

Queer Archives in the Dominican Republic: A Journey Through Film and Activism

What began as a research visit, supported by the Tinker Fund, to access the archives at the Dominican Cinematheque evolved into a vibrant exchange of ideas and a deep dive into the region's queer cultural landscape. When the Spain Cultural Center in Santo Domingo learned of my project, what was initially a focused research trip transformed into a broader engagement with local communities. I was invited to lead a workshop on queer archiving—one of the core pillars of my dissertation—emphasizing the role of film in documenting marginalized histories. This unexpected opportunity not only expanded the scope of my research but also connected me with a dynamic network of creators and activists, enriching and exceeding the initial goals of my visit.

At the Dominican Cinematheque, I spent several days poring over film reels, newspaper clippings, and other ephemeral materials documenting the national cinema from the 1980s to the present. This meticulous research revealed glaring gaps in the archival representation of queer histories, despite the genuine efforts of the Cinematheque's director and archivists to "queer" their collections. Their work underscores the challenges of preserving queer narratives within institutional spaces that have traditionally marginalized or omitted these voices.

One telling example was our discovery of a single, faded catalog from a past edition of Santo Domingo Outfest, the only LGBTQ film festival in the Dominican Republic, which ceased operations in 2022. The absence of a comprehensive archive for this landmark festival—despite its significance as a rare platform for queer expression in the country—reflects a broader issue: the fragility of queer cultural memory in contexts where visibility and survival are often precarious. The disappearance of these materials is not just a loss for the LGBTQ community but for the entire nation, as it erases a crucial piece of the country's cinematic and social history.

Despite the Cinematheque's efforts to create a more inclusive database representing queer issues in local cinematography, as its director acknowledged in our conversation, much remains to be done. Currently, they are working on incorporating six pivotal works by renowned Dominican documentary filmmaker Oscar Torres into their catalog. These films are part of a donation from the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture (ICP), where they were previously preserved. This initiative marks a significant step toward addressing the archival gaps and reclaiming lost narratives, yet it also highlights the urgent need for continued advocacy and resources to support queer archiving efforts in the region.

During my time in the Dominican Republic, I had the privilege of engaging with filmmakers like Victoria Linares, whose film *Lo que se hereda* will serve as a primary

case study in one of the chapters of my dissertation. One of the main outcomes of our interaction was the public conversation [Archivo vivo: dos miradas al cine cuir caribeño](#) moderated by Dominican film critic Diego Cepeda. In this dialogue, Linares and I shared thoughts on autoethnography and other queer archival practices employed by contemporary filmmakers in the region.

Additionally, I collaborated with queer activists such as Denis Rivera, the creator of *Memoria Queer Dominicana*, and Juanjo Cid, a film editor and the first openly queer candidate representing the political party *Democratic Option (Opción Democrática)*. These exchanges culminated in the creation of the exhibition *Es más chulo recordar en comunidad*. The exhibit was conceived as a space to share memories and construct a collective queer history of Santo Domingo. It opened in August and aligned with the workshop on [Archivo Pajarx](#) and the subsequent conversations with Linares.

These encounters deepened my understanding of how audiovisual media and grassroots activism intersect to preserve and reimagine queer histories in the Caribbean—a key component of my dissertation, which focuses on queer archival praxis within the cinematographic production of the Caribbean and its diasporas.