of the African-American community. And I think that in this moment this requires, this has much more value, to make a strong effort toward that end, that we have to work in networks. This has much more importance given the demographic trends in the United States. That is, all the projections indicate that the so-called minority will be the majority. And if there isn't a group of people with the vision and understanding that we cannot allow ourselves to fall into an attitude that divides us, we're going to continue in the same situation, or perhaps worse, as a community. If there is not a clear understanding and an effort to share our experiences, to work together, we allow ourselves to be divided by a third group. So, I believe, that to work with other ethnic groups allows one to open the door to an exchange, a conversation table where we can look for the things that we, the so-called minorities, have in common. ...we have to plan for the long-term." (translation by author).

The plight and mobility of Dominicans is, in this perspective, intricately linked to those of other communities of color. It is not enough to obtain funding for services. In fact, they suggest that undue emphasis on the goal of financial growth can divide people. Dominican Nation has only recently begun to apply for long-term funding. On one occasion of brainstorming for a proposal for youth programming, key leaders were concerned that they

might be overlooked in light of the funding track already established by Quisqueya United. Osiris Robles, former director of Dominican Nation said that on one occasion Cristóbal Pierino, director of Quisqueya United, pulled him aside for a conversation about funding wars. He recounted the way in which Pierino congratulated Dominican Nation for the work they were doing but told him that Dominican Nation became Quisqueya United's competitor for much-needed grants as soon as they were established in Washington Heights. This form of organizing, engendered by the scant supply of funding for services and programs, poses problems for the flexible kind of camaraderie and solidarity work in which Dominican Nation organizers find themselves.

Dinorah Rosa joined Dominican Nation in 1998. She had previously worked with Dominican and Puerto Rican organizations: the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund (PRLDEF), the Puerto Rican Policy Institute with Angelo Falcón and Aspira of New York, an organization founded by pioneer Puerto Rican activist Antonia Pantoja. Rosa's experiences, ideas, and understanding of the work of Dominican Nation are shared by many community mobilizers. In 1998 Rosa worked with the Political Empowerment group of Dominican Nation. She explained what she felt she brought to this project:

"What we talked about was working with other groups of color, not for political benefit of it for us but just because and this was like me and [Nocena] who, because we worked with Haitian immigrant groups and we felt that the needs that they're talking about are not that different from the needs we're talking about so it behooves us to kind of just try and connect. ...we were saying these things. People were really connecting to that."

(what sorts of issues are you seeing similar with these communities that leads you to want to work together?)

"The need for more educational services. The need, the safety issues in your community. Health services in your community. Immigrant services and issues and anything that you know, police brutality. I mean everything that I have ever heard in a meeting in Washington Heights about what's wrong in the Dominican community, I have heard it in other communities. Perhaps, you know, the names might be different, the language might be different but it's the same issues. And although we're sort of the community en vogue right now because of our numbers, it still seems to me like a repeating story. ...whenever I would hear the issues of the Dominicans, I would say, yes, you know. You're right. We need to do this and I keep on thinking, well, how do we link this to other groups? Because other groups are making the same calls. We'd have more power together and maybe we could change things."

Modeling Community Empowerment From the Grassroots

Local Dominican activism falls within the context of a longer political and economic trajectory that reaches back to revolutionary movements in the post-Trujillo Republic. And, perhaps more importantly, local activists acting as Community Mobilizers still place themselves and their organizing within this larger context of global history and politics. Such is the case with Dominican Nation leaders.

In fact, at the closing of the Dominican Nation conference in 2000, Osiris Robles, the General Coordinator of the organization, recognized the success of the conference as a direct result of the strong political lineage that stretched back to revolutionary politics in the Dominican Republic:

"Creo que si Duarte estuviera vivo hoy estuviera muy orgulloso de los jóvenes, de la creación aquí presente. ...Que las hermanas Mirabal, Manolo Tavaras también estuvieran aquí presente. ...Las mujeres, los hombres aquí presente, realmente hoy creo que presentamos un movimiento progresista con capacidad de desarrollarse en los Estados Unidos..."

"I think that if [Juan Pablo] Duarte were here he would be extremely proud of our young people, of what we have created here. ...that the Mirabal sisters and Manolo Tavaras would also be here. ...The women and men present here today, I truly believe that today we presented a progressive movement with the capability of developing in the United States..." (Conference closing plenary, February 2000; translation by author).

These organizers connect local organizing in the present to revolutionary leaders who demanded revolutionary change for democratic ends in the Dominican Republic. These leaders believe that upon establishing local organizations and expanding the network of people with whom to work in solidarity, grassroots empowerment can only be successful if projects include local voices from the community. This

ideology informed the earliest stages of Dominican Nation's new national agenda:

"Había un acuerdo, un consenso de que hay problemas en la comunidad, de que somos tantos en numero y de que hemos tenido experiencia organizativa... La segunda parte es que hacer? Y allí hicimos un planteamiento de realizar una conferencia. Desde el principio fue claro... de que la conferencia no era el objetivo final. Desde el inicio nosotros, la invitación fue que ese grupo de personas se convirtiera en promotor de un nuevo proyecto organizativo que se pudiera convertir en una alternativa en la comunidad nuestra. La meta era organizar para crear un lugar donde siempre se le presta valor a la comunidad. Juntos, podemos lograr lo que trabajando desde una oficina nunca puede."

"There was an understanding that the community had problems, that we are large in numbers and that we had organizational experience... The second part was what do we do? And that's when we suggested doing a conference. From the beginning it was very clear... that the conference was not the final goal. From the beginning, we've invited that group of people to become the promoters for an organized project that could become an alternative for our community. The goal was to organize to create a space where the community is always valued. Together, we can achieve what those working [only] from an office can never achieve."

Some community mobilizers recognize that their approach to community empowerment stems from their class positions:

"En Washington Heights la mayoría de las personas que se envuelven en lo que son las iniciativas de empoderamiento son de apellidos Rodríguez, son apellidos García, Hernández. No son de los apellidos de la élite de nuestro país. ...Y somos las personas que se envuelven, tu vez, tu te encuentra con Linares. Linares cuando llega aquí trabajaba en taxis. Somos, coño, somos la representación de lo que es la comunidad de nosotros, una comunidad pobre, pobre. Entonces hay que mirar en ese contexto. ...Como vivía mi familia cuando éramos siete [hermanos y hermanas] y

era solamente papi que trabajaba y mami recibiendo welfare. Tenemos que mirarlo de esa forma. Tenemos que mirar que la comunidad no cuenta con buenos programas. O sea, programas que les ayuden con ese empoderamiento de que nosotros hablamos."

"In Washington Heights the majority of the people involved in projects of empowerment have surnames like Rodriguez, Garcia, Hernández. These are not surnames of the elite of our country. ...And we're the people that have gotten involved. You look at [Guillermo] Linares. When Linares arrived here he worked as a taxi driver. We are, damn, we are representative of our community, we are a poor community, poor. So we have to look at it in that context. ...Look at how my family lived when we were seven [brothers and sisters] and only our father worked and our mother received welfare. We have to look at it that way. We have to see that the community doesn't have good programs. That is, programs that help them with the kind of empowerment that we're talking about." (translation by author)

Community mobilizers who shape Dominican Nation suggest that for a successful movement to occur, power must emerge from the grassroots, rather than rest with one or two main leaders. And they believe that this is also the sentiment of local residents.

"...Estamos en un ghetto donde no se cuenta con buenos programas para ayudar con ese empoderamiento comunitario de que nosotros hablamos. Yo creo de que si miramos lo poquito que hemos logrado en el poco tiempo que hemos estado aquí, yo no me sentiría de pesimista con nuestra comunidad. ...La comunidad dominicana del 2000 tiene una conciencia sobre lo que es el empoderamineto. ...tiene que haber un movimiento colectivo de empoderamiento. ...La gente que vinieron a la conferencia no llegaron porque les atrae el nombre de Hillary ó de Rangel. Vinieron porque están buscando un espacio donde ellos puedan contribuir a ese empoderamiento. Nosotros tenemos que tener un entendimiento de lo que es realmente empoderamiento.

Porque si empoderamiento se limita a creer que es, que se limita a buscar uno ó otro representantes político, simplemente nos jodimos. Porque representante política tiene la comunidad Puertorriqueña, tiene la comunidad Afro-Americana. Y, bueno, estarán mejor posicionado en lo que tiene que ver con los contactos que tienen en Washington ...pero cuando tu miras las condiciones físicos de la comunidad, y cuando tu miras la cantidad de jóvenes Latinos que están terminando en las cárceles y están dejando las escuelas, no hay una gran diferencia. Somos pobres. Y juntos tenemos que hacer algo. Sí, se necesitan los líderes, los políticos, pero la comunidad es la que tiene que reconocerse como una fuerza."

"We are in a ghetto where there aren't programs that help with the kind of empowerment we're talking about. I think that if we look at the little bit we've been able to accomplish in the little time we've been here, I wouldn't feel so pessimistic about our community. ...The Dominican community in 2000 has a conscience on what empowerment is. ...There has to be a collective movement for empowerment. ...The people that came to the [Dominican Nation] conference [in February 2000] didn't come because they were drawn to the names of Hillary [Clinton] or [Charles] Rangel. They came because they were looking for a space wherein they could contribute to that empowerment. We have to have an understanding of what constitutes real empowerment. Because if we limit empowerment to elect one representative, quite frankly, we're screwed. Because the Puerto Rican community has political representatives, the African-American community also. And, well, they're in a better position with respect to the contacts they have in Washington ...but when you look at the physical conditions of those communities, and when you see the number of young Latinos that are winding up in prisons or leaving school, there isn't much of a difference. We're poor. And together, we have to do something. Yes, we need leaders, the politicians, but it is the community we must recognize as a powerful force." (translation by author).

Some do not believe that elected politicians can be trusted to represent the true interests of the community .

J. Alexander Robles, indicating a degree of ideological kinship to Malcolm X, does not have complete faith or trust in recognized leadership in the community, particularly in elected officials:

"I think that some in our community and this is something that Malcolm mentioned *en su tiempo de activismo*, [during his time as an activist], we have a lot of good people in our community and we have a lot of bad things in our community. And as a result of those bad things, you have a lot of targeted attempts that take advantage of that situation."

In a discussion over the way in which Riverbank State Park was built in Harlem and Washington Heights, Alexander noted his strong dissatisfaction with elected officials and leadership in the community. He suggested that they work for their own personal interests and, having lost touch with the community on the ground, do not always work with the best interest of the community:

"Well, for me personally, [elected officials' support of Riverbank State Park] it kind of reinforced my belief that we need to have changes in our community and because of these other people that are supposed to look out for our community and they allow for this to happen. Definitely there is a need for changes in our community and you do that by advocating, by organizing people and that's basically how I felt about these issues ... these politicians were for it, without really caring what the impact will be on our community."

Members of Dominican Nation work to create mechanisms through which local leadership can continue to arise from the grassroots level. They organize community forums where

local residents meet to discuss issues such as redistricting and housing. From these forums, some community members have gone on to testify in city council hearings on such issues. Dinorah Rosa explains what she believes is the organization's major contribution to Dominican-American community development and empowerment:

"..this is a group of just amazing intellectual capacity. It wows me all the time. Really, like good-willed towards others and that desire to like make social change not just because it's a pure or romantic idea or because it's going to eventually get me into office or whatever... I think [what] will mark us as something amazing in this community would be the idea and the possibility of getting this emerging leadership going. So it's not just about us being the leaders but it's really about creating sort of this entire strata of leadership. And I think that I think is really *lo que podemos aportar a la comunidad* [what we can offer the community]."

The models I have discussed above represent two differing ideologies and modes of action. This is not meant to suggest that all actors working within these organizations are always confined to one or the other model of action. Neither do organizers in either category negate the important role the other can play in Dominican-American community development. Although they may disagree in their primary emphasis, they do agree that they are working for similar goals for building Dominican-American power. Speaking about whether or not he agrees with the other

modes of organizing, Osiris Robles explained that people must join in any movement that will work to advance the community in some way, claiming that, "No se debe dejar de comer pescado por temor a las espinas. [You shouldn't stop eating fish for fear of the bones]." However, the models of organizing which these two organizations, and other community leaders, employ have led them to take different positions on major community issues. Such was the case in 2000 when the Federal Bureau of Prisons' attempted to open a halfway house in Washington Heights.

Confounding Community, Confronting the State: Entrepreneurs and Mobilizers Address the Federal Bureau of Prisons

In the early part of 2000 the Federal Bureau of Prisons authorized the creation of a halfway house in Washington Heights. Set to open its doors in late fall, the home would house recently incarcerated young men originally from the New York region, though not necessarily from the Washington Heights area. The state selected a residential building located on 182nd Street between Audubon Avenue and Saint Nicholas Avenue (recently renamed Avenida Juan Pablo Duarte). This site selection was seemingly insensitive to the fact that the building was located one block away from a public elementary school, two blocks from

a public middle school, in the vicinity of at least five other public schools, and in a neighborhood where affordable housing was becoming a thing of the past. The site was also two blocks from the public school where Quisqueya United held its after-school program and three and a half blocks from Gregorio Luperón Preparatory School.

Activists and local advocates from the two organizations that are subject of this study learned of the plans when the Correctional Services Corporation, the primary sponsors of the halfway house, put up building permit notices on the building in October 2000. The ways in which Dominican organizers and local policy makers participated in actions around these plans demonstrated the heterogeneous voice with which Dominican-American organizers - ethnic entrepreneurs and community mobilizers - understand and attempt to advance community development and power.

On October 18 and October 23, 2000, leaders of Dominican Nation co-sponsored community meetings with the principal of a local high school located on 181st Street.²⁶

²⁶ It is important to note that this principal has actively supported the efforts of both Dominican Nation and Quisqueya United, serving on their Advisory Board and Board of Directors, respectively. He has a long history of activism stretching to his youth in the Dominican Republic. He has been at the helm of many groups that established major organizations in Washington Heights. His politics and strategic community planning skills have consistently found their way into the

With full support from this principal and with access to a meeting location in the heart of Washington Heights' Dominican neighborhood, the leadership was able to draw close to 60 neighborhood residents to the two evening meetings. Among attendees were: leadership and membership of Dominican Nation, youth who attended the local high school, local journalists and activists, and local residents. During one of the meetings, a local resident pointed out that *El Taxista*, a local newspaper, had published an interview with him regarding the impending halfway house in August 2000. During the course of the meeting he, and others, reiterated the issues he raised in the interview: over the summer 182 Realty, LLC had purchased the residential building on 182nd Street and began to forcibly evict tenants who did not accept "moving costs" to peacefully relocate to another building. The company then began plans to lease the building to the Correctional Services Corporation without notifying local residents or policy makers and in early fall began to renovate the

ongoing programming of Dominican Nation. This principal's support has proved instrumental in the growth of Dominican Nation. In its early years, Dominican Nation held its Saturday programming at this local high school. Most of the program's youth constituents were students in this high school. And for a short while, during the time in which some of the leaders worked as teachers at this school, this principal offered two Dominican Nation leaders overtime pay for their Saturday work with Dominican Nation; with the exception of two years of volunteers under Ameri Corps, this has been the only salary-like support the staff of Dominican Nation have received.

building for the halfway house. Meeting attendees were unwaveringly opposed to having a halfway house in their neighborhood and they opposed the manner in which authorities had approved the location, i.e., that they did not consult with local residents or consider the sites' proximity to as many as seven public schools. During the meetings, local residents decided to create and circulate documentation on the state plans, collect signatures for a petition, and organize a rally to voice community opposition to the construction of the halfway house.

