

INTERPRETING THE UNRESOLVED LEGACY OF TRUJILLO AT THE 1955 DOMINICAN

WORLD'S FAIR SITE

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A THESIS

in

Historic Preservation

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania in  
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION

2013

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“We build not just for now, but for the future”

-Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my family and friends for their love and support. My mother, for always standing by me no matter what. My father and sister, for driving me all over Santo Domingo for research appointments and interviews. My Tia Irasema for acting as my security escort, enabling me to thoroughly photograph and document the Center under dangerous and trying conditions. I deeply appreciate the time and effort of my classmates, current and former, in helping me to talk out my ideas.

My research would not have been possible without the assistance of the entire staff at AGN (Archivos General de la Nacion) the Dominican Republic's National Archives. My understanding of the current site was only possible through the conversations I was able to have with architect Gustavo Luis Moré and landscape urbanist Marcos Barinas Uribe, two figures not only of great consequence to this site but also to the larger study of Dominican Modern Architecture. I would also like to thank Mauricia Domínguez, president of the Dominican chapter of DoCoMoMo, and Bienvenido Pantaleon, professor of architecture at the Universidad Pedro Henriquez Urena and moderator of the award-winning Imagenes de Nuestra Historia for their opinions and words of encouragement.

I also give my thanks to my advisor, Aaron Wunsch, for his thorough edits and support.

To everyone who helped me along in this process, I thank you.

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## Introduction

In the thesis that follows, I explore the implications the dictatorship that was celebrated by the 1955 World's Fair in the Dominican Republic and the "denigrated urban void" that it has become.<sup>1</sup> I propose a new approach to the site, now known as the Center of the Heroes, employing theories developed for the preservation, management, and interpretation of international "sites of conscience" as a means to achieve the ultimate goal of a new "Center of Dominican Democracy".<sup>2</sup>

The dictatorship of Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina lasted from 1930 until 1961, when he was assassinated. His reign lasted for a significant portion of Dominican modern history. The legacy of those years left a physical imprint on the country, through the massive urban growth and infrastructure programs that he enacted, and an emotional imprint in the hearts and minds of the Dominican people, left from years of silence and fear.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Alexander González, "Unresolved Public Expressions of Anti-Trujilloism in Santo Domingo," Chap. 10 in *Ordinary Places/Extraordinary Events: Citizenship, Democracy and Public Space in Latin America*, ed. Clara Irazábal (New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 2008), 224.

<sup>2</sup> The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience consists of "sites, individuals, and initiatives activating the power of places of memory to engage the public in connecting past and present in order to envision and shape a more just and humane future." More information about the organization can be found at: <http://www.sitesofconscience.org/about-us/>. Establishing a new "Center of Dominican Democracy" was cited as one of the main objectives in the 2005 competition for plans to revitalize the former Fair site, now called the Center of the Heroes.

The 1955 World's Fair of Peace and Confraternity of the Free World was planned as a celebration of Trujillo's twenty-fifth year in power.<sup>3</sup> Fairs and expositions were considered one of the most effective methods for demonstrating national economic and cultural "progress" while strengthening international relations. Historian Lauren Derby frames the event, and I argue its architectural style as well as "'encapsulations' or even 'approximations', but instead worked through their creation of what Timothy Mitchell has called a 'reality effect' in which people come to inhabit the world they see represented".<sup>4</sup> Thus, by hosting a World's Fair, the Dominican Republic provided a platform for promoting its signs of progress, real and projected, all the while framing them as direct results of Trujillo's rule.

Both Trujillo and his principle architect, Guillermo Gonzalez, are rumored to have visited different World's Fair sites. Some accounts say the two visited the Rome 1942 Exposition while others claim that Gonzalez visited the 1939-40 New York World's Fair. Both stories end with these men returning to the Dominican Republic feeling inspired to

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<sup>3</sup> On October 21, 1954 Congressional decree number 279 created the Fair of Peace and Confraternity of the Free World under the auspices of the Dominican Government. The legal documentation of this decree were recorded in the publication *Feria de la Paz y Confraternidad del Mundo Libre: Unidos para la Paz y el Progreso*, (Ciudad Trujillo: Consejo Administrativo del Distrito de Santo Domingo, 1955).

<sup>4</sup> Lauren Hutchinson Derby, *The Dictator's Seduction: Politics and the Popular Imagination in the Era of Trujillo*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 131.

Mitchell describes his "reality effect" as such: "[A] world more and more rendered up to the individual according to the way in which, and the extent to which, it could be set up before him or her as an exhibit. Non-Europeans encountered in Europe what one might call, echoing a phrase from Heidegger, the age of world exhibition, or rather, the age of world-as-exhibition. World exhibition here refers not to an exhibition of the world but to the world conceived and grasped as though it were an exhibition".

Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 13.

undertake a massive exposition in the capitol city of Santo Domingo. Trujillo's utilization of Modern architecture was a symbol of progress and new national identity. Guillermo Gonzalez is widely regarded as the Father of Dominican Modernism and acted as the main architect of the Fair.

All of the major national pavilions designed for the Fair were planned as permanent constructions. From the onset of the planning process there were intended for long-term use, creating a new seat for government in the most modern expansion of the city. These new civic uses began almost immediately after the closure of the three-month celebration. Offices for the Federal District and Nation were thence house in one place. Marking the changing political climate, one year after Trujillo's assassination, the site was re-named to honor the men and women who lost their lives resisting against the former despot. The Center of the Heroes of Constanza, Maimon, and Estero Hondo is known for its function as a government center, as well as the many illicit activities that happen there.

After Trujillo's death the country was thrown into almost a decade of tumult after thirty-one years of unilateral rule which had grown to be widely known as one of the most brutal and oppressive of the twentieth century. The end result of those years of political insecurity was the re-appointment of Trujillo's last "puppet president", Joaquin Balaguer. Many of the men and women in power today were protégées of the most influential ministers and leaders of Trujillo's Dominican Party.

Of the buildings that still stand from the Fair, the largest are dedicated to Government functions and are impressive as a whole but unassuming individually. Some of the smaller pavilions broke from that mold and now hold smaller institutions or are vacant. It was necessary to look into the histories of these individually in order to understand the role they played within the larger campus. A field survey in February of 2013 allowed me to see the conditions of the fairgrounds and determine which buildings from the Fair remained. I photographed several of the statues and a significant mausoleum and was able to make observations about use and visitors.

The dual associations of corrupt and ineffective government, as well as crime and prostitution, discourage most Dominicans from visiting the site. It is considered highly dangerous, a fact visible from the ubiquitous high walls, barbed wire, and total absence of foot traffic outside of government business hours. In 2004, the area's poor reputation spurred a partnership of the major organizations involved with and located at the Center to host a competition for revitalization plans. A specific list of criteria was provided which included circulation, landscaping, and parking capacity issues. A jury composed of government officials, as well as architects from both the Dominican Republic and abroad, selected two proposals. It was decided that one winning team would address the centermost area of the grounds and the other would focus on the periphery. Approximately eight years later, the proposals have yet to be implemented, or even begun.

These proposals are explicitly forward-looking, attempting to leave behind the lingering association of the place as a public celebration of Trujillo's rule. It is a side of history the place's history that few want to engage with. An uneasy balance of anguish, denial, and nostalgia surrounds the Trujillo years in the public memory. During his reign almost everything in public media and discourse was attributed to Trujillo, but after years of backlash against the crimes he and his regime committed, almost no sites are now formally recognized as important works executed under his power.<sup>5</sup>

The legacy of Trujillo's brutality and human rights' violations are now considered "dark history". This term refers to a range of subject areas which would have previously been considered taboo; including slavery, forced internment, massacres, and totalitarian rule. The official histories about the Trujillo era now include many accounts of his atrocities, but it has become unpopular to praise any good he may have done.

There is an emerging trend in public history to include, rather than deny or ignore, "dark" elements into the larger story of historic sites. An example of this is the interpretation of the roles of slaves at Mount Vernon and Monticello, the homes of heroicized early American leaders George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. This movement encourages interpreters to be explicit about the complications of managing sites linked to histories that are difficult and uncomfortable for the public to engage with.

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<sup>5</sup> Robert Alexander González discusses the erasure of Trujillo's mark from major public spaces in Santo Domingo in the chapter *Unresolved Public Expressions of Anti-Trujilloism in Santo Domingo*. This chapter is in a larger anthology titled *Ordinary Places/Extraordinary Events: Citizenship, Democracy and Public Space in Latin America* (2008).

A “dark history” is sometimes also acknowledged by a memorial, either formal or otherwise. These memorials can carry different meanings. Temporary memorials are often public displays of personal feelings while official memorials place importance on the actions or tragedies of a person or persons through permanent tribute. In these ways, dark histories can be explored in many ways, tailored to each site. Looking to the theory and best practices of this new approach, I explore new ways of considering the preservation and revitalization of the site.



## Chapter One: Review of the Literature

The initial research impetus was to understand this place as it existed in the past and as it is today. To do this, it was first necessary to understand the sociopolitical climate in which the Fair was created. Authoritative histories on the Dominican Republic, such as historian Frank Moya Pons' *The Dominican Republic: A National History* (1998) give general overviews that cover long periods of history. These larger anthologies are fact-based and succinct, but largely impersonal. The contemporary accounts written by Dominican authors about Trujillo during his reign cover a more specific period and are in greater detail but are not critical. Nearly all such written accounts are laudatory and do little to convey the complexity of contemporary attitudes.

Directly after Trujillo's assassination there was a surge in public outcry against him. The publications from this time are gory in their detailed accounts of torture, abuse, and assassination of many of Trujillo's victims.<sup>6</sup> Reading these clarifies the danger of the time and the pain felt by so many. The once quiet stories of disappearances and broken

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<sup>6</sup> Probably the goriest account comes from Robert Crassweller's *Trujillo: The Life and Times of a Caribbean Dictator*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966. Crassweller had worked in World Trade Intelligence for the State Department and was thus privy to information pertaining to Trujillo's rule which was previously withheld from the public.

Also significant is the graduate thesis of Jesus de Galindez, *The Era of Trujillo: Dominican Dictator*, Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1973. This was edited and published several years after the disappearance and presumed death of Galindez for writing this paper.

Arturo Espaillat provides an insider's perspective in his book *Trujillo: The Last Caesar*, Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1963. He had served as a General of Security under Trujillo and was a significant participant in his secret intelligence service.

lives come to the forefront. These stories give context to the memorials which arose later at the fairgrounds. The Center of the Heroes emerges as a place with contentious history, multiple layers of significance, and a slew of contemporary urban issues.

Articles from major Dominican newspapers provide both a wider understanding of contemporary public opinions about the Fair and a more detailed record of changes and additions to the site. Some of the changes to the site include several memorials. Newspapers and online forums also provided references to several statues and the organizations that commissioned them. But it was not clear what importance the different types of memorials carried, and to whom. Folklorist Jack Santino discusses public commemoration of death in Northern Ireland, in a recent anthology. He gives special attention given to temporary memorials. In the same volume, art historian Harriet Senie discussed the use of memorials as a form of public protest.<sup>7</sup> Both of these were invaluable in understanding the motives and expected outcomes of this action. These types of temporary, or informal, memorials carry a different weight than those which are officially sanctioned. Those came later to the Center, in the form of statues and a mausoleum. The book *Memorial Mania* (2010) provides a framework in which to view these government acts of commemoration. Understanding the two separately made clear the transition from one to the other, in order to have permanence and the validation of larger support.

