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Nation & Citizen in the Dominican Republic, 1880-1916 by
Teresita Martínez-Vergne (review)

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the tragic twentieth-century legacy forged in Chiapas — one that goes a long way towards explaining the ongoing Zapatista challenge today.

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NATION & CITIZEN IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, 1880-1916. By **Teresita Martínez-Vergne**. Chapel Hill: U North Carolina P, 2005, p. 256, \$24.95.

In a thought-provoking combination of intellectual and social history, Teresita Martínez-Vergne examines the foundations of Dominican national identity at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Although scholars of Dominican history have placed the origins of Dominican nationalism as early as the 1820s and as late as the 1930s, Martínez-Vergne contends that the main impetus toward Dominican nationalism began in 1880 with the rise of the Liberal export-led political economy. The author, an associate professor of history and coordinator of the Latin American Studies Program at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota, contends that the small, urban Dominican intelligentsia, especially in Santo Domingo and San Pedro de Macorís, sought to impose its version of nationalism on the rest of Dominican society. Martínez-Vergne, however, is quick to point out that subaltern sectors of society, such as immigrant laborers, bourgeois women, and members of the working class, had their own notions of what Dominican nationalism and citizenship meant.

In 1865, after the Dominicans achieved their independence for the third time in the nineteenth century, the two predominant political parties in the Dominican Republic, known as the *Rojos* [Reds] and the *Azules* [Blues], engaged in fierce political fighting. Between 1865 and 1879, the Dominican presidency, dominated by *caudillo* [strongman] rule, changed hands no fewer than twenty times. At the end of the 1860s, the leader of the *Rojos*, Buenaventura Báez, believing that independence was not a viable option for the Dominican Republic, attempted to annex his nation to the United States of America. In October 1879, however, Gregorio Luperón, the leader of the *Azules*, took control of the Dominican Republic. In 1880, Luperón instituted a Liberal constitution inspired by Positivism and Social Darwinism. This new constitution promoted economic and military reforms, public education, private property, inclusive politics, modern agricultural techniques, and an export economy based on the production of sugar cane. Notwithstanding the dictatorship of Ulises Heureaux, the Dominican intelligentsia attempted to impose this view of modernity on Dominican society until the U.S. military intervention in 1916.

Emphasizing the impact of the Dominican intelligentsia on nation building in the Dominican Republic, Martínez-Vergne argues that “nationalism

is always invented" (xii). Although the author provides the reader with a plethora of primary source information concerning the views of the Dominican intelligentsia, she consistently highlights the impact of Eugenio María de Hostos, who was appointed to oversee the implementation of a public school system in the Dominican Republic in 1880. Thus, although many Dominican scholars have attempted to portray Dominican nationalism as either a spontaneous event or the result of some heroic moment, Martínez-Vergne holds that the formation of *lo Dominicano* [that which is Dominican] was a calculated plan carried out by the Dominican intelligentsia attempting to modernize their nation.

The author believes that the basis for this new nationalism can be found in urban areas. Notwithstanding her emphasis on these areas, Martínez-Vergne explains that economic growth in the rural areas, especially in the "nascent sugar industry," was the foundation of the Dominican intelligentsia's hopes for "political, economic, and social renovation" (1). According to the author, the means that the Dominican intelligentsia used to create this sense of citizenship and nationalism was "not a shared past, but rather a common destiny" (19). Attempts at modernizing the economy, such as the establishment of the Sociedad Agrícola Dominicana [Dominican Agricultural Society] in 1880, reveal the Dominican intelligentsia's concern about the well-being of the economy and the impact of the national economy on building a sense of Dominican nationalism.

Martínez-Vergne, however, does not believe that the formation of nation and citizen was completely the result of the Dominican intelligentsia. She places great emphasis on the impact of subaltern groups on the development of Dominican national identity. Martínez-Vergne contends that, more than any one factor, the "everyday interactions of urban residents molded notions of citizenship" (81). She explores the impact that three specific subaltern groups—immigrants, bourgeois women, and members of the working class—had on the development of nation and citizen at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Although the urban dwellers did not completely conform to the Dominican intelligentsia's idea of citizenship, they did develop "a working version of citizenship" (146).

Nation & Citizen in the Dominican Republic, 1880-1916 is an extremely well-researched and well-documented study. Although a more complete discussion of the political thought of Heureaux, who is merely referred to a "tyrant" throughout the book, would have helped the student unfamiliar with the vagaries of nineteenth-century Dominican events, the author has provided the reader with an engaging and original book that adds to the growing collection of Dominican historiography. The author's comparative perspective, which relates events in the Dominican Republic to similar events and impulses elsewhere in Latin America, adds to the book's value.

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