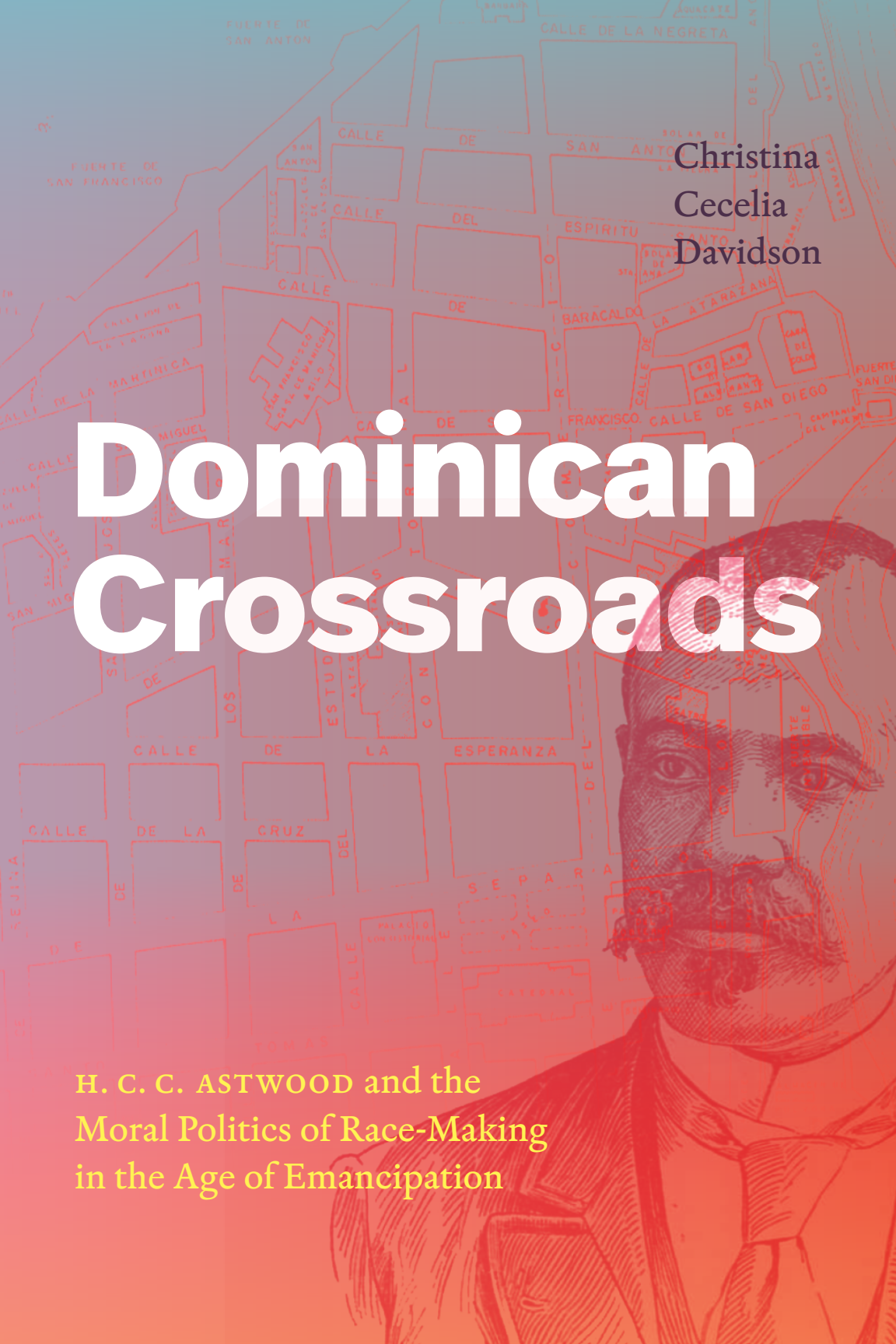
Christina Cecelia Davidson

Dominican Crossroads

H. C. C. Astwood and the Moral Politics of Race-Making in the Age of Emancipation



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Cover art: Plano de la ciudad de Santo Domingo, Compañía United Lithograph, 1882. Sketch of H. C. C. Astwood, *Colored American*, April 28, 1900.

For Joshua

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Note on Terminology

Historians face the complicated task of choosing terms to describe individuals and groups of the past. I recognize that racial, national, class, and gender terms change in meaning across space and time, and the terms I use here do not necessarily reflect how individuals and groups identified themselves in the past. Given the challenge of writing across geographies, cultures, languages, and time, I employ the following identity terms for the sake of clarity.

American: An individual born or naturalized in the United States.

African American/US Black/Black (American): A person or people group of African descent born or naturalized in the United States whose skin color, other physical traits, enslaved condition, poor class status, and/or family history prohibited their social advancement and passing into white society.

Afro-Creole: A person of African and French descent in Louisiana whose ancestors were generally free people of color (*gens de couleur*) who maintained a middle-ground status between whites and enslaved Blacks.

***Negro*:** A nineteenth-century term used to refer to Black people. This term is employed in italics on occasion to emphasize the predominant US racist mindset.

white American/Anglo-American/Euro-American/Anglo-US: A person or people group whose light skin color, Western European physical and cultural traits, and absence of known African heritage qualified them as racially white in the United States.

British Caribbean: This term may refer to England's Caribbean empire or a British subject residing in the empire.

Black: An individual of predominantly African descent whose dark skin color, other physical traits, enslaved condition, and/or poor class status formed barriers to their social advancement in the British Caribbean.

colored/colored class: A mixed-race person or people group whose ancestors were free people of color and who formed a middle racial class between Blacks and whites.

white: A person or people group whose light skin color, Western European physical and cultural traits, and absence of known African heritage qualified them as racially white in the British Caribbean.

Dominican: An individual born or naturalized in the Dominican Republic.

African American descendant/Afro-American Dominican: A Dominican who descended from African American emigrants who arrived on the island in the early nineteenth century.

Afro-Dominican/Black (Dominican): A Dominican person or people group of predominantly African descent whose dark skin color, other physical traits, and/or poor class status formed barriers to their individual or collective social advancement.

Dominican elite/lettered class: A Dominican person or people group whose relatively high social class, literacy, and access to education

enabled them to participate in national debates through the written word.

Euro-Dominican: A Dominican person or people group of predominantly European descent whose light skin color and other physical traits enabled their social advancement.

Haitian: An individual born or naturalized in Haiti. The author recognizes the diversity of skin color, class, and ethnicity within Haiti, and reminds readers of this throughout the text. Additional terms for Haitians, however, are not employed in this book.

mixed race: An individual of notably mixed racial heritage. Used for people of mixed descent (generally African and European) across locales.

FIGURE P.1. View of the colonial fort (the Homage) and military school from the Ozama River, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, ca. 1900. Photo: Detroit Publishing Co. Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/item/2016808510/.

Preface

In April 1888, an American businessman from Massachusetts traveled to Santo Domingo for the first time. Arriving aboard a passenger ship, American and European tourists entered the city by day since, as seasoned ship captains knew, it was hazardous to navigate the shallow Ozama River and the port's large sandbank at night.[1] A late afternoon or evening arrival meant another overnight stay aboard. Then, with the sun rising in the east, weary passengers could take in the town's south side, a view that consistently inspired foreigners setting eyes upon the oldest European settlement in the Americas. Situated on a hill above the mouth of the Ozama River and surrounded by a rock wall, the skyline of Spanish colonial buildings overlooked the turquoise Caribbean Sea. Traveling north up the river, visitors especially noticed the looming Spanish watchtower, the Homage (figure P.1). "The first impression you get of Santo Domingo is of this magnificent old castle, frowning down on sea and shore, dominating the whole scene, as well as your own thoughts," reminisced one nineteenth-century voyager.[2] The Dominican city, it seemed, gazed back.

Due to the sandbank, large watercrafts could not deliver their passenger or freight cargo without aid. Thus, along with other passengers, the traveler waited as a small tugboat guided the ship inland. This method not only ensured a safe approach but also drew out the drama of the American's advance. His anticipation was likely palpable. Since the 1830s, US intellectuals like William Hickling Prescott had fashioned colonial Latin

American cities and pre-Columbian Indigenous relics as part of the United States' cultural heritage.[3] This identification with Latin America's past filled Anglo-American visitors with a dual sense of awe and ownership as they approached Santo Domingo's gates. Like Mexico and Peru, the Dominican Republic existed as yet another Spanish colonial space where white Americans could identify with European conquest.[4] Undoubtedly, though, the island nation intrigued foreign visitors all the more for reasons of its own. Unlike the former colonial viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru, Santo Domingo, in the Anglo-American mindset, was a Black man's republic, and it laid claim to a relic that Americans valued even more highly than Aztec and Inca artifacts: the mortal remains of the hemisphere's so-called discoverer.