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<sup>7</sup> Jack Santino, "Not an Unimportant Failure: Rituals of Death and Politics in Northern Ireland," and Harriet F. Senie, "Mourning in Protest: Spontaneous Memorials and the Sacralization of Public Space," in *Spontaneous Shrines and the Public Memorialization of Death*, ed. Jack Santino (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013).

For me to comprehend why the fairgrounds were selected as a site for protest and memorial, I had to look into scholarship on World's Fairs as a typology to understand their meaning. I wanted to know what made this specific place so significant. Within the context of Trujillo's personality cult, a World's Fair could symbolize a great achievement that only he could accomplish. Historian Robert Rydell's *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (1984) is a good source about International Fairs their intentions, and impacts. The time frame of Rydell's examples pre-date the Dominican Fair but he effectively describes the evolution of Fairs as a medium, especially within the context of nationalism and "empire".<sup>8</sup> Although Trujillo did not attempt to create a larger imperial sphere for his small island nation, his visions of the power and potential of the country were still in many ways grandiose. With his Fair he left a long-standing symbol of his power.

When looking at the evolution of Fairs since the 1851 Crystal Palace in London, the increasing impact of these expositions on the fabric of their host city becomes clear. Employing international fairs as a tool for urban development became commonplace for modern fairs. Robert Moses intended the two New York World's Fairs (1939 and 1964) held in Flushing Meadows, Queens, to convert the marshy dumping ground into another major park for the city, one that would rival even Manhattan's Central Park".<sup>9</sup> Trujillo

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<sup>8</sup> Rydell has authored, and edited several seminal texts on the history of World's Fairs and international exhibitions. His analysis emphasizes the importance of the political and social climate in which the expositions occur, and for this his works were consulted heavily. Consult the bibliography for a more exhaustive list of relevant source.

<sup>9</sup> Robert W. Rydell, John E. Findling, and Kimberly D. Pelle, *Fair America: World's Fairs in the United States*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), 92.

undertook massive infrastructure projects to bring water and electricity to the site of his World's Fair. This facilitated the development of the adjacent lands, generating a good deal of profit for many of the nationalized companies, including Dominican Cement.

Architectural histories of the Fair cite several connections and influences for the Dominican Fair. Among them is the 1939 World's Fair and the thwarted 1942 Exposition in Rome. The connection to the 1939 New York Fair is obvious when comparing photographs of its iconic Trylon and Perisphere. The Symbol of the Dominican Fair is a direct interpretation of these forms. However, research into the 1942 Rome Exposition uncovers deeper connections related to intent and execution. Mussolini planned the creation of a new city on the outskirts of Rome to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of Fascist rule. This suburb, EUR, takes its name from the Esposizione Universale Roma (Universal Exposition Rome) and has remained as a symbol of that time. Like the Dominican Fair, the wide streets and sharply orthogonal plan are a clear departure from the more organic growth which characterizes the historic centers of Rome and Santo Domingo. These architectural history books and articles published in the *DoCoMoMo Journal* provide a larger, and more academic, take on the importance of the site within the larger story of Dominican architecture.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The most comprehensive and inclusive account of Dominican architectural history, from pre-colonization up to contemporary times is the anthology *Historias para la Construcción de la Arquitectura Dominicana, 1492-2008*, Edited by Gustavo Luis Moré et. al., Santo Domingo: Grupo Leon Jimenes, 2008. This text is also significant for including both formal and vernacular styles.

The DoCoMoMo articles that included a larger discussion of modernity and Trujillo were Gustavo Luis, Moré's "Dominican Republic, the Transition to Modernity" and Omar Rancier's

The Center as it stands today still has a great deal of original buildings, but the site's context has changed significantly. A few key primary sources provided original photographs of the fairgrounds during construction and the Fair.<sup>11</sup> To learn more about the current legacy of the site, I turned to contemporary newspapers. Most touch on the themes of crime and widely referenced the notoriety of the place. Those that discussed the Fair focused on the legacy of two remaining pavilions that were never meant for government use and which are currently unoccupied, the Venezuela Pavilion and the Agua Luz Theater. The Venezuela Pavilion was meant to be a temporary structure, but was the most distinctive building at the Fair and was left standing because of its popularity. The Agua Luz Theater design was a technological marvel. Major shows and

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"Santo Domingo, Modernity and Dictatorship". Both are in *DoCoMoMo Journal* No. 33, September 2005.

<sup>11</sup> *Feria de la Paz y Confraternidad del Mundo Libre: Unidos para la Paz y el Progreso* is the official government document from the Dominican Congress that declares the legal decrees that created the Fair. It also discusses the goals of the government to create a new civic center campus of buildings and outlines the zones of the Fair. The publication includes a fold-out map of the plan of the Fairgrounds showing the sectors and the principal buildings. Each building is labeled with great detail, including the company names of the smaller pavilions. This was incredibly helpful in navigating through the awkwardly written narrative of the fairgrounds. The National General Archives of the Dominican Republic houses a series of Informational Bulletins which have not yet been published. There are twenty-five of these four-page publications, spanning from October 5, 1955 to September 20, 1956. Each summarizes the progression and daily events of the Fair. There are images on almost every page of the bulletins, giving glimpses of the buildings as they were designed and constructed, and creating a timeline of the Fair buildings. Many images were 'recycled' between the newspaper coverage in *El Caribe*, the Bulletins, and the final Albums of the fair at its close. The Golden Albums of the Fair, a two-volume set, provide the most beautiful set of images of the Fair. Especially useful are the larger-scale and color photographs that bring the site to life. These albums were commissioned by Trujillo to serve as the official documentation of the Fair. They include aerial views of the evolution and growth of Santo Domingo over the 25 years that Trujillo had been in power.

concerts would occur in unison with water and light displays. Today it has ceased to be used and is now in great disrepair.

The Venezuela Pavilion has been widely written about.<sup>12</sup> The difference in accolades and attention given to this building contrast sharply with the lack of attention paid to the Agua Luz Theater. Garnering much less press, the former crown jewel of the World's Fair is obviously lacking advocates for its care and re-use. Its size and deterioration are often cited as deterrents for new use.<sup>13</sup>

The Center of the Heroes emerges as a place with contentious history, multiple layers of significance, and a slew of contemporary urban issues. Articles from major Dominican newspapers provide both a wider understanding of contemporary public opinions about the Fair and a more detailed record of changes and additions to the site.

Very little has been written about historic preservation as a field or movement in the Dominican Republic. Accounts are fragmentary and often antiquated. Long-term protection of the buildings and larger fairgrounds will rely on its acceptance as a site of historical and social significance. As such, I needed to learn more about the prevailing attitudes towards preservation as well as the organization that enact it. Rosa Negrón's

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<sup>12</sup> Two useful articles specific to the Venezuela Pavilion are Jose Enrique Delmonte, Mauricia Dominguez, and Gustavo Luis Moré's "Tropicalized Otherness", *DoCoMoMo Journal*, No. 36, March 2007, pages 42-44 and Gustavo Luis Moré's "The Difficult Modernism of Alejandro Pietri: The Venezuelan Pavilion, Dominican Republic (1956)" *DoCoMoMo Journal*. No. 30, March 2004, pages 50-52.

<sup>13</sup> Omar Santana discusses a large renovation planned for the theater that never materialized in "El Teatro Agua y Luz, y la Renovación Que No Llegó", *Diario Libre*, sec. Noticias, May 19, 2011, [http://www.diariolibre.com/noticias\\_det.php?id=291040](http://www.diariolibre.com/noticias_det.php?id=291040) (accessed August 16, 2013).

Masters thesis *The Origins and the Preservation Movement in the Spanish Antilles* (2000) charts the development of historic preservation as a movement in Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba. She details the governing bodies in each country and major legislation that enables acts of preserving built heritage. Her research into the Dominican Republic makes clear the conflicts and limitations of the enabling environment for historic preservation, with a majority of projects focusing on colonial history and a number of governmental organizations and offices with overlapping powers and responsibilities.<sup>14</sup>

As the city began to take more action, they created a competition which will be discussed at more length in a later chapter.<sup>15</sup> After the call for entries, two plans were selected by a jury of architects and urbanists. The two winning competition proposals by Moré Architects and Artisitdes Ramirez Minaya and Associates were published in the bilingual international architectural magazine, *Archivos de Arquitectura Antillana* that Moré edited, complete with maps and renderings to depict the designers' visions for the site.

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<sup>14</sup> There is little discussion of historic preservation and urban planning in Dominican media. However, the 2010 *Diario Libre* series "El Malecón de Santo Domingo: Una Vía con Necesidad de Dirección" (The Malecon of Santo Domingo: a Route with Need of Direction) is a three-part newspaper series discussing the role of government in urban planning for three significant areas along the waterfront of Santo Domingo. In these articles, reporter Vanessa Espailat advocates a more open and inclusive role for public participation in decision-making. There is a vested public interest in the planning of Santo Domingo, and this series indicates that there are likely many people who want opportunities for participation in discussing these urban topics.

<sup>15</sup> According to the newspaper *Diario Libre*, a large number of buses have been using the Center as a parking zone, which led to plans to re-negotiate their circulation and parking in the space by the capitol city's municipal government. Omar Santana, "ADN Sacaría los Controles de Guagua de la Feria," *Diario Libre*, sec. ECOS, August 10, 2011.  
[http://www.diariolibre.com/noticias\\_det.php?id=301124](http://www.diariolibre.com/noticias_det.php?id=301124) (accessed August 16, 2013).

The two proposals have many direct conflicts, and it is unclear if or how they will be reconciled. Both plans emphasize democracy and public participation but include no vehicles for implementation.

Thus, with a thorough understanding of the motives behind creating the 1955 World's Fair and the ways in which the changing political climate impacted the evolution of the site, I was able to critically assess the ways in which planning for the its future have been approached. Public interpretation was not addressed, but based on the complex meanings of the site, it emerged as a strong candidate for increasing interactions between the public and the Center's buildings.<sup>16</sup>

The Center of the Heroes of Constanza, Maimon, and Estero Hondo has in its name a given role to memorialize the lives lost in opposition to Trujillo. The links between his decades of abuse and the consequences of that cannot be denied. Looking into other sites related to the legacy of dictator's in Europe such as Mussolini and Hitler uncovered a genre of historic sites that deal in past tragedies. Many of these "dark" sites grapple with complex questions about freedom, the role of government, and national identity. Several of the recommendations made brought to mind efforts that are ongoing in the Dominican Republic and the Center specifically. Looking into examples of Dominican agencies that commemorate dark history turned up the Museum of Dominican Resistance. The Museum employs several methods in order to

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<sup>16</sup> The origins of formal interpretation are outlined in Freeman Tilden's *Interpreting Our Heritage* (1957). He answers the questions of why interpretation matters and what it can hope to accomplish.



commemorate the lives lost in the many attempts to oppose Trujillo's power, in order to address larger issues about the value of life and liberty.<sup>17</sup>

Recent publications have begun to group these sites in ways that highlight the patterns common to many of them. This trend in site interpretation is still growing but has picked up steam within the last two decades. Enough sites have been implementing these theories that effective methodologies and practices are beginning to emerge.<sup>18</sup> The literature on heritage interpretation of sites with dark history indicate that engaging the public can be both emotionally restorative and also a valuable educational tool for future generations. The chapters that follow will make an argument for the implementation of such an approach for the site of the 1955 World's Fair.

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<sup>17</sup>Museo Memorial de la Resistencia Dominicana (Memorial Museum of the Dominican Resistance). <http://www.museodelaresistencia.org/> (Accessed December 6, 2013).

