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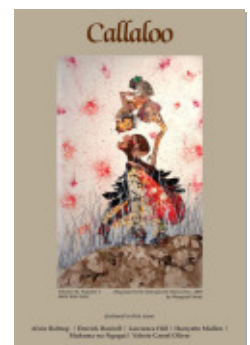
On Pan-Antillean Politics: Ramón Emeterio Betances and  
Gregorio Luperón Speak to the Present

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**ON PAN-ANTILLEAN POLITICS**  
**Ramón Emeterio Betances and Gregorio**  
**Luperón Speak to the Present**

*by Irmay Reyes-Santos*

Throughout the mid- and late-nineteenth century, Ramón Emeterio Betances and Gregorio Luperón led Pan-Caribbean anticolonial and antislavery political movements that did not merely seek independence or the abolition of slavery, but rather challenged white supremacy in the continent. Betances and Luperón antecede the “black and masculine global imaginary” examined by Michelle Ann Stephen in her historical study of Marcus Garvey, Claude McKay, and C. L. R. James.<sup>1</sup> Like these men, Betances and Luperón demanded the political and economic enfranchisement of people of African descent by mobilizing constituencies across national and colonial boundaries. In the midst of independence struggles in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, Betances and Luperón dreamed of an Antillean Confederation that would protect the independence of Caribbean island-nations and the political rights of non-Europeans.

Renowned revolutionary figures, Betances and Luperón participated in a variety of Pan-Caribbean and transatlantic networks committed to Antillean independence and the abolition of slavery. In 1875, Puerto Rican exile Ramón Emeterio Betances (1827–1898) enjoyed the hospitality of General Gregorio Luperón (1839–1897) in Puerto Plata, the Dominican Republic. Along with Cuban and Puerto Rican exiles, they published the anticolonial newspaper *Las Dos Antillas* (*The Two Antilles*), later known as *Las Tres Antillas* and *Los Antillanos*. They actively collaborated with the New York-based Junta Central Republicana de Cuba y Puerto Rico (1865) (Republican Council of Cuba and Puerto Rico) in their efforts to obtain the abolition of slavery and independence for Cuba and Puerto Rico. Both participated in the organization of the 1868 insurrections—Grito de Yara in Cuba and Grito de Lares in Puerto Rico—that attempted to free both islands from Spanish rule. Their exiles in and support of various Antillean territories, including Haiti, Jamaica, St. Thomas, and Curaçao, as well as abolitionist work in Spain, France, England, and the United States, bear witness to their commitment to antislavery politics and the constitution of a confederation of independent Antillean nations.

Closely examining Betances’s and Luperón’s Pan-Antillean rhetoric requires us to move past a celebration of their deeds as iconic national heroes of the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico and to engage seriously the political implications of how they answered questions that remain with us today: Who are we, *caribeños*? How should we formulate a decolonial Pan-Antillean agenda? What is the role of the United States, Europe, and Latin America in a Pan-Caribbean project?

I explore two aspects of Luperón's and Betances's political rhetoric that shed light on these ideological and strategic questions. First, I am concerned with Betances's and Luperón's representations of the ethno-racial composition of the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. Both refused to claim whiteness to describe these territories in order to demand their right to self-government. Anteceding twentieth-century Antilleanist thinkers by, at least, a century, Betances and Luperón developed a decolonial critique of whiteness by articulating a creolized approach to Caribbean demographics and politics. They embody the spirit of creolization described by Nicole King in *C. L. R. James and Creolization* through a constant questioning of "colonial systems of categorization and their emphasis on order, absoluteness, singular national narratives, and fixed identity" (10). Through distinct narratives of creolization, Betances and Luperón interrogated the equation of whiteness with the right to self-determination that justified the system of slavery and colonialism.<sup>2</sup> Their regionalist political discourses were not invested in notions of purity or mimicry of European political models. Both Luperón and Betances publicly acknowledged their mixed-race status and their black heritage to assert the political rights of people of color, while drawing from European and Spanish-American political thought.<sup>3</sup> They narrate ethnically and racially heterogeneous social spaces. Invoking the symbolic value of creolization theories, I situate Betances and Luperón within a multi-lingual Pan-Antillean and Afro-diasporic decolonial tradition. Examining the politics of two Antilleanists with roots in the Dominican Republic and strong ties to Haiti, I center the island of Haiti / Hispaniola in past and contemporary debates regarding the decolonial potential of Pan-Caribbean political projects.

Reading Luperón and Betances suggests that we must examine how Antilleanist thinkers have historically articulated narratives of creolization to explain their call for the political integration of the Caribbean. My close readings ask: How did each one of them mobilize ethno-racial representations of the Caribbean to explain Pan-Antillean proposals? How did those representations help explain their antislavery agenda and political alliances with other *caribeños*, Latin Americans, and European nations? How did their understanding of creolization inform how they would address the demands of autonomist, nationalists, and Pan-Antilleanists? Besides examining their representation of the ethno-racial demographics of the region, I find it enlightening to explore how they developed political relationships that they believed would bring them closer to fulfilling the promises of Pan-Caribbean antislavery and anticolonial projects. At times these political relationships seem to be at odds with their decolonial critique of white supremacy and European rule over the Americas. Other times, how they describe the racial and cultural composition of the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico explains with whom they claim to be natural political allies. Approaching Betances and Luperón through a comparatist lens provides us with an opportunity to assert the symbolic value of national and regional identities for decolonial projects then and now. Their ethno-racial identities informed their political praxis, and, vice versa, political demands required them to conceptualize Antilleanist and nationalist identities.

