

There's something sinister about Santo Domingos Zona Colonial (It goes beyond the obvious history of colonial dispossession, Indigenous genocide, and African dehumanization and enslavement). It is palimpsestic—it is as much in its contemporary role as a touristic zone as it is in its history as the “first city” in the new world. Upon 3 days of being there I had already been verbally harassed by two white women tourists inside of the area's grocery store, which is frequented by tourists as well as residents, as the Dominicans around me just watched quietly.

On every corner there is a policia turistica (POLITUR) for the safety of tourists, but not for the safety of the black girls, who those white tourists who warrant protection, have come to the island for. The figure of the POLITUR is often times that of a young black person, and when locals come and ask me for a few pesos, they approach to scold them and say “aqui no se pide, aqui no se molesta a los turistas y no se pide.” In short, this is a colonial zone in true uncreative accordance with its name. Having lived here to be closer to the national archive than my family neighborhood would allow, and also to spend time sensing the daily life, and dynamics of the area, as one of my chapters centers on its history and contemporary disturbances reminded me of how immersive and emotional research is, if your research is based in political and personal commitments and values.

Being in the Zona Colonial feels like a different world. For 18 years I have been coming to DR in the summers and I am now finding out that my vision of its life is extremely limited. Even if I already knew this logically, and had already decided to write a dissertation that contend with these realities, I saw ocularly there *is* a middle class as one might say, that there *is* such a thing as peace and quiet, that there *are* places you can walk without needing to sketch cartographic strategies for survival due to the crumbling infrastructure and state violence/divestment that plagues it. And that those places aren't just resorts. But their ‘safety’ which is oftentimes used to dispel what people see as an unfair and dominant narrative of Dominican poverty, incivility and danger, is not safe for all, and it is not value neutral, and it does not create its conditions without violating others. Although my referent for the different world of Santo Domingo is across the river Ozama, where my family lives, you don't have to travel that far to get a sense of the multiple geographies at play, of the black geographies at play in contradistinction with the geography touristic value and whiteness that I see here; The Zona Colonial, as Alicia Medina of Junta De Prietas tells me, is surrounded by peripheral barrios.

That is all to say, that my time simply living here will color my work just as much as my time reading historical documents, looking through digitized collections, and piecing together the scraps and residues about Haitian-Dominican poet Jacques Viau Renaud from newspaper clippings, conversations, poetry books, and the occasional article.

My field research was an interdisciplinary mix of qualitative work and archival work, and perhaps most intensely, observational work. I searched the archives for any stories about the first iterations of dialogues and developments that turned the Zona into a paper town for tourists, I followed the hints of Jacques Viau Renaud's life as if it were a treasure hunt, and I

talked to people—a lot. In the context of scholarly work, it can be hard to find support for anything that might be coded as “identity based” (although that is not the work I do, it is the work many of us in Black studies are assumed to be doing). To add a layer to that devaluation, it can be hard to get people to understand the importance and centrality of *part* of an already tiny island (If Charles de Gaulle called the caribbean islands specks of dust, then part of an island must be a negligible particle.) But like Glissant says, I believe in the future of small nations, I would amend that to say I believe in the future of small geographies, of ways of thinking that lean into the fringes, of not striving to be continental. But most importantly of ways of thinking that commit themselves to blackness as an analytic, to anti colonial values, and to black life from the hoods of Santo Domingo, from Haiti, from the intimacy between black Dominican-ness and Hatian-ness, and from the clutches of the violently fascist Dominican State, its migration trucks, detention centers, and neoliberal allegiances.

Through my archival research here, and my immersive observational methodology I was reaffirmed in those commitments. I leave with more questions than answers but with enough answers nonetheless.