<sup>18</sup> The anthology *The Darker Side of Travel* (2009) touched on subjects that had emerged in the prior discussions of memorials and commemoration. The examples discussed provide a link between the impetus to acknowledge death as part of a grieving process and then maintaining those memorials in order to convey a message of loss, injustice, or tragedy for a wider public audience. In this way, formal memorials can be read as including interpretive materials with the plaques and quotes that so often adorn them.

The second book, *Heritage Interpretation* (2006), takes these theories and case studies and outlines best practices for applying them to new interpretation programs.

## Chapter Two: A Brief Socio-Political History of the Dominican Republic during the Trujillo Era and Civil War

When Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina began his reign, Santo Domingo was still small and had just begun to expand beyond its colonial walls. By the time he was assassinated, the city had experienced growth in every area: population, geography, and industry. These rapid changes shaped the city's future expansion and character. Focused on leaving a physical imprint, Trujillo presented this progress as a manifestation of his control. As architect Gustavo Luis Moré observes, "[t]he city was imagined as an asset that would launch the nation beyond the countryside's stagnation and into modernity".<sup>19</sup>

Trujillo assumed power through a military coup d'état. He was trained by the U.S. Marine Corps during the American occupation of the Dominican Republic from 1916-1926. They left the island when Horacio Vasquez was elected to power, appointing Trujillo as Commander-in-Chief of the Army. After six years in office Vasquez was still very popular with many, but was beginning to be viewed as a dictator. This was cut short when he was deposed by Trujillo's army. Within months of this ascension to power, the devastating hurricane San Zenon hit. Thousands of lives were lost, due in great part to the predominance of small wooden houses which were unable to withstand the force of the storm's winds. As a reaction to this national tragedy, Trujillo began a campaign of

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<sup>19</sup> Gustavo Luis More, "Setting the City in Motion: Urban Landscape and Modernity in Santo Domingo," *MoMA Caribbean Modern Architecture*, ed. Gustavo Luis More (Santo Domingo: Archivos de Arquitectura Antillana, 2009), 33-47, 43.

development and infrastructure projects that would continue throughout his thirty one years of power.<sup>20</sup>

In the time of Trujillo there was a prevalent saying in all households that “even the walls have ears”. People were not safe to speak freely in their own homes. Those who opposed Trujillo often became pariahs, and it was dangerous to be associated with them. Every home had a framed photograph of Trujillo’s face with the label “In this house, Trujillo is chief”. All school children wrote a pledge to him at the top of their assignment pages. Each public broadcast and performance was dedicated to Trujillo. His presence was seen and felt everywhere.<sup>21</sup>

In 1949 a group of exiled political dissidents landed in the town Luperon on the northern coast in an attempt to overthrow Trujillo. They were vastly outnumbered by the Dominican armed forces. Many were killed immediately while others were taken away to be tortured in prison. In June of 1959, groups of Dominican and Cuban rebels landed in three locations: Constanza, Maimon, and Estero Hondo. This effort was backed by the Fidel Castro’s government in Cuba. These men were not so quickly killed as the members from the first expedition. Trujillo’s forces chased several of these men into the mountains

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<sup>20</sup> For more information on this storm and the process of rebuilding, see:

Frank Moya Pons, *El Ciclón de San Zenón y la "Patria Nueva": Reconstrucción de una Ciudad como Reconstrucción Nacional*, (Academia Dominicana de la Historia, 2007).

Moya Pons discusses the vast devastation and the ways in which Trujillo used the rebuilding of the capitol of Santo Domingo as an emblem for the construction of a new country.

<sup>21</sup> Many good works of historical fiction have “re-created” this time for modern audiences. Two that are widely available to English-language readers are Julia Alvarez’s *In The Time of the Butterflies* (Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 1994) and Mario Vargas Llosa’s *The Feast of the Goat* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2001).

were any survivors were brutally killed. This did not go unnoticed by the international community and created conflict for Trujillo's regime.<sup>22</sup>

The Fair served as a medium for expanding commerce and promoting trade while celebrating a right-wing dictator who directly or indirectly owned the vast majority of national industries and resources and stood to directly profit.<sup>23</sup> The estimated \$30 million dollar price tag of the 1955 Fair significantly decreased the Dominican financial reserves. This was exacerbated in 1958 when the prices of the major exports began to fall. In 1960 the Organization of American States imposed economic sanctions against the Dominican Republic. This was a reaction to Trujillo's involvement with an assassination attempt against Venezuelan president, Romulo Betancourt. The two has a public feud which came to a boil with this failed attempt. After the sanctions were imposed, Trujillo removed his brother Hector from the presidency, and replaced him with then Vice President, Joaquin Balaguer.<sup>24</sup>

Three daughters from the prominent Mirabal family were assassinated for their husbands' participation in the June 14<sup>th</sup> resistance movement. These murders did not sit well with the Dominican public and is often pointed to as a turning point in the public's acceptance of Trujillo's continued rule with its many abuses. He was assassinated only months later. Their murders has had such a lasting impact that in 1981 the UN designated

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<sup>22</sup> Frank Moya Pons, *The Dominican Republic: A National History*, (Princeton: Markus Weiner Publishers Inc., 1998). 371.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 365.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 372.

the date of their killings, November 25, as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.<sup>25</sup>

Trujillo was assassinated on the evening of May 30, 1961 by a group of six men. The conspirators were military officers, politicians, and successful businessmen. All had been insiders from Trujillo's own inner circle. Trujillo's puppet president, Joaquin Balaguer quietly held onto power while the entire nation went into shock at the news of Trujillo's death. After thirty-one years of his singular rule, the economy was in dire straits, and the country's future was uncertain. Many citizens still supported a continuation of Trujillo's government but an increasing number began to reject this perpetuated abuse of power.

The post-Trujillo period saw completely free rallies and protests for the first time in decades. Protest efforts were effective in removing the remaining Trujillo family members from the country. The U.S. government arranged the Trujillos' safe passage out of the country on American boats. They had managed in the last years of the regime to transfer millions of dollars out of the country to international banks. The repercussions of this further devastated the Dominican economy. Those monies are still in contest between the dictator's multiple heirs and the Dominican government.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> The United Nations, "International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women- Background." Accessed December 6, 2013. <https://www.un.org/en/events/endviolenceday/background.shtml>.

<sup>26</sup> "Hijos de Trujillo Exigen Más de RD\$4 Mil 432 Millones al Banco de Reservas," *Acento*, sec. Actualidad, May 31, 2013, <http://www.acento.com.do/index.php/news/84630/56/Hijos-de-Trujillo-exigen-mas-de-RD-4-mil-432-millones-al-Banco-de-Reservas.html> (accessed December 4, 2013).

The country remained in a state of crisis. The near-constant strikes and demonstrations were retaliated against with an oppressive police presence on the ground. This shifting power and unrest continued until what is now considered a civil war erupted at the end of April of 1965, four long years after Trujillo's assassination.

When Balaguer returned to power after the civil war, active protests were forcibly quelled. Violence returned and many lives were lost. Balaguer's government made a concerted and ongoing effort to distinguish him from his former ally. However, it is widely recognized that to a lesser degree he utilized many of the same brutal tactics as his predecessor. Although there was a revolution in the Dominican Republic, it ended with a return to the previous ruling power. Civil liberties grew but there was still a level of control that continued to be exercised against the Dominican people.

### Chapter Three: The 1955 World's Fair of Peace and Confraternity of the Free World

All World's Fairs are complex endeavors. They require months, if not years, of planning and vast capital investment. Their impact can be difficult to measure as they affect not only a physical site, but also the minds of all those who visit and read about them. The aims of these fairs have evolved over time, although some themes remain the same. World's Fairs are exercises in both national myth-making and advertising. World's Fairs promote the host nation to both the outside world and its own citizens; they are an exercise in looking out and in.

Due to the totalitarian political climate of the Dominican Republic at the time of the Fair, and for the decades leading up to it, it can be argued that the fair was also utilized as a tool "to win popular support for national imperial policies".<sup>27</sup> After such a long rule, there was an increasing level of unrest. With the 1955 World's Fair of Peace and Confraternity of the Free World, Trujillo meant to showcase all of the good that he had brought to the small island country. The Fair came at the culmination of an entire year that Congress declared as Year of the Benefactor of the Nation (law number 3828 on May 14 of 1954), a celebration of the twenty-five years of power held by Rafael Leonidas Trujillo.<sup>28</sup> The Dominican Republic had become a tool through which Trujillo could practice self-aggrandizement. He is even quoted as saying that the Fair "'rewards my long

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<sup>27</sup> Rydell, Findling, and Pelle, *Fair America*, 5.

<sup>28</sup> *Feria de La Paz y Confraternidad del Mundo Libre. Dominican Republic International Peace and Progress Fair; a Picture Report on the Dominican Republic's Fabulous \$30 Million World's Fair*, Havana: Printed in Diario de la Marina, 15.

vigils and my fever for work during these twenty-five years in which was forged this prodigious reality. That work is my only crown, and with it I submit myself today to history’”.<sup>29</sup>

The Fair sought to exhibit the many areas of growth where the country had progressed, presenting the “new” nation as both one of the most successful in Latin America and a strong and valuable ally to the United States. As the official guide book of the Fair states: “The Dominican Republic today... is this most evident example of the titanic effort of a Statesman to place his country among the most advanced nations in modern times”<sup>30</sup>. Trujillo constantly put out messages to the public that their lives under his control were far better off than without him. There were more strategic reasons for expending the time, effort, and most importantly, money, to mount an international world’s fair. It was both a showcase of what had been achieved and a projection of what was to come.

The event was held in Santo Domingo, capitol of the Dominican Republic, from December 20, 1955 to February 27, 1956, the anniversary of the Dominican Republic’s independence from Haiti. Although not formally sanctioned by the BIE (*Bureau International de Expositions*), the governing body of World’s Fairs and Expositions since

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<sup>29</sup> Derby, *The Dictator's Seduction*, 214.

<sup>30</sup> Feria de la Paz y Confraternidad del Mundo Libre, 1955, *Official Guide Book of the International Peace and Progress Fair, Ciudad Trujillo, Dominican Republic, 1955-1956*, New York: A.A. Marin, 3.



1928, this event was touted within national borders as a World's Fair while advertised as an international trade fair overseas [Figures 1-4].

The Fair of Peace included trade expositions, performances, food, informative exhibits and also several parades and pageants. The most elaborate of these was the Corso Florido, or Floral Parade. The parade celebrated the coronation of Trujillo's daughter, Angelita, and was held on her birthday, April 1. However, the event was dominated by a strong governmental presence. There were floats that depicted major historical events such as the Hull-Trujillo Treaty (1940) that enabled the Dominican Republic to regain control of its export profits. There were re-creations of major landmarks and monuments [Figure 5]. Each province and several industries commissioned floats.

Refer to Figure 6 for a map of the Fairgrounds, including all pavilions. At the Fair, smaller commercial pavilions and kiosks demonstrated levity. Many utilized their architecture as a form of advertisement, creating spectacle and generating interest in the various products. Photographs and newspaper write-ups describe a pavilion shaped in the form of a large bar of chocolate, another had a giant bottle pouring rum into human-sized glasses on its roof [Figure 7]. These smaller buildings reflect the purpose of the Fair to promote trade with the Dominican Republic.

Advertising abroad was undertaken by the Dominican government and by commercial groups, primarily the Occidental Hotels and Dominican Sugar. These advertisements appeared in major American magazines and newspapers. The pictures of

the new hotels and sketches of the fairgrounds, often with palm trees somewhere in the background, portrayed the Dominican Republic as an idyllic getaway replete with luxury hotels and plenty of commercial possibilities [Figure 4].