Having eagerly disembarked, the American traveler now came to the gates of the capital. Perhaps, in this quintessential moment of first contact, apprehension overshadowed the thrill of setting feet to ground. What exactly would he find inside? "We have all heard tales of Haiti. . . . The Black Republic, they say, is gradually relapsing into barbarism," explained American tourist Susan de Forest Day in her 1898 travelogue. "But here, side by side with Haiti, is another Black Republic."[5] If Haiti was known to be "uncivilized" according to the racist and fantastical fictions of pseudo-historians Sir Spenser St. John and James Anthony Froude, what could be said of the Dominican Republic?[6] No matter how much Anglo-American tourists identified with Spanish conquistadors, they did not quite know what to make of the Latin American nation that shared the island of Hispaniola with Haiti and had once formed part of the hemisphere's first independent Black state. And, in a moment of drastic social change across the hemisphere, neither did anyone else.

Various people—Dominicans, white and Black Americans, Europeans, and Latin American Creoles—had carefully drawn designs for the country's modernization despite their trepidations. The American traveler, however, was likely blissfully unaware of the diversity of plans, contracts, treatises, and treaties that drove the city (and hopefully the nation) toward an elusive progress. He thought not of such nuance as he blithely traversed the city gates and began a slow trudge up a steep incline.

At once, the senses activated. The heat radiating off the dirt road and stone buildings distracted from the cacophonous noise of the wharf's market where Black men and women sold their wares. The faint sound of a rehearsal in a convent-turned-theater bewildered, while a whiff of an old Spanish church used as a butcher's shop overwhelmed the smell

of the ocean flowing steadily on the breeze.[7] Foreign eyes surely darted from one novel scene to the next, unsure of what to take in first: the busy storefronts and verandas? The people of various skin tones clothed in the latest European fashions? The Spanish colonial architecture, tragically romantic in the foreign mind's eye, captivated and divided the attention: two-story homes painted blue, pink, and white; a row of "balconied piazzas supported on pillars of [solid stone]"; a defunct sundial; a dilapidated palace once owned by Christopher Columbus's son.[8] These edifices gestured to a time long ago. Ruins, such as the wrecked Franciscan convent destroyed by the British pirate Sir Francis Drake, tethered the city to its colonial past and provoked a sense of nostalgia in the present.[9] Catholic priests still presided over the seventeen ecclesiastical edifices in the city, including the first basilica of the New World.[10]

And, all of a sudden, there he was standing before it. Within a few short city blocks, the traveler had come at last to the central plaza where the ancient basilica hulked. The colonial square boasted a new artistic feature. A bronze sculpture of Christopher Columbus, unveiled only a year earlier, depicted the admiral pointing north toward the United States, a symbol of industry and Western modernity (figure P.2).[11] At the base, a diminutive image of the Taíno princess Anacaona inscribed the voyager's name on the monument, eulogizing him with honorifics. The American likely paused to view this metal symbol of conquest that augured good fortune just ahead for the nation. The statue was a curious depiction of the relationship between the victor and the vanquished. It portrayed a compliant, even appreciative, female Indigenous sovereign, despite the fact that Spain had subjugated the Taínos, who died from disease, and then repopulated the island with enslaved Africans. The half-naked Anacaona perched at her attacker's feet wrote not of the horrors her people survived, only to pass to the next life completely undone.[12] Instead she praised her assailant, who stood in all his glory for Spain, supposedly the most fiendish of empires.

Yes, according to the "Black legend" myth that pervaded the American traveler's history books, Spaniards had been the most brutal colonizers, crueler than any other European enslavers—especially the masters of the old US South.[13] This myth, despite its name, had little to do with the Africans who tilled the land across the Americas. Rather, it was an invention of British upstarts who believed that Catholic Spaniards had done a shoddy job of the colonizing business.[14] The British were better suited for the task because they had better religion, they thought. Protestant Anglo-Americans inherited this idea. Thus, while identifying most with

FIGURE P.2. Columbus Statue in Plaza Colón, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Photo: F. L. Vasquez, *Official and Exclusive Photographs of the First Forts, Town, Churches, &c. Built by Columbus* (New York: F. L. Vasquez, 1893), 2. Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/item/93515058/.

the Genovese explorer, the American businessman, in a split second, may have felt pity for the Amerindian princess who symbolized Spain's ruthless conquest.[15] *If only his ancestors had arrived first in the Americas . . .* This pity transferred to the present. In the racist US mindset, the fact that mixed-race people—descendants of Spaniards, Africans, and Indigenous peoples—now governed more than half the hemisphere was a lamentable reality that proved Spain's misrule.[16] That *Negro* Dominicans safeguarded the admiral's remains further vexed Anglo-US sensibilities. Such sacred relics, many Americans believed, would certainly be safer in Euro-American hands. That is, if the reports were true.

A quick jaunt across the square brought the American to his prize and promised to settle any doubts. Behind the cathedral doors now, he stepped into a cool, damp nave. Lit candles signaled pious devotion to God, Jesus, Mary, and the saints. Intricate stone arches rose to the heavens. Ornate metal crosses abounded. The American had entered a holy place much unlike the dusty streets outside. Here was the seat of European colonial power. And, after a brief ceremony, behold now the bones of Columbus!

This was a truly religious experience, it seemed. But, now came the moment of truth: Did the pilgrim truly believe?

This question cannot be answered. So we must turn to others. How did the traveler get here? Who (or what) exactly led the American down this path? There are myriad answers, no doubt, but let us consider a simple one first.

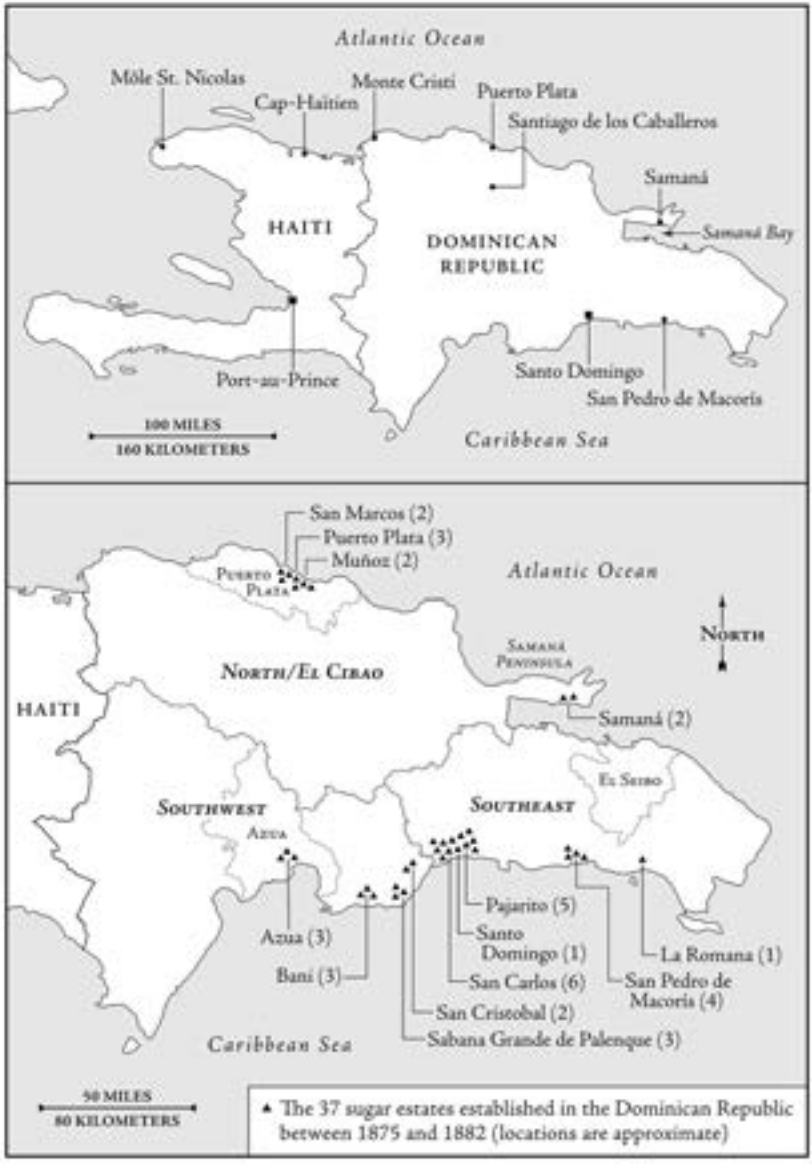
From his home near the Ozama River, the first Black US consul to Santo Domingo, Henry Charles Clifford (H. C. C.) Astwood (1844–1908; figure P.3), could observe the foreign ships come in and count the passengers as they stepped onshore. He may have been perched at home or in the nearby customhouse that day in April 1888, watching, calculating, and waiting as the US businessman disembarked. It is possible that Astwood first approached the traveler who had a name, but who at once was one and many. Although no historical record attests to this meeting, we might envision the two of them standing there before the sacred bones. Perhaps this was the moment when the infamous idea to lease the same was birthed in the mind of the visiting enthusiast. Although we cannot know for sure,

FIGURE P.3. Sketch of H. C. C. Astwood, from the *Colored American*, April 28, 1900.