Over the course of two weeks the local City Council member met with representatives of the Federal Bureau of Prisons and the Correctional Services Corporation. He also circulated a form letter via a memorandum to local "parents, educators, business and community leaders;" local residents signed the letter and mailed it to the Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons in Washington, D.C., and to their Congressman, Charles Rangel. The local community board also raised the issue at their monthly general body meeting on October 23, 2000. Although board members discussed points of contention similar to those of local residents at the community meetings, board members ultimately decided that this was not the appropriate time to discuss the matter and that the discussion was, in fact,

out of order. Someone suggested that the Chair of the Board draft a letter expressing the concern over the matter, but some board members again stated that this was not how decisions were made and that the matter should first be discussed by the appropriate committee.

While policy makers tried to address the matter through these institutional mechanisms, those attending the community meetings at the local high school initiated a petition campaign and reached out to other local residents through a phone bank. The goal was to inform the community about the plans for the halfway house and to gain support for the rally they organized. On Saturday, November 4, 2000 between 100 and 200 local residents participated in an afternoon rally that ran north on Saint Nicholas Avenue/ Avenida Juan Pablo Duarte, and onto 182nd Street, stopping in front of the building where construction was taking place in preparation for the halfway house. Local press - citywide press and press from the Washington Heights area - covered the march and rally. Confronted with organized and determined residents and with opposition from elected officials, the Federal Bureau of Prisons eventually dropped their plans to open a halfway house on 182nd Street.

In addition to the organizational eloquence of local residents in this collaborative community effort to affect

a federally-imposed program in their neighborhood, what is equally striking is the nature of participation of different institutions in the community, particularly, the role of young people and parents. Those who participated in the effort did so in different ways and invoked different definitions of and support from the community. And those local institutions that did not participate in the efforts invoked yet another working understanding of the community and goals for community improvement. But all made claims about what Dominicans, as a marginalized sector, of people of color, should receive.

On October 18, 2000 I arrived at Quisqueya United long before the scheduled 5 p.m. youth committee meeting time. I had planned to speak with the Director of Quisqueya United's Beacon about the halfway house before going to the youth meeting. Because Quisqueya United's youth program was housed on 182nd Street, I knew I would still be able to attend the community meeting being held later at the school on 181st Street, though it would mean leaving the youth meeting early. The Director indicated that although he was quite concerned about the developments, students from the program could not participate because they needed to have written parental consent long before the event, and that the Executive Director of the Quisqueya United had

suggested that the halfway house might not be such a negative development in the community. He indicated that the Executive Director believed that the development of a halfway house would bring more revenue to the community and offer employment to community residents. He indicated that this financial contribution to the community might actually empower the community in some way. At the start of the youth committee meeting one of the staff facilitators raised the issue of the halfway house. Youth participants asked important questions: who would be housed there? What types of crimes had they been convicted of? Who would determine the level of safety provided to local residents, particularly students in the area? Why were they building this unit without even talking to them? Though it is quite reasonable for local residents to be concerned with these matters, the staff member raised other issues that appeared to influence the level of discussion. He asked the youth if they thought people deserved a second chance at a "normal, productive life," and asked kinds of opportunities they believed incarcerated people should be given to return to their communities. These issues, though equally significant and meritorious, were raised in a manner that re-directed the youth's questions. After this discussion, in which the staff questions were addressed more directly

than the initial concerns of the youth, the youth dampened their critique and the meeting proceeded to other matters on the agenda. Quisqueya United never took a public stand either in support or in opposition to the creation of the halfway house and its membership did not attend the community meetings or the march and rally.

Community activists who organized around the issue of the halfway house used their political capital and their human resources differently. Local policy makers, as already noted, took a path through official, bureaucratic channels - the Council Member met and addressed federal officials directly and the community board resorted to their own bureaucratic mechanisms to decide whether or not they would draft a letter voicing their concerns. One local organization had previously attempted to organize a rally in front of the building on 182nd Street. They distributed a flyer announcing a rally for Friday October 20, 2000. The flyer directed people to "defend your rights" and "unite to fight for your community!" The flyer also listed sponsors of the event - all political and organizational allies of this one organization. Organizers from Dominican Nation said they believed that the organization listed its co-sponsors in an effort to draw attention to the director of the lead organization. He had

recently unofficially announced his candidacy in the race for the local council seat and was interested in demonstrating an active presence in community affairs. The October 20 rally did not attract many people.

Dominican Nation went about matters differently as they organized those who would participate in the mass public outcry. That is, Dominican Nation utilized its network of local activists to plan the community meetings; they called people and sent a mass e-mail announcing the issue and upcoming meetings. They also gathered the volunteers who worked in the phone bank effort, which proved successful in getting people to participate in the march and rally. In ensuing developments over the matter, people credited the large community presence as pivotal in the eventual defeat of the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Though all spoke on behalf of the community later on, Dominican Nation ensured that they made the call to local residents to participate; they are to be credited with gathering the largest number of community residents in this mobilization.

"Community" and the defense of "the community" continue to mean various things to different organizations and political institutions in Washington Heights. Nonetheless, "community" is always called upon by all these

sectors in their efforts to raise financial support for programs, organize around a time or issue-specific matter, when providing services, and/or when attempting to "empower" the community. That there might be differing ideologies around what constitutes true community empowerment is not a phenomenon unique to Dominican-Americans. Numerous scholars have documented the heterogeneity of all political and community groups (see for example Kwong, 1996; Jennings 1992; Marable 1994, 2000). And as Osiris Robles observed:

"Imagine. Hasta en la propia familia. Yo soy diferente a papi, tu eres diferente a tu madre, yo soy diferente a mis hermanos en algunas cosas. Entonces si eso se da en el núcleo familiar, qué nosotros podemos pretender en los núcleos organizativo. Van a existir las diferencias. Hay que permitir que se desarrollen las diferencias, luego que se sepan trabajar las diferencias. ... y ojalá que todos los proyectos alcancen un desarrollo máximo porque solamente gana nuestra comunidad."

"Imagine. Even in one's own family. I am different from my father, you're different from your mother, I'm different from my brothers in some ways. And so if that happens in the heart of the family, what do we expect in the heart of organizing? There are going to be differences. We have to allow these differences to develop, as long as we know how to work with these differences. ...And hopefully all projects reach their full potential because our community stands to gain." (translation by author).

Chapter 6

Race, Identities, and The New Second Generation

This chapter will explore the identities and the issues around which second-generation Dominicans organize, as well as the factors that have shaped their perspectives on race. Although the second-generation has been present in earlier chapters, in this chapter I direct exclusive attention to this population. Many scholarly accounts of immigrant organizing end with questions regarding the second-generation. How does the second-generation see itself in the immigrant community and in the U.S.? What identities inform the ways in which they interact with other U.S. communities? What factors shape these identities? This chapter is an attempt to more directly tackle these questions.

I begin with a review of the concepts raised in the literature on the "new second-generation." The ideas of ethnicity and "identity choices" are central to theories of segmented assimilation. An understanding of the new second-generation and their "identity choices" requires an analysis of the way this generation encounters racialization. In the Dominican-American case, it also requires a reading of race in the Dominican Republic.

I argue that second-generation Dominican organizers living in Washington Heights, New York confront race in both the Dominican Republic and in the U.S. These processes inform the way they see themselves in the U.S. and the ways in which they see themselves allied to other communities of color.

Infusing Politics with Race: Second-Generation Dominicans Introduce Racial Discourse

During my period of fieldwork I worked with a community youth program at Quisqueya United. I arrived each summer morning to spend the day with this group of young men and women. On many occasions these eleven young people would spend time hanging out in the air-conditioned basement of the organization's Beacon site. While they planned for events and programs, they also socialized. And during these moments they would inadvertently raise issues and present their views around race and Blackness. One young man, Kenny, a darker-skinned Dominican, often arrived with half his hair braided and the other half still "fro'd out." In the late 1990s, it was very fashionable for young men in the hip-hop generation to braid their hair into intricately designed cornrows. Kenny's half-done hairstyle did not raise questions from the other youth. Instead, a

couple of the young women would occasionally take turns trying to complete his braiding. A couple of the young women (including those who had straight hair) would also arrive with their hair braided or half-done in these hip-hop-inspired designs as well. On one occasion one of these young women, Wanda, a light-skinned Dominican, initiated a conversation about "blackness" and men. While braiding Kenny's hair, she started to talk about how much effort it takes for people to maintain their braids in good condition and about how she likes guys with braids. This led into more talk about what else she thought was attractive in boys her age. In her discussion with her peers, what struck me was the way she discussed features many still ascribe to Blackness. She said,

"But you know what I really like? Oh my, God, you got them big black juicy lips and it's, like... I love it. ...If he ain't got those lips, it's just not right. I mean, it's ok, but it's just so much better when you got something to kiss for real."

Coupled with her admiration for Kenny's hair and "big black...lips," this young light-skinned Dominican woman was embracing Blackness.

Although Wanda's reading of Blackness was also a very sexualized account, it is an important divergence from the manner in which "Black features," such as "big lips" or "pelo malo," "bad hair" (referring to curly or kinky hair)

have been depicted in racist discourse in the Dominican Republic, an issue I will address later in this chapter (see Badillo 2001; Sagás 2000). The way second-generation youth embrace Blackness is very significant. They develop identities around Blackness within a context of racialization on two fronts. That is, many of their family members still subscribe to racial codes and racism enforced earlier by Trujillo (and others) in the Dominican Republic (see Sagás 2000; Torres-Saillant 1999). For example, they hear terms such as "pelo malo," or bad hair, to describe curly or kinky hair (see Badillo 2001; Candelario 2000). And in the U.S., they experience racialization as young Black kids in the streets of New York City. During one afternoon at Quisqueya United a 14 year-old participant in the organization's summer youth program spoke with his peers about experiences with racism and harassment in public spaces in New York City:

"Me and my friends we were sitting on a bench, right? And we were gonna play basketball but we were just sitting there. And it's like four blocks from my school. It was a public park and we were just sitting there. And the cop comes and they just park right behind us. They were standing there and my friend asks [me] what are they doing here? And they wait and they wait and then they go, 'hey what are you guys doing here?' we're like 'we're gonna play basketball.' And they go, 'well hurry up, play or leave.' But it's a public area. It's not, like, what do you call it, what do you call it...
(a male peer responds) you're not loitering.

Yeah, there you go. It wasn't loitering. It wasn't in front of a private area. It was public and then we're telling them we're just there sitting. And they're telling us to leave. And then my friend starts talking in Spanish to one of the cops. He goes, 'Look, we're just sitting here, please, we're not trying to cause any trouble.' And then the other guy he goes, 'Hey, look, this is America. Talk English, English only.' And then my friend goes, no, Spanish is one of the most spoken languages. And my friend is like disputing with him, like, 'why can't I speak...?' And he's like 'just leave,' blah, blah, blah. But the Latino cop, he kinda felt bad, he was like, 'just go, just leave, don't cause trouble.' And then, when we're trying to cross the street, the cop purposely came right in front of us. And we would walk around to the side to try to leave, go around him and he would keep on going so we'd have to take a longer way. For nothing."

Informants, especially young males, spoke often of this kind of harassment in the city.

Second-generation Dominican-Americans recognize race, racism, and marginalization in the U.S. They state that they contend with this more forcefully than do their parents, the first generation. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that they take on their Blackness and this society's racism more directly - in everyday and in organizational settings. That they would embrace an identity that is subtly (or directly and/or violently) marginalized in the Dominican Republic and in the U.S. beckons us to a re-examination of the models set forth currently in the literature on the second-generation.

Another significant factor in the way second-

generation Dominican-Americans understand issues of race and racism is that they use this understanding to organize Dominican politics today. Leticia Reyna, a twenty-something second-generation Dominican, organizer of Dominican Nation and lawyer, explained,

"I've never believed in 'nation,' in 'race,' in none of that. I have always believed that in helping people, you help yourself. I've always worked with poor people, with those that are screwed over. I always got involved in things that would work with poor people. And then I realized that I wanted to be part of that work to help poor people but always I had a little difficulty getting in [to help]. And then I realized that here [in the U.S.] I'm considered to be part of a group that's defined as poor, or screwed. So what I did was I infiltrated. Well, I didn't infiltrate. I claimed my Dominicanness and Latinoness as a way to help poor people. So if you're involved, well, you have legitimacy because you're born into that group. In this country you're racialized that way, so if you're part of a group, you have legitimacy in discussing issues around that group.

The manner in which Leticia saw herself racialized into particular identities is a *process* with which other Dominican youth are also familiar. Many, including Leticia, have used the experiences behind their identity "choices" to organize, an issue I will demonstrate in the following chapter. Concerns regarding state violence, more specifically police brutality, have been central to much of the pan-ethnic and Black-Latino coalitions in which Dominicans have been involved (Sales and Bush 2000).

*Discussing Race: The New Literature on the Second-
Generation*

As outlined earlier in the dissertation, Alejandro Portes and others who set forth the segmented assimilation model agree that contemporary immigrants of color and their children are racialized. In order to overcome the negative effects of a racialized society, they must rely on their co-ethnic community's cultural capital.

There are a number of theoretical problems in this formulation. The racialization processes to which today's second-generation are subjected also delineate the extent to which "ethnic options" affect their social mobility. However, implicit in these models are racialized assumptions that follow in the vein of much of the work on youth that has focused on sub-cultures of poverty or pathologies of the poor. As discussed earlier, in these formulations, which date back to the ideas of Oscar Lewis (1965), researchers assume the independent determination of urban "subcultures," and analyze their internal characteristics while negating the continuing significance of external institutions in the lives of the urban poor. Lewis and his contemporaries posited an understanding of "urban disorganization" that identified the individuals in "subcultures" of poverty as responsible for their

perpetual, inter-generational poverty (see also Moynihan 1965). Although Lewis noted the significance of advanced capitalism in creating conditions of poverty, he also claimed that many of the impoverished then create a design for living, an adaptive function of culture which is passed, unchanging, through the generations. In his view, this "culture of poverty," once set in motion is static, autonomous, and bound. It renders its members unable to take advantage of changing social and economic conditions, of improving opportunities. Lewis offered a solution to these grim life-chances - psychological counseling.²⁷

I argue that inherent in the concept of "segmented assimilation" is adherence to the idea of the culture of poverty and bound communities. Permeating the work on segmented assimilation are assumptions about race, poverty, and a self-depreciating culture of pathology. More specifically, the theory outlines three identity options for the second generation - assimilation into white middle-stratum society, maintaining a "co-ethnic" identity, or identifying with native-born people of color. This work then indicates that identifying with "native minority"

27 It is quite ironic that this body of work was published at a point in U.S. history when many impoverished groups were organizing mass movements to address the inequities in U.S. society (Piven and Cloward 1971; Valentine 1968).

groups should be deplored.