All of the published materials on the Fair were, like everything else in the Dominican Republic at the time, under Trujillo's total scrutiny. All written reports celebrated the modernity of each building, paying special attention to those crafted by famous Dominican architects and applaud the progress and power of the nation. In the words of Trujillo; "[w]e are proud of the fact that the buildings and installations of the Fair were conceived, planned and carried out almost in their entirety by Dominican architects, engineers and laborers"<sup>31</sup>.

Every day in the two national newspapers, *El Caribe* and *La Nacion*, there were articles about the Fair. This began months before groundbreaking of at the end of 1955 and continued through most of 1956, even after the Fair's official close. Every single festival and parade was covered. The arrival of all major visitors was announced in the papers and a series of "Informational Bulletins" was published solely about the Fair. Trujillo was able to create a new civic center in the modern expansion of the city that was being developed by his infrastructure projects. News coverage began with showing the installation of large pipes to carry water to the site before construction of any pavilions could begin.

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<sup>31</sup> *Official Guide Book of the International Peace and Progress Fair*, 7.

The official decree that created the Fair and set its legal and logistical parameters also describes the site. The land dedicated for construction measured approximately 500,000 square meters. The existing George Washington Avenue<sup>32</sup> ran east-west along the coast and formed the southern border of the fairgrounds. The existing “Angelita” Children’s Hospital formed the perimeter to the West and the Dominican National Brewery to the East. The fairgrounds were laid out by a small team led by prominent Dominican Modernist architect, Guillermo Gonzalez. He also designed most of the monumental domestic pavilions.

The Fair was laid out in five zones. Section A contained domestic exhibits. Section B was for activities connected with “the political integration and preservation of the Republic”. Section C contained exhibits about the production and exploitation of national resources. Section D was dedicated to events for social and educational betterment of the Dominican people. And finally, Section E was reserved for all foreign pavilions and exhibits.<sup>33</sup> In sum, four out of the five Fair zones were occupied by domestic pavilions and events and only one was dedicated to international use.

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<sup>32</sup> Many major streets in Santo Domingo are named after famous American presidents. This is only one manifestation of the Dominican Republic’s adulation of its neighbor to the north. Many articles and books have been written about the connection between the two countries. An interesting take on this is Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof’s book, *A Tale of Two Cities: Santo Domingo and New York after 1950*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010). He focuses on the two cities of Santo Domingo and New York to discuss the migration of Dominicans back and forth to the United States and the ways in which culture and identity on the island have been impacted by this diaspora and exchange.

<sup>33</sup> *Feria de la Paz y Confraternidad del Mundo Libre: Unidos para la Paz y el Progreso*, 44.

At the intersection of the Fair's main north-south axis, then called the Central Avenue, with George Washington Avenue was the Symbol of the Fair, housed within the Pavilion of Nations [Figure 8]. This serves as one of two main entrances to the Fair. The Symbol was designed by Jose Amable Frometa Pereyra, a Dominican-born architect. Composed of a 40-meter angled obelisk and a large globe, the Symbol included 5 large stars that were often used to refer to the rank held only by Generalissimo Trujillo.<sup>34</sup> There was a clear influence from the Tylon and Perisphere from the 1939-40 New York World's Fair [Figure 9]. The Pavilion of Nations' is comprised of two wings flanking either side of the Symbol, with portals to represent the participating free nations.

The Central Avenue was planned to be part of a larger future urbanization, but initially ended at its northern end at Independence Avenue with the exit of the Fair [Figure 10]. Midway along the Central Avenue is a large roundabout with a fountain designed by the Catalan engineer Carles Buigas, creator of the Magical Fountain from the 1929 Barcelona International Exposition [Figure 11]. In front of this luminous fountain was the Administrative Council to the West and the main National Exhibitors Pavilion to the East [Figures 12-13]. Directly south of the National Exhibitors Pavilion was the pavilion dedicated to exhibits from multiple government agencies- Interior, Police, and Communications. The Armed Forces pavilion was directly south of the Administrative Council. To the North of the Administrative Council is a building that housed exhibits from Education, Exterior Relations, University, Social Welfare, and Public Health. To the North

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<sup>34</sup> *Fair of Peace and Confraternity of the Free World: Informative Bulletin*, October 5, 1955, Year 1, No. XXIII.

of the National Exhibitors Pavilion were displays for Agriculture, Public Works, Economy and Treasury.

Section E occupied the grounds directly West of the administrative Council. Perhaps the most famous and unique of these is the Venezuela Pavilion by Alejandro Pietri [Figure 14]. The structure has a curvilinear form that was markedly different from the heavily rectangular forms of the official Dominican pavilions. The area for domestic exhibitions was directly East of the main National Exhibitors Pavilion.

Facing onto George Washington Avenue was ample space for the sector dedicated to diversions, restaurants, casinos and similar establishments. This included the Dominican Republic's first Chinese restaurant and the impressive Agua Luz Theater [Figure 15]. The Agua Luz was touted as being the "world's largest everything"<sup>35</sup> Comprised of a large open-air stage "wider by twenty feet than Radio City Music Hall" it was "equipped for ice shows, legitimate theater and, if necessary two tournament basketball games played simultaneously". Perhaps the most obvious draw was the water and light show put on at the fountain that was also designed by Buigas; "Two hundred and fifty feet of lighted fountains illuminated waters cascading a hundred feet in the air to the music of Tchaikovsky and Strauss"<sup>36</sup>.

The primary architect of the Fair, Guillermo Gonzalez, studied architecture at Yale and continued his training at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Many of the other

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<sup>35</sup> *Dominican Republic International Peace and Progress Fair; a Picture Report on the Dominican Republic's Fabulous \$30 million World's Fair*, 17.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

architects who formed part of the Technical Board were also either foreign trained in the 1920s and 1930s, or students of Gonzalez's.<sup>37</sup> For these younger architects, the Fair provided their first opportunity to have their designs built. Not only did the fair showcase the work of Dominican architectural masters but it also helped to train the next generation of Modernists.

The architecture of the Trujillo Era was often less about the actual stylistic elements of the buildings than it is about the associations that accompanied certain building types, including the wealth and power of the countries where those styles originated. The small island nation sought to emulate the cosmopolitan styles of the United States and Europe. In a period during which trade, literacy, social mobility, and infrastructure blossomed, the Dominican Republic had urbanized and modernized under Trujillo. First overshadowed by Haiti, and then Cuba, the two prize jewels of the Greater Antilles, the Dominican Republic had been considered a backwater for many years. Because of this, the country and especially its leader wanted to prove that they too could be sophisticated and advanced.

The Fair was also intended to reinforce the Dominican Republic's position as a U.S. ally in the anticommunist Western Bloc. Ruling in the midst of the Cuban revolution, Trujillo was emphasizing that his country was unabashedly pro-commerce and capitalism. It was a reminder to the United States that even if it objected to Trujillo's human rights

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<sup>37</sup> Jose Enrique Delmonte, Mauricia Dominguez, and Gustavo Luis More, "Tropicalized Otherness," *DoCoMoMo Journal*, No. 36, March 2007, 42-44, 44.

violations in his own country, the Dominican Republic served as an “essential hemispheric anticommunist bulwark”.<sup>38</sup> All of the Dominican government’s main buildings, designed by Gonzalez, demonstrate a highly ordered Classic regularity. The wide avenues and scale indicates design that was focused on creating the impression of a highly ordered and controlled state. Trujillo appropriated Modern architecture to present a progressive face for the Dominican Republic.

As the Fair’s official guidebook describes, the Dominican pavilions featured a variety of materials including “marble, glass, gypsum, asbestos cement, steel, aluminum, wood, stone, concrete and many other varied and beautiful materials produced in our age”<sup>39</sup>. There was a mixture of locally-produced materials, like Dominican mahogany and travertine, and those associated more directly with Modern architecture that were also produced by Dominican firms, such as concrete. There was an effort to speak to being Dominican, either through building materials, murals or decorative elements “inspired” by the indigenous tradition.

These lavish constructions came at a high price. Most estimates of the cost of the Fair total about \$30 million U.S. Dollars, which in 1955 was approximately one-third of the Dominican coffers. The years following Trujillo’s reign after 1955 were characterized by severe economic decline, loosening one of Trujillo’s most significant strongholds over the country. Once he was no longer able to generate the same economic and industrial

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<sup>38</sup> Derby, *The Dictator's Seduction*, 223.

<sup>39</sup> *Official Guide Book of the International Peace and Progress Fair*, 7.

growth that characterized the first two decades of his rule, the might of the Benefactor began to crumble.



## **Chapter Four: The Center of the Heroes of Constanza, Maimon, and Estero Hondo**

When the 1955 World's Fair of Peace and Confraternity opened, the site was just beyond the limits of Santo Domingo's developed areas. The juxtaposition between undeveloped land and monumental buildings is visible in photographs taken during construction, most only showing the newly constructed Hotel El Embajador in the background [Figure 16]. The monumental buildings and paths of Fair appear to have been dropped onto the land, seemingly unrelated to other development, and falling just short of the coast line. That context has since changed markedly, the once vast open lands surrounding the fairgrounds are now densely packed with other civic, commercial, and residential structures. The site has been absorbed by the sprawling metropolis of Santo Domingo. The former fairgrounds have a distinct sense of place from the modern city that has grown around them. The broad avenues, open spaces, and monumental buildings are more pronounced than the smaller structures and more crowded structures that followed after. Figure 17 is a map of the current Center, with the new functions and users labelled by building.

The Center today typically find it in one of two states. During business hours the main intersection is a sea of cars. Parked bumper-to-bumper along every side of the main streets, the medians, and nearby side streets, these vehicles indicate that the Center is a destination for many visitors [Figure 18]. The lack of parking structures and public lots has contributed to a sense of chaos at the main intersection of the Center, mainly in front of the National Congress and Electoral Board. Compounding this issue is the use of the

Center for large public buses, many of which use the open area adjacent to The Agua Luz Theater as their parking grounds. The ongoing struggles to reduce crowding have led to city government crack-downs on the public buses.<sup>40</sup> A solution has not yet been reached for individual car parking needs. Afterhours, or on a weekend, the Center appears largely abandoned [Figure 19].

Aside from the government functions that draw visitors to the Center, many are drawn by the illegal sex trade that is widely practiced there. Several Representatives from the National Congress joined forces to propose a measure to convert the Center to a red light district, in no way denying the competing interests found at this place.<sup>41</sup> Crime and insecurity accompany the reputation of the Center. Although there are also three private schools, a church, a language institute, and several other smaller organizations beyond the larger government functions, this is not a place where you will see pedestrians or people congregating. The schools exist behind tall walls and layers of barbed wire. Many buildings appear unused. The dilapidated state of these buildings is a source of public discontent, vocalized widely in social media and national newspapers.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Omar Santana, "ADN Sacaría los Controles de Guagua de la Feria," *Diario Libre*, sec. ECOS, August 10, 2011, [http://www.diariolibre.com/noticias\\_det.php?id=301124](http://www.diariolibre.com/noticias_det.php?id=301124) (accessed August 16, 2013).

<sup>41</sup> Lissette Rojas, "Yo Trabajé en la Bolita del Mundo y en la Duarte, Yo Sé lo Que es Eso," *Acento*, sec. Actualidad, November 11, 2011, <http://www.acento.com.do/index.php/news/9086/56/Yo-trabaje-en-La-bolita-del-mundo-y-en-la-Duarte-yo-se-lo-que-es-eso.html> (accessed August 16, 2013).

<sup>42</sup> Every newspaper article listed in the bibliography makes mention of the lamentable state of the Center, as do many others.