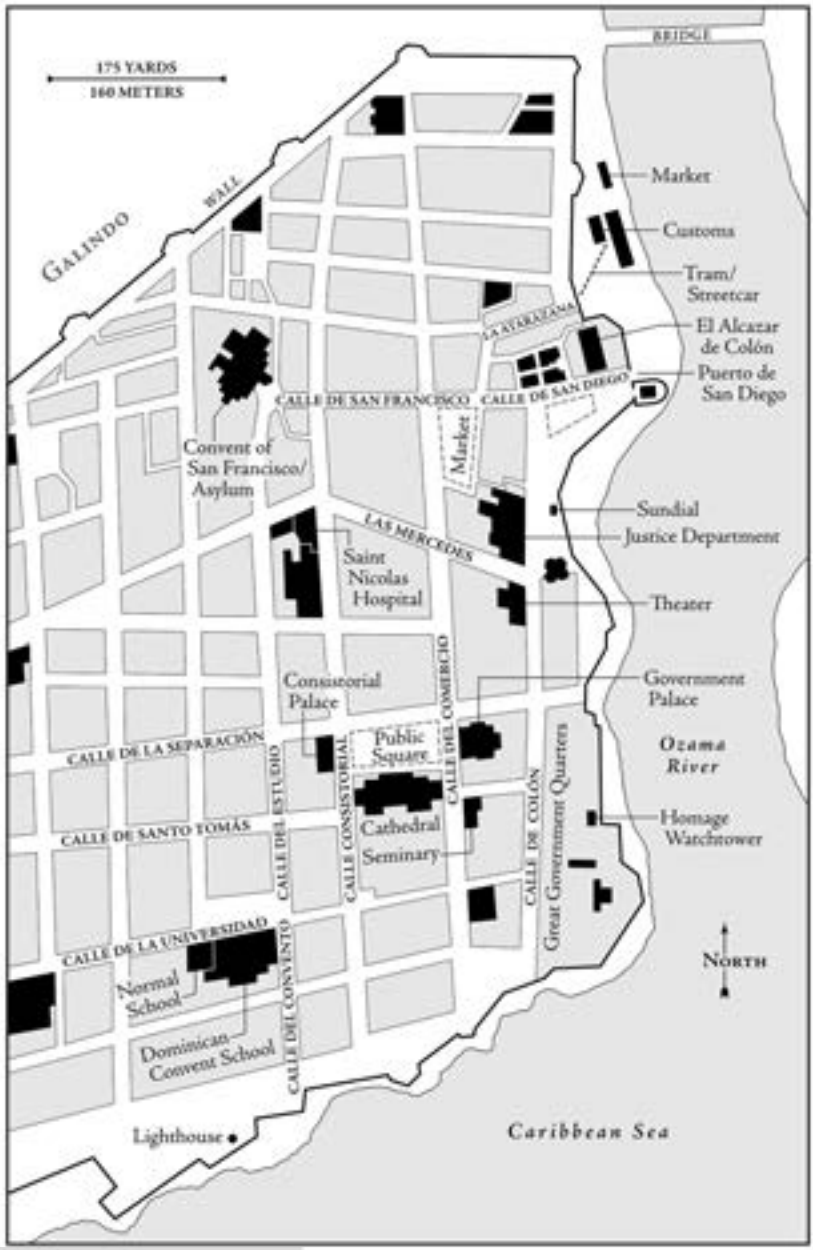
it might have happened this way because such tours had their procedures. To view Columbus's remains back in 1888, American pilgrims in Santo Domingo needed to follow policy, and the first step in the process was to meet with US Consul Astwood. It was he who led the way (at least this time).

Did the American tourist take note of the man who brought him to the doors of the basilica and directed him toward Columbus's human remains? Probably not. Why would he? H. C. C. Astwood existed to serve the businessman's interests and therefore did not play a central role in this traveler's narrative. Thus, upon first meeting Astwood, the visitor, like other white Americans, may have noted that this Black man was a "gentleman of unusual intelligence" and then paid him no further mind.[17] Historians have done likewise. Nevertheless, we might choose to reconsider. What is gained by turning an eye from the tourist to his guide?

MAP P.1. Astwood's US-Caribbean sphere. Map by Kate Blackmer.



MAP P.2. The island of Hispaniola with selected cities (*top*), and the three regions of the Dominican Republic showing selected provinces and sugar estates (*bottom*). Map by Kate Blackmer.



MAP P.3. Partial view of Santo Domingo in 1882, showing selected locations. Map by Kate Blackmer. Source: "Plano de la ciudad de Santo Domingo," Compañía United Lithograph, 1882, Harvard Map Collection, Harvard University.

Acknowledgments

My engagement with Dominican history began in 2007 when I spent seven months of undergraduate study abroad in Santo Domingo. Back then, I had no idea that my experiences would inspire an academic career. I write these acknowledgments as an extension of my appreciation for the scholars, friends, and family who have guided me in this journey.

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Introduction

At the turn of the twentieth century, Americans heralded Henry Charles Clifford (H. C. C.) Astwood as "one of the most prominent colored men in the country."[1] From the outside looking in, the skilled politician represented opportunity for both Black and white Americans. His trajectory as a poor African-descendant migrant from the British Caribbean to Reconstruction-era New Orleans to the US consulship in Santo Domingo in 1882 demonstrated his ingenuity and personal achievement. In the United States, Astwood quickly became a race leader, a position secured through his ties to the Republican Party and religious duties as a minister of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, the first independent Black Protestant denomination in the United States. White Americans also took notice of the Black statesman, hoping that his personal connections, political shrewdness, and linguistic abilities would literally pay dividends. With an Afro-Creole wife and multiple children at his side during his consular years, the clergyman-politician epitomized US Black masculine respectability, Protestant work ethic, and social mobility. No wonder then that the smattering of American history books that mention Astwood place him among the era's most celebrated Black elite.[2] In an ironic twist of fate, US scholarship has forgotten that H. C. C. Astwood was a controversial international figure whom Dominicans best remember for his involvement in a scheme to lease Christopher Columbus's mortal remains.[3]

The silences around Astwood's life and political trajectory are curious, and yet purposeful. Astwood built his career by remaining in the shadows of powerful men with the means to advance his position. His exploits in the Dominican Republic, notorious at the time they occurred, faded to obscurity in subsequent years. Astwood had an explanation for each accusation; he excelled at spinning facts in his favor. He did so with the help of powerful politicians and business associates and in spite of his adversaries' efforts to ruin his professional opportunities. When the rumors exposed a baser side of US diplomacy, international business, and African American international politics, Astwood's friends—US and Dominican government officials, prominent American capitalists, and influential African Americans—eagerly pushed aside the controversies and red tape (at least at first). Today, Astwood remains an enigma on the sidelines of US history because of a concerted effort to shield the public from the dealings of a duplicitous middleman whose extraordinary life defied borders of all kinds: national, cultural, racial, and moral.

Using Astwood's early life and polemical career in Santo Domingo as a guide, *Dominican Crossroads* examines the intersection of moral discourse and racial capitalism in the Americas at the end of the nineteenth century. By doing so, this book centers the Dominican Republic in ongoing conversations regarding the intersections of religion, race, and US empire during a period of hemispheric transition.[4] It argues that as the last pillars of plantation slavery crumbled in the Americas, the city of Santo Domingo became a metaphorical crossroads in a hemispheric debate over Black men's capacity for citizenship and political authority.[5] This debate occurred at the level of moral discourse. For various elite people in Santo Domingo—Dominicans, white and Black Americans, Europeans, and Latin American Creoles—claims to morality based in Christian (Protestant and Catholic) worldviews were a currency of power that gave individuals interpretive authority. A handful of ruling men wielded this currency in order to assert immediate power over the Dominican nation and instill their distinct visions of race within a transnational sphere that included the United States, Haiti, Latin America, and Europe.

