

PART TWO: THE PEOPLE

Locally, we may ask, who are the globalizers?¹

Lest the picture of Lawrence writhing beneath the boot of global capitalists become too oppressive, let me remind the reader that these limited pages cannot do justice to the actual City: to the mellow glow of the red brick mill buildings in late afternoon sunlight, the enormous tree-covered Common in the center of town, the freshly-roasted chicken at Pollo Típico, the intensely flavored almond bars at Tripoli Bakery; to the Public Library, brimming with younger Lawrence residents reading and socializing daily, and the numerous churches, from stately grey stone bastions of Catholicism to Pentecostal storefronts with hand-painted lettering. Ethnic businesses, restaurants, and clubs line North and South Broadway, Essex, Jackson, and South Union Streets. Twenty-four languages were spoken in the City in 1990, among them Spanish, Arabic, Mon-Khmer, Vietnamese, French, and Italian. A one-time baker to the late King Hussein of Jordan sells pistachio-filled pastries on Newbury Street, and the Vice Consul of the Dominican Republic in Boston has a restaurant on Essex Street. *But more than all these things, it is the people that give the City its stubborn and compelling vitality.* As Bray reminds us:

An undue emphasis on the functional aspects of cheap labor for global capitalism reduces our ability to grasp the reality of immigrant communities and how they can develop and succeed within constraining economic circumstances. They are not simply caught in the currents of labor and capital flows but are able to maneuver themselves through these flows to their own benefit. Within the nooks and crannies of transnational capitalism's dominance, many individuals expand and achieve... (Bray, 1987:168).

The next two chapters follow Dominican immigrants to the City as they maneuver through these flows. As Piore (1979) so eloquently reminds us, *labor is not a commodity*; income differentials and other comparisons between places are important, but migration, like work itself, is a socially embedded process. In Dominican migration in particular, the importance of family ties and of the family reunification provision of the 1965 immigration laws is paramount. For instance, of the 39,604 Dominicans legally admitted to the U.S. in 1996, 19,355 (49%) were family-sponsored preferences and 19,832 (50%) were immediate relatives of U.S. citizens².

Transcending Borders

As much of the recent scholarship on Dominican immigrant communities has argued that one of their defining characteristics is a "transnational" orientation, we shall begin by providing a broad working definition of this term. Guarnizo (1997:287) states that "transnationalism refers to the web of cultural, social, economic, and political relationships, practices, and identities built by migrants across national borders." In a variation on this theme, Itzigsohn et al. (1999:317) refer to a "transnational social field... of interactions and exchanges that transcend political and geographical boundaries of one nation and have become the relevant field of action and reference

¹ (Hannerz, 1996:29).

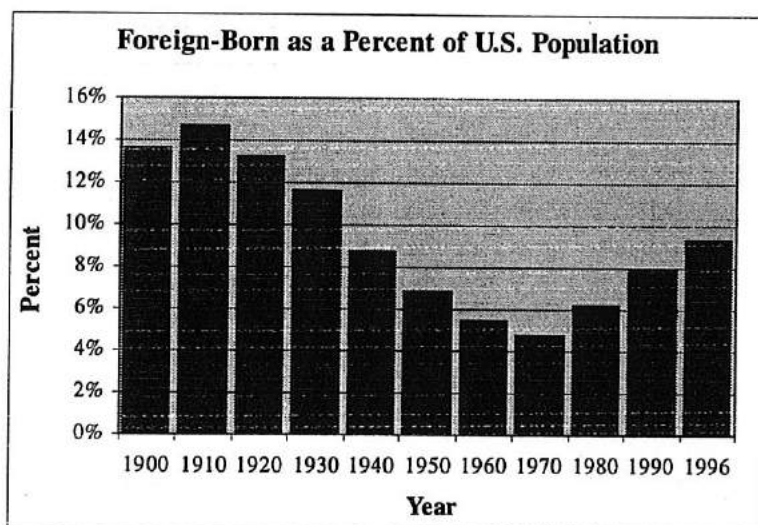
² INS Statistical Yearbook, 1996.

for a large number of Dominicans in their country of origin and in the broad diaspora it has generated." Sutton (1992:231) argues that "rather than becoming hyphenated Americans, [Caribbean immigrants] operate with a transnational dual-place identity."

These transnational ties are important because they have implications not only for the migrants themselves, but also for both the places they come from and the places they enter. Dominican immigrants to the United States come from a country that has in many ways already experienced significant Westernization—not to mention a culture that grew out of substantial racial and ethnic intermingling³—and this process has been facilitated by continuous migration and return, which brings American fashions, social norms, and consumption patterns back to the island. Furthermore, as Hannerz (1996:77) notes, "newcomers to the center... are already creolized when they arrive, and they can be seen to be further creolized through their engagements... in their new surroundings. But the natives are also frequently, in some way, and to a lesser extent probably, creolized: the periphery is speaking back." What happens when the periphery does speak back? What are the changes that take place in local communities?

Stepping Back

To place these questions in a larger context: in 1910, immigrants (the "foreign-born") constituted nearly 15% of the U.S. population. By the late 1960s, that share had declined to under 5%, but has been steadily increasing over the last three decades. Moreover, by the year 2010, it is



predicted that Latinos will overtake African-Americans as the largest minority group in the U.S.,⁴ and Latinos are also on track to become either the majority or majority-minority group in a number of major U.S. cities, including Los Angeles, New York, and Miami.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, Current Population Reports 1996

The enormity of this shift becomes even clearer when we realize that, for example, as many as 7.5% of Dominican-born people reside in the U.S., and there are more Dominicans in New York than in most cities in the Dominican Republic.⁵ Insofar as migration can actually worsen conditions in sending countries (or mitigate conditions that might otherwise lead to advocacy for structural change) (Piore, 1979; Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991; Ferran and Pessar, 1991), and this

³ Although it remains a racially stratified society, with the upper classes tending to be lighter-skinned. (Black, Betances, Haggerty).

⁴ Passel, 1992. Note that the category of "Latinos" represents a dizzying array of ethnic/racial groups/ancestry and cultures, although it basically refers to Spanish-speaking people from Central and South America and the Caribbean.

⁵ Calculations based on figures from Hernandez, 1997, Guarnizo, 1997, and Portes et al, 1997.

worsening can become one of a number of spurs to further migration, it doesn't appear that this trend will slacken anytime soon (barring drastic policy changes). Furthermore, as transnational practices have been noted in a variety of other large immigrant groups, including Mexicans, Salvadoreans, Haitians, Jamaicans, Indians, and Filipinos (Guarnizo, 1997), it is useful to understand the practices of such a large and continuing influx of new Americans and to what extent they constitute the periphery creolizing the center, as it were.

The Old and the New

Amid all the sometimes ecstatic talk of transnationalism, with its chic postmodern overtones of pastiche, impurity, and hybridization, few authors would dispute the proposition that transnational practices are nearly as old as immigration itself.⁶ What many authors might argue, however, is that the novelty of this discussion inheres in two levels of inquiry: 1) the use of transnationalism as "an emerging theoretical perspective" that reconceptualizes im/migrant experiences within, and impacts on, sending and receiving (however tangled those positions might become!) societies; and 2) an exploration of the particular technological and economic changes that provide the context for migrant adaptations in this historical moment.

Both of these levels of inquiry certainly have led us to critical new insights about immigrant communities—and will continue to do so. Before we continue, however, I'd like to try and articulate a peculiarity I find interesting about this endeavor. It goes something like this: As a relatively new way of conceptualizing immigration (in contrast to the enduring practices themselves), a complex idea of transnationalism has not yet entered mainstream American thinking or dominant discourses about immigration, except insofar as more settled populations (the product of that percentage of past groups who elected to stay, as it were) complain about the "transience" of newcomers. Although many Dominican immigrants may be engaging in a variety of transnational practices as a perfectly logical response to the social and economic imperatives of their lives, they are still contending with and responding to widely disseminated American ideals of settlement and assimilation. These ideals may be mythical, but they affect how people perceive and live their lives. Thus, some of the Dominicans I talked with in Lawrence expressed perspectives on their experience that placed less emphasis on continuing ties to the island than on their struggles to adjust to life in the United States. Because of the contacts I selected and that self-selected me to talk with, this observation may not be widely applicable; nevertheless, it seems important to mention. In a variation on this theme, one person I spoke with told me, "We are living here, we are working here, we are dying here, we are giving birth here; don't compare us to how it is back there—compare us to other groups here."⁷ But is this what most Dominicans are comparing themselves to?

Caveat

The fact that this study is not itself a transnational one—that is, I conducted no primary research with people in the Dominican Republic—represents an important limitation to this discussion. In this sense, the story I tell is doubtless more influenced by the City than the Island, for the City is the world in which my contacts were, for the most part, living their daily lives. However symbolically interpenetrated the two sites may be, few living in Lawrence would mistake it for a City in the Dominican Republic.

⁶ See Guarnizo (1997:284-5) for detailed references.

⁷ Discussion with Ramona Hernandez, 4/28/99.

CHAPTER THREE

ACTIVITIES

But First--Some Words About Numbers

It is difficult to say precisely how many Dominicans are in Lawrence. The Current Population Survey's estimate of the number of Dominicans in Massachusetts has ranged from 23,000 in 1994 down to 20,000 in 1995, dropping precipitously to 5,000 in 1996 (a number obviously wildly inaccurate; there were probably twice that many Dominicans in Lawrence alone that year). A 3/12/99 article by the Lawrence Eagle-Tribune pointed out that while the Commonwealth government estimates 30,000 Dominicans in Massachusetts, the Dominican Consulate in Boston claims that there are over 100,000 Dominicans here.