Nothing explicitly marks the Center of the Heroes of Constanza, Maimon, and Estero Hondo as a site once built to celebrate Trujillo's long reign. Statues were pulled down, busts removed, and his face painted over in murals.<sup>43</sup> Other more abstract references to the man were also quickly removed, such as the five star emblem on the Symbol of the Fair that represented his military rank. The buildings and roads remain, but the signs of their origins are gone.

Most of the smaller pavilions used to display commercial or industrial interests were demolished after the close of the Fair, but not all. Some of these remaining pavilions have been added onto and now function as auto body shops, a lottery and bank kiosk (similar to a check cashing in the United States), and café. Beyond these to the East are the Alliance Frances, a radio station, another private school, and a hospital. There exists an incongruous mix throughout the Center of major institutions and more informal commerce of various types.

Some of the unplanned uses of pavilions have brought positive results. The Spanish Pavilion designed by Javier Barroso is located in the eastern portion of the fairgrounds. After the close of the Fair, it was given by the Spanish government to the Catholic Church which converted it to its current use as the Loyola School of Santo Domingo. A southern classroom block addition in 1984 by William Reid Cabral and the

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<sup>43</sup> This was initially done by popular action but then supported and fueled by Balaguer and his network until finally the continued removal of symbols of Trujillo was almost solely an official course of action, one that legitimated the Balaguer regime by cutting its ties to Trujillo.

Sports Centre was built to the west of the original pavilion in 1996 by Jose Mella Febles.<sup>44</sup> Almost any view of the original building is obscured by these additions and a very tall wall topped with barbed wire [Figures 20-21].

Many buildings at the Center now have increased security features such as gates, walls, and private drives. The stylistic integrity of many of these significant buildings has been compromised by tall fences and “closing the ground floor (which in principle were open and raised on stilts)”.<sup>45</sup> Pressure to expand government offices is threatening to take over the land occupied by structures from the Fair that are in disrepair. Some government offices have begun to re-locate to other parts of the capitol city as they outgrow their current buildings. Newspaper reporter Vanessa Espailat has written a series of articles which call into question the “inability of local government to play its role as a mediator and regulator of the development of the city”.<sup>46</sup> There are differences in ownership between land and the structures that sit upon it because the original parameters of the Fair entitled free use of the land to construct individual pavilions for foreign nations. Many factors are at work which are potential threats to the long-term preservation and use of the fairgrounds and its remaining buildings.

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<sup>44</sup> Emilio Jose Brea, et. al., *Santo Domingo: An Architectural Guide*, (Seville: Junta de Andalucía, 2006), 372.

<sup>45</sup> Vanessa M. Espailat, "El Malecón de Santo Domingo: Una Vía con Necesidad de Dirección (I de III)." *Diario Libre*, sec. Lecturas, November 20, 2010, [http://www.diariolibre.com/noticias\\_det.php?id=269018](http://www.diariolibre.com/noticias_det.php?id=269018) (accessed August 16, 2013).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

There are two significant Fair buildings that are currently unused while still being widely recognized for their stylistic and technological merits, the Agua Luz Theater and the Venezuela Pavilion. The Agua Luz Theater is monumental in size. During the Fair's run, the Lido from Paris performed here as well as many significant Dominican performers. The open-air theater contains a fountain from which it takes its name. This was created by Carles Buigas, the same designer responsible for the Magic Fountain in Barcelona, a remnant of the 1929 Barcelona International Exposition. Insensitive additions, compounded by disuse and inappropriate uses, present threats to the site's stewardship and material value as a historic site. The Venezuela Pavilion was designed by Alejandro Pietri to house that nation's exhibitions. Already an important architect at the time of the Fair, his fame continued to grow and he is considered a significant figure in the history of Venezuelan Modernism. It now sits empty. In stark contrast to the severity of the designs created for official Dominican pavilions, the Venezuela Pavilion is framed by three significant contemporary Dominican architects as a "non-conformist work in aesthetic terms" for its curvilinear design that defied the strictly controlled environment in the Dominican Republic. They recall its multiple iterations, "from Chinese restaurant to the headquarters of the Dominican Society of Architects".<sup>47</sup> In its own right, the building is perhaps the most distinctive and innovative architectural remnant from the Fair.

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<sup>47</sup> Jose Enrique Delmonte, Mauricia Dominguez, and Gustavo Luis More, "Tropicalized Otherness," 44.

The transfer to the Dominican Society of Architects (SARD) occurred in 1995 when it was bequeathed by the Venezuelan Embassy in Santo Domingo".<sup>48</sup> Several newspaper articles have drawn attention to this special structure. By 2007 the structure had been empty for several years and had been taken over as storage space by the Senate. There they housed all of their office cast-offs including "rusting filing cabinets, freezers, motorcycles and vehicles, and rotting wooden chairs and desks".<sup>49</sup> An interview with the former president of the Society, Erwin Cott, revealed that the current president of the Senate at the time decided not to hand the property over. Later, the Senate gave orders to not allow entry to the architects, and dispatched armed guards to the monument.<sup>50</sup> And this is how it supposedly remained for some time, although today no military presence is visible at the site, and the structure appears mostly abandoned. [Figure 22].

While the Venezuela Pavilion has an ongoing battle between these two interested parties, no one has been found to take on the long-term fight for the Agua Luz Theater. Largely abandoned, the grounds of the Theater now mostly serve as bus parking for the major public transit routes that cross the zone. "At night it becomes a location more of the prostitution market that rules the Center of the Heroes. All day it is the public bathroom of the informal traders who are found in the area. And at peak times, has

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<sup>48</sup> Gustavo Luis More, "The Difficult Modernism of Alejandro Pietri: The Venezuelan Pavilion, Dominican Republic (1956)", *DoCoMoMo Journal* No. 30, March 2004, 50.

<sup>49</sup> Yvonny Alcantara, "Pabellon de Venezuela "Muere" con el Senado," *Diario Libre*, sec. Noticias, January 24, 2007, [http://www.diariolibre.com/noticias/2007/01/24/i123869\\_pabellon-venezuela-muere-con-senado.html](http://www.diariolibre.com/noticias/2007/01/24/i123869_pabellon-venezuela-muere-con-senado.html) (accessed July 7, 2013).

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

served as a rubbish dump”.<sup>51</sup> [Figure 23] This state of affairs is all the more puzzling given the attention the building has received from leading photographers in a series on “the social and moral decay of our society, reflected through buildings that were iconic and which are now abandoned, in ruins and on the way to disappear”.<sup>52</sup>

In the 1980s the Theater was leased by “the National District Municipal Government to the Centro Turistico S.A. Company, which in turn was a subsidiary of Dimargo S. A.”<sup>53</sup> but they quickly began to complain about costs and exited the agreement. It had been considered for use as a casino but the proper permits were never obtained and the project had to be abandoned.<sup>54</sup> The German consulting firm ITB Consulting recently conducted a study of the tourism capacity in Santo Domingo. They proposed the creation of a large convention center that would allow the capitol to better compete with other cities in the country. The Agua Luz was cited as a potential site. The size and current deterioration of the structure present a great challenge to private investment.<sup>55</sup> Some proposals for the site have gone so far as to call for demolition of the structure.

In 1997, the former Agriculture pavilion from the World’s Fair burned down. This is the only major building from the original complex to be lost. An open competition was

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<sup>51</sup> Santana, "El Teatro Agua y Luz, y la Renovación Que No Llegó"

<sup>52</sup> "Polvo en el Viento," *Diario Libre*, sec. Photoimagen 2012, September 11, 2012, [http://www.diariolibre.com/noticias\\_det.php?id=351499&l=1](http://www.diariolibre.com/noticias_det.php?id=351499&l=1) (accessed August 16, 2013).

<sup>53</sup> Omar Santana, "El Teatro Agua y Luz, y la Renovación Que No Llegó," *Diario Libre*, sec. Noticias, May 19, 2011, [http://www.diariolibre.com/noticias\\_det.php?id=291040](http://www.diariolibre.com/noticias_det.php?id=291040) (accessed August 16, 2013).

<sup>54</sup> "Deadline Expires and Casinos Still Operate Outside the Law," *Diario Libre*, sec. DL English, July 23, 2010, [http://www.diariolibre.com/noticias\\_det.php?id=254522](http://www.diariolibre.com/noticias_det.php?id=254522) (accessed August 16, 2013).

<sup>55</sup> Juan Llado, "Gran Reto al Turismo Capitalino," *Diario Libre*, October 1, 2012, [http://www.diariolibre.com/noticias\\_det.php?id=353881](http://www.diariolibre.com/noticias_det.php?id=353881) (accessed August 16, 2013).

held in order to develop a design to replace this form and create a new Supreme Court and Attorney General's Office. The architects Gustavo Luis Moré and Juan Cristobal Caro were awarded the commission to design a new Supreme Court of Justice and Attorney General's Office [Figure 24]. In a co-authored article on the project, Moré and Caro claim that building "respects the significant Modern structures in the area designed by Guillermo Gonzalez". After the design was developed, there was a four year period of inactivity. This ended in a "frantic" three month construction period. The new building was inaugurated on January 5<sup>th</sup> of 2005.<sup>56</sup> While still undeniably contemporary, the Supreme Court building gracefully fits into its surroundings.

### **Memorials at the Center of Heroes**

The Fair was selected by the families of these fallen revolutionaries because it was known as an important symbol of Trujillo's power. They focused their temporary memorial at the Pavilion of Nations, the structure that looked out towards the sea along the fairgrounds main North-South axis. After removing signs that referenced Trujillo, they hung photos of their murdered friends and family in the wings of the Pavilion, where the flags of participating nations one hung.

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<sup>56</sup> Gustavo Luis More and Juan Cristobal Caro, "Suprema Corte de Justicia & Procuraduria General de la Republica, *Archivos de Arquitectura Antillana*, Volume 9, Issue 20, January 2005, 84-94, 84.



In order to prepare the Pavilion of Nations for a restoration project in 2004, the photographs were removed and never replaced. Later that year, the Pavilion was renovated and inaugurated as the Plaza of the Americas. This undertaking was a collaborative effort of the National District Municipal Government and the Board of the Center of the Heroes. The plan was for the Plaza to feature “a water fountain, 42 flags of sister countries, gardens, and lights that highlight the esplanade”.<sup>57</sup> The removal of the informal memorial created by the families of Trujillo’s victims cleared away a personal element from the massive and formal Center.

American Studies scholar Erika Doss has done a great deal of research into the social practice of creating memorials. Her work provides context to understand the impetus for, and meaning of, this “temporary” memorial that was in place for several decades. She posits that these types of memorial are “actually highly orchestrated and self-conscious acts of mourning aimed at expressing, codifying, and ultimately managing grief”.<sup>58</sup>

The families of some of Trujillo’s most well-known victims used this public space as a way to publicly mourn their lost loved ones in a way that helped them to cope with years of forced silence. In fact, this performative aspect is what distinguishes temporary

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<sup>57</sup> "Reinauguran Plaza Bolita del Mundo," *Diario Libre*, sec. Noticias, August 13, 2004, [http://www.diariolibre.com/noticias/2004/08/13/i46067\\_reinauguran-plaza-bolita-del-mundo.html](http://www.diariolibre.com/noticias/2004/08/13/i46067_reinauguran-plaza-bolita-del-mundo.html) (accessed August 16, 2013).

<sup>58</sup> Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 67.

from officially sanctioned memorials.<sup>59</sup> Public art historian Harriet Senie frames these acts of public grief as a form of protest.<sup>60</sup> The acting community appropriates the space that their memorial occupies.