### Ramón Emeterio Betances

Of Betances's extensive and not fully compiled writings, three pieces have been selected as exemplars: an 1882 letter published in Paris in a volume entitled "Los detractores de la raza negra y de la República de Haití" ("The Detractors of the Black Race and the Republic of Haiti"), his 1870 biographical speech on Haitian President Alexandre Petión, and his 1872 proclamation "La abolición de la esclavitud en Puerto Rico y el gobierno radical y monárquico de España" ("The Abolition of Slavery, and the Radical and Monarchical Government of Spain").<sup>4</sup>

Despite his status as a nationalist hero in Puerto Rico, Betances's racial politics challenged national narratives that began to be consolidated in the island in the nineteenth century. In the autonomist imagination, Puerto Rico was the legitimate daughter of Spain deserving autonomy from the mother country, not necessarily independence. Anti-colonialists in the island often disseminated a Puerto Rican identity that would explain differences between them and Spaniards, but would also highlight the dominant features of Hispanicity in Puerto Rican culture. White immigration to Puerto Rico and Cuba from Europe was encouraged to whiten the population and preempt any black insurrections that could be inspired by the 1804 success of the Haitian Revolution.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, Betances valorized the blackness of the Antilles and spoke about cross-racial alliances to obtain the abolition of slavery and independence for Cuba and Puerto Rico. According to Betances, Puerto Rico was demographically constituted by the "raza de color" ("colored race") ("La abolición de la esclavitud" 77). His antislavery project was meant to politically enfranchise what he understood to be a racial majority marginalized by Spanish rule.

Betances saw in Spain the main obstacle to the fulfillment of his antislavery ideals, to obtain "no solamente la abolición de la esclavitud, sino el reconocimiento, para el esclavo, de todos los derechos del ciudadano" 'not only the abolition of slavery, but rather the ascription, for the slave, of all the rights enjoyed by citizens' ("La abolición de la esclavitud" 73). In response to those who praised Spain for its gradual abolition of slavery in Puerto Rico, Betances's 1872 proclamation "La abolición de la esclavitud en Puerto Rico" unearths a history of Spanish political violence against abolitionists and pro-independence movements. He argues that Puerto Ricans should not be thankful to Spain for the decree that ordered the abolition of slavery but rather must recognize how other countries had for years imposed the diplomatic pressure needed to accomplish it. Betances asserts that the emancipation of slaves is a victory for the Puerto Rican people who had been demanding it for centuries.

Betances also foresaw that the colonial government would continue to exploit the labor of people of African descent after emancipation. He did not envision the full political enfranchisement of *la raza de color* under Spain considering how Chinese indentured workers were treated in Cuba: "nada improbable parece que, bajo otro nombre, reaparezca la esclavitud, y que sea, como para los chinos libres de Cuba, ese Reglamento de trabajo, el ku-klux-klan de la libertad" 'it would not be improbable if, under a different name, slavery reappeared, and became, as with the free Chinese of Cuba, those labor regulations, the Ku Klux Klan of freedom' ("La abolición de la esclavitud" 77). If free indentured workers—who were not legally defined as slaves—experienced slavery-like conditions under the Spanish colonial government in Cuba, then Betances correctly expected the implementation of

post-emancipation policies—such as vagrancy laws and labor requirements—that would guarantee the continued subordination of free people of color in Puerto Rico. He ascribed to Spain a white supremacist project that shared the ideological grounding of the Ku Klux Klan in the United States: the elimination of non-white populations. Denouncing Spanish racial policies, Betances was not interested in affirming the Hispanic heritage of Puerto Rico, or the island’s filial ties to its colonial motherland, but rather sought to underscore the role played by Spain in the slave trade and the institutionalization of racial subjection in Puerto Rico, as well as its refusal to abolish slavery in Cuba until 1886. Betances ends the proclamation warning Spain of its fate as a colonial power and slave trader:

. . . que la institución disolvente, desorganizadora de la esclavitud, acabará de consumirla [a España], y que sobre todos sus hechos ha de pesar, con todo el peso de mil y mil crímenes acumulados durante más de tres siglos, la justa reprobación del mundo civilizado. (77)

. . . may the dissolving, disorganizing institution of slavery, end up consuming it [Spain], and on all its deeds weigh, with the weight of thousands and thousands of crimes accumulated during more than three centuries, the fair reprobation of the civilized world.

As an Afro-descendant who openly asserted Puerto Ricans’ blackness, Haiti, not Spain, offered Betances a precedent and ally for those demanding the right to self-determination of non-white populations. Haiti became in Betances’s political rhetoric and praxis a natural ally of Spanish-speaking Caribbean anticolonial struggles. Haiti carried an enormous symbolic value for antislavery and anticolonial struggles of the nineteenth century. While the constant uprisings of black slaves and indigenous peoples that had been occurring since the inception of the first colony kept colonial forces always on guard, Haiti embodied one of the worst nightmares of the colonial imagination. Having abolished slavery, gained its independence, and defined itself as a black nation, Haiti challenged the racial premises of processes of nation-building in the Atlantic world. Along with European colonial metropolises and the United States, white-identified elites of emerging Spanish-American republics developed policies that sought to contain what became real at the time: the possibility of successful insurrections by non-white populations. In contradistinction, Betances’s 1882 letter published in Paris in a volume titled “Los detractores de la raza negra y de la República de Haití” (“The Detractors of the Black Race and the Republic of Haiti”) illustrates his support of the tenets of the Haitian Revolution and rhetorical deployment of Haiti to assert the humanity of Afro-descendants in the Caribbean.