By analyzing this moralized contest for power, *Dominican Crossroads* especially shows how Astwood, a man of African descent, participated in the era's moral politics of race-making—defined here as the purposeful deconstruction and reconstruction of racist moral logic—in order to command political authority. As demonstrated throughout the text, the moral politics of race-making was more than realpolitik. Instead, it was a component

part of racial capitalism, a theoretical framework first advanced by Cedric J. Robinson and further developed by other scholars to explain the mutual constitution of racial ideology and modern world capitalism.[6] Scholars of racial capitalism have recognized the moral dimensions of racial discourse as part of human antirelationality, a necessary part of capitalism.[7] However, such work has paid less attention to the ways that racial theory and Western Christian theology also developed in tandem. Rather than viewing racist moral discourse as soft power in service of hard power, this book takes seriously the equally significant mutual constitution of race and Western Christianity.[8] As discussed throughout the chapters, the moral discourse examined herein abided by a strict dichotomy between good and evil based in Christian theology. Such theology, in its hegemonic white supremacist form, not only justified the capitalist exploitation of nonwhite people but also sanctified their violent suppression. Astwood's ability to deconstruct and reconstruct racist moral logic at will depended upon this belief system. Thus, *Dominican Crossroads* fundamentally considers the moral politics of race-making as religious race-making, a component part of racial capitalism.

As a politician and preacher, Astwood engaged in the moral politics of race-making to claim power over US-Dominican international relations and Protestant religion in the Dominican capital. His actions ostensibly combated the era's greatest myth—that is, the myth of white supremacy. And yet Astwood's methods were unconventional. As a middleman, Astwood constantly manipulated Western conceptions of good and evil. His actions not only reveal the constructed nature of this dichotomy but also demonstrate that the transnational fight for Black political authority in the Americas was intrinsically a battle over interpretive authority. Always claiming the moral upper hand, Astwood aimed to construct and control narratives of the past and present. By doing so, he, like other people in governance and high society, hoped to enact his own racialized visions of the Dominican Republic's future.

The Dominican Crossroads and the Middleman as Trickster/*Tíguere*

During the late nineteenth century, it seemed that all eyes were on the island of Hispaniola, where enslaved Africans had defeated their French oppressors and created the first independent Black republic in 1804. Much had changed since then—and not just on the island. After the Haitian Revolu-

tion (1791–1804), Hispaniola was divided into its western Haitian and eastern colonial Spanish parts. But, in 1822, following a short year of independence, the eastern Spanish side of the island unified with independent Haiti. For twenty-two years, the whole island triumphed under Black rule, defying the basic tenets of white supremacy. Then, in 1844, Spanish Creoles in the east declared independence from the Black state. The Dominican Republic was born. Next came the turbulent decades of the 1850s to the 1870s on the island and everywhere else. Eventually, war erupted across the hemisphere, in the United States, the Dominican Republic, the broader Caribbean, and the republics of South America. The slave system was falling. The Spanish Empire found itself under renewed attack in its last colonial holdouts, Cuba and Puerto Rico. The question of Black social equality percolated from one society to the next. This question pulsed beneath the shallow surface of all politics in the US-Caribbean sphere—from labor protests in the British Caribbean, to cross-border disputes over Dominican annexation, to the travails of US Reconstruction, to Cuba's Ten Years' War (1868–78). Meanwhile, there remained one constant: whites across the hemisphere continued to villainize Haiti because its independence persistently proved Black humanity and signaled the possibility of social equality. The Dominican Republic, however, represented a question mark. What would become of this independent nation of majority mixed Spanish and African descent?

Everyone who inhabited the capital of Santo Domingo at the end of the nineteenth century had an opinion about the country's future, as both outsiders and nationals sought to convert it into a modern Western nation. White foreigners and most Euro-Dominicans believed that such a conversion depended upon an absolute rejection of the nation's historical ties to Haiti and the Dominican nation's own racial Blackness.[9] This dominant viewpoint, however, was not hegemonic during this crucial moment after war when the Dominican lettered class sought to invent a national character.[10] As elsewhere in Latin America, the lettered class's musing on the future of their nation existed on a spectrum that did not always evince overt anti-Blackness.[11] And, whereas some Caribbean Creoles from Venezuela, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Curaçao, and St. Thomas aligned with the Europhile Dominican elite and articulated conservative racist views about the nation they came to inhabit, other interested parties forged alliances with Dominicans and Haitians during the island's decolonial struggles.[12] Afro-Dominicans, as well as Black labor migrants residing on Hispaniola's northern coast and in the growing sugar industry ports of the island's

south, also had a stake in the nation's anticolonial, potentially racially democratic project—a vision articulated, and seemingly embodied, by a few Dominican generals and politicians visibly of African descent.[13] Taking pride in the existence of these Black officials, African Americans in the United States sought to "racially uplift" the Dominican nation along with Haiti.[14] Thus, while some outsiders considered the Dominican Republic to be a racial borderland suspended between Black Haiti and white United States, this symbolic borderland was simultaneously a cosmopolitan crossroads where various stakeholders sought to enact their racialized visions of modern progress.[15]

The Dominican Republic of the late nineteenth century also marked a temporal crossroads as slavery fell throughout the hemisphere, and the United States came to figure prominently in Dominican history. From a US historical view, the rise of US empire in the Dominican Republic and the greater Caribbean coincided with the fall of Reconstruction and the dawn of Jim Crow. The juncture between Reconstruction and the Jim Crow era generated a racist moral discourse that directly affected US-Dominican diplomatic relations. Most notably, in the 1880s and 1890s, the US government considered the Dominican Republic to be a Black nation akin to Haiti and Liberia and in desperate need of social and moral reform. It therefore showed little respect to the island republic, which white Americans exploited economically. It also appointed Black foreign service agents to the country, a policy that reflected both white Americans' racist outlook and African Americans' efforts to secure dwindling federal posts.

By following the early life and political career of one such Black US agent, this book recounts how H. C. C. Astwood navigated the Dominican crossroads. As stated above, Astwood's methods were unconventional. His very existence as US consul challenged the myth of white supremacy. Yet his engagement in the moral politics of race-making not only reinforced said myth but also disrupted notions of cross-border racial solidarity. This fact drew critique. The nineteenth century's most famous US Black activist, Frederick Douglass, and his son Charles R. Douglass, for example, believed Astwood to be an "unmitigated trickster" and perhaps even "a villain of the deepest dye."[16] These accusations were not idle insults. Rather, they referenced the African American folklore figures of the "trickster" and "badman," which both featured heavily in late nineteenth-century African American folktales.[17] While the trickster figure came to symbolized subversive behavior during slavery and later Jim Crow, the badman represented an outlaw whose sadism was "a source of unrelieved violence in the black

community."[18] At times, Astwood displayed characteristics of both figures. In fact, the Douglasses intimated on multiple occasions that Astwood used trickery to escape being classified as a badman. Accordingly, this book examines Astwood's trickery as a component part of the moral politics of race-making at the Dominican crossroads. This association is fitting since, in Afro-diasporic religion and folklore, the trickster is the master of the crossroads.[19]

Considering the parallels between Astwood and the Afro-diasporic trickster figure, *Dominican Crossroads* not only analyzes the historical grievances against Astwood within his contemporary US context but also considers the Dominican Republic's version of the trickster, the *tíguere*. In the Dominican Republic, the word *tíguere* traditionally referred to a person "who rises from poverty to a position of wealth and power, often through illicit means."[20] This term is especially relevant in Astwood's case because it emerged in the late nineteenth century as a derogatory term for Afro-descendant men who lived in the barrios outside the capital and who surpassed their class status.[21] Placing Astwood within the *tíguere dominicano* framework both highlights the parallels between African American and Dominican folk hero narratives and emphasizes the similarities between white Americans' and Euro-Dominicans' anxieties over Black political authority in their respective countries.