And the memorial at the Pavilion of Nations went hand-in-hand with a larger protest. As people took to the street for the first time in decades, they were protesting the ways in which their nation had been abused and mismanaged. The memorial created by the families became a point of congregation for victims and families affected by disappearances and murders to talk openly about the crimes committed against them. As Doss states, “[t]hese are not graves awaiting occasional visitors and sanctioned decorations. Instead of a family visiting a grave, the ‘grave’ comes to the family- that is, the public. All of us”.<sup>61</sup>

Growing international recognition of the right and need to commemorate victims of tragedy set the scene for the creation of a formal memorial in the Dominican Republic. In 1972, more than ten years after Trujillo’s assassination, a more formal memorial was created to recognize the heroes for whom the Center had been re-named in 1962. The land was donated by the National District Municipal Government and the space was

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>60</sup> Harriet F. Senie, "Mourning in Protest: Spontaneous Memorials and the Sacralization of Public Space," *Spontaneous Shrines and the Public Memorialization of Death*, ed. Jack Santino (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 45.

<sup>61</sup> Jack Santino, "Not an Unimportant Failure: Rituals of Death and Politics in Northern Ireland," *Spontaneous Shrines and the Public Memorialization of Death*, ed. Jack Santino (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 13.

designed by Dominican architect Carlos Sully Bonelly.<sup>62</sup> The monument-pantheon, as it is formally known, is unassuming. It is located on a secondary street within the Fairgrounds, its commemorative purpose indicated primarily by the two angels that form the entrance, in addition two plaques on either side of this doorway [Figure 25]. Beyond the entrance, the small gated enclosure has a path leading to a large statue of an angel, the “Angel of Freedom” created by Dominican sculptor Domingo Liz [Figure 26]. The actual mausoleum lies directly below her form. The lot is landscaped with grass and small bushes with trees lining the sides and rear. It is an intimate and simple space.

The Museum of Dominican Resistance, as an umbrella organization that supports the Foundation for the Center of Heroes, documented the inauguration of the monument-pantheon. The founding members of the Foundation were several of the same mothers who first made their mark at the Miniño Puigsubirá, mother of Expeditionary hero Johnny Puigsubirá. Then acting President, Miniño Puigsubirá, mother of June 14 expeditionary hero Johnny Puigsubirá recounted the story of how the family members of these murdered revolutionaries scoured the mountains and countryside in search of the remains of their fallen loved ones.

At the time of the inauguration, the remains of 52 expeditionaries were exhumed and reinterred together so that “all together they can rest in one place and in the view of

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<sup>62</sup> Museo Memorial de la Resistencia Dominicana, "Pantheon Heroes Monument Constanza, Maimon and Estero Hondo." Accessed December 5, 2013. [http://www.museodelaresistencia.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=199:monumento-panteon-heroes-de-constanza-maimon-y-estero-hondo&catid=49:monumento-heroes-de-constanza-maimon-y-e&Itemid=85](http://www.museodelaresistencia.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=199:monumento-panteon-heroes-de-constanza-maimon-y-estero-hondo&catid=49:monumento-heroes-de-constanza-maimon-y-e&Itemid=85).

future generations". In 1987 the remains of 67 more men were added to the pantheon's roster. These were found in 14 mass graves found at the San Isidro military base. This was where Trujillo's most trusted captains were stationed, and many terrible things are known to have happened there under him and his sons' watchful eyes. Again in 2007, on the significant date of June 14, the remains of six more expeditionaries were entered after being discovered near the military airport in Costanza. At this point, 125 of the 196 expeditionaries have found their final resting place at this monument.<sup>63</sup>

Other monuments have been erected in recent years. In June of 2010 another monument to the heroes of Constanza, Maimon, and Estero Hondo was installed. Facing the Congress it depicts the form of one of the expeditionaries raising a flag. The work was commissioned by the Comisión Permanente de Efemérides Patrias (CPEP), the Permanent Commission of National Ephemeris and created by Juan Gilberto Nuñez.<sup>64</sup> The same Commission and sculptor were responsible for another memorial in January of 2011, this time dedicated to the Mirabal sisters [Figure 27]. Jose Rafael Sosa of the newspaper *El Nacional* interviewed the President of CPEP, Juan Daniel Balcacer. The official stated that "Considering the necessity of a monument in the city of Santo Domingo to revere the memory of these outstanding national heroines, we are conveniently located in the

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Jose Rafael Sosa, "CPEP Destaca La Feria se Transforma en Zona de Monumentos y Homenajes," *El Nacional*, sec. Reportajes, January 08, 2011, <http://www.elnacional.com.do/reportajes/2011/1/8/71488/CPEP-destaca-La-Feria-se-transforma-en-zona-de-monumentos-y-homenajes> (accessed August 17, 2013). The title of this article translates to "CPEP Designates the Fair to Become a Zone of Monuments and Tributes".

Center of the Heroes, being the most emblematic area of the struggle against the Trujillo dictatorship".<sup>65</sup> The signs of this struggle have been lost but are now being commemorated with these types of official sculptures.

As William Shakespeare wrote, "what's past is prologue." Events in the past have implications in the present and future. The legacy of the Dominican Party remains, because it is very difficult to undo decades of deeply entrenched power dynamics. Those who did well under Trujillo were for the most part in a position to continue doing well. They were not exempt from his abuses- no one was. But generally they owned businesses, had jobs, and were more likely to be educated and well connected. The value of these memorials is in their ability to give a presence and voice to those who were wronged. The shameful histories of a country can be reparative when "individuals, communities, and nations recognize that injustices have been committed against others, that those injustices continue to have power, and that current understandings of self and national identity are complicit in those injustices".<sup>66</sup>

### **Plans for the Future of the Center**

In 2005 the Santo Domingo Municipal Government, the Museum of Dominican Resistance, and the Board of the Center of the Heroes of Constanza, Maimon, and Estero

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 311.

Hondo commissioned landscape urbanist Marcos Barinas Uribe to develop an open competition for revitalization plans for the Center. The competition proposed using the plaza to rebrand contemporary Dominican citizenship and nationalism”.<sup>67</sup> Focusing on that plaza, other concerns such as circulation and parking were explicit goals in the call for entries. Eight proposals were submitted and two winners were selected. The firm of Moré Architects was assigned the responsibility of revitalizing the central corridors of the Center while Aristides Ramirez Minaya and Associates are responsible for the periphery zones.

One of the two winning designers, Gustavo Luis Moré, claims that the original spatial arrangements of the Fair informed the new design.<sup>68</sup> In his research for the site, he determined that the original planners of the fair, most notably Guillermo Gonzalez, planned for each building to have an adjacent open space that would allow for expansion as the government and nation grew over time, allowing the site to evolve with these changes. This original intent is incorporated into the design scheme. While respecting the height, façade lines, and massing of the neighboring buildings, he and Caro still created a form that was very much of its moment. The building’s specifications call for travertine veneers like those found on many of the large pavilion buildings of the Fair. In this case they are applied on a building with much more complex volumes than the rigid

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<sup>67</sup> González, "Unresolved Public Expressions of Anti-Trujilloism in Santo Domingo", 230.

<sup>68</sup> This quote is taken from an interview with Gustavo Luis Moré that was conducted by the author, Moira Nadal, on February 8, 2013 in the office of his firm, Moré Architects, and magazine, *Archivos de Arquitectura Antillana*.

rectangular boxes of the older buildings. The use of glass and metal framing showcase contemporary building technologies and materials.

Moré is both a successful architect and serious historian. A former president of the Dominican chapter of DoCoMoMo he has authored many articles about the development of the Modern architecture movement in the Dominican Republic and larger Caribbean. He has also been involved with larger anthologies that cover a much longer historical trajectory. He has made himself into an authority on Dominican architecture both famous and obscure.

His firm's proposal has three main functions: "to convert the Center into the new civic center of democracy; make it more agreeable for citizen use; and reusing the Modern architecture". Moré's vision is for a site that is not just institutional but democratically participatory, a meeting place for citizens. The architect aims to translate the Modern architecture as an image of Dominican democratic architecture through a re-appropriation of the style.

The proposal submitted by Minaya and Associates is very detached from the history of the site, stating their intention to "turn this area into another part of the city"<sup>69</sup>. Their reference to the history of the Center comes through an emphasis of the monumentality of the place and the use of sculptures. Circulation routes are employed to weave the Center into the surrounding urban fabric. They propose future expansion

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<sup>69</sup> Aristides Ramirez, et. al., "Another Part of the City," *Archivos de Arquitectura Antillana*, Volume 9, Issue 20, January 2005, 103-06, 104.

through the construction of two large-scale towers in the center of the Fair complex, “in order to highlight the presence of the complex within the city”<sup>70</sup>, completely dwarfing the existing buildings.

The written proposal by Moré Architects includes several maps to illustrate three specific phases of implementation, parking and landscaping strategies. Within the guise of a thoroughly mapped out plan divided into implementation phases is a nebulous approach to reverting years of political apathy and public memory. While relying heavily on research and first-hand experiences of the old Fair grounds as a child, Moré combines historic details such as the reconstruction of the exit portal of the Fair that had to be demolished after hurricane damage in 1979<sup>71</sup>, here renamed as the “Gate of Citizenship”<sup>72</sup>.

When asked about his intentions for the site when developing his submission to the competition, Moré replied that “Transcendence in time was the main interest, not just to conserve but to project it for future generations”.<sup>73</sup> Taking this site as the principle civic and governmental center, he doesn't see why new generations need to carry the weight of the Trujillo legacy. He prefers that people to see the possibilities of it as a

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>71</sup> Gustavo Luis More, " Modernidad y Contradiccion en la Arquitectura de la 'Era de Trujillo' 1930-1961," chap. 4 in *Historias para la Construcción de la Arquitectura Dominicana, 1492-2008*, ed. Gustavo Luis More et. al. (Santo Domingo: Grupo Leon Jimenes, 2008).

<sup>72</sup> Gustavo Luis More, and Emilio Martinez, "The Space of Dominicanhood: Constitutional Representativity." *Archivos de Arquitectura Antillana*, Volume 9, Issue 20, January 2005, 95-102, 101.

<sup>73</sup> This quote is taken from an interview with Gustavo Luis Moré that was conducted by the author, Moira Nadal, on February 8, 2013 in the office of his firm, Moré Architects, and magazine, *Archivos de Arquitectura Antillana*.



democratic space. His proposal was to “give a new symbolic weight to a space that has a situational and contextual importance”. In a conversation with the President of the Dominican chapter of DoCoMoMo, Mauricia Dominguez, she stated that, “they mention that this was the fair. What they don't mention is that the goal of the fair was to celebrate the 25 year anniversary of Trujillo's power”.<sup>74</sup>

The two selected plans emphasize participatory and user-centric spaces in their narratives. The revitalization plans emphasize an investment in the long-term future of the Center, the continued civic nature of the place, a celebration of Dominican democracy, and improving the visitor experience. They are form and infrastructure driven, but include no mention of collecting public opinion. The lack of open public process in the Dominican Republic, especially in terms of urban planning is reflected in the proposals for the Center of the Heroes.

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<sup>74</sup> This quote is taken from a brief conversation between the author, Moira Nadal, and Mauricia Dominguez, current President of the Dominican chapter of DoCoMoMo. This conversation took place on February 8, 2013 in the joint office of Moré Architects, and the magazine *Archivos de Arquitectura Antillana*.

## Chapter Five: Interpretation

### The Evolution of Interpretation

Definitions of interpretation vary slightly, but as it relates to historic sites, the word can generally be accepted to mean the conveyance of information for an audience to make information accessible and meaningful while educating them of past events. Heritage interpretation can take the form of guided tours, workshops and activities, wayfinding, signage, and print materials. Any or all of these can be found at any historic site.