The authors suggest that given the vulnerabilities of many second-generation youth - lack of financial and social capital - if they begin to identify with native minority groups they will easily fall prey to these groups' "maladaptive" cultures. They posit that these youth will develop an "oppositional identity," which will lead them onto a path of downward assimilation where they can easily succumb to the ills of impoverished native minority cultures: teen pregnancy, truancy, drug use, single-female-headed households, and perpetual poverty.

The assumptions concerning the pathologies of "native minorities" are glaringly obvious in this body of literature on the second generation. The authors argue that second-generation youths' best chance for mobility rests with the cultural capital present in their own ethnic groups. By implying that success or failure is based on the cultural components of immigrant versus native populations, this analysis clearly blames native minority groups for their conditions of poverty and marginalization. The authors argue that when they live in poverty in places where native minorities also reside, it is the culture of the immigrant group that will save the second-generation. It is, therefore, suggested that the properties that

guarantee either successful mobility or intergenerational poverty lie within the cultures of the groups under study. According to what these authors imply, inherent in the cultures of native minority groups are characteristics that limit their mobility in this country.

Other scholars have critiqued the culture of poverty thesis (see Leacock 1971). On a number of occasions I have been asked why it is necessary to raise Oscar Lewis' argument from the dungeons of the discipline. Scholars have gone on to examine the ways in which government policies, economic developments, and capitalist exploitation continues to keep people around the world in poverty. Mass movements, particularly the civil rights movement, which incorporated "...confrontational politics, which were often racial in form, resulted in public exposure to the deterioration of conditions in the inner city" (Mullings 1987). Anthropologists such as Delmos Jones (1993), Ida Susser (1982), Carol Stack (1974), and Roger Sanjek (1987), using a perspective similar to that found in the work of DuBois (1899) and St. Clair Drake and Cayton (1945), drew attention to the ways that the urban poor were agents of change, constantly attempting to make choices and re-structure elements of urban institutional life. This new work highlighted the structure of

constraints that often left those struggling for change with few tenable options.

Jones (1993) reminds us that people living in poverty always struggle to achieve, to move beyond poverty, but that their success or failure must be analyzed in the context of their relationship to larger power structures. In fact, we would better understand the intergenerational nature of poverty if we understood the manner in which supra-local institutions created and maintained such conditions (see Piven and Cloward 1971; Mullings 1987; Jones 1993; Susser and Kreniske 1987; Sharff 1998). Despite these advances in the social science literature, proponents of the segmented assimilation model continue to invoke vestiges of Oscar Lewis' arguments.

In contemporary discussions over immigrants and "incorporation" there is a realization that today's immigrants and their children, hailing from Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa, are racialized into the lower rungs of the U.S. racial hierarchy. Denied entry into a level of citizenship offered to earlier waves of white ethnics (Sacks 1994; Ignatiev 1995), today's immigrants of color seek new paths to declare their arrival and ownership of their new homeland. The current literature on immigrant second-generations focuses on the

identity choices the new racialized second-generations must make in order to achieve a level of "upward mobility."

What experiences inform these "choices?" To what extent can we say that today's second-generation "chooses" an identity that spans other Latino and Black categories? Is this necessarily a retreat into perpetual poverty and complacency with one's marginalized status? And, finally, can we determine the degree to which these coalitional identities mark a new "oppositional identity" in the making - not the negative type of "oppositional identity" elaborated upon in the segmented assimilation literature, but one that questions the conditions that create poverty and injustice.

Racializing Dominican Youth

The literature on the second generation has not yet fully examined the manner in which ascribed identities affect its members and limit the "choices" they can make, as well as their social and economic mobility. Dominicans have been racialized both in popular media and popular discourse. Literature on Washington Heights, particularly on Dominican youth, abounds with vivid portraits of violence, drugs, and gangs (e.g. Williams 1989; O'Shaughnessy 1992; McAlary 1992; Gonzalez 1993; Arce 1996;

Jackall 1997). One *Daily News* cover page (May 14 1992) read: "Bodega Terror: Dominican gangs rape, rob and torture their own in city;" re-articulating a stereotypical and racist image of Dominicans and their supposed self-imposed, ruthless, unnecessary violence. In a more recent New York *Daily News* article, the title promises the reader that there is a "Cocaine Crackdown" in Washington Heights and Harlem. Although the article emphasizes the New York Police Departments' seizure of narcotics from a home in the area, it begins with a vivid description of the "frontline" of the new army of drug monsters:

"A 13-year old boy stood on the corner of 150th St. and Amsterdam Ave., his skinny arms folded across his chest as he paced in front of a busy bodega, staring at passersby. Directly across the street, another teen, 17, stood in the same position, his eyes darting up and down the busy block, scanning for *las moscas*, or the flies - slang for undercover cops. The teens were lookouts for a cocaine-dealing gang, The 500 Crew, which took its name from the building where it operated: 500 W. 150th St. Inside the lobby of that building, another man, known as the Crew's manager, took order for \$20 tins, a half-gram of cocaine slipped to customers by a different dealer in neatly folded foil gum wrappers. Upstairs, in a third-floor apartment, was the Crew's stash. There an enforcer stood guard, protecting the drugs from both the cops and rival dealers" (McPhee, July 21, 2002, author's emphasis).

This depiction of the new drug wars racializes young Dominicans. The *Daily News* report refers to the young men as a "pack of pigeons." In the 2000 Paramount Pictures

motion picture film "Shaft," young Dominicans were, once again, portrayed as the greedy, violent, young drug lords against whom society must fight. The heroics of Shaft, the unorthodox crime fighter, are championed as he tries to outsmart [and kill] the young, murderous, gold-chain-wearing, dark-skinned Dominican men. That no other major motion picture features the Dominican experience and that mainstream media accounts continue to focus on Dominicans' involvement with the drug trade points to the way this society has generally seen Dominican youth as a population with pathologies that must be controlled and rehabilitated.

Martín Guevara, the Director of Quisqueya United's Beacon center, is a 31 year-old Dominican-American. He doesn't describe himself as dark-skinned or light-skinned, rather in-between these codes of color. He often talks about the many issues that young people in Washington Heights have to deal with. As part of his work at the organization, he has tried to bring youth together with local law enforcement to foster mutual collaboration. He stated that he believed that a change in this relationship was possible, nevertheless, he recognized the effects of individual and institutional racisms:

"We have friends who are good people, they are open-minded, but you can tell that they walk around with the privilege because they're light [white]. And they

can open doors, go to Yonkers, to the wealthy communities and apply for houses and no one will question them. But as soon as my wife and I try that - and we have the same positions, the same salaries, same everything - we don't have that luxury."
 "This country has never made me feel welcome."

Racialization in the Dominican Republic

In an article describing the prospects for first and second generation Dominicans, Grasmuck and Pessar identify race as a fault line between the generations stating that, "...[race] will undoubtedly remain salient for second-generation Dominicans, who are likely to experience both color discrimination and racial pride in the United States in a way different from that experienced by their parents coming from the Dominican Republic" (1996:290).

Race and racialization processes in the Dominican Republic privilege whiteness, as is the case elsewhere in Latin America, the Caribbean, and the U.S. (Torres-Saillant 1996, 1999, 2000; Safa 1998). The roots of the Dominican version of racialization are found in the colonial era and the Haitian slave revolts (Franco Pichardo 1996; Sagás 2000). The invention of the Dominican Nation as a white, or at the very least a non-black, nation is the product of a long history of political manipulations of "race" by a powerful white ruling class.

In the late 18th century slaves on the Haitian side of

the island of Hispaniola organized the largest and most successful slave revolution in history. Sagás describes the revolution as "...a true social revolution, the first one in the Americas" (2000:26). Slaves revolted against the French colonial government and in 1804 became the first free, black-ruled nation in the Western Hemisphere, as blacks and mulattos replaced the white colonial administration. Initially, Toussaint L'Ouverture, one of the leaders of the Haitian Revolution, found support in the Dominican Republic.²⁸ However, once the Haitian Revolution showed signs of victory and a black government was in place, white elites from the Dominican Republic resisted efforts to unify under black rule. Many whites fled the island. In 1822 Jean-Pierre Boyer, president of the Haitian Republic, annexed the Spanish colony. Boyer declared the entire island the Republic of Haiti. Sagás (2000) notes that at this moment in history, the lower class and the black masses were in favor of unification under black Haitian rule. However, the white elite, having lost administrative posts and privileges based on race, resisted Haitian rule. In the early 1840s they began

28 The Spanish colony offered Toussaint refuge and supplied food and other essential resources to those organized in opposition to the French. They did so in large part because of their dislike of the French, a political sentiment handed down from the Spanish government (recently having been defeated by the French in Europe).

organizing revolts against the Haitian Republic. The white elite attempted to unify those on the eastern portion of the island. They highlighted their "Hispanic" origins and values. But it wasn't until black figures joined the Dominican movement that the country unified against Haiti and drove Haitian authorities from the Dominican Republic.

In 1844, after the Dominican Republic had declared itself sovereign from the unified, black-controlled government,

"...U.S. Secretary of State John C. Calhoun spoke of the need for the fledgling Dominican state to receive formal recognition from the U.S., France, and Spain in order to prevent 'the further spread of the Negro influence in the West Indies' (Welles 76)" (Torres Saillant 2000:1087).

In much of the discourse that followed, elite and ruling Dominicans placed themselves in opposition to Haitians. In their attempts to solidify a national Dominican identity, the ruling elite created the channels through which all Dominicans would claim their national identity and "race" in contradistinction to Haitians. Dominican identity was a Hispanic and Catholic identity, while Haitians became the measure of blackness. Sagás (2000) defines *antihaitianismo* as "...a set of socially reproduced anti-Haitian prejudices, myths, and stereotypes prevalent in the cultural makeup of the Dominican Republic. These are based on presumed

racial, social, economic, and national-cultural differences between the two peoples [of the Dominican Republic and of Haiti]" (4).

The Dominican ruling elite made strenuous efforts to subsume all Dominicans within the language of Dominican national identity. That is, all Dominicans - black, white, and mulatto - were part of the Dominican nation. All those who were part of the Dominican nation could claim Hispanic roots and culture. And all those who were part of the Dominican nation were conditioned to understand that they were "not black," as Haitians were the true measure of blackness. With an elite class of whites and mulattos leading the Dominican Republic, the racial hierarchy, though not rigid, did nonetheless place blackness on the lowest rungs of the social order. However, in efforts to solidify a national Dominican identity, the Dominican state created the mechanism whereby the black masses would claim a measure of superiority over their Haitian neighbors. This was accomplished through decades of institutionalized forms of *anti-haitianismo* and the privileging of a history that championed white European lineages and cultural inheritances in the Dominican Republic.

In the twentieth century "race" has been a central component in conceptualizations of Dominican national

identity. Dominican dictators and leaders such as Rafael Trujillo and Joaquín Balaguer continued to assert the superiority of the "Dominican race" over the "Haitian race." Just six years after his ascension to the presidency of the Dominican Republic, Rafael Leonidas Trujillo ordered the mass murder of Haitians who resided or worked along the Dominican border. Thousands of Haitians were massacred. Trujillo attempted to solidify a Dominican national identity which, in part, included the country's black masses in order to build loyalty to his regime. He organized intellectuals to provide credibility for claims of Dominicans' Iberian lineage and their superiority to Haitians (and their African past). Sagás (2000) explains,

"The regime's intellectuals transformed popular anti-Haitian prejudices, and the elite's Hispanophile ideas, into a complex, yet historically flawed, dominant ideology" (46).

Anti-haitianismo became state-sponsored ideology. One of the most important tools in this agenda was the system of education. Under Trujillo, history books were rewritten to highlight Spaniard and indigenous presence and influences in the Dominican Republic. Sagás (2000) writes,

"The ideology of antihaitianismo, as promoted during the Trujillo era, operated on simple principles: Haitians were an inferior people, the pure descendants of black African slaves who were illiterate, malnourished, disease-ridden, and believed in voodoo; Dominicans, on the other hand, were portrayed as the

proud descendants of the Catholic Spanish conquistadors and the brave Taino Indians (Sagás 1993)" (47).

Under Trujillo the population was socialized into a national identity that denied their blackness. The Catholic Church seemed to further this process by admonishing the Haitian "pagans" and underscoring the Hispanic-Catholic character of the Dominican Republic and." Trujillo used the Church to instill fear of God among the masses, along with respect, obedience, and fear of the Dominican authorities. Anti-haitianismo under Trujillo attempted to unite Dominicans in contradistinction to Haitians, but it did so "... in order to gain the minds and hearts of the Dominican people. Dominicans were socialized to think and act as a sole entity with a single purpose: to passively accept the authority of General Trujillo" (Sagás 2000:61).

Dominican citizens were encouraged reject the racialized category of blackness. Central to Dominican national identity was a social distancing from the blackness identified with Haitians and toward the whiteness identified with the country's elite. In fact, under Trujillo, state documentation, such as the Census and identification cards, did not include the category of "black." Instead, the term *indio* was used as a catchall

category for all non-whites. Negrophobia, a sentiment to which the country's white elite adhered, permeated national ideology. Identifying the Dominican nation as anything but black prevailed in state-sponsored education, policy, and religion. Trujillo and his administration omitted all contributions and influences of people of African descent in Dominican history. The "Black Eve," as Torres-Saillant (2000) states, was written out of history and out of the national conscience.

The omission of the majority of the Dominican masses from the discourse of [white] national identity and history was solidified under Trujillo and it continues to appear in the present. And the oppression of Haitians also continues to this day, as evidenced in the government's expulsion of Haitians from the country during the 1990s.

The denial of blackness in the Dominican Republic is met with the contradictions of race in the U.S. Many Dominican immigrants talk about how they did not discover they were black until they came to the U.S. In the U.S., one cannot "escape" into categories meant to hide one's roots, explains Cristóbal Pierino, an older second generation Dominican-American:

"You can't insulate yourself ever from it, not to mention the fact that wherever you go people will remind you... aha, so that's who you are!"

Second-generation Dominican-Americans say that their views on race differ from those of their parents in a way that critiques and challenges older racist views. Racialized into the most marginalized sectors of this society - immigrant and black - many second-generation Dominicans begin to confront the racial dilemmas their histories present.

Youth Experiences

Experiences and questions of race and racism have occurred in both the public and the private realms. Second-generation Dominican-Americans have encountered racism in both. During my time in the field, informants spoke primarily of racism experienced in the public sphere, particularly in individual interactions throughout the city and in institutional settings - such as schools or with the New York Police Department. The private spheres of racialization include peer groups and their families. Their experiences around race have also been shaped by both these groups. Most of my informants established friendships and/or participated in collaborative organizing across ethnic and racial lines, examples of which will be demonstrated in the next chapter. This has often led them

to reformulate their perceptions of race and ethnicity, as well as their own identities. This has also allowed many to create perspectives around race that contradict and challenge the ideas the first generation may have brought over from the Dominican Republic. They often contend with and contest concepts of race and racism in this society and within their own families.