Even more significantly, I argue that the *tíguere* figure may serve as an analytical framework for understanding both Dominican Blackness and US Black internationalism. First, the *tíguere* serves as an apt metaphor for what US academics and mainstream media have labeled "Dominican self-hatred, negrophobia, and anti-Haitianism."[22] This US stereotype has denied Dominicans the spectrum of racial sentiment and *vaivén* (ebb and flow) of Black expression that existed across Latin America where Blackness is "a moving target."[23] The pervasive US stereotype that Dominicans deny their own Blackness, as Raj Chetty and Amaury Rodríguez have written, "can only lead to the conclusion that Dominicans are not invested in forging ties with their international brothers and sisters in the region, nor even in the US."[24] However, thinking through the *tíguere* figure as metaphor for Dominican Blackness demonstrates the ways in which *tigueraje* (trickery) factored into Black individuals' struggles for survival even while such trickery sometimes counteracted collective Black liberation. As with Karl Jacoby's scholarship on William Ellis, another nineteenth-century African American social climber who, like Astwood, straddled Latin American and US racial systems, the *tíguere* metaphor suggests that periodic subterfuge

was sometimes necessary in an individual's fight against white supremacy.[25] Thus, whereas critics have rendered the trickster a "symbol of the corruption of humankind . . . [and] an obstacle to regional [Caribbean] enlightenment and progress," Astwood's *tigueraje* prompts us to step away from making strict moral judgments about the correct (i.e., US hegemonic) way to embody Blackness and fight global white supremacy.[26]

Similarly, this book considers Astwood's *tigueraje* as a prism through which to reevaluate nineteenth-century US Black internationalism. Scholars have used the term *Black internationalism* to describe the myriad ways that African Americans have joined over time in a global fight against white supremacy both inside and outside the United States' geographic borders. While scholarship on US Black internationalism has concentrated on the twentieth century, which lends itself to more unequivocal versions of antiracist Black solidarity, a few works have used this framework to understand African Americans' ambivalent engagement with Hispaniola in the nineteenth century.[27] Lorgia García-Peña, for example, has argued that a hegemonic form of Blackness originated in the late nineteenth-century United States as African Americans joined the US empire–building project in Latin America, especially in the Dominican Republic and Haiti.[28] In order to justify their alignment with US empire, African Americans saw themselves as superior to Afro-Latin people whom they hoped to uplift through Protestant conversion, US education, and industry.

Like other African Americans of his era, Astwood assumed this biased attitude. However, he also revered the Afro-Dominican president Ulises Heureaux and shifted his anti-Catholic, anti-Dominican rhetoric depending on his audience. Thus, Astwood's political *tigueraje* demonstrates that, like the *vaivén* of Dominican Blackness, US Black internationalism also existed in flux. While the US stereotype of Dominican racial identity has reified Dominican Blackness as "negrophobia" and would likely judge Astwood's moral politics of race-making similarly, the *tíguere* framework adopted here critiques such judgments as overly proscriptive. Bringing an Afro-Dominican analytical framework to US Black internationalism means viewing Astwood's moral politics of race-making as an expression of Black internationalism that contrasted the racial solidarity expressed with Haiti by Black diplomats such as Ebenezer Don Carlos Bassett and Frederick Douglass.[29] This perspective allows for the multiplicity of Black expression that existed in the nineteenth century.[30] Accordingly, it redirects scholarly attention to the fundamental question of narrative construction in order to understand how such multiplicity came to be.

By analyzing Astwood's moral politics of race-making as a form of political *tigueraje*, *Dominican Crossroads* reveals the ways that individuals gained power over narrative through moral discourse. Accordingly, this book is not a conventional biography. Astwood's name appears scattered across newspaper articles, lawsuits, government documents, and personal letters produced in the United States, the Dominican Republic, and the British Caribbean. Yet, rather than providing a full picture of Astwood's life, these documents attest most acutely to the ways that power operated in the world he inhabited. Astwood's early life and tenure in Santo Domingo demonstrate that his political outlook and actions were not reflective of his individual choices alone. His periodic subterfuge existed as one of various reactions to his era's primary question: Did Black men have the capacity to become equal citizens in the hemisphere's racial capitalist societies? Astwood believed the affirmative, and he did whatever it took to evidence this truth in his own life and prove a world full of naysayers wrong. Consequently, although Astwood serves as an invaluable guide, *Dominican Crossroads* is most fundamentally a history that examines the moral politics of race-making in Santo Domingo—a transitional place and time—during a moment when US empire in Latin America and the Caribbean loomed large.

The United States' Racial Gaze upon the Dominican Republic in the Nineteenth Century

The history of US relations with the island of Hispaniola is well known in broad strokes. At the hour of Dominican independence in 1844, the United States refused to diplomatically recognize the new nation, a position that reflected its policy toward Haiti. While Black people across the hemisphere praised the Haitian Revolution and Haitian independence, the United States and other foreign powers shunned the sovereign Black republic.[31] On this point, the United States' stance proved unyielding because the island's free Black population threatened American slavery. Consequently, Washington maintained its foreign policy of nonrecognition even after Haiti agreed to indemnify France 150 million francs in 1825 for its lost colony in exchange for official recognition. Nearly two decades later, the US government similarly withheld recognition from the Dominican Republic.[32] The United States still maintained this position in the 1850s when European nations established official diplomatic and commercial relations with the two nations. By then, the US debate over slavery was

so fraught that any perceived challenge to the "peculiar institution" could ignite interpersonal violence. Only during and after the US Civil War (1861–65), a battle waged over slavery, did the United States finally grant diplomatic recognition to Haiti (and Liberia) in 1862 and the Dominican Republic in 1866. The United States' recognition of Haitian and Dominican sovereignty ostensibly signaled a new era of diplomatic and commercial relations in which the United States was willing to negotiate on equal terms with nonwhite nations. The truth, however, was much more opprobrious. Between 1869 and 1871, the United States considered annexing the Dominican Republic with the hope of someday also gaining Haiti and then the rest of the Caribbean.

Meanwhile, on the island's eastern side, Euro-Dominicans knew that their geographic and historical ties to Haiti and their large Black population made their territory a joint target of the Western world's scorn. Consequently, their lobbying efforts to unencumber the Dominican nation from the era's racist politics of nonrecognition began at the moment of separation from Haiti in 1844. To curry favor for Dominican independence, Dominican agents in Washington claimed that whites governed the eastern side of the island where, as they alleged, the general populace was racially and culturally distinct from Haitians (despite Haitians' own class and color diversity).[33] Thus, Dominican elites portrayed the east as a land full of whites and mulattos in danger of "pure Black" Haitian invasion.[34] This portrayal continued into midcentury and served as a principal reason why Dominican elites sought annexation to a European power or the United States. Such efforts found success when, by invitation, Spain recolonized the Dominican Republic in 1861.

US commercial agents, filibusters, and lobbyists who wished to control the whole island and reenslave its Black population prior to 1865 bought into Dominican elites' convenient version of events, and they subsequently implored Congress to defend Dominicans in a "race war" against Haiti with a show of military force.[35] This initial cooperation between Dominican government officials and US speculators established a pattern. Whenever white US opportunists attempted to lobby for US domination of Dominican territory—whether through white settler colonialism (1840s–50s), annexation (1865–71), or purchase (1850s–90s)—they argued that Dominicans were racially whiter than Haitians.[36] Dominicans were whites, mulattos, or Latins—not *Negro* Blacks like Haitians or African Americans. Nevertheless, despite various iterations of this argument used throughout the nineteenth century (and into the twentieth), the strategy generally did not work. The

association of eastern Hispaniola with Haiti and racial Blackness proved to be too strong in the popular Euro-American mindset.[37] This association did not shift substantially until after the US invasion and occupation of the Dominican Republic in 1916.

In retrospect, the prominence of Haiti in US foreign policy toward the Dominican Republic is unsurprising. Indeed, only three factors fundamentally distinguished US-Dominican international relations from US-Haitian relations in the nineteenth century. First, whereas Haitian officials resented American commercial agents stationed in Haiti prior to the date of official diplomatic recognition, US agents overall received a hearty welcome from Dominican presidents and politicians anxious for foreign investment. Dominican elites' approbation of US agents formed part of their lobbying effort to transform the international community's racist image of their country. Second, while Black US ministers served in Port-au-Prince beginning in 1869, the United States sent only white commercial agents and consuls to Santo Domingo until Astwood's appointment in 1882. This difference is likely due to the two annexation efforts. During and after Spanish annexation (1861–65) and in the early 1870s when the United States negotiated its own annexation of the republic, the United States used white men to represent its interests. This practice endured in the capital throughout the 1870s, despite Charles R. Douglass's token assignment to the Puerto Plata consulship in 1875.

The third difference was a critical issue for Astwood—and likely weighed heavily upon Dominican officials too in the 1880s and 1890s. Unlike Haiti, which since 1862 had hosted a US diplomatic legation in Port-au-Prince, the Dominican Republic did not receive a similar honor independent of Haiti until 1904.[38] The reason for this discrepancy is simple. After the possibility of US annexation died, the United States lost diplomatic interest in the country, although white consuls continued to intercede between the Dominican government and US investors.[39] By the late 1870s, the US consulship in Santo Domingo became a neglected, thankless role at the margins of the US State Department's weak, underfunded international apparatus. Thus, even as Astwood's appointment in 1882 marked a shift in the racial makeup of US consuls in Santo Domingo, it simultaneously reflected the marginal status of the post and Americans' continued association of the Dominican Republic with Haiti.[40] In other words, the Dominican Republic was both Black and of lesser importance than Haiti. This US viewpoint held through to the end of the nineteenth century despite all arguments,

for better or worse, to the contrary. And, like the decade of the 1880s, it remains an understudied aspect of US-Dominican relations.[41] Astwood's consular years (1882–89) reveal this racialized outlook and the diplomatic dynamics that resulted.