INS numbers are counts and thus more reliable—although they do not account for the return flow of migrants, or capture the numbers of undocumented entrants, which may be substantial. Indeed, the official INS 1996 estimate of 50,000 undocumented Dominicans in the whole U.S. seems a trifle conservative. In 1996, 1,928 Dominicans admitted listed the Boston-Lawrence-Lowell-Brockton Metropolitan Statistical Area as their intended residence¹. It is, however, difficult to extrapolate from a single year, or to tell how many of those people are bound for Lawrence. As the City has traditionally been a secondary settlement for those moving from New York, many new arrivals also will not appear in INS statistics.

Table 3.1: Latinos in Lawrence and Massachusetts, 1990

	Massachusetts	Lawrence
Growth Rate, 1980-1990	104%	184%
Poverty Rate, 1989	36.7%	45.8%
Dominican as % of Latinos	11%	37%
Share of MA Latinos, 1990		10.2%
Share of MA Dominicans		36.1%

Source: Rivera, 1993 and U.S. Census, 1990

1990 Census data, outdated as it may be, probably represents our best baseline, although the Census is notorious for undercounting minority and immigrant populations. Population projections (see Introduction, note 2) indicate

¹ This was the second-highest mainland U.S. destination behind New York.

Table 3.2
Dominican Migration
to the U.S., 1981-1997

1981	18,220
1982	17,451
1983	22,058
1984	23,147
1985	23,787
1986	26,175
1987	24,858
1988	27,189
1989	26,723
1990	42,195
1991	41,405
1992	41,969
1993	45,420
1994	51,189
1995	38,512
1996	39,604
1997	27,053

Years in Bold are
Election Years

Adapted from Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991, & INS Statistical Yearbook, 1996

Table 3.2 indicates the enduring political elements of the Dominican migration to the United States.

Latinos comprise 50%-70% of the total population. Most observers also believe that Dominicans now equal or outnumber Puerto Ricans in the City. It thus seems reasonable to estimate that there are currently around 20,000 Dominicans in Lawrence.

I. TRANSNATIONALISTS

Immigrants to US cities... modify the social and cultural geographies of the places in which they live and work (Laws, 1997).²

The stereotype of "transience," freely applied to the Dominican³ population in Lawrence by some of the older residents of the City, is striking not only for its dismissal of communities critical to the economic and cultural vitality of the City, but also for its superficial understanding of the complex ties that Dominican individuals and families have forged between the Island and the City. Dominicans in Lawrence do remain intimately connected to their country of origin. Many own property on the Island, vote there, send their children back for discipline, and visit quite often. However, Dominicans are also very much present in the life of the City, from the recent Dominican-Puerto-Rican voting coalition that ousted Paul Iannucillo and installed Jose Santiago as the Massachusetts state representative from Lawrence, to the considerable presence of Dominican children in the City's public schools and Dominican workers in the City's factories, to the plethora of small Dominican-owned businesses that dot the streets of North Lawrence neighborhoods—some of which draw in Latinos from around the region.

The Spectrum of Involvement

In exploring some of the ways that Dominicans are working and living and adapting to life in the City, as well as the extent to which they are linked to life on the Island, it will be helpful to refer to Itzigsohn, *et al.*'s formulation of *narrow*

² In Chapter Five I will return to some of the broader discussions around transnationalism and how it represents a continuity with and an evolution from past immigrant practices. However, it seems to me that the point is not so much whether immigrants have always done these things—except insofar as we use that historical realization to fight existing prejudices—but understanding how, and in what context, people are living their lives, and how that opens or constrains opportunities for individual and community empowerment.

³ And Puerto Rican (usually lumped together as "the Spanish").

My life as an immigrant is in such a way very phony. Because when I came here I was thinking that as a civil engineer, as an English-speaker, it would be nice for me and smooth to get a position as an engineer and then I dreamed about living in an Anglo community or neighborhood, maybe in a twelfth, thirteenth, or fourteenth floor in an apartment, to do my job working with a big company making steel buildings, a bridge and everything. And living with American people, eating American food... What is happening is that I am still living in a Spanish community, eating my same food... and dealing mainly with Spanish people.⁴

⁴ Interview, 2/11/99 (Male, 50s, teacher, 12 years in the City).

and *broad* transnational practices. As they note, "many Dominicans have a deep involvement in these links and exchanges, whereas others participate in them only occasionally. Some members of this transnational community engage in economic exchanges; some are part of its political links; others only experience the transnational field in a symbolic way, as part of their space of meaningful references" (1997:317). The extent to which each of these practices can be considered narrow (i.e., more intense and focused) or broad (i.e., more informal, sporadic, and diffused) depends on the degree of institutionalization of the practices, the level of involvement of people, and the regularity of movement between places (p.323). In addition to existing along a narrow to broad continuum, these practices can be economic, political, civic, social, and cultural (p.324); and while these categories are of course embedded in each other, and often overlap significantly, the framework they provide is useful.

Two qualifications (one liberatory, one cautionary): 1) participation in these transnational exchanges (which can be as focused as a "hometown association," or as broad as reading a daily national newspaper of the Island) is in no way necessarily exclusive of participation in purely "local" activities, and in some cases may catalyze it; 2) the mere fact of these activities "transcending" physical borders does not mean that they also transcend asymmetries of class, race, gender, power, which are themselves culturally transmitted and thus easily can be extended or reinforced through these practices.

Arrival: The Importance of Family Ties and Social Networks

The first Dominicans did not come to Lawrence straight from the Island but migrated up from New York. The story of Alma, a young woman who was born in the U.S. and raised on the Island, is in some ways paradigmatic of the early Dominican migration to the City. Her parents, of "humble background," emigrated from the Dominican Republic in the early 1960s after Trujillo died. They came first to New York, rapidly followed by a large circle of extended family and friends in what Alma described as "the domino effect." In the late 1960s one member of the circle came up to Lawrence following rumors of work, and soon the rest followed; local industries were paying "headhunter fees" to those who

La Cadena

*Un familiar... se estableció...
porque Lawrence tenía
mucha industria [y] hacía
conexión con [otros] y lo
traía para acá y así venían:
todos uno detrás de otro
porque sabían que aquí
estaban las condiciones de
trabajo y de vivienda.⁵*

*Todo eso ocurre porque hay
un familiar, un pariente que
emigra, que viene a este país,
pasa muchísimos trabajos,
aprende tal vez a hablar un
poquito el inglés o lo que
fuere, o se adapta en una
factoría donde le permitieron
o donde se hablaba más
español y ha durado diez,
doce, veinte años en esa
factoría... Esa persona viene
y comienza a traer a su hijo,
a su hija, y si están casados,
esas personas van a traer a
sus esposas, y se va creando
una cadena donde siempre el
primero va a pasar más
trabajos que los demás.⁶*

⁵ Interview, 2/17/99 (Man, 40s, former doctor, here 5 years).

⁶ Interview, 3/5/99 (Man, 40s, union member, Malden Mills).

brought in new workers (at this point the going rate was about \$25, according to several interviewees). Most members of the circle (male and female) worked in factory jobs, sewing shoes and coats. In the late 1970s many of them began moving into electronics firms such as Raytheon, Lucent, and Western Electric, which Alma described as “the elite of immigrant working class” jobs. Although her parents never made more than \$8 or \$9 an hour, they saved enough to buy a triple decker in Lawrence, and they made regular biannual visits to the Island. Their ultimate objective was to save enough money to buy property on the Island as well, and to get the children back there as soon as possible; America was seen as a dangerous place to raise a family. In 1980 they bought a house in the DR and moved back, although this was not true of the entire circle of family and friends, some of whom are still living in the City. In the late 1980s Alma returned to the area to go to college, and has remained here ever since; she now works in the City’s nonprofit sector. In America, Alma’s family maintained a strong emphasis on Dominican culture. Within the house the family spoke only Spanish and ate Dominican food, and interaction with extended family and friends was frequent and expected. Back on the Island, Alma attended American schools with both Dominican children and those of other nationalities, and immersed herself in American popular culture (a good friend of hers had, as a high school yearbook quote, a line from the Led Zeppelin song *Stairway to Heaven*: “there’s a feeling I get when I look to the west, and my spirit is crying for leaving”). Alma describes her family as “working class here, almost upper-middle class back home.”

Alma’s story—which many will recognize as a classic description of chain migration—is interesting in and of itself, but also because it begins to illustrate the complexity of transnational ties and exchanges that many Dominican immigrants experience. The family’s “narrow” economic practices of saving for and investing in property on the Island were embedded in slightly broader social practices of regular visits home to maintain kin and friendship ties that would facilitate the return move; at the same time, this did not impede purely local economic investment. The intense links the family maintained with Dominican culture while here in the U.S. were mirrored by Alma’s desire for and connection to Western culture once back on the Island. At the same time, Dominican traditions of reliance on extended kin networks facilitated first the extension of opportunity structures across

[My aunt and uncle]... retired. They were so used to travel there just to visit and have a good time that they probably thought that if they go back, it was going to be good all the time... so they went back, they had this big trailer with every possible thing you could imagine, full, every little thing you could think of they had in this trailer, and they bought a house in the Dominican Republic and this house had everything you'd probably need to live a good life. But they had an alarm in the house, so when the alarm went off they didn't know if it was real or a false alarm. All the things they had, they didn't know if people wanted to get into their house and kill them... after maybe a year-and-a-half or so they decided they were coming back. They packed a trailer again with their stuff, and from the Dominican Republic they sold whatever they could and then came back here.⁷

⁷ Interview, 2/12/99 (Man, 40s, here 20+ years, professional).

the ocean to the U.S. for employment, back to the Island for property, and back across again for higher education.