In 1882, Haitians residing in France, such as Louis Joseph Janvier, asked Betances and abolitionist Víctor Schoelcher to prologue a volume challenging French journalist Leo Quesnel’s article about Haiti in the Parisian “Revue Politique et Littéraire.” In his piece, Quesnel dismissed the constitution of the Haitian nation-state after the triumph of the Haitian Revolution in 1804. Undertaking a historical critique of Quesnel’s article, Betances cites his arguments about the alleged cowardly nature of the black race, and contrasts them with quotes from United States abolitionist Wendell Phillips’s laudatory 1869 speech on Haitian revolutionary leader Toussaint L’Ouverture. Betances quotes Phillips’s admiration for the military successes of the Haitian revolutionaries against the three main colonial armies of Europe:

él [Toussaint] forjó un rayo y lo lanzó, ¿contra qué? Contra la sangre más orgullosa de Europa, la española, y la rechazó vencida. Contra la sangre más guerrera de Europa, la francesa, y la holló bajo sus plantas; contra la más esforzada de Europa, la inglesa, y también ésta se retiró a Jamaica. (“Los detractores” 100)

he [Toussaint] forged a thunderbolt and threw it, against what? Against the proudest blood of Europe, the Spanish, and vanquished it. Against the most combative blood of Europe, the French, and trampled it under its feet; against the most enterprising blood of Europe, the English, and this one too retired to Jamaica.

In Betances’s letter, Toussaint represents Haiti and all blacks. His capacity to gain and protect the sovereignty of Haiti in the face of Spanish, French, and British invasions demonstrates that, like Europeans, Haitians and other Afro-descendant populations have the courage as well as the intellectual skills to lead a political and military movement. Betances’s example places Haiti on equal terms with respect to white-identified European powers. Haitians outperformed the most recognized armies of Europe and therefore affirmed their right to self-government. Consequently, all blacks can demand their independence and freedom from colonial rule and slavery. Affirming the independence of Haiti, Betances recognized the rights of Afro-descendants to determine their political future.

Betances signs the letter as *El Antillano* (The Antillean) claiming a Pan-Antillean identity that ties him to the region. He is not merely writing as an ally of Haiti, but rather he identifies with its history, he claims it as his own, and claims it for the rest of the Caribbean. In an 1870 speech about the life of Haitian former-President Alexandre Pétion, he traces the struggle for national independence and the abolition of slavery in Cuba during the Ten Years War (1868–1878) to early-nineteenth-century collaborations between South American liberator Simón Bolívar and Pétion. At the time, Pétion sent Haitian troops to support Bolívar’s attempt at gaining South American independence. In return, Pétion demanded that slavery be abolished in the independent territories. Betances greatly admired the alliance between Pétion and Bolívar and affirmed the role played by Haiti in the attainment of independence and the abolition of slavery in Spanish American mainland territories. His political work is sustained by his faith in similar enterprises. By highlighting the political alliance of Pétion and Bolívar, he used their example to promote alliances between whites, free people of color, and slaves in Cuban struggles for independence: “Tales son nuestros precursores, ¡oh cubanos! ¿Puede creerse que estamos condenados a morir esclavos?” “Those are our precursors, oh Cubans! Could one believe that we are condemned to die as slaves?” (62). Betances infuses a nationalist movement with a Pan-Antillean and Pan-American genealogy of struggle that emphasizes the significance of interracial relationships to the future of the Caribbean. Cubans must pursue an interracial fight for independence if they mean to be as victorious as Pétion and Bolívar. Haiti once again serves as an emblematic example of the path toward independence that must be followed by the rest of the Caribbean. In practical terms, claiming to be *antillano* means for Betances to draw from Haiti’s history to sustain Cuban decolonial efforts five decades later.

In spite of his adversarial stance toward Spain at the time of emancipation, Betances’s Antilleanism and advocacy for the Haitian Revolution did not entail rejecting European



political influences and support of his cause. It is noteworthy that he spent a large part of his life in France. His education in Paris in the 1840s, his participation in the 1848 revolt that abolished slavery in the Francophone territories and established the Second Republic, and his final relocation to France in the 1870s, informed his thinking and defined his political allegiances. He spent the last two decades of his life in Paris, where he further admired some of the political trends of the country. Historian and anthologist of Betances's writings, Félix Ojeda Reyes asserts that, similar to Latin American Creole elites, he sought models to emulate as well as resources in England and France (32).<sup>6</sup>