Nevertheless, the appointment of Black US officers to Santo Domingo also reflected an achievement for African Americans. Like white Americans, African Americans sometimes grouped the two nations of Hispaniola together or subsumed them both under the banner of Haiti or "San Domingo."[42] Consequently, during US Reconstruction, when white Americans argued that political turmoil and war on the island proved that Black people were incapable of self-government, African Americans recognized that their own fate was tied to the whole island and its continued struggle for sovereignty.

US Black Internationalism and Dominican Protestantism in Retrospective View

The Dominican Republic's potential as a racial democracy made the country a crucible of US Black internationalism in the late nineteenth century. While Haiti remained paramount in African American thought, the Dominican Republic represented an alternative to America's racial divide. By the late 1870s, some African Americans even came to believe that the Spanish-speaking, mixed-race people of Hispaniola served as a better model for race relations in the United States than Haiti.[43] Whereas the Haitian Constitution prohibited white landownership, Dominicans of all colors reportedly worked together in government, and liberal principles seemed to reign as the country opened itself to foreign capital and saw its first "colored president," Gregorio Luperón, rise to power in 1879.[44] Soon thereafter, another Afro-Dominican, Ulises Heureaux, assumed the presidency and maintained power for the rest of the century. Thus, as in the days of the US annexation debate, throughout the years of Astwood's consular tenure, "Santo Domingo seized the [American] imagination . . . because it offered an opportunity both to advance and to vindicate a radical vision of racial belonging."[45] After the failure of Reconstruction, the Dominican Republic remained a beacon of hope for a functional racial democracy; if a racial democracy could not yet exist in the United States, then at least it existed somewhere. Such imaginations about the Dominican Republic drove increased US Black engagement with the country in the 1870s and 1880s

as Black orators and newspapers featured stories from the island, and the AME Church saw the country as an open missionary field. Due to such attention, a few African Americans even immigrated to eastern Hispaniola.

This flurry of activity at the end of the nineteenth century formed part of a longer history of African American engagement with the island dating back to the Haitian Revolution and the founding of Haiti in 1804. As stated previously, Black people in the United States and elsewhere across the hemisphere saw Haiti as a symbol of freedom. Accordingly, in the decades after 1804, thousands of Africans and their descendants fled the US mainland and surrounding Caribbean islands for Haiti's shores. In the United States, the largest such emigration movement occurred during the unification period when between 1824 and 1826, upward of thirteen thousand African Americans responded to an invitation from Haitian president Jean Pierre Boyer to join the republic.[46] Known by scholars as the Haitian emigration movement, the mass migration represented a significant moment of Afro-diasporic solidarity. The Haitian government granted African American immigrants citizenship and land upon their arrival, and African Americans hoped to join Haitians in building the hemisphere's first Black state. Although most historical scholarship of the movement emphasizes the fact that many recruits soon returned to the United States, historian Brandon R. Byrd has argued that biased white US newspapers exaggerated the number of returnees.[47] Believing that God guided their path to the Black "Promised Land," many thousands stayed.[48]

As in the 1880s, the AME Church played a critical role in the Haitian emigration movement of the 1820s. The AME Church originated from the Free African Society, which, under the leadership of the formerly enslaved preacher Richard Allen (1760–1831), broke from the white-led St. George Methodist Episcopal church in Philadelphia in 1787.[49] The Free African Society became the first AME congregation, later known as Mother Bethel AME Church, and inspired various other free Black Methodists to form independent congregations of their own. In 1816 these congregations incorporated as the AME Church and elected Allen as the first bishop. Thus, like Haiti, the AME Church became a symbol of Black self-determination for African Americans.[50] It also served as a central site for Black social life and political organizing in the US North. It is no wonder then that the Haitian agent Jonathas Granville presented Boyer's immigration proposal first to the Mother Bethel congregation.[51] Unlike the contemporaneous American Colonization Society's efforts to send free Blacks to West Africa, the Haitian plan enabled African Americans to maintain control over

the process as the Bethel congregation negotiated the terms of migration with Granville. Consequently, many Bethelites, including Allen's son, were among the first recruits.[52] Allen also appointed ordained AME preachers as missionaries who left for Haiti along with other migrants. Within the first decade of their arrival, such immigrants established AME congregations across the island, maintaining contact with Allen and other US-based AME leaders whenever possible.[53] The AME Church's critical involvement in the migration remained in the immigrants' corporate memory for generations.

However, because slavery continued in the United States and surrounding islands, African American immigrants in Haiti could not maintain formal connection to the AME Church throughout most of the nineteenth century. In response to this loss, immigrant communities in Port-au-Prince and elsewhere sought connection to another Methodist body: the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Unlike the AME Church, this British denomination was a white institution that originated in the Church of England's Methodist movement, led by Methodism's founder, John Wesley (1703–91). After Wesley's death, the Wesleyan Methodist Church became an independent British denomination with overseas missions in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. The first Wesleyan missionaries to Haiti arrived in 1817, but it was not until after African Americans landed in large numbers that the Wesleyans permanently established missions on the island.[54] Although some African Americans protested Wesleyan affiliation on racial grounds, immigrants in Port-au-Prince and along the northern coast ultimately invited the British missionaries to lead their congregations because they wished to remain within a formal religious body.[55] The Wesleyans' presence in Puerto Plata and Samaná, which later became Dominican territory, especially impacted local culture as the missionaries established schools that served African American children as well as Haitians, Dominicans, and British Caribbean migrants. These ports, in turn, became nodes in the Wesleyans' Caribbean network, socially connecting African American immigrants to the British Caribbean in a way that eluded the AME Church for most of the century and forming the basis for an endemic Dominican Protestant identity.

Ultimately, for African American immigrants, their religion more than their skin color or even their continued use of the English language distinguished them from the island's Catholic peasantry. This distinction especially sustained African American communities on the eastern side of the island through the trials of the 1840s–70s, when the Dominican Republic separated from Haiti but it was still not clear if the new Dominican nation would endure. Spanish annexation represented the greatest challenge for

such immigrants during this period. Prior to 1861, the independent Dominican government followed Haiti's lead, granting the immigrants and their children Dominican citizenship and protecting their religious freedom. Spain, however, appointed a new Catholic archbishop who targeted these Protestants, shutting down their churches and schools. This persecution explains why many immigrants supported the Dominican War of Restoration (1863–65), which reinstated Dominican independence.[56] It also ironically helps explain why annexation to the United States, a Protestant nation, seemed appealing to some immigrants in the early 1870s.[57]

The US annexation debate represented a new moment of African American engagement with the island. For US-based African Americans, time had not erased the memory of family members and friends who boarded ships for the island in the 1820s. Thinking of those who left and the annexation debate, many African Americans assumed Dominican annexation and other coeval events to be "clearly parts of one drama" working for the "glory of God."[58] They were encouraged in this thought when US President Ulysses S. Grant appointed Frederick Douglass to the US Commission of Inquiry in a tour of the Dominican Republic to assess Dominicans' willingness for annexation. Once on the island, Douglass met African American immigrants and their children in Samaná who endorsed the annexation.[59] Douglass then brought news of these experiences back to African Americans in the United States through publications and speeches delivered in Black churches. Listening to Douglass and reading US newspapers, African Methodists especially believed their denomination to be uniquely poised and divinely appointed to spread to the Dominican Republic.[60] After the US Civil War, AME missionaries had flooded the US South, gaining the denomination over 200,000 members.[61] Due to this success and contemporaneous white Americans' efforts to evangelize foreign nations in the 1870s, AME leaders thought it their duty to evangelize Black people across the world.[62] Such leaders viewed African American immigrants on the island not just as kin but also as settler colonists who would pave the way for AME expansion. Yet immigrants and their children were Dominican citizens who had adapted to their local society in ways that allowed them to slip in and out of various modes of belonging.[63]

Astwood met such Afro-American Dominicans and their descendants at two distinct moments in his life. First, as a British Caribbean migrant, he joined the Wesleyan missions in Puerto Plata and Samaná in the late 1860s. Later, as US consul in 1882, he met African American immigrants' children in the Dominican capital. The AME Church subsequently appointed him its

official missionary to Santo Domingo in 1883. By then, the stories of mass emigration from the United States were family lore. Details embedded in first-person accounts of US racial oppression had mostly passed away along with the elders, replaced with more immediate concerns of maintaining the community's Protestant church. Given that Wesleyans had never established missions in the city of Santo Domingo, Afro-American Dominicans in the capital had struggled for sixty years to support their religious endeavors independently. Yet, even as this immigrant community practiced an independent form of Methodism in the Spanish-Catholic land, their Protestant church had become part of the social fabric of the capital. Ignoring this nuance, AME leaders in the United States charged Astwood with advocating on behalf of Black Dominicans and "civilizing" them through American religion. This vision, however, failed to account for significant cultural, linguistic, political, and historical distinctions between US-based African Americans and the island's peoples. It also did not consider the fact that Dominican society was already replete with its own civilizing moral discourses.