One of the first people to write about historic site interpretation was the writer, and National Park enthusiast, Freeman Tilden. His 1957 book, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, contains many words of wisdom that are still followed in contemporary site management. His views and practices can be taken as the beginning of a professionalized interpretive movement. Re-visiting his ideas can reveal the foundations of heritage interpretation and also the ways in which it has evolved.

Tilden promotes six main principles of interpretation. They are as follows:

- I. Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile.
- II. Information, as such, is not Interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based upon information. But they are entirely different things. However, all interpretation includes information.
- III. Interpretation is an art, which combines many arts, whether the materials presented are scientific, historical or architectural. Any art is in some degree teachable.

- IV. The chief aim of Interpretation is not instruction, but provocation.
- V. Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part, and must address itself to the whole man rather than any phase.
- VI. Interpretation addressed to children (say, up to the age of twelve) should not be a dilution of the presentation to adults, but should follow a fundamentally different approach. To be at its best it will require a separate program.<sup>75</sup>

These principles make clear a dynamic between fact, interpreter, and visitor. This clear linear progression was employed for many decades. The histories of sites were condensed into interesting and easy to understand activities. As attitudes towards History as a field changed to include more untold stories. This included the stories of many minority groups that had been ignored in official histories and classrooms. Many of these included great tragedies, persecution, and victimization. As our attitudes shifted towards a willingness to acknowledge conflicting interests and shameful acts, the approaches towards conveying these stories at historic sights also began to evolve.

A successful interpretation, as Tilden states in his first Principle, is one that each visitor can somehow relate to. Their varied individual experiences that form the filter through which they understand the world will ensure that they will leave this place having formed their own understanding of the facts presented to them. Demand increased for sites that dealt with the more tragic moments in our collective history.

In 1999 The International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience was created. Their mission states them to be “sites, individuals, and initiatives activating the

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<sup>75</sup> Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 9.

power of places of memory to engage the public in connecting past and present in order to envision and shape a more just and humane future.”<sup>76</sup> This group sought to support those who were transforming memory into action. The places that dealt with issues such as slavery and murder have been called many things but are often referred to as sites of “dark history”.

This movement has grown rapidly in the last couple of decades and continues to evolve. A great number of topics fall within this larger umbrella, the only unifier seeming to be that all negotiate with stories of injustice. Creating and managing these places has proven challenging and requires a good deal of creativity in applying traditional methods to new issues. The staff have the onus to create the “provocation” of which Tilden spoke, but with a subject matter which could easily offend or hurt most people. Developing a balanced approach takes a great deal of care.

The prevailing best practices that have emerged all involve a good deal of public participation. They try to engage the people who have connections to the place, be they victims, perpetrators, neighbors, and even visitors to develop an understanding of the themes that matter most and the ways in which they can tactfully ask people to ask themselves about larger questions.

The objective of having people deal with large and meaningful themes is best described as a “constructivist” approach. Historian Tim Copeland explains this to be a

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<sup>76</sup> International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, "About Us," Accessed December 5, 2013, <http://www.sitesofconscience.org/members/about-us/>.

different means of interpreting sites in comparison to the more traditional “positivistic model” wherein evidence is shaped into a set of facts and a set view of how the past was. This is then conveyed to the visitor as interpretation. It is simplistic and linear, requiring little processing from the audience. A constructivist approach requires visitors to develop their own understanding of their world.

“Since the past does not exist any more [sic] we have to construct what it might have been like from present evidence. We construct our understandings through reflection upon our interactions with objects and ideas, or in the case we are discussion, with the sites and artefacts from the past and the ideas of others who have already constructed their own understandings and are in a position to share them.”<sup>77</sup>

In this way, each visitor has an individualized experience with the stories being told and is able to understand them through first-hand interactions and the ways in which they themselves view the world. This approach gives power back to the individual, as opposed to the positivistic model in which the “expert” interpreter is the holder of all information, and with that- power.

To ensure that each visitor has points upon which they can relate when visiting sites that may have nothing to do with their own lives, the histories told must be explained in larger and more conceptual terms. By simplifying in this way, each visitor will actually be able to gain a more personal and deeper understanding of the site and its messages.

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<sup>77</sup> Tim Copeland, "Constructing Pasts: Interpreting the Historic Environment," chap. 6 in *Heritage Interpretation*, ed. Alison Hems and Marion Blockley (New York: Routledge, 2006), 84.

This comprehensive approach is more challenging to the people who are being presented the interpreted history because they are not able to be passive listeners but are pushed to make connections between difficult subjects and painful stories and their own experiences. A constructivist approach is participatory in its development, and dissemination. Best practices dictate that the site stakeholders also provide feedback about what they have been presented and the way in which the information is interpreted by the site manager and staff. By creating this iterative loop, these sites are able to adjust as public opinions change with time.

The traditional mode of historic interpretation consisted of collecting information, developing an interpretation of those facts, and conveying them to the visitor either through print material or guided tour, sometimes both. That approach is overly simplistic for a site that represents many things to many people. For example, the Center of the Heroes does not only serve to tell the story of Trujillo, or of the Fair, but also the evolution of Dominican Democracy and urbanism.

### **Dominican Interpretive Examples**

There are some emerging forums that seek to deal with the difficult legacy of a thirty-one year dictatorship. There are still people who celebrate and idolize Trujillo, often the people whose lives or families benefitted directly from his rule. And there are still many people who are in great pain because of the crimes that he and his government are

guilty of. As a whole, the entire Dominican Republic still carries some weight left behind from that time.

The reparations made by the Balaguer government, in the most critical years after 1961 are widely considered to be political gestures through which he could appease the masses and maintain his own power. But other groups have emerged. Foremost among those is the Museum to the Dominican Resistance.

The Museum was inaugurated to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Trujillo's assassination. It was created by Congressional Decree No.287-07 to collect, organize, catalog, preserve, research, disseminate, and exhibit the goods of tangible and intangible national heritage that relate to the struggles of several generations of Dominicans during the Trujillo dictatorship, its antecedents and its consequences.<sup>78</sup> This comprehensive mission allows the Museum to deal with a wide array of topics and issues. They also support a number of smaller foundations that are related to specific sites of memory, such as the Foundation for the Center of the Heroes.

The Museum is a member of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience and have declared that first and foremost they seek to function as an educational institution where new generations have a space to learn about "the value of life and the fundamental

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<sup>78</sup> "La Era de Trujillo Será Recreada en el Museo de la Resistencia Dominicana," *Hoy Digital*, May 27, 2011, <http://hoy.com.do/la-era-de-trujillo-sera-recreada-en-el-museo-de-la-resistencia-dominicana/> (accessed December 5, 2013).

human rights to liberty, action, and expression of ideas without the fear of losing family, dignity or life.”<sup>79</sup>

Through multi-media resources, the staff have collected the first-hand accounts of many revolutionaries and political dissidents. These are coupled with videos and photographs of some of the most gruesome moments of the Trujillo regime. The Museum does not shy from revealing the brutal torture methods that were used against so many men and women. They directly confront the ugliest aspects of those years and advocate for the formerly disenfranchised to be given back their voice in Dominican public history.

In addition to the educational value of interpreting the dark history of Trujillo, it also has a proven commercial value. A tour that actively interprets the history of Trujillo is one that has been advertised both in the Dominican Republic and abroad. While riding in restored cars from the 1950s and 1960s, tourists can visit the major sites of Trujillo’s memory.<sup>80</sup> These include the Museum of the Dominican Resistance, the most infamous torture chamber (La Cuarenta), the marker of where he was shot, and the fairgrounds. The “Route of the Goat”<sup>81</sup> tour focuses entirely on exploring the painful memories attached to the long deceased dictator. The existence of this type of tour demonstrates

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<sup>79</sup> International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, "Museo Memorial de la Resistencia Dominicana (Dominican Republic)," Accessed December 5, 2013, <http://www.sitesofconscience.org/members/museo-memorial-de-la-resistencia-dominicana/>.

<sup>80</sup> Jose Rafael Sosa, "Turistas Realizaron la 'Ruta del Chivo'," *El Nacional*, sec. Nacional, May 12, 2012, <http://www.elnacional.com.do/nacional/2012/5/12/121257/Turistas-realizaron-la-ruta-del-chivo> (accessed August 17, 2013).

<sup>81</sup> El Chivo (The Goat) is a popular nickname for Trujillo.



the demand for the ability to learn, visit, and experience locations with strong negative associations, including the regime's most infamous torture rooms.

The endeavor has support from USAID and the Dominican government.<sup>82</sup> The government is willing to become involved with these types of projects. The article in the *Herald* interviewed the both director of the Museum of the Dominican Resistance and the famous Dominican-American novelist Julia Alvarez. They were asked their opinions about the importance of memory in terms of the political history of the country. Both offer strong support in favor of increased opportunities for youth to learn through interpretive methods about the history of the Dominican Republic.<sup>83</sup> Julia Alvarez reached prominence largely for her book *In The Time of The Butterflies* about the Mirabal sisters who became involved with the anti-Trujillo June 14 resistance movement. They were famously killed, resulting in increased popular opposition to Trujillo. She states that "[a]ny way to bring history alive to young generations who did not live it but who have inherited that legacy in bad habits of thinking and acting and being a citizenry is important — be it a novel, or a film, or a *ruta* [tour]".<sup>84</sup>

Unlike government bodies in the United States, like the National Park Service, that have undertaken the responsibility of preserving and managing sites of dark history, like the Manzanar Japanese internment camp, the Dominican government plays a secondary support role in the efforts of these private, commercial, and third-party advocacy groups.

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<sup>82</sup> Fieser, "Dominican Company's Tour Visits Spots Made Infamous by Dictator Rafael Trujillo."

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

The reasons for direct government involvement are compelling. Many countries approach the sites of national shame or tragedy as an opportunity to negotiate larger cultural meanings. They recognize that these events and places have meanings and value to them ascribed by the public, they have become part of a collective memory. As events fade and survivors die, the ways in which the sites are interpreted may change, but “issues which involve personal values, beliefs, interests and memories will excite a degree of emotional arousal which needs to be recognized and addressed in interpretation.”<sup>85</sup> Active engagement with this issues and places help to ensure that not only will there be a group who are invested in the protection of these sites, but also a willingness to learn from past crimes in order to not repeat them.

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<sup>85</sup> Edward Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum*, (New York: Viking Press, 1999), 152.

## **Conclusion- Interpreting the Uncomfortable History of the Fair**

To remove all traces of Trujillo in Santo Domingo would require widespread demolition of huge monuments, infrastructure and housing projects that were constructed under his rule. Urban historian Robert Gonzalez argues in his article about the “unresolved” public spaces in Santo Domingo that any trace of the Trujillo Era, even in sites that have been transformed and repurposed, remain as “contentious elements” in the city.<sup>86</sup>

The Center of the Heroes is a complex and in many ways troubled place. But it is not alone. Many sites with similar issues or origins have begun to manage theirs through careful engagement with the public. Within the larger umbrella of “dark” sites are also those that are linked to the histories of dictatorial leadership. The best practices used to approach sites of this nature can be applied to the specific context of the Center of the Heroes. There are case studies from around the world which can provide insight into the methods and results of creating official interpretations for these places. Common trends which are applicable to the Center emerge from these examples. Theories about interpretation aimed at raising public conscience and memorializing social injustices will inform how to approach the complex significance of the Center.