Experiencing Race with the Supralocal

In New York, as in many other major cities in the U.S., young people of color have called attention to local racisms. Police brutality and unemployment are two issues that have particular relevance for second-generation Dominican-American youth in Washington Heights. In 2000, youth of Quisqueya United tackled these issues in their annual youth conference, entitled "Youth, Jobs, and Justice." They focused the conference on the murder of Amadou Diallo, police brutality, and on the erosion of Summer Youth Employment (SYEP) opportunities.

On February 4, 1999 four officers of the New York Police Department's Street Crimes Unit ambushed Amadou Diallo, an unarmed African immigrant, with 41 gunshots. He

died instantly in the vestibule of his apartment building.²⁹ In early 2000, around the same time as the trial of the officers who killed Mr. Diallo, the New York State Assembly debated eliminating funding for the state's Summer Youth Employment Program. The summer program provided summer jobs and internships for youth ages 14 through 21 throughout the state. In years past Quisqueya United had received funding through the program to employ approximately 500 area youth every summer. Employment at Quisqueya United consisted of either assisting staff in the organization's many programs or participating in skills-building seminars every day of the summer session.

In 1999 more than 80,000 youth applied for the 40,000 SYEP jobs statewide. In 2000 the New York State Assembly proposed to cut funding for 40,000 summer jobs. Kenneth Fisher, chair of the City Council's Youth Services Committee stated, "These are kids who want to work. They are poor but they are ambitious and they do meaningful work and get real-world experience." In a New York Amsterdam News story on the issue, David R. Jones wrote, "The losers will be kids from poor neighborhoods who are eager for experience in real jobs" (3/2 - 3/8 2000. NY: Community

²⁹ The police claim they had simply mistakenly identified him as a suspect and fired when the victim reached for his pocket. Mr. Diallo was looking for identification in his wallet.

Service Society of New York).

Youth from Washington Heights would obviously be affected and they were concerned. On March 29, 2000 the director of the after-school program of Quisqueya United organized approximately 12 youth from the youth council to join him on a morning trip to Albany. The group left at 5:30 in the morning, traveling from their Washington Heights school site to Albany, where they rallied for support of SYEP. They met with their Assemblyman, Adriano Espaillat to talk about the significance of the program for youth in Washington Heights. As the director of Quisqueya United observed, "they met with our Assemblyman and he was really impressive and the youth were able to go into the building and meet with the Assemblyman." It is important to note that Espaillat had a friendly working relationship with the leadership of Quisqueya United. This, no doubt, facilitated the access the youth had to his offices in Albany and to him. They talked with him about the importance of summer youth employment. One former SYEP participant told me later,

"So what would I be doing if I didn't go to SYEP? Ok, so maybe I could make some money in Mickey D's [McDonald's], but that's if they're hiring a lot of people. But it's better for me to come here [to SYEP work at Quisqueya United]. It's different. It's like, you're gonna learn something and you're with people who care. It's the money, no doubt, but it's

something else, too. It does something to you, working with other people who give a shit about what happens to us and here in our [neighborhood]."

In mid April the New York State Assembly approved the 40,000 positions in the Summer Youth Employment Program, now renamed the Youth Employment Program. Staff at Quisqueya United informed its youth membership and began helping youth council members compile their information in preparation for the April 24 application release date. Despite its late application process, more than 54,000 youth applied for the slots available that summer. In late May, there were a number of days when a line of youth waiting to apply for the slots available through Quisqueya United stretched down the entire block and around the corner where the school is located.

The youth of Quisqueya United had numerous discussions about SYEP and the budget cuts. They felt that people outside the community did not really care about what happened to young people there. Marta, a 14-year old in the leadership groups explained how she learned "...a lot of stuff with the SYEP thing. You don't see anybody doing nothing about it so you take it into your own hands. Since you know ain't nobody gonna do nothing and you know it's gonna affect you, you take it into your own hands." Jesse, a 16-year old in the same program explained, "We kept them

from making jails for young people like us. Yeah, cause they was gonna play us. They were gonna take our summer youth jobs, they were gonna take that money and make jails. They were gonna cut schools funds too." Marta said that it's important to keep fighting against these injustices, stating:

"...with each step we can do something and then maybe one day it can be a giant step... we have to take [it] because you don't see anyone else fighting for you. It's just the opposite. It's like people want to see us fail. Or they make us fight really hard for even the most basic thing. Like respect and jobs and just, really, I mean, just for a chance."

Many of the youth share similar experiences with and interpretations of everyday forms of racism. Henry, a 17-year old college-bound senior related his experience with peers in Quisqueya United, from whom he received an important level of understanding:

"I had this friend. He's white. My friend, he was chillin' on the corner [by my apartment]. He's white, chillin' where there are Dominicans. And the cops stopped like, asking the kid if we're doing something wrong to him. Just because he's chillin' with Dominicans, you know what I mean? It's like, automatically, just because he's chillin' with us, that means we're hurting him or something?"

Yudelkis Perez, a fifteen-year old Quisqueya United youth council leader responded, "And that's in our own community. It's not like we're taking a train [and going to another neighborhood]." Berto, another youth council leader

responded, "That bugs me out. It shouldn't, but no matter how many times I hear [stories like this], it just bugs me out." Numerous youth are involved in organizations like Quisqueya United because they seek a level of support. Participating in programs such as those offered in Quisqueya United, including the opportunity to be employed through SYEP, allows youth to share a space with peers who share their frustrations. Many attempt to move toward creating a dialogue around these issues.

Developing Race Through Peers

Second-generation Dominican-Americans develop important systems of support with peers. It appears that peer groups comprised of fellow Dominicans and people of color allow them to develop a community in which frustrations over issues of race and racism can be channeled and identities developed.

A sense of solidarity and mutual support is often developed in friendships among second-generation and other people of color encountering racism. Such is the case for Dinorah Rosa, a 26-year old leader of Dominican Nation. She describes herself as privileged. Though born in Washington Heights, her grandparents raised her in the Dominican Republic until she reached high school. She

lived in the capitol city, in Ensanche Piantini, or the "family compound" as she likes to call it, because her great-uncle used to own most of the area during the time of Trujillo and many family members still reside there. This neighborhood is a wealthier neighborhood in the city. In the Dominican Republic Dinorah is considered white - she is fair-skinned and has straight brown hair. Growing up in Santo Domingo, she attended a private school with kids from many different countries. Dinorah said that her experience had always been one in which she was one of the many different faces that made up a "multicultural" group. Her concepts of race, specifically her perception of her own racial identity changed when she arrived in the U.S. She found friendship and support among peers from different backgrounds in the United States but says that a black friend, Brandy, was most helpful in figuring out issues of race:

"[As a senior in high school] I had my first encounter with skinheads. I didn't know what a skinhead was. I tend to get either migraine headaches or blisters around my mouth when I get really nervous or stressed out. And this kid was harassing me in high school... And nobody really protected me except Brandy. And Brandy was the only black person in the group, so they had issues with her too. So one day I remember going into my house and ...my aunt was going, what's wrong with you? Are you stressed? What's going on in school and then I started to cry. I was like, there's these girls and they're really ugly and they have their head shaved. My father is like, oh-oh, my God,

those are skinheads. And I was like, oh, what's a skinhead? And they explained the whole thing of what a skinhead was. ...that was like my first experience with outright racism that ...I didn't process until years later."

Brandy was around to protect Dinorah during the school day, and after school her father and uncles accompanied her home. Dinorah continued to develop friendships she calls multicultural, but she continued to experience her "blackness" through college.

Many second-generation Dominicans further develop important friendships and collaborations across racial and ethnic lines in their college years. These friends often challenge their perceptions and identifications around race. Dinorah explained how her friends questioned her identification only as Latina:

"...my black friends [would] say you're black. You're black. Cause you got African blood in you and you got big thick lips and you got a big black butt, and like, you black. And, [I'm] going, yeah, I do have all that, but I'm not [phenotypically] black... all of that...made me kind of come to terms with who I was. It made me really think."

The identity issue that most second-generation Dominicans engage is one of "what kind" of black identity they embody. That is, like Dinorah, many of my informants feel that others tried to pressure them to make a choice between being Dominican or Latino and being black. They do not see the two as separate, but feel that black friends would

often urge them to identify themselves as black. The question for many was does this embody all of who they are? They acknowledge membership in the black diaspora, but they infuse this with an identity of Latino or Dominican. Nocena Domínguez-Fernández, a 28-year old organizer for Dominican Nation explicates this Dominican-American consciousness quite clearly. Nocena developed an identity around blackness that distinguishes between blackness as experienced by those in the U.S. from those in Latin America. She developed this identity as a response to the issues and conversations raised with peers in college:

"Well I just have had that conversation with many people about how.. I think a lot of African American people at [college] that I was with felt that there was this thread of African-ness that joined everybody. But they wanted to define what those things were. And I had a problem with that because to them, you know if I said I would have more in common with a person from Puerto Rico who might not look like me in terms of language, and culture than I may have with you, and they would say, well no. You're black. You look black. You have that skin tone. So you would have more in common with me, and my experience, and so if I don't have that, then I'm not African enough. So what am I saying? So I had a lot of conversations trying to explain to people it's not that I'm denying that there is a composition in ethnic, and racial composition in me that can be labeled as black. All I'm saying is that my experience, and your experience as an African person, have other things added to them. You know, and I always used to use the example of you know you're 1st world African person. I'm a 3rd world African person."

Although she acknowledges African roots and her blackness, she distinguishes that from what she feels African-Americans experience. This kind of position does not necessarily suggest distancing from African-Americans; it is, rather, an affirmation of one's place in the African diaspora that includes acknowledgement of roots in the Caribbean.

Contesting Race Within the Family

Contending with their definitions of race and blackness in the U.S is the second generations' parents' perceptions of race. Racial discourse in the Dominican Republic privileges whiteness. As noted earlier, Dominican elites have constructed the nation in a way that highlights whiteness and degrades African roots. Racial codes in the Dominican Republic have been normalized to the extent that the majority of the country's population - whose African roots are visible - can deny its blackness (Torres-Saillant 2000; Sagás 2002). When they do acknowledge their African roots, or blackness, they do so claiming that they "may be black, but at least [they're] not Haitian."³⁰ Categories of

30 I remember my first encounter with this racialized national identity. I was living in the Dominican Republic in the home of an older, dark-skinned Dominican woman in 1997. She and her husband had lived in New York, where they raised their daughters. After both daughters graduated from college, the older couple returned to live in

skin color in the country provide the opportunity for people to identify themselves as other than white without having to identify as black. Such is the case with the infamous racial code "*indio*." Though in much of Latin America it is a term describing indigenous peoples, in the Dominican Republic it is most similar to the use of the term *mulatto*, a mix. Anyone not phenotypically white - from light-skinned blacks to "charcoal black," as Torres Saillant (1998) explains - will place themselves in this category. The continuum of "*indio*" runs from "*indio claro*," light, to "*indio oscuro*," dark. In one Census, the Dominican government created the term "*color teléfono*,"

the Dominican Republic. With money saved over the years and with help from their daughters they purchased a home in a new urban development project in the eastern part of the capitol city, Santo Domingo. During my time there the homeowner hired a young Dominican woman as a live-in housekeeper. On numerous occasions the older woman would talk about the problems she was experiencing with this young maid. She attributed many of the problems to the young woman's poverty or, indirectly, to attributes laced with racial codes: "*esa cultura de esa gente*," (the culture of those people) "*la ignorancia de la raza*," (the ignorance of the race) "*esa gente es mala... se aprovechan*. No, no, no, uno no puede darle mucho la mano, se aprovechan de ti" (No, no, no, you can't give them a hand, they'll take advantage of you). She and I sat one afternoon watching a television video show. There was a young black woman in a hip-hop video that reminded me very much of one of her daughters. I asked her if presented with two identically dressed black women - one Dominican, one African-American - would she be able to distinguish between the two. She answered affirmatively, that you can tell, that they were raised differently. I probed, saying that if the two were not only dressed alike, but had the same hairstyles, makeup, and did not speak, would she still be able to tell. She responded that there is no question that she would be able to tell the difference. When I asked how that could be, if they would look exactly the same, she said "*es que la piel de nosotros tiene otro brillo. Tu ves la piel de ellos, como los haitianos es muy distinto*." She told me this while she rubbed the skin on her arm, as if to prove that she did, in fact, "have a different shine to her skin."

[black] telephone color, to describe people who were darker than the term *indio* would allow. Again, this terminology allowed people to identify an ambiguous blackness without ever having to submit to the term *negro*, or black.

For Dominicans in the U.S., these color codes are not relevant. But perhaps more importantly, second-generation Dominicans are not finding the ideologies behind these codes relevant. Young second-generation participants of one program explained their parents' ideologies around race and critiqued the racism inherent in these modes of thought:

"Well, my mom, she says she's not racist. My grandmother, she's half French and half Spanish. But she's like mad-tinted, you know, she's mad tan, black. So next thing you know, there's black Dominicans, white Dominicans, every kind of Dominicans you could think of. But then when you're talking about 'another race,' they freak out. I'm serious, they do freak out. And it's hard for me. My point was that sometimes parents sometimes impose these stupid beliefs on us and we take it out onto the streets. But some of us are smart enough not to be guided by that, but some of us are stupid enough to fall for that."

They identify and challenge what they perceive as the explicit and masked racism carried over from the Dominican Republic.

"And even on their own. Because my mother she may sound racist, my mother's not racist but I think she is in a way. Like he said. My mother will be like damn, *esta prieta que es azul*. I'll be like, Mami, how you gonna say that? That he's so black that he's

blue? That's some messed up evil... I'm like Mami, we're Dominican. Why you gonna say things like that? "And then you wonder why we're divided. "And then we wonder why even in our own we're divided. "My mother's like that. Because one day I took my boyfriend to my house, right. And he was really, really dark. She was like, why you bring this dark nigger to my house with his big ass lips, whatever, whatever? And I'm like what? You want me to bring a light-skinned guy, a white boy? And she's like, yeah, it looks better. And I was like well, I don't like light-skinned people, I like my dark-skinned people. And she was like, well it would look better and people talk too much. And I was like them people don't pay my rent and they don't do nothing for me. My mother, was like, well, people don't like that and they talk."

Youth, Race, and Politics

Second-generation Dominicans living in New York have developed numerous reactions to racialization processes. For many, this has led them to develop identities and ideologies of race and politics that allow for organizing with other people of color. Speaking of African-American women and their resistance to the popular mammy images, Leith Mullings (1997) explains that, "Despite minimal control of the institutions that produce and reproduce these images, people develop alternative beliefs that grow out of their own experience. In their everyday lives people accommodate, resist, and transform hegemonic models" (1997:119-120). We need to understand this resistance and see it for "...what it is (the power to oppose) and what it is not (submission)" (Gaspar de Alba 1995:104).

Thomas, a young second-generation light-skinned Dominican who often sported an afro, indicated that he attended the youth program at Quisqueya United as a means of protection from the effects of everyday forms of racism:

"The reason I come here. It might sound kind of selfish. But I do a lot of fucked-up shit and if I was caught for half the things I did I could get in trouble. But things happen no matter what [I do]. There's times that I'm tired and I'm trying to get home and I take a cab. [On one occasion a] cop follow[ed] me all the way from the Bronx all the way to the front of my building. My neighbor's are all chillin' outside. I pay the cab driver, they see the money in my hand. They make me get out, take everything out of my pockets. They search me right there in front of my neighbors. Now you don't do that. You followed me. Why? Just because where I was at. Just because I'm Hispanic. Just because of where I live. ...I'm here minding my own business and you're harassing me. At least being here, I'm not around cops or nobody like that. And if shit happens, then [people in the organization] got my back."