The story of Carlos, a much more recent immigrant to the City, also illustrates the importance of family ties in immigrant settlement patterns. At the time he left the Dominican Republic (in 1998), Carlos held degrees in social science, political science, and social psychology (the youngest of five brothers, he was the only one in his family who had the opportunity to go to University). All of his brothers were already in the U.S. (one still in New York, three having moved to Lawrence)⁸. Although Carlos was reluctant to leave the Island, being heavily emotionally and intellectually invested in his teaching work there, his lack of political connections greatly constrained his opportunities not only to advance professionally but also simply to support his family, and in the end he felt forced to emigrate (his wife and three children followed a month later, once he got settled; the whole family had been saving money against this eventuality for years). Once here he connected through family with a local temporary agency well-known in the Latino communities, and has spent the last year working at various factories in the region and taking English classes at a school near his house.

For many migrants, social networks are overlaid like so many ligaments and tendons on the bare bones of economic necessity; they are what makes movement possible. In Carlos' case, his lack of knowledge of English (a common barrier), combined with the fact that most professional credentials do not transfer to the U.S. context, made the existence of a kin system especially important. While Carlos' current economic situation does not permit regular travel to the Island (the same \$8 an hour doesn't go as far as it used to), he defines himself very strongly as a member of the Dominican diaspora (something Itzigsohn *et al.* define as a broad transnational practice), feeling himself almost in exile here. Although somewhat reserved, he takes great pleasure in sharing elements of his culture with North American friends, and he keeps well abreast of political and cultural developments on the Island.

⁸ His brothers, like Alma's relatives 20 years ago, have also received "commissions" for referral of new employees.

[E]stá muy presente esa parte de la cultura... los saludos, las relaciones humanas, todos esos valores que están en uno... en la República Dominicana uno los carga y los lleva para acá y para allá; entonces uno añora siempre su tierra... No es porque uno no quiera seguir viviendo aquí sino que hay toda esa cultura... esas amistades que uno mantiene para allá también lo atan a uno al territorio... nuestra cultura está englobada dentro de todo este tipo de gozadera, de vivencia, y eso es lo que hace que yo quisiera volver rápidamente a pesar de que todavía no tengo un año cumplido [acá]... Agradecemos que nos hayan abierto las puertas... lo que hay es toda una cultura que pesa en nosotros. O sea, la cultura es como los guantes del boxeador; quien boxea tiene que llevar sus guantes en su mochila para allá y para acá.⁹

⁹ Interview, 3/8/99 (Male, 40s, factory worker, former prof.).

Transnational Economic Activity

While my research did not uncover any large-scale transnational capitalists in Lawrence (people directly involved in formal businesses in both countries—see Portes and Guarnizo, 1991; Guarnizo, 1994; Itzigsohn, 1997), I would venture to say this is not because they do not exist. I did, however, find evidence of a variety of transnational economic activity beyond the commonplace remittances that many (but not all) of my interviewees send to family back home.

Ramon came over with his extended family (straight to Lawrence via an uncle already settled here) in the late 1970s. He estimates that close to 100 of his direct relatives—aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, and numerous cousins—are currently here in the City. His family members have worked in factories and professional jobs, as well as owning small businesses. One of his entrepreneurial aunts operated a clothing business in which she would buy the latest American fashions in the City or in New York and sell them in the Dominican Republic, traveling regularly between places to transact her business. Many of his other relatives own property or houses on the Island, and two uncles have since moved back. He himself (currently a professional) goes back at least twice a year, and is planning on eventually moving back with his wife (perhaps not permanently), taking advantage of her professional contacts to develop Internet-related business opportunities.

Ramon's aunt is an example of the way that fairly narrow transnational economic practices can have broad transnational cultural effects, as she participates in a process of cultural diffusion that brings American fashion, on an informal and personal but highly effective level, to the Island.

Milagros, a small business owner in the City (who is also an officer of the local Latino merchants association), tells a complementary story. While the clientele of her business is local (though she does make purchasing trips to New York), she notes that many of her customers buy clothing and accessories from her not to wear in Lawrence, but to take as gifts for friends and relatives (or outfits for themselves) when they go home to visit, presenting an image of success and prosperity to those who have remained behind. Both my informants and several studies (Itzigsohn, 1997; Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991) have mentioned this phenomenon and the way in which it acts to stimulate further migration by

El dominicano que viene a este país, y muchos se sacrifican haciendo su economía para cuando van a su país llevar lo mejor que pueden comprar aquí... porque inclusive yo a través del negocio yo me doy cuenta que la mayoría de los dominicanos siempre están recolectando cosas para cuando van de viaje a su país... A lo mejor no lo disfrutan aquí; se lo llevan a Santo Domingo para disfrutarlo allá. Entonces cuando la gente ve que las personas van de aquí con tantas cosas bonitas, con ropa nueva, prendas, muchos artículos de vestir, solamente se entusiasman y piensan, qué tan fácil, pero no saben todo el sacrificio que han hecho esas personas para ellos poder llevar eso allá. Entonces ahí la persona se engaña e inventan que aquí hay de todo, que se consiguen las cosas fácil...¹⁰

¹⁰ Interview, 2/17/99 (Woman, business owner, her 16 years).

portraying an overly optimistic picture of the riches to be had in the land of milk and honey.

Politics Without Borders?

One of the signs of a developing “transnational political sphere” is the fact that Lawrence has joined many New York neighborhoods as a required fundraising and campaign stop for political candidates from the Island. In tracing the rise of this type of activity, Itzigsohn *et al.* point to the “consolidation of competitive politics during the 1980s and 1990s” in the Dominican Republic (after years of Trujillo’s one-party rule and numerous less stable parties), which “generated a need for political fundraising” (1997:320). They (and others) also mention the encouragement of current Dominican President Leonel Fernandez, himself a return migrant who lived and received his education in New York (and who has urged Dominicans abroad to involve themselves politically in both places)¹¹, and the acknowledgement of dual citizenship by the Dominican government in 1994 as other contributing factors.

Two of the major Dominican parties, the Partido Revolucionario (PRD) and the Partido de la Liberacion (PLD) have facilities in the City that serve not only as a headquarters for political activity but also as social centers for members (the PRD even has tables set up for playing dominoes). Two of my informants had relatives that were “narrowly” involved in Dominican politics, at times traveling to the Island; one interviewee noted, “my youngest sister is part of the political party. She got that from my father. She’s very active in the PRD. She’s so involved that she’s there this week.” Others were involved in PRD activities here but did not travel to the Island for political purposes. Most PRD members whom I spoke with in Lawrence indicated that they did not get involved in City politics; they believed “no vale la pena” (it isn’t worth the trouble) and little substantial benefit for themselves or their families would arise from it. As Hardy-Fanta (1993:178-9) found in interviewing Dominican women in Boston that the “tepid” U.S. political atmosphere was a

¹¹ Some of my interviewees expressed quite a bit of skepticism and disillusionment with Fernandez, who they indicated has merely followed the hallowed tradition of Dominican leaders in enriching himself and his friends at the country’s expense, in spite of his fine words. One person also cautioned against seeing the fundraising activity that goes on here as true political involvement, arguing that it is driven much more by candidates’ need for American dollars than participants’ deeper understanding of the issues.

I think Lawrence is a nice community to live, it's wonderful. But still, I will not tell you that the challenge [is] for the Dominican people, I think it's for the Hispanic in general. There are still many things that they have to deal with here, there are many changes that still they need to make... So I see the Hispanic in a way that they need to wake up, it's time for them to wake up... Dominicans are very political, and we've been very, very involved in our country of political things. Right now I can tell you that it's not like before—people come here and spend one year, two or three years, they make a few bucks and go back. No. I think people come here and stay here now. The movement from here to over there is less than maybe five years ago...¹²

¹² Interview, 4/8/99 (Female, 40s, here 13 years, nonprofit staff).

poor substitute for the “vibrant political life” of the Island with its tangible consequences and distinctly personal, social elements, it seems that even Dominicans escaping from the uneven results of the political patronage system back home continue to use it as a political frame of reference.

On the other hand, Dominican political activity can help catalyze involvement here, as we see in the case of Silvestre, an older man who had participated in the 1965 Civil War in the Dominican Republic as a Constitutionalist. He moved to Lawrence in 1978 as part of his work for the New York branch of the PRD, campaigning on behalf of then-candidate Antonio Guzman. In his twenty-one years in the City he has since thrown his energy into campaigns for Ted Kennedy, Marty Meehan (the Democratic U.S. Congressman from the Lawrence district), and the current Mayor of Lawrence.

Civil Society and Transatlantic Obligations

In addition to their transnational economic and political activity, “Dominicans stick together when the need arises.”¹³ The hurricane which ravaged the Island (and other parts of the Caribbean and Central America) late last summer elicited an immediate, widespread, collective response from Dominicans in the City. A number of prominent City businesspeople and community leaders used their organizations as the focal points for a massive collection of money and resources (food, clothing, water, blankets, first-aid supplies) which were then distributed through similar networks and personal contacts on the Island. This extra effort joined a much more modest but regular flow of resources toward the Island, as Dominicans in the City routinely collect gifts for poor children at Christmas time and sponsor the educational costs of children who otherwise could not afford to attend school.

