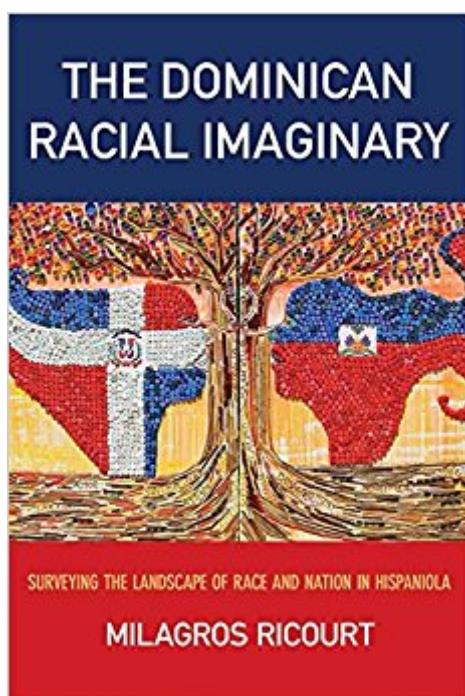


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The Dominican Racial Imaginary: Surveying The Landscape Of Race And Nation In Hispaniola (Critical Caribbean Studies)



Synopsis

This book begins with a simple question: why do so many Dominicans deny the African components of their DNA, culture, and history? Seeking answers, Milagros Ricourt uncovers a complex and often contradictory Dominican racial imaginary. Observing how Dominicans have traditionally identified in opposition to their neighbors on the island of Hispaniola—Haitians of African descent—she finds that the Dominican Republic’s social elite has long propagated a national creation myth that conceives of the Dominican as a perfect hybrid of native islanders and Spanish settlers. Yet as she pores through rare historical documents, interviews contemporary Dominicans, and recalls her own childhood memories of life on the island, Ricourt encounters persistent challenges to this myth. Through fieldwork at the Dominican-Haitian border, she gives a firsthand look at how Dominicans are resisting the official account of their national identity and instead embracing the African influence that has always been part of their cultural heritage.

Building on the work of theorists ranging from Edward Said to Édouard Glissant, this book expands our understanding of how national and racial imaginaries develop, why they persist, and how they might be subverted. As it confronts Hispaniola’s dark legacies of slavery and colonial oppression, *The Dominican Racial Imaginary* also delivers an inspiring message on how multicultural communities might cooperate to disrupt the enduring power of white supremacy.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"A necessary book to rethink Dominican racial identities. Ricourt challenges the hegemonic national imaginary and brings forward alternative discourses and practices highlighting the presence of Dominican Black identities and culture." (JosÃ© Itzigsohn professor of sociology, Brown University)"By reconsidering Dominican Vodou as the living legacy of Indigenous-Black liberation projects, Ricourt manages to make sense of how Dominican history and culture create and sustain both black 'denial' and black 'existence.' I cannot emphasize enough how powerful, radical, and important an argument this is." (Ginetta E. B. Candelario sociology and Latin American & Latino studies, Smith College)"Ricourt challenges the long-held idea of black denial in the Dominican Republic by highlighting examples from Afro-Dominican religion and other cultural practices where the African past is present. This book continues to move us forward in the ways race and blackness are discussed in the Dominican Republic." (Kimberly Eison Simmons Anthropology and African American Studies, University of South Carolina)

MILAGROS RICOURT is a professor of Latin American and Puerto Rican studies at Lehman College, the City University of New York. She is the author of *Women in Latin America* and *Dominicans in New York City: Power from the Margins*, and coauthor of *Hispanas de Queens: Latino Panethnicity in a New York City Neighborhood*.