Gabriel Aponte, a 27 year-old Assistant Director of Quisqueya United's Beacon program explained that even though he believes that teenagers of all backgrounds face issues of drugs, unemployment, teen pregnancy and, for youth of color, police brutality, he recognizes the important role of institutionalized racism:

"[the problems are] universal. They're definitely universal. It just affects certain groups in different ways, you know, because if you're, if you're Dominican in this country you're going to get certain help and you're going to be treated a certain way, you know, and you're going to go to certain schools. If you're white, you're going to go to certain schools, you're going to get treated differently. You're going to have more

resources. This community, you know, now, -- is getting more and more resources. But before, I'm pretty sure that other libraries downtown had computers before we had up here in these libraries or in these schools. You know, it's taken a while for us to reach that, but it just shows that when, when something comes out, before it gets here, it's going to go through so many levels first. I haven't mentioned blacks because they're a minority like us, but when things get passed down, after it goes to white and rich communities it usually [gets] passed down to them before it hits us, so we're still like the third party you can say. Or if you want to separate it between lines you will say fourth party because then it will go to Puerto Ricans first, because they're considered to be the largest Latino group."

This understanding has led many to take action. Second-generation Dominicans growing up in a city such as New York are developing a level of consciousness and action in attempts to counteract racism and racial disparities. Teen leaders of Quisqueya United's youth programs explain why they felt it was important to participate in local organizations:

"We do not like what we see. And adults have this view of us that maybe we've led them to believe or maybe we haven't stood up [to them]. ...But the parents are a tiny portion of it 'cause school *también* [also], you know. I mean, seriously, think about it. If you hear a teacher call somebody a *platano*, what are you supposed to do? You gotta stand up somehow."

Others affirmed the need to organize and make demands:

"If you see all the other people who got something in this country, it's not like anyone just gave it to them. That's not what it's like. Nobody's gonna give you nothing for free. You gotta work hard. I mean, you gotta fight to get recognized, to get respect. "When we saw the Young Lords' movie, I felt like they could've been talking about us. We have all those

same issues. We should do like they did and organize. They inspired me. We're all here but we need to do something. Things have to change."

Their experiences have not only shaped the way they envision "doing something" about the issues they confront, but their identities as well. Dinorah Rosa, organizer for Dominican Nation said:

"...understanding that all of that had been done by society [the good-hair, bad-hair, light-skinned, dark-skinned thing], and so all that, sort of brought me into figuring out what being Latino was and whether I wanted to be Latin American, Caribbean, whether I was Dominican-American or Dominican, and recognizing that I was American. ...so that was sort of an identity I'd always had, but redefined Dominican style. Since I was little I always questioned these social inequalities... I remember asking my grandfather why there were these poor people and why, like maids [in the Dominican Republic] were black and all these random things and never really getting a straight answer. But realizing all this in college... if there was a cause, I was there. And if there was any cause of social inequality, I was there. And anything that I felt was like unfair or anything, I was signing a petition or like leading a demonstration or whatever. I felt like this was sort of my calling or something that I needed to do, [to] just always be involved. And it included blacks, it included Latinos and it also included the Asians and other groups of color. I'm a part of that no matter how you slice the pie."

While in graduate school, Dinorah belonged to SADA, Students of African Descent Association. Pursuing her Masters degree in Public Policy, she worked with one of her African-American professors, Dr. Walter Stafford. Dinorah explains,

"...[Dr. Stafford] would send me to work with Richie Perez [a Puerto Rican organizer in New York, formerly of the Young Lords' Party] and he would send me to work with Reverend Rawlins at the Catholic Church Charity. And so through him I got all these gigs and also, he was one of the founders of the Roundtable of Institutions of People of Color and through him I met all these really great folks from all these institutions and so, sort of that dream of connecting all these people was like, yeah, it's really great, that's what it's all about. And so that's how I met and worked with really fabulous people from all groups of color and saw like the old guard that had been the young guard. Cause all these folks that were in the Roundtable were all friends in the '60s and the '70s and these were all people who organized at one point and now they were leading like organizations and they were trying to see how to coalesce and I was like, this is so cool. I'm going to be there some day. I want to do this.

...I want to be nurtured and sustained in a community of color. And that, I guess is one of the things that makes me really happy about coming to [Dominican Nation], that although I have friends of all backgrounds and I love it and it's wonderful, it's just, there's a real nurturing sense. ...it was sort of an extension of family..."

Alexander Robles, a Dominican Nation organizer also saw Dominican-American organizing connected to other communities. He explained how he connected progressive movements throughout Latin America to local action and how that empowered him to take action:

"Just to bring out *el orgullo* [the pride in being] Latino like the different struggles that we've been involved, not only in the U.S. but *otros lugares* [in other places]: El Salvador and Colombia, and Santo Domingo, and Puerto Rico, and just to make it, to bring it out there, this is a collective movement that's been happening in different countries and

different continents with the purpose of self-determination. Knowing all of this, *yo creo que a pesar de estar en lugar que no somos blancos* [I think that despite being in a place where you're not white] it gives you more sense of pride to be Latino, or Latina, and a person of color. ...there were some issues where people felt that there were some type of discrimination going on at the school, and so we got involved in outreach, getting people involved and that was good..."

Second-generation Dominicans' experiences of racism and marginalization have clearly allowed some to create a political space that examines and challenges racial ideologies. Dinorah says,

"I just think that if we all did it then that would really contribute to like popular growth in the community, in all the communities we're a part of. And maybe even to this society. We all know that real democracy and real civil rights and equality can only happen if we decide to do something and take action."

Chapter 7

Second Generation Dominicans Expanding the Movement: Building the Potential for Collaborative Projects

Second-generation Dominicans I interviewed recognize that they "wear" markers of race in public spaces, no matter how they choose to identify themselves. In this chapter, I will point out the ways in which second-generation Dominican-Americans with whom I worked challenge racialization processes. This includes an understanding of why and how they organize with other people of color. As I argued earlier, not only does this sort of collaboration demonstrate a connection to "native-born" people of color, but it also suggests an alliance built on the prospects for social change and justice- a fluctuating sense of self and community that permits people to work together to obtain resources and rights from the nation and, in other cases, to challenge the state. What kinds of alliances do Dominican-Americans forge with other people of color in N.Y.? What political prospects are we to envision with this new generation? In this chapter, I focus on second-generation organizers' perspectives and activities in order to more clearly explore these processes. I present two examples of the ways in which these organizers organize around Blackness and "take on" racial demarcations in politics in both New York and in the Dominican diaspora.

Issues of race and racism in police brutality, education, and jobs for youth have taken center stage in many collaborative organizing. Dominican-Americans have, in fact, worked together with other Latinos and African-Americans, the "native minority" groups which Portes et al. argue will lead the new second-generation into a path of "downward assimilation." As I will demonstrate, however, the new second-generation works on events and larger projects side by side with members of other communities of color, including the larger Latino community, Black communities in New York, and at times, Haitians. This is an examination of the way people, particularly second-generation Dominican youth, work across racial and ethnic lines in efforts to confront the state. Their work not only challenges the assumptions of current literature, it dispels the concepts used to describe youth of color.

Remapping Ethnic and Racial Identity

In our attempt to understand the significance of second-generation Dominicans' perspectives on race and identity, it is perhaps fitting to highlight the work of some Latino studies scholars. Discussing the idea of immigrants and racism in the U.S., Candace Nelson and Marta

Tienda state:

"Europeans settled in large Eastern and Western cities during a period of industrial expansion. ...that predominantly white Europeans gave birth to the melting pot metaphor while the very different experience of Hispanics continues to destroy it. That most Hispanics have not assimilated and occupy the lower ranks of the stratification hierarchy brings into focus the issue of the convergence of ethnicity and low socio-economic position - an issue that needs to be explored in both theoretical and empirical terms" (Nelson & Tienda 1997:9).

Felix Padilla (1995) criticizes the vast body of new social science literature that has focused analysis on the experiences of separate or individual ethnic groups. He claims that popular approaches have ignored the interethnic relations among these groups. These Latino studies scholars argue that the question is not whether the ethnic groups have assimilated. Instead, the ways in which members associate with one another is "...a conscious attempt to use ethnicity for the purpose of empowerment and entitlement" (Torres & Ngien 1995:65). But it is important for us to not automatically assume that an alternative, or unexpected, ethnic identification suggests protest, resistance, or a social movement. Mullings states, "What appears as accommodation may be resistance, but it does not lead to transformation. Resisting one set of oppressions may produce or reproduce another; dominant ideology may be

replaced with alternative rather than oppositional forms (cf. Williams 1977)" (1997:121). However, for the Dominican-American organizers on whom this research is based, oppositional identities and collaborative organizing are meant to resist dominant discourses of race and oppression.

The meaningful co-existence of various communities of color leads us into a new territory of pan-ethnic/racial theorizing.

"Ethnic identity is, in this view [in post-industrial societies], a strategic possibility peculiarly suited to the requirements of political and social mobilization in the modern state. People may shed, resurrect, or adopt ethnicity as the situation warrants" (Padilla 1995:441).

Though these "choices" are infused with deeper power relations and political processes, this notion of ethnic heterogeneity and mobilization are very useful in this analysis. Ethnic and racial identity, in this argument, is not inherited or static; it is a social product resulting from a mix of history, politics, as well as from experiences in particular economic and social locations.

In his research on new immigrants and second-generation youth, Juan Flores (1993, 1996) discusses the interaction prevalent among various Latino-American immigrant groups in New York, arguing:

"...the individual and interweaving cultures involved are expressions of histories of conquest, enslavement and forced incorporation at the hands of the prevalent surrounding society. As such, the main thrust... is toward self-affirmation and association with other cultures caught up in comparable processes of historical recovery and strategic resistance" (1993:185).

Collaborative organizing and ethnic identity is a "...collective generated behavior which transcends the individual national and cultural identities of the various... units and emerges as a distinct and separate group identification and consciousness" (Padilla 1995:442).

As pan-ethnic/racial identity is situational, Dominican-American individuals can see themselves as a Latino/a sometimes and as Dominican or black at other moments. When one identifies as a person of color, one takes on a consciousness, or at least an understanding, that one shares an experience and a link with other groups of color. From this interaction and consciousness may come the beginnings of a movement that attempts to foster positive change in communities of color in the United States. Such is the case with many of my informants. Dinorah Rosa, a self-proclaimed Dominican, of Dominican and Puerto Rican descent explains that her identity is rooted in the belief that her experiences here in the U.S. are very similar to what other women-of-color face. Guadalupe

Palmas, a second-generation Dominican, identifies with the newly arrived Dominican youth because that's how she identifies her family. But growing up in New York also

"...puts [me] close to Black people and other Hispanics. I mean, I go to school with people and they're all my friends. We've been hanging out since we were little and they're like sisters. ...yeah, it's like there's a group of us that's I guess pretty multi-cultural. I mean, we're probably all Hispanic and Black but we know what we're about."

Their attempts to consciously link themselves to these other groups allow them to envision a different means of resistance and affecting change. For examples, Dominicans have collaborated with other groups and attended the Latino/immigrant march in Washington, D.C. in October 1996, demanding amnesty for immigrants; attended rallies in support of Mumia Abu-Jamal; and led a ceremony honoring Haitian-Dominican activist Sonia Pierre.³¹ What we need to keep in mind is that when people begin to utilize this self-ascribed identity more regularly and consciously, more fruitful social and political prospects enter our fields of vision.

31 Many people who are not affiliated with an organization may also identify themselves as Latino or person of color. We need not assume that they are addressing political issues and/or trying to overcome disadvantages, or gain political, economic, or social empowerment. Certain events may instill ethnic pride for short intervals during the year; e.g., Puerto Rican Day Parade and Dominican Day Parade. "Ethnic fads" also occur, spurred by Hollywood and/or advertising, at times it has been fashionable to be Latino (see Madonna's & Hollywood's obsession and influence in creating popular/mainstream Latino images) (Davila 2001).

Identities such as Latino and person of color, as social categories, are embedded within a larger system and a longer history. "[We] need to look much more carefully into the social conditions that create the situation for the emergence or construction of this group form" (Padilla 1995:448). This is not merely a reactive force among exploited, impoverished groups that occupy lower rungs of political and economic hierarchies. It is a strategy to achieve various resources and rights for the groups. A self-conscious frame of reference as person of color, Latino, or part of the African diaspora carries with it strong proactive possibilities.

"Rather than deriving from historically fixed and primordial ties, the collective representations... and consciousness derive from the observation of the strategic reactions of disadvantaged peoples to their assignment to underprivileged statuses offered within the context of this society's political economy" (Padilla 1995:451).

From Amadou to the Heights: The New Generation

The issues around which much coalition work have occurred have also permeated the work of younger members of Quisqueya United. In the beginning of the last chapter I highlighted the rallying cry issued by Quisqueya United's youth council in 2000: "Youth, Jobs, and Justice." This was the theme they selected for their conference that year.

Conference flyers announced this demand, and asked people, particularly youth in the Washington Heights community to "...be part of the solution!" One year after opening its doors as an incorporated, funded non-profit organization, Quisqueya United held its first annual youth conference. Every year, youth leadership from the organization, under the supervision of staff and with final approval from the organization's Executive Director, drafted ideas for workshops and themes for their conference. The conference, targeting issues that affect youth in the community, generally drew in between 200 and 400 area youth. The conferences always ran one full day, usually on a Saturday. The year 2000 marked the conference's tenth anniversary and the youth council wanted to make it a memorable one. That spring 2000 their meetings, pre-meeting, and post-meeting time was dedicated to conference planning, particular as the day of the conference drew near.

Planning for the Quisqueya United 10th annual youth conference took most of the spring. The entire youth council, composed of 15 youth, met two days every week to discuss the issues being raised for the conference: police brutality and jobs for youth. Police brutality weighed heavy on the minds of the youth in the council; "how many more [times] will I have to sit there and watch this

happen?" Police brutality against Dominicans was not a new theme addressed in the community. In the early 1990s New York Police murdered "Kiko" García in Washington Heights. Many from the old and the new guard of activists recall the uprisings that occurred after police shot Kiko on the streets of the neighborhood:

"It was a time when we all had to come together. It didn't matter that someone was a dealer or not. The issue was how much we were not respected, we were like animals to [the police]. They couldn't care less about what happened to us so we had to speak out. And we shut down the bridge and just made everyone listen. We weren't going to play the silent victims. We were here and we were going to be treated with dignity. ..And we demanded justice."

For every reported abuse, another handful goes unreported and unchecked; the Dominican youth in Washington Heights know this. In April 1997, members of Dominican Nation videotaped an afternoon in their neighborhood. In it they questioned the police-community liaison on the death of a teenage girl. Eyewitnesses (including a Dominican Nation member who lived in the building) said that NYPD officers had chased her up to the roof of a building, handcuffed her, watched her fall, raced to the bottom and removed the handcuffs. The liaison insisted that it was a suicide and that handcuffs and/or police force were never used with the young woman. Yet eyewitnesses, including young girls, ages 6-10, witnessed the event.