Levitt (1998) has also examined the role of what might be called transnational neighborhood associations-cum-community development corporations: “associations created by people from a certain town or region that gather to socialize and to help their town or village” (Itzigsohn, 2007:328). While such an inquiry is beyond the scope of the current effort, there apparently is at least one such association in the City, formed by people from the town of Altamira. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence indicates that many of those from Bonao meet regularly with kin and associates from their

Yo vine a Lawrence de New York porque al partido al cual yo correspondía que es el PRD en Santo Domingo en esa época había campañas políticas para llevar a presidente a Antonio Guzmán Fernández... Entonces, de New York me mandaron para acá en Lawrence para trabajar en esa política. A la zona que tienen que aquí llaman Hermanas Mirabal... para hacer la campaña al ex-presidente don Antonio Guzmán que fueron los que arreglaron un poco las cosas allá...Luego pertenezco al partido político demócrata: trabajo con la Congresista Marty Meehan. Soy uno de los que los soportan su campaña cada vez que viene la elección. Trabajo para las campañas de Kennedy cuando hay elecciones. Cada senador que yo veo que es demócrata que viene a mejorar la situación de los Hispanos pues ahí estoy yo al tiro en la política.¹⁴

¹³ Interview, 4/22/99 (Male, 40s, Business owner, community leader).

¹⁴ Interview, 3/2/99 (Male, 50s, former Constitutionalist).

hometown in the neighboring City of Haverhill, while Lawrence is empty of Banilejos (those from the southern City of Bani) on Sunday as they reunite with family and friends in Boston.

The Culture Brokers: Travel Agents in Lawrence

[T]he business of specializing in the problems of immigrant adjustment is [an] early avenue of economic activity, and immigrant-owned travel agencies and law firms as well as realtors and accountants are common in most immigrant communities. Such businesses frequently perform myriad functions far beyond the simple provision of legal aid or travel information and reservations.¹⁵

Travel agencies figure prominently in the physical and symbolic landscape of North Lawrence. As the literal mediators between the Island and the City, it seems only fitting that these businesses (and their owners) often serve as cultural and economic mediators as well, engaging in a variety of both narrow and broad transnational practices; essentially, they are the vehicle for many of the links. Travel agencies in the City are rarely just that; most are also at the least places where one can send remittances home, and sometimes places to ship purchases or gifts, receive mail, call the Island, or purchase beepers or cellular phones. Others combine the travel agency with accounting and insurance services that help new arrivals negotiate the labyrinthine bureaucracy of tax forms and insurance regulations that is often incomprehensible even to natives. These businesses are also places to exchange news or receive advice—as are hair salons, *bodegas* (corner grocery stores), and *botanicas* (dispensers of herbal medicine and religious guidance)—and their social and economic elements tend to reinforce each other, as both Levitt (1993) and Hendricks (1983) have emphasized. Partially because they act as mediators between the two worlds, an activity in which trust and personal relationships are vital, travel agents often occupy a prominent role in the community. One Lawrence travel agent is one of the founders of the Dominican American Voter's Association, which boasts over 5,000 members and has begun to take a more active role in City politics. Another is a well-respected community leader who was involved in numerous local nonprofit organizations before starting her own business, and

Oh, yeah, I always go back... There was a time when I had to go there with my husband and my mother was very sick in New York. I felt so bad leaving the country that I was questioning myself why. It was on my way back. Why I felt so sad if my mother, my brothers, my kids were in New York... It was when you are born in a place, you like it, you love it. It doesn't matter how far away you are from it... the country is something that is so tied to you that you cannot put it apart. My grandfather is there, but I have no other close relatives because my close relatives I call my mother, my father, my brothers and sisters. Even though everybody's here, when I go there, when I have to come back I feel like I'm missing something or that I'm leaving something that I like so much... when you're 17, you are aware of what you're leaving behind...¹⁶

¹⁵ Waldinger, 1990:23.

¹⁶ Interview, 4/8/99 (Woman, 40s, teacher, 25 years in the U.S.).

made a heroic but unsuccessful bid for City Council a number of years ago.

Transnationalism vs. Creolization

Discussions about transnational activities can have oddly contradictory elements. For instance, Levitt (1998) points to the way that returning migrants bring with them American cultural knowledge and customs that change food, fashion, business practices, and social norms in the DR, as well as creating a larger knowledge of the world—an intimate knowledge of a Boston neighborhood, e.g.—among Dominican friends or family who may never leave the Island. Guarnizo (1994) has documented the rejection that successful returning migrants eager for social acceptance—the nouveau riche, as it were—experience at the hands of the established Dominican elite, such that in some cases an actual spatial residential segregation has occurred, with migrant neighborhoods springing up in some parts of the capital, Santo Domingo. One view posits a process of cultural creolization that, it could be—and has been—argued, is a continuing element of many Caribbean cultures. The other posits the creation of an altogether different space—a migrant community separate from the economic and cultural mainstream of both Dominican and American societies.

This suggests to me that in addition to Itzigsohn *et al.*'s formulation of narrow and broad transnational practices, it might be useful to make a distinction between transnational and creole practices, acknowledging at the same time that considerable overlap will exist. This distinction may become clearer by taking a look at the activities of Working Capital, a national micro-enterprise/ peer-lending¹⁷ program that has one of its most successful operations in Lawrence. Of the nearly 200 active members of the Lawrence program, over 90% are Dominican; many of them are using the program to help initiate and finance very small home-based businesses (such as catering or childcare) that supplement other individual or family income. I would argue that, in effect, Working Capital is a hybrid or creolized form of capitalization and entrepreneurship that mediates between practices such as the *san*, an informal rotating credit association popular on the

¹⁷ Peer-lending refers to a system whereby interested individuals form a loan group that provides support and advice to members and acts as a loan review committee. Working Capital lends money to the group, which is collectively responsible for repayment though typically only one member at a time uses each loan. The combination of peer support and accountability has proven effective in encouraging high repayment levels.

*Fíjate, en Santo Domingo
hay un pueblo que se llama
Jánico que se dice que Jánico
es el segundo Nueva York
porque casi todas las
personas que viven en Jánico
están residiendo en Estados
Unidos. Viven aquí pero
tienen familiares allá y
entonces les hacen llevar la
misma vida que se está
viviendo aquí y que se vive en
Jánico: con tiendas, con
discotecas, radiocelulares,
teléfonos celulares, bipers,
antenas de televisión,
parábolos grandísimas. O
sea, ellos viven una vida de,
lo que nosotros le llamamos
allá, de ricos¹⁸.*

¹⁸ Interview, 3/5/99 (Woman, early 40s, teacher).

Island (Safa, 1995), as well as the unofficial peer lending groups that are common among Dominicans here and on the Island¹⁹, and the more formal system of bank financing with its stricter lending requirements. The program itself does not operate transnationally (though it may allow some members to do so; e.g., one is a clothing business similar to the one described in Ramon's story above), but instead fuses different cultural elements to help Dominican entrepreneurs succeed in a local American context. The Dominican-dominated Asociacion de Comerciantes Latino-Americanos (Association of Latin American Merchants) also plays this mediating role in the City by administering a line of credit originating through a local bank.

II. WORKING IN THE CITY

A Closer Look at Small Business Activity

Dominicans, more than any other Latino group in the City, have turned to small and micro-businesses to supplement their income or make a living in Lawrence. A recent survey by the Merrimack Valley Catholic Charities organization found that nearly half of the City's small businesses were Dominican-owned (this figure does not even include home-based businesses, which were not surveyed). Indeed, Dominicans had three times as many businesses as the next largest group (identified as "Americans"). While not all these entrepreneurs are part of the informal sector—indeed, a great many operate squarely in the middle of the business mainstream—there is an informal element to the enterprise: fully 82% (of all businesses surveyed) were operating without a business license, and most indicated little awareness and less utilization of either private or public institutional resources such as bank loans, façade improvement grants, and technical assistance services. Moreover, the business owners I interviewed all got their start informally, providing services to family, friends, and co-workers.

The fact that the survey data regarding other characteristics were not disaggregated by ethnic group hampers extensive inference-making; for instance, based on my knowledge of both the Working Capital Program and the small business community in North Lawrence, I would say that the rate of male proprietorship may be closer to 2/3 than ¾. In addition,

¹⁹ Personal communication, Working Capital Program Manager, March, 1999.

Snapshot: Lawrence, 1998

Small Business Characteristics

Employed Family Members	67%
Rent or Lease Space	63%
Stable or Decreasing Revenue	72%
Male Proprietorship	73%
Owner Lives in City	55%
1-3 Employees	79%
4-8 Employees	17%
Serve Mostly Latinos	72%
Serve Regional Latino Clientele	39%
Latino-owned	58%
Dominican-owned	49%
Owner's Average Time in U. S. (if Foreign-Born)	10.5 years

Source: Merrimack Valley Catholic Charities

within the Dominican business community the rate of employment of family members is probably much higher than 67%, considering the extent to which Dominicans in the City rely on family networks; all of the business owners I interviewed (and many others in the neighborhood in which I work) have family members working for them.

Access and Context

As Waldinger (1990) notes, immigrant entrepreneurship is shaped by access to business opportunities (within a particular place), immigrant group characteristics, and the specific historical conditions within which immigrant groups arrive and settle. In the wake of white flight and retail abandonment, Dominican businesses have also moved into underserved markets and empty spaces in the City. In the North Common neighborhood (which still hosts a small cluster of Italian-owned businesses), many bodegas occupy the same retail spaces that small Italian grocery stores did decades ago; on downtown Essex Street, small clothing retailers have proliferated around a closed department store. The critical mass not only of Dominicans but also of Puerto Ricans in the City forms a ready market for the neighborhood bodegas, which adapt themselves more readily to the available space and specific tastes in neighborhoods than large-scale supermarkets (establishments that have traditionally been wary of locating in poor and minority neighborhoods).