Dominican Liberalism, Social Morality, and the Catholic Church

Naturally, the Europhile men of letters who constituted the Dominican Republic's political and intellectual elite resented the racial prism through which Black and white Americans continued to view their country at the end of the century. Dominican intellectuals, the majority of whom were white or light-skinned mixed-race men, saw themselves as possessing high-class European culture, and they too had thought long and hard about their country's needs. Their pressing questions reflected both concerns over the island's African heritage and the Dominican Republic's struggle for national sovereignty: How could the Dominican Republic modernize when the majority of its population was of African descent? Did dark-skinned people have the capacity to become equal citizens in Western societies? And how could the nation progress despite the United States' and other foreign powers' constant interference? Dominicans' answers to these questions were never monolithic. Indeed, their ideas ranged across a conservative-liberal spectrum that, on the one hand, had precipitated Spanish annexation in 1861 and, on the other hand, had led to war and the restoration of independence in 1865. However, the ideologues who gained the most influence during the 1880s "were of one mind regarding the philosophical tenets of their labor: they were Liberals, rational men,

positivists."[64] As such, they believed that modernization depended upon the transformation of the populace, and they cast the ideal Dominican citizen as manly, bucolic, hardworking, patriotic, and possessing Spanish culture, high moral integrity, and a skin color that appeared "more white than black."[65] Their vision of society betrayed their anxieties over the country's racial Blackness and their own adherence to white supremacist notions of human civilization and morality.

Dominican liberals, however, purposefully avoided using overtly racial language. Instead, like the Cuban thinker José Martí, they espoused a racially inclusive, anti-imperialist, color-blind nationalism. For dark-skinned Dominicans and Black migrant populations from the United States and the surrounding Caribbean, the social transformations that occurred after the War of Restoration lent credibility to this more inclusive form of national identity. By the 1880s, a new generation of African-descendant military officers counted among the country's national heroes, and both Gregorio Luperón and Ulises Heureaux had served as the country's president. Between 1879 and 1884, these exalted generals paved the way for more social changes. Luperón, for example, endorsed the educational reforms of his friend Eugenio María de Hostos, the Puerto Rican intellectual who became the director of the republic's first secular normal school in 1879. Although the school served mostly Euro-Dominican elites, a handful of young mixed-race men and a few Protestants joined the ranks of scholars who matriculated and adopted Hostos's positivistic view of society.

For his part, Heureaux was also a liberal positivist, but his version of this ideology manifested mostly in his economic policies: friendliness toward foreign capital and defense of private property. This disposition, which advantaged Americans and other foreigners over Dominicans, became even more pronounced after 1887 when he consolidated power and imposed a dictatorship.[66] Still, during his first administration (1882–84), Heureaux maintained the liberal reforms of his predecessors (Luperón and Fernando A. de Meriño), including freedom of the press. He also supported the Protestant community in Santo Domingo in the reconstruction of their church; he did so even though he and other members of the liberal nationalist party (known as *azules*) remained closely aligned with the Catholic Church.[67] This nuance helps explain why some dark-skinned Dominicans as well as descendants of African Americans in the capital possessed a sense of their own inclusion in the nation's body politic even though the daily concerns of the peasant class remained marginal to the inner workings

of the government, the Europhile elites' goals, and the aims of local and foreign investors friendly with Heureaux.

For Afro-American Dominicans in the capital, the social and educational reforms led by Eugenio María de Hostos were especially beneficial. Hostos, a liberal positivist, espoused a secular moral ideology known as *moral social* (social morality) that considered the pursuit of science and modern progress to be a moral imperative. His call for the secularization of education and moral thought challenged Catholic orthodoxy, and indeed Hostos criticized Catholic dogmatism as antithetical to modern progress. At the same time, he cast a more favorable light upon Protestantism in his written work.[68] Thus, the philosophy of *moral social* benefited Protestants as Hostos's ideas became popular among a group of educated Dominicans known as *normalistas*. This group advanced liberal democratic principles, including the idea that freedom of conscience and freedom of religion were Dominican national ideals. While such ideas did not lead to widespread Protestant conversion in Santo Domingo, they did enable the capital's small African Methodist community to grow modestly. Even more significantly on a symbolic level, Black Protestants gained public visibility and inclusion in the Dominican nation. Within Hostos's line of thought, African American descendants were Protestant Dominicans whose social ties to known *normalistas* influenced one of the era's most radical visions of Dominican national belonging.[69]

Nevertheless, despite the fact that secular positivist ideology carved out space for Dominican Protestantism at the turn of the century, Catholicism endured as the state religion, and the Catholic Church remained hegemonic. Indeed, in the post-1865 period, the Catholic Church gained even more cultural influence over Dominican society as Catholic clergy, Dominican intellectuals, and government officials worked to construct a Hispanophile nationalism that relied heavily on Catholic religious symbolism. While such Dominicans harbored anticolonial feelings against Spain, they still identified with the old colonial Spanish conquistadors, which produced a "peculiarly anti-Spanish Hispanophilia."[70] The apotheosis of Christopher Columbus especially provided a foundational basis for such identification. These sentiments intensified all the more after the discovery of Christopher Columbus's human remains in the Basilica Cathedral of Santa María la Menor, the oldest cathedral in the Americas, in 1877. The discovery set off an international dispute with Spain over which country possessed the explorer's true bones.[71] Spanish-Catholic nationalism abounded in other

ways as well. During this period, Dominican intellectuals produced the nation's first works of history, sociology, and fiction, which emphasized the country's links to the Catholic Church and colonial Spain.[72] They also laid claim to Spanish colonial ruins as an unofficial archive and searched for other national relics such as the cadaver of Juan Pablo Duarte, the nation's most celebrated founding father.[73] Located in Venezuela, Duarte's remains were disinterred and shipped to Santo Domingo for reburial in the basilica in 1884. Three years later in 1887, Heureaux authorized the erection of a monument to Columbus in the plaza fronting the cathedral to celebrate the 1877 discovery. These symbolic acts fused Catholicism with Dominican culture, but association between church and state did not stop there.

The Catholic Church's influence in Dominican society was also political. Not only did the state grant special privileges to the Church, but throughout Dominican history Catholic priests had served in the government. This tradition reached a climax in 1880–82, when Father Fernando Arturo de Meriño served as president of the republic. Meriño, like Heureaux and Luperón, was a member of the liberal Partido Azul. Unlike these Afro-Dominican generals from Puerto Plata, however, Meriño was of European descent and hailed from the traditionally more conservative capital. Although he remained quiet on the issue at first, he ultimately rejected the secular reforms to education and the ideology of *moral social* that took place under the first Azul administrations (including his own). Meriño believed that the Catholic Church, not positivist reformers like Hostos, should exclusively set the terms for morality within Dominican society.[74] After his presidency, Meriño became the country's first Dominican-born archbishop in 1885, and thereafter worked to nationalize the priesthood and strengthen the already strong bond between the Catholic Church and the Dominican state. In the following years, the Catholic Church's alliance with Heureaux's dictatorship grew all the more as Hostos and his followers, outspoken critics of Heureaux, became new targets of the regime, and Heureaux used displays of Catholic devotion to fortify his power. By the end of the 1880s, it became clear that the radical visions of secular social morality and expansive Dominican national belonging embodied in both *normalista* ideology and the city's Protestant church were under threat. Such ideas ran up against Spanish-Catholic nationalism, Catholic religious orthodoxy, and ultimately Ulises Heureaux.

As US consul, Astwood counted Heureaux among his close friends, and indeed the pair were partners of sorts. Not only did they know each other prior to Astwood's appointment, but they had similar life trajectories. Once

impoverished men of color, they both came into positions of authority in the 1870s and 1880s. They were both known for their thirst for political power. And, when necessary, they both resorted to stratagems to force their way. As the following chapters show, Astwood, like Heureaux, unabashedly wielded racialized moral discourse to command political authority in Santo Domingo. He did so in spite of the many local forces—including Catholic authorities, *normalistas*, and even Protestants—who challenged him.