On various occasions, in my own walks through Washington Heights, I observed police arrests, surrounded by groups of neighborhood residents. During one incident, I stopped and asked an older community member what had happened. She said that the police simply stopped a man as he was walking, reached into his pocket, removed some money, and then handcuffed him. They did not take him away, rather held him while they radioed for backup. It took about ten minutes for an unmarked van with no windows to arrive and take the man away. In those ten minutes a group of at least 25-30 people arrived, to "watch over and make sure the police don't do anything..." according to one woman. This woman and I also noted that the police took out a paper bag from their own car - planted evidence? Living in this community, one has reason to suspect.

In 1996, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and police commissioner Howard Safir made strong efforts to establish a contingent of the New York City Police department in the Dominican Republic. One of the goals of this department was to help capture drug dealers from Washington Heights vacationing or taking refuge with family in the Dominican Republic. This was perceived by organizers among whom I worked as adding to the criminalization of young Dominicans in New York City. To my informants, Giuliani and Safir's

effort to expand the reach of the NYPD into the Dominican Republic seemed more serious than that made towards investigating and curbing police brutality in Washington Heights, of providing adequate housing for impoverished Dominicans, and of establishing guidelines and budgets to support a decent educational system for the growing Dominican/Latino population. A 1997 FBI report concluded that of all the major United States cities, New York City had the lowest crime rate, with the homicide rate down 50 percent and overall crime down 36 percent. Yet complaints and cases of police brutality were on the rise. Iris Baez, mother of Anthony Baez (murdered by NYC police's illegal chokehold), observed, "...now you can't even stand on your stoop because they [police] can harass you" (June 2 1997, Channel 11 news report). Young, second-generation Dominicans are concerned about issues rooted in their New York experience; they have led Dominican-Americans to a new kind of identity and organizing - a kind that says little of assimilation and ethnic divisions, but much of resistance to mainstream hype and of empowerment alongside other people of color. In the case of Kevin Cedeno's murder and ensuing protests, particularly at the ceremony where the accused officer received a merit award from the 33rd police precinct, many Dominican Nation members and

other Dominican youth collaborated with other Latinos and African-Americans to confront police brutality and racism.

Michael Robles, a 27-year old pilot and volunteer organizer for Dominican Nation frequently informed Dominicans about marches in support of Mumia Abu-Jamal. On December 5, 1999, in one of Dominican Nation's open community meetings, he talked about Mumia and why so many people have rallied for his release from prison. He invited people to participate in a meeting with *ProLibertad*, a progressive Puerto Rican organization, to talk about Mumia and political prisoners in Puerto Rico. The following Saturday, December 11, 1999 I joined members of Dominican Nation at five in the morning to go to the rally for Mumia. We took the subway over to an UMN campus on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. There, we joined dozens of other young people from around New York City on chartered buses going to a rally in Philadelphia in support of Mumia Abu-Jamal, calling for his release from prison.

What propels youth to work against racism? As one second-generation Dominican-American organizer stated,

"Yes, we have to work for a better future, but don't forget we're here now and we have to make the present a place with more justice and opportunity."

This is what propelled the youth council of Quisqueya

United to move forward with their agenda of a conference wherein youth called out for justice and demanded programs for youth of color. The flyers they distributed for the conference declared, "This year we want to address the most important issues that concern young adults, which are Police Brutality and Summer Jobs." When they first talked about the conference and its main objective - to demand justice in areas such as police brutality and youth employment - the youth discussed staging a march around the area of the conference, near 181st Street. Trinidad, one of the more senior members of the council stood up during one meeting and said,

"You know, we always say how people don't listen to us, so let's make them hear us this time. A conference is good, but let's do something different. We can't just keep our voices locked up inside, inside a school, in a conference. Well, it's good to get together and talk about this but, ok, then what? What are we gonna do? We have to get out there, make people hear us."

Challenging Racial Discourse: Second-Generation Projects

AZABACHE

In 1995 a group of young activists from Puerto Rican, Black, and Dominican-led organizations began discussing the possibility of collaborating on one project. They envisioned an organization of people who shared political

ideologies that demanded justice for Black and Latino populations, and the Black diaspora in general. They called the group "Azabache."³² Parents have their children wear the azabache, a black stone, to protect them from "*mal de ojo*," or the evil eye, caused by the envious and/or ill intentioned looks by others (see Brana 1998; Burk et al. 1995; Mikhail 1994).

Members of Azabache hailed from Muevete! - a Puerto Rican youth organization founded in 1993 by Gina Amaro, a twenty-something Puerto Rican activist and the National Latinas Caucus - from numerous Black and West Indian organizations in Brooklyn such as the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, and from the afterschool program of Quisqueya United. Among Azabache's members were Martin Guevaro, the current director of the Beacon program of Quisqueya United and Farabundo Marquez, former co-director of the same program. Many of those who formed part of the organizing committee of Azabache had also been involved in solidarity movements with Cuba; the two members representing Quisqueya United had actually been the organizing leaders for the New York contingent of the Venceremos Brigade, a U.S.-based organization that assembles groups of young activists from

³² Azabache is a fossilized carbon that, over millennia turns into a brilliant black stone. In Latin America it is commonly carved into a

around the country to participate in work and training in Cuba every summer. Martin Guevara, the Quisqueya United leader said,

"Of course it's connected if you see people that look like you as the constant target. We're targets for police, our communities, our poor. We have overcrowded schools and live in the worst conditions. That's not an accident. Not if you look around and it's happening to all us Black and brown people. ...And we have to address this together. The divide-and-conquer tactics have to be left behind. We need to address all these political, these real issues together."

All those involved were aware of the other social justice projects of their peers. And all had organized various rallies protesting police brutality in the City of New York. A flyer announced a rally to protest the light sentence given police officer Frank Speringo (though sentenced to four years in prison, the Parole Board was opting to place him in a work release program), upon being found guilty of the wrongful death of Maria Rivas, a young Dominican woman:

"This decision is an insult against the Dominican and Latino community, and against the family of Maria Rivas, which confirms that the judicial system and the police are all part of the same structure of domination and oppression. We must continue the struggle for social justice and to end police brutality, and with that goal we call on women, youth and workers, and the community at large, to join us in

charm in the shape of a fist, which is placed on a gold bracelet or necklace.

this protest."

The collaborations around police brutality have also been apparent in New York's Racial Justice Day, an annual event of which Quisqueya United and Azabache were a part. A flyer for the 1997 rally announced: "Rally for Racial Justice: Against Racial Violence and Police Brutality." Held at the steps of New York's City Hall, the rally was spearheaded by the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights, led by Richie Perez, former Young Lords Party member. The event was co-sponsored by *Quisqueya United*, *Azabache*, *Alianza Islamica*, the *Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation*, the *Audre Lorde Project*, *Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College*, *Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence*, *Jews for Racial and Economic Justice*, *Malcolm X Grassroots Movement*, *Muevete*, *Mosque of Islamic Brotherhood*, among others. The rally, in which Azabache, the groups they represent, and many others took part, was led by families of the victims of police brutality. But the organizers went on to say,

"...it's not only about those who have been killed. **All our young people are at risk because of government policies and police action.** We're marching because it seems that society has no use for its youth, especially youth of color. Education, youth services, and job programs have been cut drastically. There are no jobs for young people and the doors of the colleges are slamming shut in their faces. What is the message

when the only increased spending is for prison construction? With dignity, discipline and militancy, thousands of us will send our own message: INVEST IN OUR YOUTH! JOBS & EDUCATION - NOT PRISONS! PROTECT OUR YOUTH! STOP RACIAL VIOLENCE AND POLICE BRUTALITY! JUSTICE NOW!" (emphasis on flyer)

People organized against treatment of youth by the state apparatus, particularly Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's crackdown on youth of color. This echoes the kind of organizing ideology of Quisqueya United youth described in the last chapter. During the Mayor's first year in office, juvenile arrests increased nearly 50%, with "four of five arrests ...for non-violent offenses such as disorderly conduct and drug possession, and half were violations so minor that they did not require fingerprints, just a summons." An Amnesty International report also denounced police practices toward youth of color in Giuliani's New York. Members of Azabache were among the groups organizing around this issue.

Azabache was given a "home" in the Caribbean Cultural Center in mid-town Manhattan. Marta Moreno Vega, PhD, the Center's Director and Professor of Anthropology at Baruch College of the City University of New York, had been involved with many of the Azabache activists for years. She has, in public forums, indicated the pride she feels in having seen so many from today's leadership grow and

flourish (public forum, Baruch College, Fall 1997). The significance of this selection of "home" is very indicative of the emphasis of the organization. Rooted in a center that showcases the importance of Afro-Caribbean cultures and artistic representations, the group's attachment to the Caribbean and to the African Diaspora was striking. Not only were people going to work together around common goals of racial and economic justice, but they would do so with a sense of common heritage, a bond created in their roots in Africa. The selection of the Azabache as an organizational symbol also signaled a connection to Latin America, but it was done in a way that highlighted "blackness." This was no small divergence from the more common racialized discourse over blackness, particularly for those coming from the Dominican community.

For many second-generation Dominicans, including those who are members of Azabache, the examination of racial discourse and an affirmation of one's blackness, or allegiances to black populations, has been important. This is evident in Azabache's mission statement:

*"Who We Are: We are a collective of **African (Black/New Afrikan) and Latino** grass-roots community activists desirous of radical social change and the development of a politics of human liberation. We reject capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy and homophobia as it is these institutions which have constantly oppressed us. We are students, **New Afrikan***

nationalist, socialist, youth organizers, cultural and educational institutions. Collectively we understand that we are responsible for forging this new change in society, our communities and in ourselves. We are dedicated to the defense of human rights globally.

Why We Exist: We exist to initiate a proactive movement for the benefit of our communities. We recognize that a reactive pattern of organizing has had limited success in transforming the overall economic and political condition of **People of Color** - domestically and internationally. We exist to create new alternatives for strengthening and empowering our communities for self-determination, self-preservation, and self-defense.

What We Will Do: We will organize to bring political power to our communities and improve their social and economic conditions.

We will build truly democratic mass organizations.

We will design and build a city wide network that will unify our actions as a larger community.

We as a collective have taken on the charge of empowering our communities with information needed to effectively mobilize our communities, through organizer training sessions.

We will continue to organize political education sessions for grassroots organizations and activists.

We will articulate the need for the larger masses of our communities to understand their/our responsibility to move forward" (Azabache organizational literature, author's emphasis placed).

The two key points this agenda addresses are: 1) the unity in Blackness and in the experiences of socio-economic and political conditions; and 2) the need for ongoing collective action among communities of color.

During its relatively short existence (the organization came to a slow end in 1998), Azabache held monthly organizers' training session at the Caribbean Cultural Center, where they "...continued the dialogue on crucial

organizational issues, such as political prisoners and legal defense, organizational security, grassroots utilizations of the Internet, sexism within the ranks, independent educational institutions, etc." (Azabache organizational literature). Between 1995 and 1996, the coalition established a "... 'Charge for New York City,' that sought to address the position of the African (Black/New Afrikan) and Latino grassroots community and the challenges we face, as well as the direction we must take to effect substantive change" (Azabache organizational literature). In New York City, Latino, Black, and Asian organizing had often taken place around rallies against police brutality (Sales & Bush 2000; Jennings 1994). Azabache was an attempt to continue this coalition on a number of fronts.

In June 1996, the Azabache Organizing Committee held its second annual Roundtable Conference. The event was held in the school where Quisqueya United's held its after-school program. Martin Guevara, the director of the Beacon program for Quisqueya United stated, "...it's important for this to be included in what we do. We can't build a real movement separately. I want these kids [in the youth programs] to see us working together." In the invitation to this second conference the coordinating committee summarized their first conference as "a 'call to action' to

mobilize, educate and organize our communities with the goal of radical social change and the development of a politics of human liberation" (Azabache statement, 1996). They called on organizers to meet to further discuss these issues and create action plans. During the second conference, representatives from all organizations participated in three "think tank microgroups" which focused on the topics of: "1) Defining a common vision, 2) Defining common principles, and 3) Developing common organizing strategies" (Azabache Roundtable Agenda 1996). The conference brought together the new leadership with "...veterans from traditional resistance organizations like the Black Panther Party, the Young Lords, SNCC, The East, and trade unions" (Sales & Bush 2000:33).

The involvement of Dominicans, Puerto Ricans and African Americans in this collaborative project represents an example of the way some contemporary Dominican-American activists imagine themselves as part of a larger network of people of color in the United States. That they do this in political efforts and grassroots mobilization suggests a serious limitation in Alejandro Portes et al.'s framework. Portes tells us that alliances with "native minority" populations, including Puerto Ricans and African Americans would create a path of "downward assimilation" for the new

second-generation, making them unable to take advantage of opportunities presented to them. The involvement of Dominicans in organizations such as Azabache indicates that some second-generation Dominicans are not only identifying with and working beyond their national-ethnic group, but also that they are doing so consciously, with the goal of empowerment and social justice. They question social and political issues in the U.S. and then use the wider network to attempt not merely a modest degree of "upward mobility" but, more importantly, to question the practices of policy and race in this country, and to demand change. In this way, they create a new level of consciousness through coalitions with other people of color and grassroots politics. Dominican-Americans' involvement in solidarity efforts with Haitian organizations highlights the importance of this work.

MUDHA

The second-generation has altered the work and meanings around the black diaspora in ways that extend beyond the local New York scene as well, shifting the definitions of Blackness in relation to Haitians. Dominicans have questioned and attempted to change the racialization of Haitians by organizing to change the lived

experiences of racial discourse, of state-sanctioned racism hiding behind the guise of nation and citizenship. This was evident in the issues the Quisqueya United youth council highlighted for the conference and in the program of Azabache. And, as I will attempt to demonstrate, it was also the driving force behind second-generation Dominicans' involvement with a Haitian organization, MUDHA.

During her tenure as a law student at Columbia University, one of the leaders of Dominican Nation, Leticia Reyna, became involved with an organization in the Dominican Republic, MUDHA. MUDHA is the acronym for "El Movimiento de Mujeres Dominico-Haitiana," Movement of Dominican-Haitian Women. Haitians have consistently been racialized as the "savage race" in the Dominican Republic. Their stay in the Dominican Republic has been historically "tolerated" for the cheap, nearly slave labor they provide for the country's sugar and tobacco fields. The racism acknowledged in the Dominican Republic is often shrugged off as simply the country's consistent adherence to "Anti-haitianismo" (Sagás 2000).

MUDHA is composed of Dominican women of Haitian descent. It is a "non-profit, non-governmental organization that advances the development of democratic, egalitarian, solidarity, sustainable work and the respect

of Human Rights. ...It works from a gender and ethnic perspective with Dominicans of Haitian descent, with an emphasis on women and children" (MUDHA document, translated by author). Founded in 1983 MUDHA works with Dominican-Haitian populations throughout the Dominican Republic.