Table 3.3: Occupations of Admitted Immigrants, 1996

	Dominican	All U.S.
Total Admitted	39,604	915,900
Declared Occupation	12,043	314,705
Professional/Specialty/Technical	14%	24%
Executive/ Administrative/ Managerial	4%	10%
Sales	5%	5%
Administrative Support	7%	7%
Precision Production/ Craft/ Repair	14%	7%
Operators/ Fabricators/ Laborers	37%	24%
Farming/ Forestry/ Fishing	6%	4%
Services	14%	19%

Source: INS Statistical Yearbook, 1996

The blocked mobility²⁰ that many Dominicans in the City experience, partially as a result of labor market conditions and

²⁰ Combined with, as Waldinger points out, the self-selection of the less risk averse as immigrants in the first place.

Cuando llegué a Paterson, New Jersey, trabajé en una factoría seis meses, entonces cuando yo, a la semana de comenzar a trabajar todavía yo no tenía papeles, nada ves. Entonces yo le dije al americano, "I am doctor in Dominican Republic, you have something good for me?" Y el americano me puso de supervisor. Supervisaba un departamento que trabajaban cuarenta mujeres, ahí duré seis meses, porque después de ahí conseguí en otra compañía de electrónica, entonces yo fui y solicité y entonces el supervisor me dijo, tú sabes trabajar con los micrométricos, y yo le dije si, y yo no sabía ni lo que era, y él se moría de la risa, porque me dijo, tú no sabes ni lo que es eso, y le digo bueno es verdad, yo no se lo que es pero si tú me enseñas yo lo hago.²¹

²¹ Interview, 3/9/99 (Male, late 40s, teacher, former doctor).

language barriers, may also act as a spur to entrepreneurship. Many studies of Dominican immigration to the U.S. indicate that migrants (contrary to popular U.S. stereotypes) tend to have higher education and skill levels, and more financial resources, than the average non-migrant remaining in the Dominican Republic (Grasmuck & Pessar, 1991, others). While Table 3.4 suggests (at least broadly) that business ownership may be linked to higher levels of education (perhaps received abroad), the story of Milagros, a local business owner, is more illustrative. Trained as an accountant in the DR, she came to Lawrence sixteen years ago to visit family following the separation from her first husband. Once she decided to stay, Milagros, who at that point did not speak any English, worked in a local shoe factory and did sewing on the side until she was able to open her own retail clothing business (which recently celebrated its ten-year anniversary). Although her experience in the factory was in many ways a positive one—her employers provided help and encouragement in learning English—she saw entrepreneurship as the most viable escape from the drudgery of factory work. And as Milagros pointed out, “Having a business is also a *vocation*. Not everyone has the ability to manage a business. It is like an art. Not everybody will dedicate themselves to making it happen” [my emphasis]—a incisive reminder of the individual factors that shape each immigrant’s experience.²²

Table 3.4 Education Levels in Lawrence: Small Business Owners vs. General Population

	Small Business Owners, 1998	Lawrence Population Over Age 25, 1990
<i>Less than HS</i>	6%	43%
<i>High School</i>	42%	32%
<i>Associate Degree</i>	11%	4%
<i>Bachelors</i>	25%	6%
<i>Technical Training</i>	8%	NA
<i>Masters or Higher</i>	4%	3%
<i>Some College</i>	3%	12%

Source: Catholic Charities Report 1998; U.S. Census, 1990

It is also possible that much of the entrepreneurial activity of Dominican Lawrentians²³ draws upon a recent tradition of coping with economic informalization in the Dominican Republic.²⁴ Ironically, given the fluctuating nature of low-wage labor demand in the Lawrence region, which is characteristic of the “peripheralization of the core” I discussed in Chapter Two, it is little wonder that similar strategies have emerged in both places. Although Waldinger (1990) notes

²² I cannot stress this enough, in the face of both the generalizations required by scholarly/ policy research and the way that popular stereotypes of immigrant and minority groups flatten our perception and understanding of members of these groups.

²³ Please note that it is beyond the scope of this study to enter into the debate on just how entrepreneurial Dominicans really are. While some authors (Borjas, Waldinger) have indicated that Dominicans have low levels of entrepreneurship relative to other immigrants such as Koreans or Jamaicans (and sometimes even relative to the native population), others (Portes, Guarnizo, Levitt) have commented on the Dominican-owned businesses that abound in any Dominican neighborhood, as they do in Lawrence, and their importance to the community. On another note, Hernandez (1997) has argued that high levels of entrepreneurship do not necessarily translate into better quality of life for entrepreneurs themselves, an important point that deserves consideration.

²⁴ In the wake of the economic changes on the Island described in Chapter One (and the growing rural-to-urban migration), a growing number of Dominicans have turned to informal sector activity (businesses that operate outside the official legal and regulatory framework) such as food vending to households and *zona franca* workers, homework in the garment industry, and freelance construction work (Safa, 1995; Lozano, 1997).

that this peripheralization often creates self-employment opportunities for immigrants within the core industries themselves (smaller, more flexible firms, staffed by “co-ethnics,” subcontract with larger ones to handle the unstable portion of demand), that role seems to be foreclosed by the presence of temporary agencies in Lawrence, which offer regional firms flexible access to the immigrant labor force.

Table 3.5 Occupational Distributions, Lawrence Workforce (Selected Occupations) 1970-1990

	1970	1980	1990
<i>Latinos as % of Total Workforce</i>	3%	12%	34%
<i>Professional, Technical, Managers, Administrators</i>			
Total Population	16%	14%	21%
Latino Population	5%	7%	9%
Latino as % of Total	1%	6%	15%
<i>Clerical/Sales</i>			
Total Population	22%	27%	23%
Latino Population	3%	11%	17%
Latino as % of Total	0.4%	5%	24%
<i>Operatives/Transport/Laborers</i>			
Total Population	37%	33%	25%
Latino Population	83%	60%	39%
Latino as % of Total	7%	21%	52%
<i>Service/Private Household Workers</i>			
Total Population	12%	12%	16%
Latino Population	4%	6%	21%
Latino as % of Total	1%	5%	44%

Source: U.S. Census 1990 and Borges Mendez, 1992

Upward Mobility?

While many Dominicans living in the City are employed in the region's low-wage manufacturing and service sectors, a good number also work in one of the few union shops in town: Malden Mills, the producers of PolarTec™ fleece and the City's second largest employer. Malden Mills is well known in the City as a source of better-paying and more highly skilled manufacturing jobs, as well as for owner Aaron Feuerstein's commitment to remaining in the City after a devastating 1994 fire gave him what seemed like the perfect excuse to relocate²⁵. However, Malden Mills represents an exception in terms of the employment opportunities open to immigrant workers. Moreover, given the trends in Massachusetts manufacturing discussed in Chapter Two (and the decline in real wages discussed in Carlos' story above, and evident from many interviews), the prospects for upward mobility certainly seem less likely than they did at the turn of the century, when Cole (1963:121) could write that “[the immigrant] knew that the arrival of new immigrants improved the position of older ones. His own pay might not be much, but he had reason to believe that his son would do better... The longer a person had been in the United States, the higher his earnings.” Table 3.5 above gives us ambivalent evidence in that regard for the Latino population (as data for the Dominican population in particular are not available, I shall have to draw conclusions from the larger category of Latinos). While it is true

²⁵ Generous tax incentives from the City government eased this decision.

that a greater percentage of the Latino workforce has moved into professional and managerial jobs, Latinos have become increasingly disproportionately represented in the laboring and service professions. In 1990, Latinos were 34% of the Lawrence workforce, but 52% of all laborers—providing more evidence for Borges-Mendez's assertion that Latinos are heavily used in the region's declining manufacturing sector—and 44% of all service workers. In addition, while the percentage of Latinos who are laborers has steadily decreased—no doubt partly due to the absolute decline in the number of manufacturing jobs available—the percentage working in the service sector, a growing source of different low-wage low-skill jobs, has steadily increased.

Some Conclusions

Portes (1990:28) has noted that “labor economists frequently write as if immigrants have perfect information about labor market conditions in the receiving country and adjust their locational decisions accordingly... the roots of the locational patterns of immigrants arriving today are often found in events that took place earlier in the century.” As we have seen from some of the voices and stories in this chapter, this comment could not be more insightful. The pull of existing family ties, and the support these ties offer to “strangers in a strange land,” proves absolutely essential to location decisions. This pull also interacts with the whole history of the Immigrant City, made manifest in its industrial structure and response to a changing economic order, to both create and constrain opportunities for new arrivals. In this chapter we have seen some of the ways in which Dominican immigrants adapt to this environment through their involvement in a variety of social and economic activities. In the next chapter I will take a step back from the activities to listen to some of the attitudes behind them.

CHAPTER FOUR ATTITUDES

Attitudes is a word that encompasses both feelings and perspectives. As this thesis argues that it is by looking and listening more carefully to the feelings and perspectives of certain community members that we discover habits and resources that can be adapted for the benefit of the community as a whole, it becomes crucial to explore these attitudes. Thus, this Chapter is an attempt to look beyond simply *what* people are doing in order to understand *why* they are doing it (i.e., what does it mean to them? What is their frame of reference? How are they understanding and contextualizing their actions?), and *how they feel* about what they are doing and experiencing. In the following pages you will find people's thoughts on a range of topics, including family life, discrimination, the American dream, the dream of returning, the language barrier, and the acculturation process.