The Dominican Racial Imaginary by Milagros Ricourt looks at the racial landscape in the Dominican Republic. There is a denial of their African heritage in the minds of many Dominicans. She looks at the historical factors that surround the official narrative about what Dominicans are, with regard to race. Ricourt looks at the historical sources to prove there is a more accurate narrative that the official one is actively ignoring. The book itself is an interesting look at how the Dominican Republic and Haiti got to where they are. It intertwines stories of different communities and perspectives that allow one to get a good look on the island's racial identity.

excellent book

In her ethnographic study *Dominican Racial Imaginary*, Milagros Ricourt pursues the racial, social, and political history of Hispaniola. Being born in the Dominican Republic and also being part of the

Dominican diaspora in the United States, she has witnessed two different notions of what is to be Dominican and how Dominicans racially self-identify in each place, from self-categorizing as white to embracing African roots. This experience generates questions that she answers after spending time in the border region and researching the colonial history of the Dominican Republic and Haiti. I found very interesting when Ricourt writes about parallels between Cuban orishas and the mysteries of Dominican Vodou that emerged in the midst of resistance to slavery. The author does a phenomenal job going through history searching for answers to explain the development of the Dominican Racial Imaginary.

In Milagros Ricourt's book *The Dominican Racial Imaginary: Surveying the Landscape of Race and Nation in Hispaniola*, we explore the one question we all wonder and that is why do Dominicans neglect their African heritage? The question has even been simplified to why do Dominicans and Haitians not get along? Readers learn that the official policies of the Dominican government are discriminatory against those who come from Haiti. Ricourt explains that Dominicans trace their heritage to Europeans roots to distinguish themselves from their Haitian neighbors that are classified as Africans. The complex relationship between Dominicans and Haitians can be traced back to resentments that the Spanish elites had towards the neighboring French colony. Dominican history was mostly written from the slaveholder's perspective, who were loyal to their Spanish heritage. The author suggests that although the Dominican authorities have made great effort in trying to erase the African roots of the Dominican society, it is still present in many cultural behaviors. After reading the book, I was very upset with the ideology that these people had, and even more upset that they could not accept where they truly came from. However, I do not blame the people, as much as I blame the dictator who was in power at the time, Trujillo. We learn about his dictatorship, as well as the people's impact because of it. The book touches on other topics such as vodou as well, and how common it is within the Haitian community, but the author wanted to shed some light on Dominican Vodou. All I can say is, I appreciate this book for all of the information it contains, and how well put together it is.

In *The Dominican Racial Imaginary: Surveying the Landscape of Race and Nation in Hispaniola*, Milagros Ricourt explores the question, as to why Dominicans deny the African component of their genetic DNA, culture and history. What are the reasons that would push one nation to harbor hate, racism and genocidal sentiment against a neighboring nation? In search of answers to these questions, Ricourt presents her point of view through an accumulation of her experiences and

through experiences of Dominican, her travels to Haiti and other Caribbean Islands, and visits to archives and observations of Dominicans both in the United States and throughout the diaspora to bring an academic approach to help understand where these questions stem from. I found this book to be very informative and the material to be easy to read. Ricourt's Dominican roots provides an authentic voice from which she was able to speak and present the subject matter of this book. I really enjoyed reading this book and would highly recommend this book to students, researchers and anyone seeking information on the racial examination of the Caribbean and Dominican Republican culture.

Highly Recommended book for anyone interested in the History of Dominican Republic. Ricourt has written this book to find the answer to the question why Dominicans deny their Africanness. Also, she had provided context and claimed to solve the reason for the hatred between Dominican and Haitian. Not only that, Ricourt has kept a balance of keeping it neutral by showing incidents that are mutual and of cooperation between the two nations. For example, her bus ride in chapter 2 where she had seen Dominican women taking care of the Haitian babies in absence of their parents. Inter- Racial happy couples were seen on the five-hour bus ride. However, there were military officers who were criticizing the Haitian. In return, the Haitian was defending themselves. This bus full of diverse people viewed from Ricourt's lens is a figurative way of showing the Dominican society. There were people who respected each other differences and did not bother what was going on and there were the powerful officials who left no stone unturned to criticize the Haitian.

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