The Road Map

Following Astwood's early life and consular career, *Dominican Crossroads* bridges the fields of Latin American and Caribbean history, African American history, Afro-diasporic religion, and US diplomatic history. It provides the first study of Astwood's life, the first in-depth analysis of Black Protestantism in the Dominican Republic, and the first critical examination of US-Dominican relations during the 1880s.

Part I, "Beginnings," examines the multiple freedom struggles that occurred in the Caribbean and the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century. Centering Astwood's birthland, the Turks Islands, chapter 1 links the British Caribbean's transition from slavery to free labor and the question of Black civic capacity to the Dominican War of Restoration, the US Civil War, the Morant Bay Rebellion, and other contemporaneous events. It shows how Turks islanders assisted Dominicans in their war against Spain. It also demonstrates how white Turks islanders' ideas about the Dominican Republic and Haiti shifted after the events at Morant Bay. Last, the chapter reveals the historical, economic, social, and familial ties that Black and mixed-race Turks islanders—especially the Astwood family—held to Hispaniola's northern coast. Chapter 2 then considers the transnational organizing and social networking that connected the era's various freedom struggles. Following Henry Astwood's trajectory from the Turks Islands to Puerto Plata to Samaná and finally to New Orleans, it demonstrates how people of color in each locale united and adapted their strategies in their struggles for liberty. Most significantly, this chapter not only highlights Astwood's upward mobility and path to the consulship but also reveals the various ways in which Black Protestantism in the Dominican Republic and the US South formed part of the era's transnational political organizing for freedom in various forms.

Part II, "Black Political Authority," argues that the decade that encapsulated Astwood's tenure in Santo Domingo (1882–92) represented a significant

moment in US-Dominican relations when US constructions of Dominican Blackness and morality discourse took center stage. Chapter 3 considers Astwood's aspirations for the Dominican Republic within the context of the United States' racial imaginary of Haiti/Hispaniola, and it documents his struggle to assert his political authority. As consul, Astwood faced discrimination against his color and the United States' racist disregard for the Dominican Republic. This chapter shows that due to these dynamics, US-Dominican relations depended upon both official and unofficial diplomacy bifurcated along racial lines. This form of segregated statecraft reveals the dialectic relationship between the building of US empire and the defense of Black political authority. Instead of accepting the subordinate status of his post, Astwood strategically manipulated racist US stereotypes about the island through discursive performances of righteous indignation on behalf of US capitalists. Such performances enabled him to gain legitimacy and assert his authority among three competing groups: US State Department officials, American capitalists, and Dominican government officials.

Chapter 4 presents a case in point of this process by analyzing the events surrounding the Dominican government's accidental killing of the American citizen John J. Platt in 1885. It additionally argues that racial moral discourse drove the dialectic between US empire and Black political authority. Whereas the US government in Washington preferred to ignore the killing, Astwood declared it a case of murder and insisted that both the Dominican Republic and the United States engage in diplomatic negotiations under his watch in order to avert international scandal. Through an analysis of the racist and gendered language in the case, this chapter grapples with Astwood's Blackness and the persistent racist stereotype of Black misrule that white Americans and Europeans applied to the island and its leaders. Ultimately, the chapter probes Dominican elites' reproductions of this stereotype through moral discourse, particularly as fear grew over Heureaux's rising authoritarian rule. Thus, chapter 4 exposes the contours of transnational moral discourse regarding Black political authority within the diplomatic sphere and uses a close reading of Astwood's consular dispatches to construct a new vision of US-Dominican international relations as a struggle for the power to determine right and wrong.

Part III, "Social Morality," turns to the cultural sphere to analyze racialized moral ideology in Santo Domingo. Chapter 5 decenters Astwood in an analysis of two Black institutions that he led in Santo Domingo: the AME Church and the Grand United Order of the Odd Fellows (GUOOF). Focusing on the historical and ideological ties between these organizations and

Dominican liberals, the chapter shows that these links grew stronger in the post-1865 period as radical liberal positivists promoted ideas that benefited non-Catholic Dominicans, namely the separation of Church and state, the freedom of thought, and the freedom of religion. Tracing the intersecting histories of the AME Church, the GUOOF, and Dominican liberalism through the eyes of African American immigrants' descendants, chapter 5 shows how the founding of these institutions in Santo Domingo reflected radical visions of Dominican national belonging. It also argues for a redefinition and a wider application of Hostos's term *moral social*. Social morality, as chapter 5 asserts, was an expansive liberal public discourse that often served as a proxy for racial discourse and at times made various non-Catholic creeds—white US capitalism, African American Protestantism, and Latin American positivism—seem compatible with each other as well as with local expressions of Dominican Catholicism. These convergences, however, also had their fault lines.

Juxtaposing the liberal convergences explored in chapter 5, chapter 6 takes up the dominant narrative of Spanish-Catholic nationalism through a close study of Astwood's most infamous scheme: his attempt to facilitate the lease of Christopher Columbus's exhumed remains to a US businessman in 1888. The transatlantic debate with Spain over which nation possessed the true bones not only cast doubt on Dominican officials' integrity but also challenged the Dominican Republic's symbolic claim on Columbus, a figure of Western modernity and whiteness. In 1888, Astwood argued that by leasing the remains and exhibiting them in the United States, the Dominican Republic would gain ground in its dispute with Spain. This proposal, however, violated Western notions of social morality, specifically the divide between the sacred and the secular. What began as a private scheme between a few power brokers soon became an international scandal. A fervent cross-border effort to shame the "immoral" Black US consul quickly ensued as white Americans and Creole Latin Americans found common ground in saving the quasi-religious figure of Western civilization (and themselves) from disgrace. Chapter 6 demonstrates how both US and Dominican reactions to the event reinscribed symbolic racial and national borders through racialized moral discourse. Racial and gendered ridicule, as this chapter argues, ultimately reasserted the hegemonic racist capitalist system, which depended upon the strict divide between white and Black, American and Dominican, the sacred and the profane.

The book's last chapter shows how, through the moral politics of race-making, individuals attempted to construct and control narratives of the

past and present. Analyzing the aftermath of the Columbus bones debate, which led to Astwood's dismissal, chapter 7 exposes the contours of moralized race-making as a competition for authority over fact and fiction. Despite public embarrassment, Astwood refused to surrender his post, and then, once finally discharged, he immediately began to lobby for his reinstatement. Behind the scenes, prominent American businessmen and AME clergy debated Astwood's fitness for office. This debate reflected a larger transnational dispute over Black men's capacity for citizenship and political authority. Various individuals, including US postmaster general John Wanamaker, got involved. On each side, the Christian dichotomy between good and evil became a moving target as various elite white Americans and African Americans lobbied to see their candidate of choice in the consular office in Santo Domingo. Moving beyond Astwood's case, the chapter also explores the diplomatic appointments of Frederick Douglass (US minister to Haiti) and John S. Durham (Astwood's successor). Letters of recommendation in each case demonstrate how power over historical narrative was based in moral claims. It also demonstrates how such power, which white men claimed as an exclusive right, was always contested. In this way, both white and Black Americans attempted to control the past and thereby direct the future.

Last, the conclusion considers events that took place in the Dominican Republic, the United States, and the broader hemisphere in the wake of Astwood's consular ousting in 1888–89 and final departure from Santo Domingo in 1892. Describing the Santo Domingo Improvement Company's advent in the Dominican Republic and the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, among other events, it demonstrates how white supremacist concepts of morality consolidated a new US world order in the 1890s. Consequently, it foreshadows the US Supreme Court's decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), the Spanish American War (1898), and the subsequent US occupations of Haiti (1915) and the Dominican Republic (1916).

Dominican Crossroads explores how H. C. C. Astwood and his contemporaries strategically engaged moral discourse to navigate racial borders, control international policy, negotiate the politics of US empire, and direct the course of history. It, moreover, traces how Black male politicians' ability to play this discursive game shifted over time. The narrative may seem familiar and yet somewhat alien to experts on Caribbean, Latin American, US, and African American history. The histories of African American consuls and Black Protestant clergy, for example, do not often feature in studies of the Dominican Republic, just as the Dominican Republic does not often

take center stage in hemispheric visions of the Americas. The chapters of this book, however, present a vision of Santo Domingo within a racialized geopolitical context at the end of the nineteenth century. In this world, moral discourse became the vernacular of choice in a transnational debate over Black social equality, Black civic capacity, and Black political authority. By focusing on the moral politics of race-making as a component part of racial capitalism, *Dominican Crossroads* foregrounds the dangers and uncertainties that people of African descent confronted during this turbulent era and their remarkable ingenuity, including subterfuge, when facing impossible odds in Santo Domingo and in the broader Americas.