Against the Myths of Totality and Assimilation

Again, I feel compelled to remind the reader that the information in these pages is in no way a complete portrait of the Dominican community in Lawrence. It is rather an attempt to pay attention, as Ramos (1983:379) suggests, "to the ways people, as particular persons with particular histories, use their common-sense reasoning to develop methods for structuring and managing their everyday lives." In the bulk of this document I have avoided using the paradigm of "assimilation" to frame Dominican experiences because I believe it offers a flat, either/or perspective on cultural adaptation that has little to do with the ways in which Dominicans in Lawrence live (and this Chapter will provide further evidence of that). In making a similarly passionate argument in the case of Mexican-Americans, against cultural reductionism and the charge to assimilate, Ramos remarks (1983:381):

Never does the social scientist consider the possibility that a given Mexican American urban migrant's conflict may be the result of his being fat and having a large red nose... implicit in [the] recommendation to conform [to the dominant Anglo culture] is the idea that Anglos do not experience any cultural conflict.

Emigrant's Song

*Do not yearn Emigrant
for the way back
neither think sadly
about your land
nor your home.*

*do not let the doubt
nor the fear
nest in your heart.*

*God will guide your steps
in this foreign land
and will care about you
until one day
you may return home
looking for your memories
even though time
has turned them
only into dreams.*

*Jose R. Garcia
Lawrence, MA
December 1987*

Indeed they do! Psychiatrists and psychologists make their living from it.

Thus, much of the older migration literature around assimilation boxes the immigrant neatly into a paradox: on one hand, recommending assimilation as the only way to succeed and overcome drastically curtailed opportunities, while on the other hand arguing that attempts to assimilate, which are portrayed as necessarily involving a rejection of the old culture, doom one to marginal status in both cultures. Moreover, as one observer has asked, "Assimilation to what? Where is this ubiquity called American society and how can the immigrant identify and use it as a model?"¹

The assimilationist paradigm ignores the multiplicity of interactions within and around an ethnic community, among recent arrivals, those born here, and long-time residents. It also ignores the multiple frames of reference within which immigrants operate—the way, for instance, that the "world of everyday life" for many Dominicans is both a transnational and a creolized one, encompassing people, events, institutions, and places on the Island as well as in the City (as we saw in Chapter Three). An engagement with "the practical circumstances of people's everyday lives" (Ramos, 1983:383) allows us to glimpse the heterogeneity of the Dominican community, while realizing and struggling against the constant flattening effect of popular stereotypes. It may be fashionable now to celebrate the "liminal spaces," in which immigrants negotiate "at the margins" between two (or more) cultures (which are themselves an impure mixture of different myths and realities). However, I would argue that in a sense there is nothing marginal about Dominican transnational and creole practices; they represent a varied and perfectly logical strategy at the center of the common-sense reality in which many Dominicans operate.

Intergenerational Change

In our attention to the details of daily life we also need to be cognizant of the larger social structures that impose or promote or attach meanings to those details. For instance, Ramos may argue that, "Mexican immigrants are more concerned with the practical circumstances of their everyday lives than with being Anglo or Mexican." Yet the fact of being one or the other forces you to experience some

¹ Hernandez, Frank (commentator), *Sourcebook on the New Immigration*, p.479.

"A Dominican Female"

I come from a family of really strict parents and they tend to hover a lot and shelter a lot, very overprotective... My father's really big into discipline, but mainly because his father was like that. My grandfather worked for Trujillo; he was like his right-hand man. That had a big effect on the family... It does affect me, because of the way my father is... he'll just come out and say, "You come from a Dominican family and Dominican girls don't do this."... I'm supposed to live at home until I get married... [but] I need to be completely independent and have some knowledge of self before I jump into any marriage just to leave my house... It's a lot, a lot of pressure. You're expected to do certain things just because of where you're from, and that doesn't make any sense. I hate it when my father just labels me as a female or labels me as a Dominican female....

[continued]

things at least partly according to these categories. I'd like to turn to the story of Asha, a young Dominican-American woman, to illustrate how some of these categories give rise to tensions between Dominican parents and Dominican-American children.

Asha's parents left the Dominican Republic after Trujillo was killed. Her paternal grandfather worked for Trujillo and he was killed shortly after the dictator himself. Asha is the eldest of three sisters; she was brought up strictly by her parents, especially her father (who was himself brought up in a military household), with whom she has an ambivalent relationship. Her father has stringent ideas about what it means to be a "Dominican female" and has attempted to hold Asha to certain rules of behavior as a result (to a greater extent than with her younger sisters). Although Asha does not see her world, or her possibilities (in terms of educational achievement, career, or marriage) in such a constrained way, this nevertheless informs her frame of reference; that is, one of the ways she defines herself is against this notion of a proper Dominican female. Moreover, Asha sees her father's strictness as intimately related to his father—not only his behavior but his profession as part of an authoritarian government². At the same time, she describes her father as having enormous pride in (and being very supportive of) her mother, who works outside the home and has just completed a master's degree, which complicates the picture of Dominican machismo struggling with American feminism that this story might otherwise suggest.

Family in Context

Another way in which the details of daily life intersect with larger social or institutional structures can be seen in the fact that American immigration policy intersects with Dominican cultural traditions of close, extended kin networks ("*La familia allá no termina con familia inmediata*") to reinforce the chain migration tendency. This in turn increases the likelihood of permanent settlement, as it encourages immigrants to recreate a familiar community in the new territory (Borjas, 1990; Ueda, 1994). Many interviewees, even those who still expected to return home one day,

² A regime, moreover, that was deeply involved in a project of national identity consolidation, which suggests interesting connections between state power, gender identities, nationalism, and patriarchal family structures that are way beyond the scope of this thesis.

I'm like, no, this is the way I feel about it, not because I'm a female but because I'm me. He doesn't understand that... I don't know how to explain it, but it's like when you're talking to somebody in a conversation, you forget everything; you forget that you're a female, you forget that you have legs, it's just the psychology of it, you're just an emotion, just talking. But when I'm around him, it's like I'm conscious of everything around me... He makes me very uncomfortable because I know how he feels about certain things. He makes me feel like a female, he makes me feel like a Dominican female... It's hard, but I really think that... it's forced me to be really open-minded, it's forced me to go out there and prove to myself that I can do certain things and that nothing can really hold me back.³

³ Interview, 3/18/99 (Woman, early 20s, nonprofit staff, second generation).

acknowledged the ambivalent situation this creates, and especially emphasized the role of children in solidifying one's presence in the City. Immigrants' reluctance to uproot children's lives at a time when stability and continuity can be crucial (not to mention the preferences of children themselves) weighed considerably in the stay-or-return decision-making process.

Snapshot: U.S. Immigrant Admittance Category, 1996

	Dominican	All U.S.
Total Number	39,604	915,900
Family-Sponsored Preferences	49%	32%
Immediate Relative of U.S. Citizen	50%	33%
Employment-Based Preferences	1%	13%
Diversity Program	negligible	6%
IRCA Legalization	negligible	1%
Refugee/ Asylee	negligible	14%
Other	negligible	1%

Source: INS Statistical Yearbook, 1996

At the same time, both the expectation of and the desire to stay or return can have a gendered dimension. Grasmuck and Pessar (1991) have documented the differences between the male and female desire to return within many Dominican households, noting that Dominican women are more likely to relish the increased independence work outside the home brings them in the U.S. (although this can become problematic if men do not also contribute to housework), while Dominican men may view this situation as one more uncomfortable cultural upheaval to be corrected upon return. One successful businesswoman commented that, "*el hombre dominicano es el que desea más regresar... muchos hombres no quieren que las mujeres trabajen*" ("the Dominican man is the one who wants to return more... many men don't want the women to work"). She herself went back very briefly to the Island in the mid-1970s because her husband wanted to return, but was very unhappy (securing employment as a return migrant was apparently difficult, as employers did not trust that she would remain). They soon returned together. Although Grasmuck and Pessar also discussed the conflict that many Dominican women feel between Dominican and American middle-class gender norms, none of the women I interviewed—most of whom had been working outside the home in the Dominican Republic—expressed the sentiment that they were working "just to help out" their husbands. Indeed, several of the men I interviewed expressed pride in

You come here and you have your children, so if I tell my children that we're going to go back to Dominican Republic, I can tell you that maybe they say, "oh, yes," they're going to enjoy it to go back there, but after they're there for a few days they start, "Mommy, when are we going to go back? I'm missing this, I'm missing that. Mommy, the mosquitoes. Mommy, ... I can't do this or I can't get this." ... I don't know if everybody's seeing in the same way, but I think first in my children's life and in my own life. Maybe I don't like the weather, but I have to live with the weather. But I see my children, how they like when it's snowing. So at the same time that they enjoy, I enjoy seeing them doing that.⁴

⁴ Interview, 4/8/99 (Woman, 40s, here 13 years, nonprofit staff).

their wives' work achievements. One man, who emigrated here with his wife after she lost her job in a changing political administration, noted that his own employment situation had been very good at the time, but "this is not the only thing that counts in the marriage... I have to think about my wife's life and the way she feels."

Language is the Bridge

As Roberts (1983:70) points out, "the family is likely to be strongest when the opportunities available in the wider community are most easily accessed by a collective family strategy and by family-based networks." It is thus important to note that although many aspects of Dominican life in Lawrence—from arrival to employment opportunities—are shaped by participation in these family networks (and thus reinforce them), there are other opportunity structures that mitigate against family cohesion. An example of this would be the language barrier, which is often more easily overcome by children than adults (especially if the child is born here or comes here very young), and thus tends to undermine parental authority. As one respondent phrased it, "*cuando los hijos saben ingles y los padres no, los hijos se hacen en no solamente traductores pero también los que hagan decisiones*" ("when the children know English and the parents don't, the children become not only translators but also those who make decisions"). This can become especially problematic in a school situation, when attempts to impose discipline or monitor progress are mediated between mostly Anglo, monolingual English-speaking teachers and monolingual Spanish-speaking Dominican parents by the child him/herself.