Though in "Los detractores" he acknowledges that France was one of the colonial powers confronted by Haiti, Betances promptly affirms that "Ciertamente, no hay pueblo que goce de simpatías más profundas. No digo sólo de Haití, sino en América del Sur, que los franceses. Esas simpatías valen la pena de ser cultivadas" "Certainly, no other nation enjoys deeper sympathies, not only from Haiti, but also from South America, than the French. Those sympathies are worthy of being cultivated" (100). Such an affirmation of the need to "cultivate" amicable relationships between Haiti, Latin America, and France, despite French colonial history, is motivated by Betances's and Luperón's vision for Latin America. Betances finds in France not only a political education and a refuge when in exile, but also the financial and political support he was trying to gather to fulfill Simón Bolívar's dream of a unified Latin America.<sup>7</sup> With Luperón in 1880, Betances created the Unión Latino Americana (Latin American Union) which counted on the support of French investors interested in placing capital in Latin American countries (Luperón vol. 3, 133).<sup>8</sup> The Unión was an initial step in what they saw as the inevitable constitution of a confederation of Latin American and Caribbean nations. During the 1880s, one of the investment projects that would have cemented relationships between the French and a future confederation was the construction of the Panamá Canal by the French. Along with other Latin American intellectuals and politicians, Betances and Luperón preferred to see the project undertaken by France, rather than the United States, whose expansionist policies had been brought to bear in the continent throughout the century. However, the French could not complete the project, the Unión Latino Americana did not lead to the desired confederation, and the Panamá Canal fell into the hands of the United States in 1903.

Betances's and Luperón's deployment of French economic and political capital in the service of the Bolivarian ideal was meant to curtail the increasing hegemony of the United States over the continent. What is quite provocative about this political move is the fact that France itself had colonial holdings at the time in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean. In their attempt to gain and protect the sovereignty of Latin American and Caribbean territories, and affirm the political rights of non-European populations, Betances and Luperón were compelled to turn to resources made available within a colonial metropole. In Betances's case, being of French descent and having received his education and lived in France for a significant portion of his life could also explain his reliance on French resources.

Writing his letter on behalf of Haiti, Betances finds himself in a situation where he must negotiate his decolonial critique of whiteness, European colonialism, and the strategic demands of a struggle with scarce economic and human resources. He self-identifies as *El Antillano*; he sees himself as the product of a process of creolization that has populated Puerto Rico with a racial majority of *gente de color* that can claim Haitian revolutionary history as their own. Haiti exemplifies both the capacity of Afro-descendants, and conse-

quently the rest of the Caribbean, to govern themselves and the need to pursue interracial alliances to gain and maintain their sovereignty. In the meantime, France became another home when the Spanish government forced him into exile, and the French emerged as useful allies for the antislavery and decolonial Pan-Antillean and Pan-American project at hand. For this reason, Luperón also cooperated with the French, but, unlike Betances, he strongly affirmed the Dominican Republic's filial relationship with Spain. Luperón produced a narrative of creolization that decentered whiteness, while simultaneously affirming a Hispanic Dominican ethno-racial heritage.

### Gregorio Luperón

Having been called "el indiscutible líder histórico de la futura confederación antillana" 'the indisputable leader of the Antillean Confederation,' (Betances qtd. in Cordero Michel 10), it is remarkable that Luperón's ideological contributions to nineteenth-century Pan-Caribbean antislavery and independence movements have remained mostly unexamined. Luperón's three volumes of *Notas Autobiográficas y Apuntes Históricos* [*Autobiographical Notes and Historical Sketches*], written between 1892 and 1896, offer an exceptionally productive site of inquiry for exploring the tensions between nationalist and Pan-Antillean politics that continue to shape debates about the future of the Caribbean into the twenty-first century. Unlike most of the recognized figures of nineteenth-century anticolonial movements, Luperón's political thought was shaped by a fraught historiography of Haitian-Dominican relations, the Haitian unification of the island (1822–1844), the struggles for Dominican independence from Haiti, the 1861 re-annexation of the Dominican Republic by Spain, and the 1863–1865 War of Restoration that achieved the independence of the Dominican Republic from Spain. Luperón's politics were also greatly shaped by his working class background and a Dominican nationalist tradition that had seen the emergence of a nation-state amidst continued efforts to achieve stability and international recognition. The 1895 and 1896 Puerto Rican publication of the three volumes that compose Gregorio Luperón's *Notas Autobiográficas y Apuntes Históricos* denotes the writer's conceptualization of a Pan-Antilleanism at times at odds with the racial premises of a nation-building project that became officially sanctioned by the Dominican state.<sup>9</sup>

His narrative of creolization does not reproduce elite Latin American national narratives that privileged whiteness. Luperón imagined Haiti and the Dominican Republic as places undergoing the same process of racial mixture. He questioned the racial basis of Dominican national narratives that referred to Haiti's blackness as entirely antithetical to the demographic constitution of the Dominican Republic. According to Luperón, demographically, both countries were inhabited by a mixed race, a product of miscegenation between Europeans and Africans: "Son éstas la europea y la Africana, que al cruzarse entre sí, han producido otra raza mixta, participando de ambas, según la preponderancia de una u otra sangre, la cual tiende por la ley de los climas a volver a la raza primitiva de la isla" 'These are the European and the African, which after cross-breeding, have produced a mixed race, which by natural law tends to return to the primitive race of the island' (27). In contrast to Latin American thinkers who expected the gradual whitening



of their populations through *mestizaje* (racial and cultural miscegenation), Luperón imagined Haitians and Dominicans turning into the indigenous race that inhabited the island before the arrival of the Spanish and the French. Claiming indigeneity for Dominicans and Haitians, Luperón develops a rhetorical device that could be deployed to support each nation's independence and sovereignty; as the heirs of indigenous peoples, Dominicans and Haitians would have a legitimate claim to the land owned by indigenous peoples before the conquest. In this narrative, Europeans would continue to be outsiders trying to impose their rule in a land to which they did not belong.