MUDHA's mission statement reads as follows:

"MUDHA, as an institution made up of Dominican women of Haitian descent, forming part of an ethnic group: promotes the integration and participation of Dominican women of Haitian descent in the social processes that develop in their communities, with the goal of eradicating sexism, racism and anithaitianismo that permeates many sectors of our society; to defend the civil right, political rights, economic, social, cultural, and human rights of Dominicans of Haitian descent" (MUDHA, organizational literature, translation by author).

The disdain for Haitians is still state-sanctioned, with children born to Haitian parents in the Dominican Republic not legally eligible to be granted citizenship status in that country. They are children with no country to call their own. In 1999 Dominican President Leonel Fernández began to round up Haitians in buses destined for the Haitian side of the island. Many were taken away from families; many children who knew no other country than the Dominican Republic and no other language other than Spanish were forced to abandon their lives in the Dominican Republic. This violent rupture did not go unchallenged by

Haitians or Dominicans living in the U.S. On a number of occasions in late fall 1999, Dominican organizers joined Haitian activists in Times Square in rallies protesting the Dominican government's treatment of Haitians. Among this group was Leticia Reyna, a law school student who began organizing with Dominican Nation in 1997.

Leticia Reyna began to work with the director of MUDHA, Sonia Pierre, inviting her to speak at Dominican Nation's National conference. In 2001, when planning for Dominican Nation's second national conference, one organizer nominated Pierre as the keynote speaker. The conference focused on community empowerment through civic participation and the organizer noted that Pierre is "the epitome of civic participation." Organizers also began to work on a lawsuit challenging President Fernández's policies toward Haitians. A legal team from Columbia University, where Leticia was a student at the time, led the legal assault on the Dominican government. Two renowned authors, Junot Díaz, Dominican-American, and Edwidge Danticat, Haitian American, joined forces and wrote an article on the issue. Members of the diaspora of each country met to tackle an issue that was taboo in the Dominican Republic. In rallies in Times Square, Dominicans and Haitians joined to voice opposition to Fernández's

policies and practices; they made their demands in front of the Dominican Consulate's office located in the heart of Times Square. With dozens of Haitian and Dominican activists coming together, including those from Dominican Nation, this moment in history marked a time when the two sides of the island joined to demand an end to the racial discourse and racist practices underlying many state projects. Dominican-Americans had taken their past successes of bridging presumed ethnic and racial divides to change what racial justice meant for all people of color.

Conclusion

Literature on contemporary immigrant groups places many in a paradigm defined as "between and betwixt." That is, immigrants, particularly the children of immigrants find themselves straddling their "home" and "American" societies. Gerd Baumann critiques this notion of ambiguous social existence. Referring to the way social scientists have defined South Asian youth living in London, he tells us,

"I could not work out why they should be suspended between, rather than be seen to reach across two cultures. More importantly, which two cultures were involved? Was there a homogeneous British culture on the one hand, perhaps regardless of class or region, and on the other hand some other culture, perhaps one which was shared with their parents? If so, how were

these parental cultures defined: was it on the basis of regional origin or religion, caste or language, migratory path or nationality? Each of these could define a community, culture, and an ethnic identity in the same breath, it seemed. So between which two cultures was any young Southallian suspended?" (1996: 2)

Are we to retain this language of duality in which cultures are seen as static, bound entities from which one can never really transcend? Or should we examine the manner in which people travel through different identities and social locations, altering them in the process? These questions are central to a study on second-generation youth; "...what is at stake ...is the claim to cultural citizenship, as new categories of citizens or social movements organized by disenfranchised citizens demand both state 'recognition' and 'redistribution of resources'..." (Maira 2002). Second-generation Dominicans involved in organizations like Quisqueya United, Azabache, Dominican Nation, and MUDHA challenge definitions of ethnicity and race, working across prescribed roles to confront the state and to demand justice. Second-generation Dominican-American organizers can be said to have gone through a three-pronged process toward an oppositional or progressive stance: 1- they experience daily and institutionalized racisms in both the public and private realms; 2- they develop ideologies and identities in response and; 3- they use these identities or

ideologies to organize collaborations with other people of color to challenge racist constructs. This "oppositional stance" is crucial as Dominicans attempt to change the structures that have, thus far, racialized them and limited their opportunities. Guillermo Linares, former City Council member for Community District #10, stated,

"...Since the very beginning, I understood the importance of making alliances and connections with other communities. I also recognized that the group that is pushing you ahead is your own ethnic group at the immediate level. But you also have potential allies with whom you are struggling together and whom you unite efforts and promote collective agendas. The results are more effective and viable solutions and with a wider outreach" (as quoted in Ricourt 2002: 77).

CONCLUSION

In April 2003, the Dominican Presidential elections were two months away. They were taking place in a country miles from my field site. Yet there I was, in the Dominican Republic, with the organizers of Dominican Nation, an organization based in New York, having dinner with one of the Presidential candidates and his family in the Dominican Republic. Amid talk of the recent conference in New York, the local (Dominican) elections, and the candidate's and New York organizers' families, I could not help but see the connections between political organizing in Washington Heights and in the Dominican Republic. As the night progressed and the festivities continued, the connections between Dominicans in New York and Dominicans on the island became even more apparent. It was late evening. The power had been temporarily cut off in parts of Los Minas, a neighborhood on the Eastern end of the capital city of Santo Domingo. Nevertheless, food, drink, and pa'lo continued. I sat with the New York organizers on the veranda of the two-story family home (belonging to one of the organizer's family) and we planned for the next day of newspaper interviews and appearances. Although the transnational political connection seemed to be operating, it was not the focus of this trip - at least not the way

current literature on the subject would suggest. We were there to discuss the New York Conference that Dominican Nation held just two months earlier. The conference, as documented in chapter six, sought to build a national agenda - a Dominican-American agenda in the U.S. Dominican Nation had traveled to the Dominican Republic that spring to speak about the conference and the organization and to request support from island leadership in their developing efforts.

Our visit coincided with organizing for the upcoming 2000 Presidential elections, but we were there to let island compatriots know of the success of the New York Conference and to request their support and/or assistance in the efforts of Dominican organizers in New York. We had already met with two national newspapers and the President of the Senate. The next day we were to appear on the Dominican equivalent of the "Today Show" in the U.S. I tried to understand how this connection and dialogue between Dominican leadership and civic participation in the U.S. and in the Dominican Republic figured into my understanding of the development of local leadership in New York.

I did not intend to ignore what some would categorize as a "transnational connection." This type of political

organizing has been extensively documented and highlighted as proof of the transnational identity and political life of contemporary immigrants. It was not something I could overlook. It is still an element of Dominican organizing in Washington Heights. I understood that immigrants do maintain ties to "home country" politics. However, I still question the extent to which everyday working populations participate. Nonetheless, Dominican Nation did, at first glance, appear to conform to the transnational paradigm. Although the goal of their 2000 conference in New York was to build a national agenda in the U.S., their conference included invited speakers from the island country. And there we were, in the Dominican Republic, discussing future plans of collaboration with island leaders.

Leaders from New York initiated the dialogue I have just outlined in an attempt to share their experiences with leadership in the Dominican Republic. Similar to cash remittances, this cultural capital was being sent back to the Dominican Republic; it was an effort to address a new series of issues, born in New York, with island leadership. It was a call for a renewal of collaborative efforts that would benefit Dominicans living in New York. It was, at its most basic level, a move away from the "Dominicanyork" stereotype that still prevails. It was a way that local

New York leadership would hope to build their strength in the city with support from island leadership. The end-result of this flow of ideas and dialogue would be a strengthening of the political power of the Dominican community living in New York. It is at this point that I diverge from the contemporary immigration literature that, as Silvio Torres-Saillant states, lingers on and overdramatizes the transnational condition. I suggest that through the work of Dominican Nation and other organizations in Washington Heights we are witnessing a political strategy frequently overlooked in the current literature. Sitting there, speaking of what New York-based leadership was bringing back to share with the island leadership, I sensed the political and personal connection that might never disintegrate, along with a renewed commitment to building the network that will work to empower Dominicans living in New York. That they also use a network of politicians in the Dominican Republic is understandable, as they try to expand their collaborations with groups that will help them attain power and rights in the U.S.

The identities and networks from which Dominican organizers draw strength are numerous. The ways in which they organize suggest a very strategic manipulation of

historical memory, racial politics, and identity shifts. Rooted in all of the activism I witnessed was a desire to affect change in social and political discourse in New York. Dominicans have not simply arrived in Washington Heights, they have initiated a process of local ownership; they challenge the state and "use" Dominican, Latino, and Black identities and coalitions to claim rights and power in the New York political landscape. Although many who carry out this work now are the second-generation, it is clear that first generation Dominican immigrants also participate in this demand for power and entitlement. The issue at hand is, therefore, not about inter-generational difference or fault lines, for as Lisa Lowe reminds us, "The reduction of ...politics of racialized ethnic groups... to first-generation/second-generation struggles displaces social differences into a privatized familial opposition, ...denying ...immigrant histories of material exclusion and differentiation" (1996:63).

This study has been about the ways in which immigrants and the second-generation have mobilized locally to challenge macro-level politics. The roots of identity from which Dominicans strategically pull are multiple and cry out for a renewed examination. The routes of Dominican politics, however, are clearly etched in the geography of

New York and U.S. politics. It is important to understand the diverse tools with which Dominicans carve this new agenda.

There are a number of conclusions that should be drawn from this work. First, ethnographic and archival research has demonstrated that through current organizational activities Dominican leaders in Washington Heights prioritize New York-based concerns over "home-country" issues. This community confronts problems such as underemployment, government disinvestment in public education, police brutality, and the lack of political representation. Community organizers have been mobilizing around these concerns over the past two decades. Their organizational activities center on educational, economic, and political empowerment in the United States, with "home-country" issues raised much less frequently. This analysis files in the face of the current trend in popular immigration literature that emphasizes the transnational or "home-politics" aspects of immigrant community politics (see also Hernández and Jacobs 2001). This study questions these theories and offers a critical perspective on the history and continuing development of immigrant-community organizing and the place of the second-generation in this

process.

Secondly, the second-generation plays a significant role in shaping contemporary racial discourse and politics. The literature on migration has often omitted analysis of the role young and/or second-generation immigrants in shaping the new immigrant politics. Scholars writing on the new second-generation have attempted to understand this growing population, focusing much attention on their identity "choices" and the prospects these choices signify for the future of immigrant communities. However, this body of literature also omits the second-generation from the political landscape. This dissertation has attempted to understand the ways in which identity and politics are practiced in Quisqueya Heights. There has been a concerted effort to document first and second-generation involvement in local politics. This study has moved away from the assumption of a zero-sum game in which the two generations stand at polar ends of the transnational-local dichotomy. The continuum of activism, the reasons behind these organizing choices, and the ways in which racialized immigrants use numerous identities, networks, and coalitions to initiate or participate in political projects requires a more nuanced analysis. The task of identifying oneself and others - in a particular economic and political

context - is more than an act of classification or "choice"; it is a process of social imagination that forces individuals to search for a new ethos (Flores 1997). This new "ethos" often leads to a shift in how one organizes collectively, how one (re)presents and (re)envision cultural practices, and, ultimately, how one relates to the state and its institutions. The relationship between the state (its policies and everyday practices) and immigrants is often contentious and plagued with rigid power imbalances; one need only observe recent U.S. immigration and welfare policy changes to recognize the detrimental effects of such an imbalance.

The third conclusion involves a nuanced understanding of identity politics. People respond individually and collectively to develop new strategies through which they creatively manipulate or alter state-imposed regulations. These transformations from the "margins" (of discourse and politics) can prove to be vehicles for resistance, as well as accommodation. This research documents trends and practices frequently neglected or misinterpreted in current immigration literature. It places identity formation and manipulation at the center of the discussion of immigrant politics. Social scientists have begun to understand how marginalized and/or racialized individuals and groups

"...selectively appropriate, contest, and transform..." cultural and racial meanings (Gregory 1994:366; see also Darder 1995; Duany 1994; Flores 1993; Fox 1996; Kelley 1997; Mullings 1997; Torres and Ngim 1995). The role of individuals as active agents in such processes is at the forefront of current theories. However, investigations into the roles that youth play in these processes of reconfiguration and transformation are scarce (Amit-Talai and Wulff 1995; Gilroy 1981/82; Solomos and Back 1995; Willis 1977), as are ethnographies of coalition building across racial and ethnic demarcations (notable exceptions include Jennings 1992, 1994; Henry 1980, 1994; Tchen 1993; Yun 1993).

When people take control of the representations of themselves, of their communities, of their cultures and their histories, they can also begin to fashion a more just present and a more empowered future for themselves. From this vantage point, power relations can begin to shift. Frantz Fanon explained that so long as the dominant group's power to represent the history and cultures of subaltern groups persists, so the tools to maintain domination grow stronger (1963). Once a group begins to break from this structure, they can begin to create new spheres of struggle. Those who control the interpretation of history

have, in their power, the tools necessary for charting the future.

Contemporary immigrants and their children, the new second-generation, face a de-industrialized, racialized labor market (Kasinitz 1992; Sassen 1991; Sharff 1998) that may curtail their social, economic, and political mobility. Contemporary scholars have demonstrated that people utilize various strategies to survive -- economically and socially -- under such conditions (Jones 1993; Sharff 1998; Sacks 1988; Susser 1982). Excluded from (or forced into) certain social spheres and labor markets, marginalized ethnic and racial populations select, modify, develop, and act upon different modes of identification (Bonus 2000; Goode 2000; Espiritu 1992; Torres and Ngin 1995). The issue at hand is the extent to which the networks and modes of identification of ethnic groups presuppose "...a conscious attempt to use ethnicity for the purpose of empowerment and entitlement" (Torres & Ngin 1995:65). In a racialized society such as the U.S., organizing around these identities and networks is not only useful but proactive mobilizing.

It is with these tools and sense of empowerment that a number of Dominican-American activists have organized. The leaders and members of the organizations that form the

subject of this research see their lives very much rooted and routed in the United States (and for most, in New York) .

The fourth conclusion is one that questions the assumptions Portes and others set forth in the segmented assimilation model. Ethnographic inquiry has revealed that the "co-ethnic" theory is bound and static and does not account for the ways people strategically and successfully organize across ethnic and racial lines. In addition, organizing with "native minorities" has been crucial for Dominicans; this collaboration has helped catapult the Dominican-American community onto New York's political landscape. On the surface, it does appear that the organizations that are the subject of this study retain the co-ethnic identity that Portes prefers. However, they do not remain bounded to such an identity. Many Dominican-Americans collaborate with other groups of color as they work to build power in the Dominican community.

One person stated, "...it's difficult to feel American... because there's a lot of discrimination against Hispanics" (Duany 1994). Experiences of racism and discrimination, coupled with geographic proximity to other communities of color, have led to an ideological and organizational shift among the new generation of Dominican-

American activists. That is, Dominican-American organizers who were part of this study intertwine their Dominican identities with their alliances to other marginalized groups in the U.S.³³ This new generation is actively engaged in reidentifying themselves and finding a meaningful place in a very turbulent society (Padilla 1995), constructing a strategic and empowered sense of community (Hernández and Torres-Saillant 1998). In this process, the new generation is developing an identity, perhaps a world view, that does not fit into the "melting pot" model, the "cultural pluralist" models, the "transnational" or "co-ethnic" models (Fox 1996; Haslip-Viera & Baver 1996).