La Barrera del Lenguaje

The language barrier is, in the words of one observer, "the tip of the iceberg of the cultural barrier."⁵ For many of my respondents who were monolingual or not yet fluent, this barrier was a source of great preoccupation, and people keenly felt the foreclosure of opportunities that it presented. Indeed, several of my interviews were conducted in the following manner: I would ask questions in Spanish, and my respondent would answer in English, so that we both could practice our skills in a less-than-familiar communication medium. One of my interviewees practiced his English by creating a scrapbook of panels from newspaper comic strips, which he then painstakingly translated in order to familiarize

*[En mis] diez meses
residiendo aquí he tenido que
trabajar en seis lugares;
ninguno de estos tienen nada
que ver con la formación
académica que yo tengo de
Santo Domingo... [pero]
estos trabajos han permitido
seguir sobreviviendo aquí.
En las diferentes industrias
que he estado trabajando el
inglés es una necesidad
conocerlo, dominarlo, para
poder mantener una
comunicación. Desde que
llegué me puse a estudiar y
he ido poniendo mayor
empeño, porque cada vez
más me doy cuenta que es
una necesidad el inglés... uno
la va desarrollando por la
necesidad... Quien cree que
hay vida sin necesidad poco
desarrollo va a tener... El
idioma es el puente para uno
conocer por lo menos la
cultura hablada... la mayor
parte de la cultura es
hablada. Si uno no habla el
idioma, no va a conocer la
cultura... no va a conocer
nada.⁶*

⁵ Personal communication, Sam Bass Warner, 5/17/99.

⁶ Interview, 3/8/99 (Male, 40s, factory worker, former prof.).

himself with American colloquial expressions. Several respondents also spoke of the importance of watching television⁷ in order to accustom their ears to the sound and flow of English, and broaden their vocabularies⁸.

The language barrier is one of the main reasons that so many Dominican professionals can be found in the region's manufacturing and service sectors, literally unable to translate their considerable skills and experience into better jobs in this new context. This is a point to which we shall return in Chapter Five; for now we simply emphasize that the situation of these professionals represents not only a "brain drain" from the Dominican Republic, but also a considerable untapped resource for the City of Lawrence.

Transculturation: Harder Than It Sounds

Much of the literature on Caribbean and Latino immigrant communities in the United States has emphasized the central role of back-and-forth movement, migration and return, in creating a "dual-place" identity among migrants and engendering a trade in media, fashion, food, music and other cultural products. Many also have argued that Caribbean and Latin American peoples, with their rich genetic and cultural heritage (Spanish, African, indigenous, and other influences)—a product of continuous in-migration from countries around the globe, as well as regular migration within the region—already have a long history of cultural creolization on which to draw when emigrating to and remaking their lives in America, or between America and their countries of origin. However, the fact that such a process of transculturation, as many of my interviewees termed it, was historically highly problematic (in an evils-of-colonialism-and-slavery sort of way) and often remains painful seems to receive less attention.

Consider the story of Dede, a woman who was a teacher in the Dominican Republic and terms herself "*una exiliada familiar*" ("a family exile"), as she came here not for political or economic reasons (she had a house and a secure job on the Island), but because all of her family in the Dominican Republic had died and her husband was living in the States.

⁷ May my father forgive me for endorsing such a sentiment.

⁸ One of my favorite television-practicing moments occurred when I visited the house of a female interviewee with several colleagues; they proceeded to discuss politics together at the kitchen table while I watched telenovelas (evening soap operas) with her husband in the living room.

When I go down the corridor of the Lawrence High School and I see another Spanish teacher I say: "Hi, how are you today? How have you been? What did you do last night? See you later. Okay, talk to you later! Nos vemos después." But when you see an American friend you say: "Hi Mike." "Hi [Antonio]." You don't feel that you have to say Hello again because you already did... to live in America you have to share these ways and act with some circumspection... I can't change the way of thinking or living of an American because then they would be strangers in their own country but this is a two-way situation... I would like these people to tell me hello three times in a day but they prefer to say it just once... They expect that you respect his or her intimacy and if they don't want to talk to you, don't try to talk to them... I learnt the lesson. It was a painful lesson but I learnt it...⁹

⁹ Interview, 2/11/99 (Male, 50s, teacher, 12 years in the City).

Dede recounts that when she first arrived, not knowing the language, the laws, and the rules (and being unused to depending on her husband economically), it was extremely difficult for her; she went a year and a half without working, and was very depressed. Although she is now working as a teacher, she half-laughingly compares the United States to a cancer that is difficult to extinguish once it has entered your body—a painful metaphor. While she remains homesick for the DR after years in the City, she does not feel that she would be able to live there after becoming used to a basic level of material convenience here¹⁰, and this is a distressing tension for her, though she accepts it as part of life:

“Queremos hacer nuestro mundo solo pero poniendo de las dos partes pero muchas veces ponemos partes que no nos convienen y las integramos; entonces lo que nos provoca es un caos... Es parte de la vida del Dominicano.” (We want to make our one world taking from the two parts, but many times we take parts that do not belong together and try to integrate them; then what this provokes in us is chaos... It is part of the life of a Dominican”).

Many other first-generation immigrants (the vast majority of my interviewees) expressed similar sentiments. Alma, whose story we first heard in Chapter Three, commented, “cultural schizophrenics—that’s what we are,” but also pointed out that this can be both positive and negative. For her it is positive in the sense that she feels she has two cultures on which to draw in negotiating through the world: she considers herself Dominican in her sense of self-respect and the importance of extended family connections in her life, but American in her openness to new ideas, independence, and unwillingness to conform. On the negative side, cultural schizophrenia also implies a dualism in how other people react to you, both in the City and on the Island. Several people indicated that many Dominicans on the Island view you through the lens of the “Guaguacanari Complex” we read about in Chapter One—that you have sold out or surrendered a part of yourself in order to advance; many Americans view you as strangers; in the meantime you are living here and longing for a home that can often function as an idealized embodiment of what

¹⁰ We’re talking running water and steady electricity, not luxuries; as another interviewee put it, “Yo vine aquí porque estaba cansado de que la luz se me fuera y no había agua para bañarme... yo me voy para Estados Unidos que allá hay mucha agua y mucha luz.” (I came here because I was tired of the lights going off and there not being water to bathe... I came to the U.S. because there is a lot of water and a lot of light.”)

Yo siempre digo que Estados Unidos es un cancer. ¿Y sabes por qué la uso? Porque después que el cancer entra dentro de tu cuerpo es muy difícil que lo extirpen. Después que nosotros venimos aquí y vemos las comodidades que tenemos no es verdad que vamos a regresar allá. Siempre tenemos en mente regresar. Pero vamos de vacaciones pasamos un mes y queremos volver porque no tenemos las mismas facilidades allá... Uno siempre añora su país, uno es muy nacionalista. Pero... tú sabes que si uno trabaja aquí es muy difícil poder ahorrar para tú poderte ir... si tenemos hijos que se han criado aquí y ellos no quieren, si todavía tenemos el ánimo de seguir trabajando no podemos ir porque no podemos perder nuestro trabajo... Por eso te digo que Estados Unidos es un cancer. Porque tú te acostumbras a vivir aquí, se hace difícil volver.¹¹

¹¹ Interview, 3/5/99 (Woman, early 40s, teacher).

your life here lacks. As another interviewee phrased it: "*tu no eres ni de aquí ni de allá... presente en cuerpo pero no en espíritu*" ("you are not from here or from there... present in body but not in spirit"). To a certain extent, however, the experience of this duality is individually mediated; it also depends on the length of time in the U.S. and the conditions accompanying emigration. Several of those who had been in the States for many years—and they or their parents had come for political reasons—felt less torn; as one older man, a former Constitutionalist, put it, "*no tiene que escoger; puede ser los dos—dominicano y americano*" ("you don't have to choose, you can be both, Dominican and American")¹².

Double Dreaming

Las personas que están en Santo Domingo, la esperanza de ellos es venir a este país... ellos sueñan con venir a este país... dejan carreras, dejan todo por venir aquí... el gran sueño americano; el gran sueño dominicano, diría yo, es venir a Estados Unidos.

(People in the Dominican Republic, their great hope is to come to this country, they dream of coming; they leave careers, leave everything to come here... the great American Dream—the great Dominican Dream, I would say, is to come to the United States.)¹³

One of my most striking findings was the persistence of this archetype of the American Dream in the narratives of my interviewees. Not only does this dream persist, but it plays out for Dominicans in much the same way as it has for generations of immigrants before them, as people come face to face with the enduring difference between dream and reality and the typical immigrant realization that the streets are not, in fact, paved with gold. In the Dominican context the dream is given more apparent substance by returning or visiting migrants who load up with presents and material goods to give or show off to family and friends back home, not to mention the television and film images that increasingly permeate life on the Island. Ironically, these images often reach people because a relative in the States has provided a television and a generator to power it.

A moment from Miranda's story is characteristic of this moment of realization. She came first to Salem (MA) with

20 years ago... not everyone can afford to travel, and not being educated, coming from the rural places, way back into the country, people didn't know about traveling. What will generate the interest of people to travel if they don't know about travel? Nowadays you go to the Dominican Republic and you see a house that has broken windows, broken doors, but they have a color TV in there. The reason is, they probably have a friend or relative here who brought a TV. Things are more exposed today. People could see things and say "I've got to travel there, I'm going to try to go to this place"... I don't know if the way things are in the Dominican Republic are so hard for some people that they say, "If it's going to be hard for me here, and I have to go over to the States and maybe have no documents, but still I will have a life, a so-called life."¹⁴

¹² Interview, 3/1/99 (Man, 50s former Constitutionalist).