It is of utmost importance that Luperón starts his three volumes with a chapter that focuses on describing the geographical space occupied by the Dominican Republic and Haiti. To preserve the national sovereignty of the Dominican Republic requires, in Luperón's political praxis and rhetoric, acknowledgement that its geographical proximity to Haiti meant that the economic and political circumstances of one country affected the other. His history of the Dominican Republic starts by recognizing their shared geography. Luperón asserts that Haiti shares a geopolitical space, history, and racial legacy with the Dominican Republic. In contrast to official Dominican historiography of the period, Luperón states that the fates of Haiti and the Dominican Republic are inextricably linked; these two countries must "garantizar mutuamente su independencia y su integridad nacional" 'mutually guarantee one another's independence and national integrity' (27).<sup>10</sup> He joyfully describes the natural beauty and resources of both nations and asserts that they have been blessed by Providence.

One of the main concerns shaping Luperón's historical narrative is that Haiti and the Dominican Republic must confront in unison the legacies of colonialism in the island in order to succeed as independent nations: "Desgraciadamente pasaron por ella [la isla], cual horrosas tormentas, dominaciones inicuas, dejando por herencia a las nuevas generaciones, los vicios y los odios de la esclavitud y la tiranía, a tal extremo, que todavía están sus habitantes padeciendo las consecuencias de esos horribles azotes" 'Unfortunately iniquitous dominations passed through her [the island], like horrendous storms, leaving the vices and hatred of slavery and tyranny as inheritance for new generations, to such extremes that its inhabitants are still suffering the consequences of those horrible scourges' (vol. 1, 26). Comparing colonialism to the disaster, chaos, disease, and death left by storms in the Caribbean, Luperón suggests that a colonial inheritance is embedded in the landscape of the island. Luperón asserts that colonialism is not a relic of the past, but rather is present in Haitian and Dominican nation-building projects. In Luperón's account, it is a shared turbulent, violent, colonial legacy that does not allow these new nations to build stable democratic systems of government.

Luperón's assertion of their common colonial past and racial future served as a basis for the anticolonial alliances that he proposed and pursued between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. These collaborations were crucial during the War of Restoration (1863–1865) against renewed Spanish rule and the revolts against Dominican Presidents Pedro Santana and Buenaventura Báez, who sought foreign protection over the Dominican Republic.<sup>11</sup> In 1861, Pedro Santana submitted the Dominican Republic to Spanish rule, and in 1869, Buenaventura Báez tried to annex the Dominican Republic to the United States or lease/sell the Samaná Bay to United States investors. Anticolonial forces in Haiti and the Dominican Republic understood that these plans endangered the independence of not only

the Dominican Republic, but also Haiti, and required that Haitians and Dominicans share the task of challenging them. For this reason, Haitian presidents Fabr e Nicol s Geffrard and Nissage Saget, and other Haitian officials, provided political asylum and resources when Luper n led military forces against these colonialist projects in the 1860s and 1870s.

Luper n's imagination of a racially unified island translated into a series of concrete political alliances with Haiti, as well as informed the antislavery politics that grounded his attempts to establish meaningful relationships with other independent nations. His 1888 presidential campaign advocated for the need to "estrechar esos preciosos v nculos con los pueblos latinoamericanos . . . sin excluir ninguna raza" 'embrace those precious bonds between Latin American peoples . . . without excluding any race' (247). Luper n still hoped to develop the necessary hemispheric will to accomplish the ideal of the confederation. He promised that such hemispheric collaborations would be informed by an antislavery stance that required ending the racial subjection of non-white populations. His affirmation of a racially inclusive Pan-American community addressed policies that sought to whiten Latin American populations, the continued exploitation of indigenous and Afro-descendant labor after emancipation, and the infringement on indigenous property and cultural traditions throughout the continent.

While *Notas autobiogr ficas* documents Luper n's antislavery Pan-Antillean and Pan-American projects, the professed purposes of the three volumes are to produce a history of the Dominican Republic since the War of Restoration and to state Luper n's contributions in the making of this national history:

Esta obra no es la historia completa de la tit nica Guerra de la restauraci n de la Rep blica Dominicana; mas ser  un auxiliar poderos simo para los historiadores que la escriban. En ella encontrar n, como en una fuente viva, la narraci n de sucesos ciertos... Sirve tambi n este libro de alegato en causa propia, del personaje que motive y que hace esta exposici n, tan gratuitamente calumniado por aquellos que tanto empe o tienen en apagar la gloria del pueblo dominicano; y que jams  ha tenido por ideal sino la felicidad de la Patria, a la que espera ver libre y gloriosa. (6)

This work is not a complete history of the titanic War of Restoration of the Dominican Republic; but it will be a powerful auxiliary for those historians who write it. In it you will find, as in a living source, the narration of true events . . . Moreover, this book also serves as a declaration in favor of the character who motivates and makes this exposition, freely calumniated by those who are so invested in extinguishing the glory of the Dominican people; and [this character, Luper n himself] has never had as an ideal anything else but the happiness of the motherland, which he hopes to see free and glorious.

References to *Notas Autobiogr ficas y Apuntes Hist ricos* tend to emphasize either its autobiographical qualities or its value as a historical document. However, it is not solely a piece of autobiographical literature because it is committed to a historical narration of the nation, and it is not merely a historical account because it is always mediated through Luper n's construction of his own nationalist subjectivity. He expects his writings to help historians

of the Dominican Republic in the future. To fulfill his national duty, he accompanied the autobiographical narrative with letters, government documents, sketches of historical figures, and speeches pertinent to the subject-matter.