Dominicans, through their organizational efforts, are engaged in this endeavor in significant ways. Their activities and projects are geared towards achieving goals of empowerment in New York. It would be erroneous to overlook the very political and oppositional nature of this type of organizing - organizing that focuses on issues faced in this country by this ever-growing community. Their brief encounters with leadership from the Dominican Republic, coupled with the experiences of life in urbanized

³³It is important for me to point out here that the youth I have worked with do not demonstrate the strong antagonistic feelings towards Puerto Ricans, as popular lingo and media hype many times claims.

areas and close association and interaction with other people of color in the United States, affect the ways that second-generation Dominican youth are identifying and re-imagining themselves and others. It is apparent in the programs, events, and conferences they have organized that they seek to address issues pertaining to their New York life: police brutality, poor educational services, unemployment, access to higher education, state violence, voter registration, and social justice.

Community organizations have a long history in Washington Heights; political activism and civic participation have an even longer history in the Dominican Republic. Those who speak of transnationalism theorize that involvement in "home country" politics is a way in which immigrants, denied power in the political mainstream of the "host" country, choose to exercise some claim to power. If they are disenfranchised from the political discourse in the host country, then their choice to maintain some engagement with "home country" politics serves as a tool for regaining a sense of power and control and, in some cases, a rise in social status. In fact, Dominican organizing taking place in New York City in the 1960s would attest to the "transnational" or "home politics" theory. What these theorists have neglected to

underscore is the political climate in the Dominican Republic at the time this organizing was most fervent and the manner in which many activists were also involved in solidarity movements in multiple countries throughout Latin America, regardless of their own country of origin. Political developments would later alter the sense of urgency with which this community addressed international solidarity issues.

During their early years of large-scale participation in local politics in New York, the young Dominican population reached out to other, more established communities of color for support; many leaders of all these populations met in New York City's public schools, including UMN. By allying with Puerto Ricans in the early years, Dominican leadership was able to gain a degree of political mobility. Relationships and ties to "native minority" groups were an important and empowering option for the Dominican community in their early years of political growth in Washington Heights. Alliances with Puerto Ricans, and to a lesser extent, key leadership in the African American community continued after the 1970s and 1980s. This alliance is still called upon for major events (conferences), fundraising, and political support.

Theories of "segmented assimilation" and "downward

assimilation," as proposed by Portes and others state that if immigrant youth "choose" to identify with Black, Puerto Rican, and Mexican American youth, they will develop an oppositional identity and spiral down a path of decreased opportunity and life chances. Authors state that co-ethnic adherence is the key to success for today's immigrants. This perspective resonates with elements of the culture of poverty arguments made over half a century ago while it ignores larger economic and political occurrences that affect the "choices" and "life chances" youth of color face in the U.S. It also fails to capture the empowering option affiliation with other people of color presents for the political growth of populations like that of Dominicans in Washington Heights.

Far from disengaging from U.S. politics or from other people of color, the population of local Dominican activists described in this dissertation have mapped very complex paths of involvement with other Latinos and African Americans as they secure a space in national politics. Rather than serve as a divisive tactic, local organizers use identities such as "Latino," "Dominican," "person of color," "Black" to imagine themselves into a political unit that organizes collectively, if only for a moment. Such identities promote mobilization across multiple boundaries,

allowing for the possibility of a larger, diverse, and potentially more powerful political community. However, I am not suggesting that people simply replace one identity with another for political gain nor that these self-ascribed identities and organizational tactics alone can channel resources and power to the Dominican-American community. To assume such would lead away from the complexities of the ways in which racial and ethnic politics works for Dominicans in Washington Heights. Dominicans "wear" these markers of identity simultaneously. They are at once black, Latino, Dominican, Dominican-American, Caribbean, and people of color, even in moments when they are not defining themselves as such. The issue at hand is, therefore, not about what Dominicans "are" per se, rather how, when, and why certain identities emerge at specific points in history. Why would an individual carry a Dominican flag at a festival held in Riverside State Park in Northern Manhattan, embrace collective identity and action with a wider Latino coalition on a college campus, and then, organize alongside African American, Asian American, and Latino youth to protest police brutality? Rick Bonus explains that ethnicity is "a contingent, unstable, and open-ended site of convergence between individuals and society, structure and agency, theory and practice, and accommodation and resistance"

(Bonus 2000: 22).

At the root of U.S. racial hierarchies and ethnicity are issues of division of labor and allocation of resources. The ways in which people determine when, where, and how one status is articulated over another reveals as much about individuals' political strategies as it does about the society in which they operate. Joan Vincent (1974) explains that these "choices" of ethnicity are embedded in structures and ideologies of domination, exclusion, and power. We must study these processes over time, and we must document the relationships and the processes in which these constructs become important (Vincent 1974: 377).

We must also acknowledge that Dominican leaders are also using a Dominican network. Within this network they challenge what it means to belong to the diaspora; they also question and attempt to change racial discourse in Dominicanidad. The organizations on which this study is based do not identify only with the Dominican Republic. It is true that Dominican families' links to the Dominican Republic are important, as is their identity and struggle with other Latinos and blacks in the United States, and in some cases, with the black diaspora in general. But organizing locally seems to supersede transnational

organizing when the time comes for the new generation of activists to take action, in school settings, in social and political meetings, in theater and arts productions, and in mobilized, organized demonstrations and other political forums. This illuminates and complicates our efforts of re-presenting this group. We must continue to investigate the ways in which immigrants and their children play an active role in trying to change their economic³⁴, social, and political situations in the United States. Their dedication to developing political routes in the U.S. continues to grow, with a growing population of youth continually taking the reins. As one organizer stated,

"There's always been some organizing in the community. [However,] activism in and of itself is not enough. There's a role and a purpose for activism. But I've always been clear that activism has to lead toward infrastructure. And the role of activism here is to create conditions to increase resources to deal with issues here."

Dominicans have been doing this in Washington Heights -

34"...even though Dominicans came predominantly from an urban, middle-sector class/educational background, that is, a higher class background than that of Puerto Rican migrants, it was not an accident that Dominicans came to occupy the same economic niche of the Puerto Ricans in the racial/ethnic division of labor of New York City. As racialized non-citizens, Dominicans were an even cheaper source of labor than were Puerto Ricans. Dominicans replaced the so-called 'expensive' Puerto Rican labor force in the manufacturing sector. Many Dominicans worked in New York City's sweatshops, earning wages below the federal minimum wage. ...By 1980 Dominicans had formed their own ethnic community in Washington Heights. They started to be identified by whites as a 'racialized other' distinct from Puerto Ricans. However, the 'Puerto Ricanization' [read "Latinization"] of the Dominican migration in New York's racial/ethnic division of labor was an accomplished fact by

some through social service delivery and others through grassroots and/or electoral politics in the City of New York, others by calling on the Dominican diaspora to lend a hand in establishing Dominican power in the U.S.

In the case of the organizations with which I have worked, there are differences and conflicts between and within the various groups; however, major shifts are similar, with funding and political orientation and fervor being the primary differences. Although financial, logistical, and political difficulties have come to affect their efforts, the Dominican activists and institution-builders of Washington Heights are creating a new sense of community empowerment. Some attempt this by maintaining a "Dominican" identity, while others reach out to other communities of color. Dominican-American organizing, therefore, cannot be simply and quickly defined as co-ethnic, transnational or local. It is, rather, politically astute and strategic. In our analyses we must recognize the local and national political climates - in the U.S., in the Dominican Republic, and in New York - and how they affect community organizing in general, and immigrant community organizing in particular.

then. Around 50 percent of the Dominican work force worked as cheap labor in manufacturing" (Grosfoguel & Georas 1996:196-7).

We must understand the ways in which local populations and organizations work within the context of and in relationship with larger, macro-level processes. People are not passive or simply reactive in their organizing, but proactive and strategic agents of change in dialogue with political, social, and economic developments around them. It is not difficult to imagine that people will ultimately organize around the concerns and issues they face in their daily lives. People are not isolated; rather, they have a direct and powerful relationship to things external to community life. "Community" and community organizing are not homogenous, unchanging, bound entities. They change, people negotiate relationships - both productive and contentious - with one another, with supralocal institutions. Furthermore, communities are riddled with internal politics and structural changes very much related to larger processes. The transnational literature follows in the trajectory of community studies in explaining that notions of "bound" communities are passé and incorrect interpretations of immigrant life. What I suggest is that this understanding be extended to an analysis of the ways in which immigrant politics incorporates multiple communities - Latino, black, diaspora - in the process of securing political citizenship and empowerment in the U.S.

What I have attempted to explain in this dissertation are the numerous and diverse ways that Dominicans have challenged their marginalization and exclusion by organizing to take ownership of their neighborhoods, and challenging state policies. That they do so in consultation with non-Dominicans is crucial. And that the second-generation is involved in important ways in local politics is not to be ignored. Young émigrés and second-generation immigrants are an integral part of the current social capital found in any community. This is particularly the case in Washington Heights, as this population founded and continues to develop some of the most prominent organizations in the neighborhood.

The organizational identities and networks of Dominican activists in Washington Heights do not follow a linear model, rather, are constantly shaped and re-configured given micro and macro level socio-political and economic developments. Although the argument can be made that the second-generation will have more input from their peers and life in the U.S. than their parents, and that the first generation will have far greater interest in maintaining some connection to friends, family, and organizational compatriots left "back home," it is imperative that we side-step simplistic zero-sum assumptions and examine the history

of Dominican organizing based in New York along with an examination of other, larger political and economic occurrences. And we must do so utilizing the memories and interpretations of those who have formed a part of this community. Their individual perspectives and identities may differ radically, as might their political orientations. But the political cultures and "communities" of which they are all a part have been etched from longer trajectories of activism and will continue to change, as will the actors involved. And it is clear that their involvement and interest in U.S. or New York politics alongside other people of color will continue to develop. This dissertation has been an exploration into the dynamics and histories of contemporary organizing and identity politics among Washington Heights' Dominican population.

Dominicans are positioned into certain locations and, as I have attempted to document, they organize in diverse ways to position themselves into alternate spaces of empowerment. Many immigrants of color are excluded from full citizenship (Haney Lopez 1998; Takaki 1989; Maira 2002; Espiritu 1992). Excluded from certain spheres they work to create new forms of empowerment. Bonus (2000) tells us that immigrants "... want a different kind of inclusion and they want to transform the ways in which the

nation incorporates them" (28).

The political and racial ideologies that motivate many contemporary Dominican activists have been central to the development of local Dominican politics. On a flyer announcing a conference, Azabache quotes Shawna Maglangbayan:

"In essence, an ideology is a set of principles drawn from the historical experience of a given people, a people submitted to the same general social, economic and cultural realities, in a common historical situation... The aim of this set of principles is to explain to this given people the causes of their past situation and their present situation, and the ways and means to bring about a future situation consistent with their desire for an independent and free existence."

Dominican activists in Washington Heights are clearly involved in re-formulating the political ideologies and practices that are, undeniably, catapulting this community onto a path leading to empowerment. The tools with which they carve this new path are multiple. The manner in which we describe their efforts must reflect the diverse and powerful ways in which they challenge hegemonic discourses - of race, ethnicity, and nation - and create community. In the end, scholars must see "... the [diaspora] ...and the connections and disconnections that have made [them] what [they are]..." (Hyppolite 2001:11) - a community organizing an active citizenry in the U.S., demanding resources from

the state and inclusion in local politics.

*Power in Quisqueya Heights: Concluding Thoughts for a
Renewed Scholarship*

I began my "official" period of fieldwork in the summer of 1999. It was the summer the lights went out in Washington Heights and a storm of activism united many local officials, activists, business owners, and residents. That June, major electrical arteries supplying power to Washington Heights disintegrated; Consolidated Edison, New York City's major energy provider, had not properly cared for these connections. Washington Heights residents and businesses went without electricity for three days. Local residents and business owners demanded explanations and justice from the city and from Con Edison. Even Mayor Rudolph Giuliani joined in condemning Con Edison for not preventing this kind of electrical power outage incident. I very quickly entered the political spheres in which issues of marginalization, disrespect, dis-enfranchisement, racism, activism, identity, and coalition building were center-stage. Local activists - with whom I had been involved since 1996 - were at the forefront of the community outcry and organizing that took place that summer. People with whom I worked continue to participate

in channeling activism into local politics. The power I saw emanating from the community has not been sufficiently nor adequately documented.

As I complete the writing for this dissertation, people in the organizations with which I worked are still positioning themselves in multiple racial and ethnic networks, coalitions, and political spheres. With a U.S. war targeting the Middle East and civil rights and freedom everywhere, many have taken to the streets in protest. They connect the U.S. invasion of Iraq with the U.S. military invasion of the Dominican Republic in the 1960s to many other instances where U.S. imperialism has infringed on the basic human rights of people - particularly black and brown people - throughout the world. One Dominican Nation organizer wrote:

"...in case you haven't noticed, we are under siege and our community and its apathy is ill-equipped to deal with these Patriot Games, Mind Games, and the War Games of an unelected President and his unelected Vice President. For some of us born under dictators and other violent, cultish phenomena, this new post 9/11 system resonates with the familiarity of danger."
(Reynos 2003).

Dominican-Americans' understanding - of how global events and process affect individuals' lives - has been at the center of the way they are constructing a vision of activism in Washington. Theirs is not an activism bound to

co-ethnics, to the neighborhood, to the Dominican diaspora, or even to other people of color. It is an activism that embraces all these identities and all those who use these identities in their cries for justice. In a recent article on her protest to the U.S. attacks on Iraq, one young Dominican Nation organizer simultaneously identifies as an immigrant, a Dominican, a person of color, and fully American:

"You see, my existence in this country is a product of 'the American Empire building.' ...My country's attempts at democracy and some form of economic justice were derailed by the U.S.-backed coups that put my people under dictatorships. ...So, I - a subject of the American Empire - came knocking at its door. And they inside its walls were shocked... Stunned to this day as if they just can't figure out where folks like me are coming from - why are folks like me populating the crown's inner-cities and ghettos? Yo - Does America remember what it did to my country's self-determination? So I am a part of you America. I will not become your house Negro. Or more appropriately your house mulatta. I will not stand by and participate in your colonialism. ...I will learn your language beautifully and devour the knowledge that you offer. I will do my part to teach you, America, the values and culture of consciousness. And through you America, the multilingual voices of your empire will be heard. Beware, my America, I might be your future President." (Reynoso 2003)

In my long trajectory with organizers in Washington Heights I have come to admire the many ways they attempt to create a more empowered citizenry. And I have come to respect the

many young people who initiate and labor over this proposition. I began this research in a hot summer, heated with political debates around local issues. I end this writing in a time where war and U.S. imperialism bears a heavy weight on all, including the many activists working from Washington Heights. Through it all, these activists have provided me with a sense of hope. As they work tirelessly to infuse the local and the global with their sense of politics and empowerment, they create possibilities for change.

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