¹³ Interview, 2/17/99 (Woman, 40s, business owner, her 16 years).

¹⁴ Interview, 2/12/99 (Man, 40s, here 20+ years, professional).

one of her sisters in 1969, petitioned in by her father (who came as a political emigrant to New York first in 1962). As Miranda recalls, "You feel like you'll be rich, like you'll have everything here. We left everything in the Dominican Republic because my father promised we would have everything here... we arrived and he had an empty apartment. The next day we went to a pawn shop to get furniture."

As Hannerz (1996:101) astutely points out, people "migrate to a possible life depicted... but once such a move has been made, that which one left has become another possible life." The American Dream and the dream of returning (the Island Dream, as it were) are intimately connected opposites—the yin and yang of Dominican immigrant dreaming. In the old country, people dream of the riches to be had in the U.S.; once people get here, the rigors of life in the City (not the least of which is adjustment to a radically different climate) give more intensity to the dream of returning to the Island. Each comes to embody the lack in the other. In this, Dominicans are no different from many other immigrants who believe their sojourn on North American soil is a temporary measure geared towards eventually saving enough—in this case an *economía*—to support a return to a better life at home.

In Chapter Five I will go more deeply into some of the political implications of this double dream, as well as explore how the role of this dream might be in some sense independent of its realization. For now I'd like to briefly touch on a related phenomenon—what Piore (1979:54) has referred to as the disjuncture between what a migrant does for work, here in the City, and his or her social identity, which is essentially located at home, on the Island. Because the Dominican immigration to Lawrence is only in some respects a Piore-type labor migration, this disjuncture does not hold entirely. For one thing, this migration has initiatory and ongoing political elements that complicate im/migrants' views of the possibility of returning home. For another, the Dominican community in Lawrence has multiple aspects of permanent settlement (growing political activity and homeownership, social clubs, service organizations, a small business community with a developing institutional infrastructure, etc.) that provide a context for identity formation and social life within the City. Finally, the role of family and tendency to re-unite with family members (often by relocating from New York) ensures that most Dominican

Hablar de una penetración cultural del inmigrante latino hacia la cultura norteamericana no es tan fácil... como nosotros conocemos lo que es la penetración cultural norteamericana hacia Santo Domingo, por el peso económico de ustedes, por el peso político, por el peso social, hace que haya más influencia del norteamericano... está presente la cultura latina porque no es que esté aplastada, no es que no tenga existencia, pero que no se nota tanto porque nuestro poder económico es limitado en este país... solamente en una de esas fábricas uno de los jefes intentó un día bailar algo de bachata entre un grupo que estábamos ahí presentes. Pero el latino, por ejemplo el dominicano, baila la salsa, baila el corrido, la música mejicana... entre nosotros, hacemos una mezcla cultural rápidamente.¹⁵

¹⁵ Interview, 3/8/99 (Male, 40s, factory worker, former prof.).

migrants are not acting as “purely economic” men and women.

Nevertheless, the Island orientation of many Dominicans does in some sense make it more bearable for them to accept lower-status jobs, at least to begin with. Pedro’s case is a good example. He grew up in a rural area of the Dominican Republic but because of his class background (his father was a land owner and merchant) was able to go the University, where he chose to become a doctor. He has moved back and forth between here and the Island twice now, and hopes to save enough to return permanently next year. When he first came to the States in 1986, he worked in a furniture factory in New Jersey—an experience that he says wasn’t pleasant, but that he views positively, as a learning experience. As a member of the middle class he did not necessarily view this job as a move of upward mobility, but he was able to look at it with some equanimity, some distance, seeing it as a temporary means to an end, separate from his life back home.

Discrimination

Piore’s point about this disjuncture is important because it provides a explanation of why many immigrants are willing to take low-status jobs that counters the often implicitly racist assumptions of what immigrant groups are fit to do. While racial discrimination is nothing new for Dominican immigrants—*cédulas*, or identification cards, on the Island still record the bearer’s racial background through an intricate system of classification refined under Trujillo¹⁶, and many of my informants mentioned the racial prejudice against Haitians on the Island¹⁷—immigrants are frequently dismayed at the often rigid racial/ethnic categories and meanings embedded in American culture; in a sense, people are unused to feeling discriminated against or looked down upon because they are *Dominican* (or *Latino*). Many people with whom I talked were quick to point out all that Dominicans contribute to the City—as a labor force, as tax payers, and as a culturally diverse group—and were perturbed by the lack of acceptance and respect their community has received from older residents. For instance, several local groups are currently working with the U.S. Justice Department in an attempt to improve the City’s election practices through the hiring of more Latino poll workers.

¹⁶ Interview, 1/28/99.

¹⁷ One respondent commented that “Dominicans do work here that Haitians do in the Dominican Republic.”

La factoría para mi era horrible, porque yo nunca en mi vida había trabajado ese tipo de trabajo... en mi casa yo trabajaba con papá en el negocio pero era diferente, tú ves. Trabajaba claro en agricultura pero para mi este tipo de cosas yo no había hecho, pero lo veo positivo porque fue una experiencia tú ves, porque la vida es una escuela, y cada actividad que tú realizas es una experiencia más en tu vida... no lo vi negativo, lo vi muy positivo, porque aprendí a hacer los muebles, y aprendí a hacer las cosas en electrónica, las piasas y todas las cosas, entonces eso es algo, es un conocimiento más¹⁸.

¹⁸ Interview, 3/9/99 (Male, late 40s, teacher, former doctor).

Ironically, the discrimination faced by Dominicans in the States as newcomers and “strangers” can be echoed by the rejection many returning migrants (successful and otherwise) experience back in the D.R., where their newfound wealth or experience challenges old class hierarchies and cultural norms. One interesting manifestation of this division is that the spatial segregation that characterizes many Dominican (and other immigrant) communities in the U.S.¹⁹ appears to have a counterpoint in Santo Domingo, where “today, urban spatial segregation is drawn not only along class lines... but also according to migration status” as returning migrants, barred from the capital’s old money neighborhoods, have developed their own communities (Guarnizo, 1997).

While the example above may be a strong indication of a separate, transnational migrant community, the lines in Lawrence appear much less clearly drawn. It thus seems more appropriate to keep in mind Itzigsohn *et al.*’s formulation of narrow and broad transnational practices; as these two chapters have shown, Dominicans in the City engage in a complex array of activities that put them in varying degrees of dialogue with social and economic structures in both nations. It is evident that many Dominicans feel very keenly the penetration of American culture (if such a thing can be said to exist) and norms in their lives long before they leave the Island. In the context of the historical U.S. political and economic presence in the Dominican Republic, it is no wonder that so many Dominicans have this consciousness of “being here because [we] were there” (Sutton, 1998)—or, as one interviewee put it: “¿Sabes porqué tantos dominicanos han venido aquí? Es porque los Estados Unidos han cogido toda la riqueza de nuestro país... somos inmigrantes económicos” (“You know why so many Dominicans have come here? It’s because the United States has taken all the wealth of our country... we are economic immigrants”)²⁰.

At the same time, immigrants seem less sure of the ways in which Dominican culture might be changing the United States, arguing that it is more difficult for a smaller and weaker country to have a large impact on the superpower to the North. Some interviewees indicated that in comparison to Dominican culture, American society seems much less open and welcoming—of both individuals and traditions that are

I don't consider myself an American, and that's when they usually refer to North American as American. Some people won't let me feel like an American. In some cases, people think I'm an Afro American, so they treat me like that... To me it was no surprise because I didn't know how the prejudice or discrimination was going to present... But in the Dominican Republic, I was dating this lady who I married, and her family used to say, "You're going out with a Black guy." According to Dominican standards, she is White. So discrimination was nothing new for me...²¹

¹⁹ In the City the majority of Dominicans are concentrated in North Lawrence, in the Arlington and North Common neighborhoods.

²⁰ Interview, 2/2/99 (Male, 40s, business owner, here 20+ years).

²¹ Interview, 2/12/99 (Male, 40s, here 20+ years, professional).

new. Thus, while people in the Dominican Republic celebrate Thanksgiving and Halloween, and Dominican children await Santa Claus at Christmas, not many in the U.S. are even aware that February 27th is Dominican Independence Day. On the other hand, those interviewees who had been here longer noted the rising prominence of Dominican baseball players and the popularity of merengue outside Dominican circles—while also noting that this was no substitute for political and economic power for Dominicans here. In the next section I will discuss some of the implications of the activities and attitudes here presented for gaining such power.

Inmigrante

*He visto los caminos y las huellas del inmigrante,
sus pasos nos empapan de alegría, sueños, y sudor.*

*En las noches he contemplado las estrellas
y al cielo oscurecer en tinieblas.
Atrás, duermen las palomas mensajeras.*

*Soy inmigrante como el primero,
quiero caminar por el mundo entero,
sin el vil odio racial que nos separa.*

*Al inmigrante no le llamen extranjero.
Yo no soy extranjero de este mundo.
El inmigrante vive creciendo.
El universo es su lecho, el verso y alimento.*

*El inmigrante tiene un amigo, su amigo sonríe,
me abraza, canta, me mira, y dice...*

*Sus ojos derraman lágrimas.
Como el rocío en la natura.
Mi vida está aquí y las raíces en mi país,
otros esperan al inmigrante primero,
en caminos y praderas alguien les espera,
la bandera es la primera.
El inmigrante y las palomas hoy son mensajeras.*

*Juan Gabriel
Lawrence, MA
2/2/99*