*Notas autobiográficas* constructs a symbiotic relationship between Luperón and the Dominican nation. The story of his life—his coming to consciousness as a national subject and defense of the sovereignty of the Dominican Republic for four decades—becomes the history of the Dominican nation. The triumph of the nationalist revolutionary forces that ended the re-annexation of the Dominican Republic to Spain in 1865 marked a new stage in nation-building, as well as initiated Luperón’s life as a statesman, as one of the men who made the sovereignty of the nation possible. It is implied that the nation would not exist without such a dutiful national subject. In 1895, when Luperón found himself exiled from the Dominican Republic by the government of Ulises Heureaux, he constructs himself as a “*personaje*” (“character”) of this historical narrative, one whose contributions to the glory of his country need to be recognized in the midst of political turmoil. The nation needs him, as much as he needs it.

The historical and personal project that motivates Luperón to write *Notas* reveals tensions and contradictions in his thinking and political praxis in the late nineteenth-century. Despite belonging to a Pan-American antislavery and anticolonial movement, the nationalist aspects of the text reiterate, at times, official national narratives that emphasized Dominican Hispanic heritages over others. For instance, Luperón’s description of Spanish colonial rule affirms the filial relationship between Spain and its former colonies. He expresses gratitude to Spain for granting independence to the Dominican Republic: “España no tiene enemigos en las naciones que fueron sus colonias en América, sino hijos emancipados, que son para los españoles, verdaderos hermanos” “Spain does not have enemies in the nations that were its colonies in America, but rather emancipated sons, who are true brothers for the Spanish’ (31). The trope of Spain as a generous mother country—due to a Hispanic linguistic, cultural, racial, and religious legacy in the Caribbean—is a common reference in Luperón’s writings. Spaniards, Dominicans, and Latin Americans are brothers of the family created by the Spanish motherland through its civilizing project in the Americas.

After introducing the trope of a transatlantic Hispanic family, Luperón’s narrative of Haitian-Dominican relations changes from his previous representation of a population tied by their co-existence in the island and the laws of nature. His zealous defense of a Hispanic Dominican legacy is incongruent with the idea that both Haitians and Dominicans share the same racial composition and must work together against colonialist schemes. In *Notas Autobiográficas* Dominican struggles to achieve independence from Haiti are represented as necessary acts to maintain the Hispanic heritage that sustains the moral health of the country:

El pueblo dominicano defendía más que su independencia; defendía su idioma, la honra de sus familias, la libertad de comercio, la moralidad del matrimonio, el odio a la poligamia, mejor destino para su raza . . . Era la lucha solemne de costumbres y de principios diametralmente opuestos, de la barbarie contra la civilización . . . (34)

The Dominican people defended more than their independence; [the Dominican people] defended their language, the honor of their

families, freedom of commerce, the morality of marriage, hatred of polygamy, a better destiny for its race . . . It was the solemn struggle between customs and principles diametrically opposed, of barbarism against civilization . . .

Here Luperón relies on linguistic, cultural, religious, moral, and racial distinctions to describe the two countries inhabiting Haiti/Hispaniola. According to this narrative, belonging to a Hispanic national family entails defending civilized attributes that do not seem to pertain to the barbarism ascribed to Haitians.

In *The Imagined Island: History, Identity and Utopia in Hispaniola*, Pedro L. San Miguel describes how Haiti became the point of contrast for official definitions of Dominican national identity in the nineteenth century: “The definition of ‘Dominican’ became ‘not Haitian.’ This dichotomy could be seen in nearly every sphere: Haitians practiced voodoo, Dominicans Catholicism; Haitians spoke Creole, Dominicans Spanish; Haitians were black, Dominicans were of mixed race or white” (39). San Miguel attests that, in the Dominican Republic, state sanctioned narratives of *mestizaje* and *hispanidad* were historically shaped by the unification of the island under Haiti in 1822. Luperón engages such narratives while deploying the racialized dichotomy between civilization and barbarism that explained Latin American proposals to whiten indigenous, black, and mixed race populations.<sup>12</sup> Thinkers who espoused the need to whiten Latin America assumed that non-Europeans were barbarous people whose presence delayed the economic and political development of the newly constituted republics of Latin America. Luperón draws from this Latin American intellectual tradition that had justified nation-building policies encouraging miscegenation, white immigration, and genocide. He re-racialized Haitians as non-whites who limited the Dominican Republic’s ability to sustain the cultural attributes left by Spanish colonialism.

Though he had initially affirmed the racial and historical ties between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, and had questioned the assumption that only Europeans could enjoy the benefits of self-government, Luperón ultimately cannot imagine a stable independent nation that does not reproduce European/Hispanic cultural practices and religious mores. His Hispanofilia does not necessarily contradict his narrative of racial mixture in the island because it does follow, to a certain degree, the dominant logic of *mestizaje* that became predominant in Latin America. Unlike other Latin American thinkers, he did not seek a whitening of the population through racial mixture and cultural assimilation. However, he did imagine the eventual elimination or reduction of the African presence, and assumed that indigenous peoples had just disappeared after the conquest. His national subject is a racially indigenous, yet culturally Hispanic Dominican.

Nonetheless, his ethno-racial imagination of Haiti and the Dominican Republic was a revolutionary idea. One cannot forget that he simultaneously struggled with Haitian collaborators against Spanish rule in the island and advocated for the secularism of the state and freedom of religion, the political rights of people of color, and the need for interracial and international political solidarity. In the end, Luperón always asserted that he was Dominican and Antillean. He considered it impossible to claim to be Dominican and not recognize the shared plight of the Caribbean (Torres-Saillant 144).

Noting these ideological tensions between his commitment to an antislavery Antillean Confederation, and the defense of a Hispanic Dominican national family, I suggest that Luperón’s thinking embodies some of the most serious political dilemmas of the region

to this day. His writings propose narratives of creolization that seek to explain the need to constitute regional and national identities to sustain the independence of and racial justice in the Caribbean. The ideological tensions found in *Notas* are representative of the challenges faced by those who try to grasp the radical potential of anticolonial regionalisms and nationalisms in the past and the present. How can those two modes of political engagement co-exist?

### Placing Luperón and Betances in the Twenty-First Century

Luperón's and Betances's political work is situated at the precise moment when the idea of developing a single political-economic unit out of Caribbean islands emerges. They both supported the independence of individual Caribbean territories (and Latin American nations) and the constitution of an Antillean Confederation. As Pan-Antillean revolutionaries they have been credited with pursuing a radical antislavery project, one that sought not only the abolition of slavery but also the full political enfranchisement of what they understood to be a majority non-white population in the Caribbean. What is quite provocative is that, though they both share a similar set of political commitments and collaborated in various campaigns, their ethno-racial imagination of the Caribbean does not fully correspond.

Fully engaging their distinct perspectives on the end-product of processes of creolization elucidates who they imagined to be natural allies of their territories of origin or the Caribbean as a whole. They both developed ideological and strategic alliances with Haiti as the first republic to assert the political rights of black citizens. Rhetorically Haiti provided Betances with an example of Afro-descendants' capacity to govern themselves and Luperón with the possibility of claiming the legitimate rule of the island by its non-European inhabitants. Both counted on Haiti as a refuge and ally for antislavery and pro-independence movements.

In spite of their affinity with Haiti, Betances's understanding of Puerto Rican racial demographics and his personal experience of exile and persecution due to Spanish policies against abolitionist and pro-independence movements are devoid of Luperón's celebration of a Hispanic Caribbean heritage. Haiti figures more prominently in his political writings as a nation whose interests and experiences are in line with Cuba and Puerto Rico, a precursor to the interracial relationships and alliances that should characterize their struggles for independence. Luperón imagines the Dominican Republic and Haiti sharing the same racial history, in the process of becoming the same race, one that can govern the island without colonial interventions. But his valorization of Hispanic Dominican attributes—the Spanish language, religion, and sexual mores—represented Spain as the motherland of the Dominican Republic and Haiti as a threat to the cultural and moral integrity of the Dominican Republic. In Betances's writings, another European nation emerged as a friend of the Caribbean and Latin America, France. His appreciation for French political traditions and support of French investments in the Caribbean causes one to wonder: How would France's colonial holdings in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean have fit in a French-Caribbean or French-Latin American alliance?

Luperón's and Betances's rhetoric underscores the political value of nationalist and regionalist identities and the need to pay attention to their historical contingency—how they get articulated in response to specific historical demands. Betances and Luperón pose crucial questions for those who follow their Antilleanist paths. Reading their work forces us to contemplate how we continue to negotiate diverging nationalist and regionalist identitarian claims, and how creolized identities might get mobilized in the Caribbean for the interests of the state, capital, and the peoples of the region.

In the twenty-first century, the Caribbean's creolized experience gets mobilized to justify the demands of neoliberal globalization and to facilitate the mobility of transnational capital and labor across borders. For instance, international financing institutions have argued that due to cultural intermixing, the Caribbean antecedes contemporary trends of globalization. Anoop Singh, director of the Western Hemisphere Department of the International Monetary Fund, rearticulated this idea at a 2004 conference with Caribbean state officials. He stated that "the Caribbean region can be proud of its integration with the world community. In many respects, the region has been among the pioneers of globalization, with an intermingling of peoples from different parts of the world that began many centuries ago" (par. 6). In Singh's statements, the cross-cultural adaptations that characterize the Caribbean are celebrated as inherent features of globalization. In other words, Caribbean creolization processes are equated with the implementation of neoliberal economic policies. If Caribbean people have embraced the racial and cultural mixture of peoples from Europe, the Americas, Africa, and Asia, then they are well suited to open their markets to the regime of unregulated capital flows. However, as I have argued elsewhere, a Pan-Antillean project that follows the logic of globalization is doomed to fail to meet the needs of Caribbean working peoples and those who still experience the burden of racial subjection.<sup>13</sup> It would subsume the need to engage existing racialized socio-economic hierarchies under the multiculturalist celebration of difference that has come to characterize the global market.

As the Caribbean faces demands to further neoliberalize Caribbean economies through a variety of political entities, such as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Assembly of Caribbean Peoples, the People's Summits of the Americas, and the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), it must engage the same questions Betances and Luperón addressed as they articulated a decolonial project. Put in simple terms, those questions can be stated as follows: Who are we? Where are we going? And with whom?

At the IV People's Summit of the Americas, these questions had not only regional but hemispheric implications. In April 2009, social movements, labor unions, and non-governmental organizations from the whole continent met in St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago, and openly critiqued neoliberal policies. Participants rejoiced in the experience of hemispheric solidarity. During the final day of the Summit, a representative of the Venezuelan-sponsored ALBA wondered how culture could be mobilized to bring together the Caribbean and Latin American. Advocating for the incorporation of the Caribbean into ALBA, Venezuela seeks to create a free trade area, one that fulfills the dream of Simón Bolívar, Betances, and Luperón, a hemispheric entity that works together to address the legacies of colonialism. In this case, it would be a free trade area infused with socialist ideals.

What he noted spoke to cultural and historical differences permeating conversations in the Summit. Solidarity did not preclude debates regarding political tactics and mobilization



strategies when the government of Trinidad and Tobago refused to allow a planned march through the capital and harassed and denied entry to Latin American activists traveling to the country to partake in the Summit. Ensuing conversations required participants to be aware of the distinct histories of struggle and cultural experiences that have informed Latin American and Anglophone Caribbean politics in order to develop a shared response to the state—one simultaneously fraught with tensions and deep feelings of solidarity. The need for translation itself was emblematic of this process. It was not simply a linguistic one, but rather required making sense of cultural and political traditions to facilitate communication across a diverse array of political actors.

Reading Luperón and Betances suggests that any Pan-Antillean and Pan-American project must not ignore the historical, political, linguistic, and cultural boundaries that define nations and regions in the continent. Those boundaries are what constitute nationalist and regionalist identities. As Betances and Luperón demonstrate, one must not underestimate the symbolic value of identitarian claims. To claim to be Antillean, Puerto Rican, and /or Dominican is not simply to state one's cultural background. It is also an affirmation of a political community. Therefore, it informs who one imagines shares a similar plight and experience. For this reason, Pan-Antilleanists such as José Martí, Lola Rodríguez de Tío, C. L. R. James, Luis Rafael Sánchez, the Créolistes, Edouard Glissant, and Ana Lydia Vega for the past two centuries have attempted to develop a transnational consciousness, a shared sense of identity, that, to some extent, overrides nation-specific concerns and understandings of belonging in order to integrate the political and economic life of the region.

For some, the stronghold of nationalism may seem to pose insurmountable obstacles for such a project. Political observers have pointed to CARICOM's dilemmas negotiating its attempts to create a single economy for its members while individual nations act as sovereign actors protecting their own interests.<sup>14</sup> What I believe Betances and Luperón offer is a lens through which we can recognize a Pan-Antillean and a Pan-American unity built in moments of crisis and tensions, as participants in the People's Summit met and debated in workshops, panels, and cultural events, and developed a response to the Trinidadian state, and as *caribeños* respond to the devastating earthquake in Haiti. Their lived experience of Antilleanism was not devoid of difficult rhetorical and political compromises, tensions, and contradictions. They remind us that in those moments of needed mobilization, one must examine which identitarian claims mobilize people and more effectively engage the concerns of Pan-Antillean antislavery movements: How can we accomplish the political and economic enfranchisement of Caribbean populations facing a global regime of racial subjection? Reminding us to ask ourselves this question is one of Betances's and Luperón's legacies for Antilleanists in the twenty-first century.

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NOTES

1. For discussions regarding the masculinist assumptions of Caribbean political traditions and Caribbean women's participation in anticolonial struggles, see Edmondson; Guerra; Stephen; Lazo; Mirabal; Toledo; and King.
2. I acknowledge that, as Shalini Puri has argued, Caribbean nation-building projects have articulated creolization as a discourse of hybridity that blurs discussions of racialized socio-economic inequalities (61–70). I am interested in thinking about creolization as a cultural theoretical model intrinsic to regionalist struggles against colonial legacies.
3. Betances was of Dominican and French descent, and being the son of a landowner rejected the legal whitening of his family in Puerto Rico ("Carta Núm. 67"). Historians argue that Luperón is a Dominican of Haitian ancestry (Luperón, *Notas Autobiográficas* Vol.1.; Castro Ventura).
4. The ongoing publication of Ramón Emeterio Betances's oeuvre by Félix Ojeda Reyes and Paul Estrade will be the most complete compilation of his writings .
5. See Geggus's volume *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* for essays describing transatlantic responses to the independence of Haiti.
6. For the influence of Latin American, French, and British political thought on Antilleanists, see Ojeda Reyes, "Ramón Emeterio Betances."
7. As historian Aims McGuinness has argued, in response to United States expansionism and Spanish colonialism, mid-nineteenth century intellectual tendencies in Spanish-speaking nations connected these territories to France through the notion of a "Latin race."
8. For a historical study of Betances's diplomatic work in Paris, see González Vales; Ojeda Reyes, *La Manigua en París*.
9. For scholarship about Luperón, see Hernández Flores; Rodríguez-Demorizi; Castro Ventura; Núñez Polanco; and Tolentino Dipp.
10. For a short discussion of proposals to create a Haitian-Dominican Confederation during the War of Restoration, see Cordero Michel.
11. For Haitian-Dominican collaborations, see Hernández Flores.
12. See San Miguel for a discussion of how notions of civilization and barbarism informed Dominican nationalist discourses (82–84). San Miguel also traces, in the island's historical traditions, various representations of the ethno-racial composition of the Dominican Republic and Haiti.
13. See Reyes-Santos "Capital neoliberal."
14. For instance, see Brathwaite, "Political Symbolism" and Ramphal, "Wither the Caribbean?"

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