Just as “many Dominicans would like to move beyond the focus on Columbus’s ‘discovery’ as the defining point of their history, many would also like to move beyond

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<sup>86</sup> González, "Unresolved Public Expressions of Anti-Trujilloism in Santo Domingo," 227.

the legacy of Trujillo”.<sup>87</sup> This is clear in the two winning proposals for the Center. They are significant because the competition dictated they create a Center dedicated to Dominican democracy, which they did only looking forward. Neither team chose to incorporate or interpret the struggles that helped to spur the demise of Trujillo’s totalitarian government, opening the way for democracy to grow in the Dominican Republic, nor so that its citizens could have their voices heard. The outcropping of increasing statues and memorials, combined with the private market tours highlighting remnants in the city from Trujillo’s reign, demonstrated interest in exploring the different facets of the site’s history. Having an open discussion about the multiple layers of significance is likely to bring about a more nuanced approach to its long-term future.

Tilden asserts that a primary purpose of interpretation, is “to present a whole rather than a part, no matter how interesting the specific part may be.”<sup>88</sup> The value of this place is its unique and multiple layers of history and the impact that can have for many people. The Center carries significance to many people, and for many reasons. For a more inclusive approach to the site, the powers that be have to be willing to take a progressive approach and talk openly about Trujillo, while providing opportunities for the public to do the same.

The process of creating these public forums could help to reinforce the existing partnerships with the Museum of the Dominican Resistance and Municipality while

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 227.

<sup>88</sup> Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, 40.

reaching out to a wider stakeholder base. The organizations that could take responsibility for treating the Center as a historical site with value are numerous. What is most likely to be successful is to continue building on the collaboration of the groups who came together to commission the open competition for the revitalization proposals, a group of scholars, activists, and local government, in conjunction with those active in the Museum of Dominican Resistance and the Foundation for the Center of the Heroes. This wide range of interests will ensure that multiple objectives and approaches are incorporated into a comprehensive plan.

The power to implement any new plans rests on the shoulders of City Hall and the Mayor of Santo Domingo. Nothing can happen without his support. Because the site is the most important center of government for the nation, it has the potential to make the largest statement about the rights of the Dominican people to have their voice heard.

Increased tourism will create an economic impetus for change. Creating new demands which will be met by the private market. Touristic centers have cafes, street vendors, and a lot of “eyes on the street”<sup>89</sup>. This increased presence and activity will act against the off-hours desolation on nights and weekends and is likely to increase a

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<sup>89</sup> This quote is a reference to Jane Jacobs’ book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1992) in which she attributes safety in urban neighborhoods to a variety of users who provide “eyes on the street” to witness any potential criminal or violent behavior as an effective deterrent.

feeling of safety for visitors. Renewed public interest, coupled with increased commercial opportunities from tourism could actually begin to revitalize the site.

## Figures

**THE FREE NATIONS OF THE WORLD**  
PARTICIPATING IN THE 25th ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE GLORIOUS, NEW...

*Dominican Republic*

**THE INTERNATIONAL  
PEACE AND PROGRESS FAIR**  
(Feria de la Paz y Confraternidad del Mundo Libre)

**DECEMBER 20th, 1955 through Spring, 1956**  
**CIUDAD TRUJILLO • DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

Come to the Dominican Republic and join in the celebration of 25 years of Peace and Progress—the Era of Trujillo, highlighted by exhibits from free nations the world over, on a thrilling 125 acre fair site. See the wonders of the world at this fascinating fair... and enjoy the many vacation pleasures of the beautiful Dominican Republic, Land of Discovery.

**FOR INFORMATION:**  
See your Travel Agent,  
American Express Travel Service or  
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC TOURIST OFFICE  
Room 516, Chrysler Building  
New York 17, New York  
MUrray Hill 5-3536

TIME, NOVEMBER 28, 1955

109

Figure 1: Advertisement for the Dominican International Peace and Progress Fair. Author's Collection. Published in Time Magazine, November 28, 1955, pp 109.



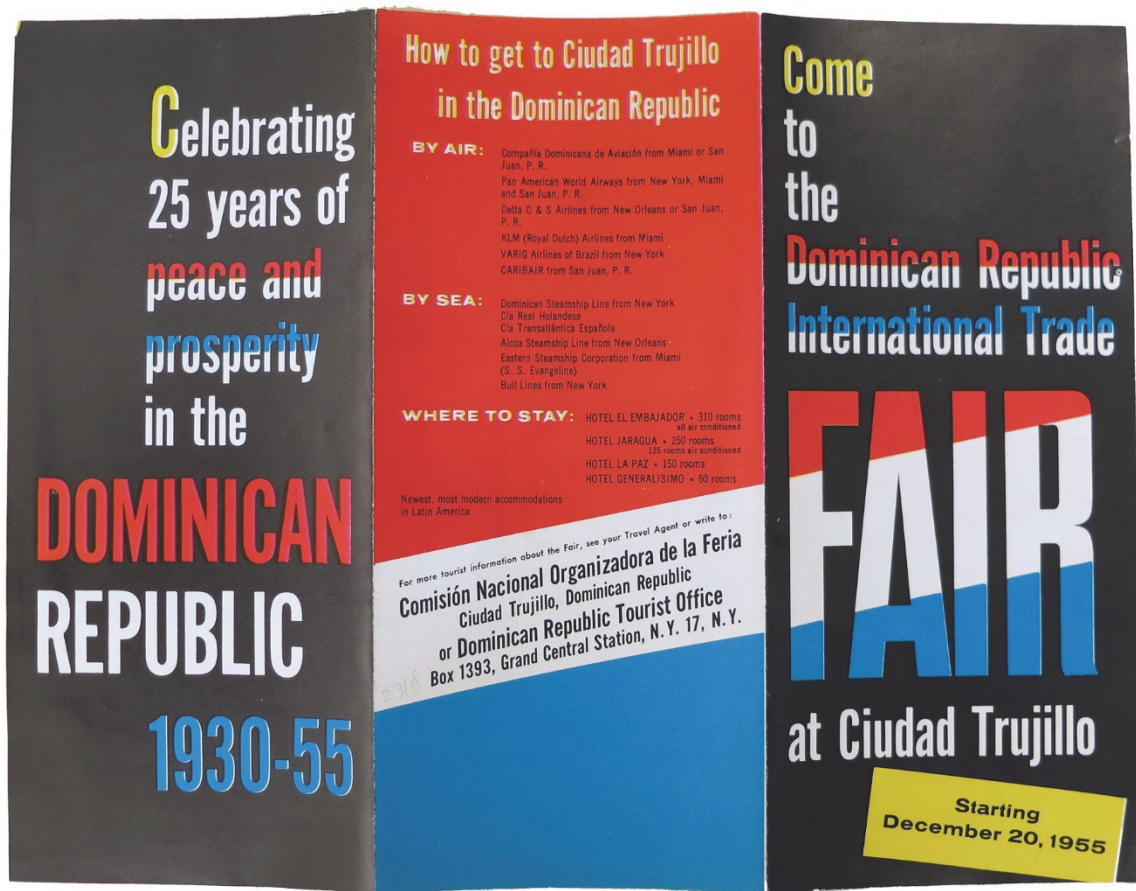


Figure 2: Promotional Pamphlet for the Dominican Republic International Trade Fair. Author's Collection. Unknown Source.



7

# 125 Acres of Fun!

## INTERNATIONAL FAIR

for Peace and Brotherhood  
AT CIUDAD TRUJILLO  
**NOW!**  
(until August 16th)

Join fun-seekers from all over the world, on the most magnificent fair-site ever developed! Its 125 acres, edging the whispering tropic sea, are alive with beauty and glamour, music and gaiety!

Enjoy famous entertainers . . . moonlight dancing (with a million-dollar fountain display for background) . . . the happy rhythms of native merengue bands . . . a fabulous "Theater of Water and Light"! Your Travel Agent has complete information—and his expert advice is free.

**Note to Business Men**—Give your family a thrilling tropic holiday while you visit the many industrial and economic exhibits at the Fair. While you're acquainting yourself with business opportunities throughout the Western Hemisphere, you can spend a glorious week or fortnight with your family!

**Easy to Reach • Easy to Enter • No Currency Exchange Problems**

### *Dominican Republic*

**"LAND OF DISCOVERY"**  
**BETWEEN CUBA AND PUERTO RICO**

Dominican Republic Tourist Office, Dept. NY-156  
P.O. Box 1393, Grand Central Station, New York 17, N. Y.

Please send me the illustrated, four-color booklet, "Dominican Republic—Land of Discovery."

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... State .....

Figure 3: 25 Acres of Fun! Advertisement from the Dominican Republic Tourist Office. Author's Collection. Unknown Source.



Discover new vacation fun in the exciting **Dominican Republic**  
...Land of Discovery



This is a beautiful country, full of fascinating things to see and do. Pleasantly warm all year 'round—you can swim, fish and water ski at famous beaches—golf, watch horse races and polo—play in exciting casinos—see the Theater of Water and Light; the Columbus Castle, Tomb of Columbus; the first church, first monastery and first college in the Western Hemisphere. Come now... you'll enjoy every minute in the Dominican Republic!

**FREEPORT SHOPPING** Buy English Cashmeres, French Perfumes, Swiss Watches, Cameras, Fine Jewelry and other exciting imports at savings unsurpassed in the Caribbean!



**Embajador**  
INTERCONTINENTAL  
CIUDAD TRUJILLO, D. R.

One of the world's most beautiful hotels... a vast resort estate, resplendent in tropic beauty... where your holiday dreams will come true! Swim or laze at poolside—golf at the hotel's own 18-hole championship course. Play tennis, other sports. Savor the creations of famous master chefs—thrill to top-flight entertainment in the unique Embassy Supper Club—meet Lady Luck in the exciting gaming Casino. Nowhere in the Caribbean will you enjoy a more bountiful holiday!



**Jaragua**  
INTERCONTINENTAL  
CIUDAD TRUJILLO, D. R.

You'll sense a wonderful spirit of friendliness the minute you arrive at this delightful seaside resort. Famed throughout the Caribbean, it offers you every opportunity for fun, excitement and relaxation as you like it! Spend pleasant hours at the pool—relax in the congenial cocktail lounge—dine and dance and enjoy fine entertainment on the open patio—try your luck in the gay Casino. Your vacation at the Jaragua is sure to be a memorable one!

For reservations call  your Travel Agent or

**INTERCONTINENTAL HOTELS**

Chrysler Bldg., New York—STillwell 6-5858

Roper Bldg., Miami—FRanklin 1-6661

SAN JUAN INTERCONTINENTAL, San Juan, Puerto Rico  
EMBAJADOR INTERCONTINENTAL, Ciudad Trujillo, D. R.  
JARAGUA INTERCONTINENTAL, Ciudad Trujillo, D. R.  
CURAÇAO INTERCONTINENTAL, Curaçao, N. A.  
VARADERO OASIS, Varadero Beach, Cuba  
HOTEL NACIONAL DE CUBA, Havana, Cuba

REFORMA INTERCONTINENTAL, Mexico City, Mexico  
HOTEL VICTORIA PLAZA, Montevideo, Uruguay  
HOTEL DEL LAGO, Maracaibo, Venezuela  
HOTEL TAMANACO, Caracas, Venezuela  
EL SALVADOR INTERCONTINENTAL, El Salvador, C. A.  
EL PRADO INTERCONTINENTAL, Barranquilla, Colombia

HOTEL TEQUENDAMA, Bogotá, Colombia  
HOTEL GRANDE, Belém, Pará, Brasil  
HOTEL CARRERA, Santiago, Chile  
**OPENING SOON:**  
PONCE INTERCONTINENTAL, Ponce, Puerto Rico  
PHOENICIA INTERCONTINENTAL, Beirut, Lebanon

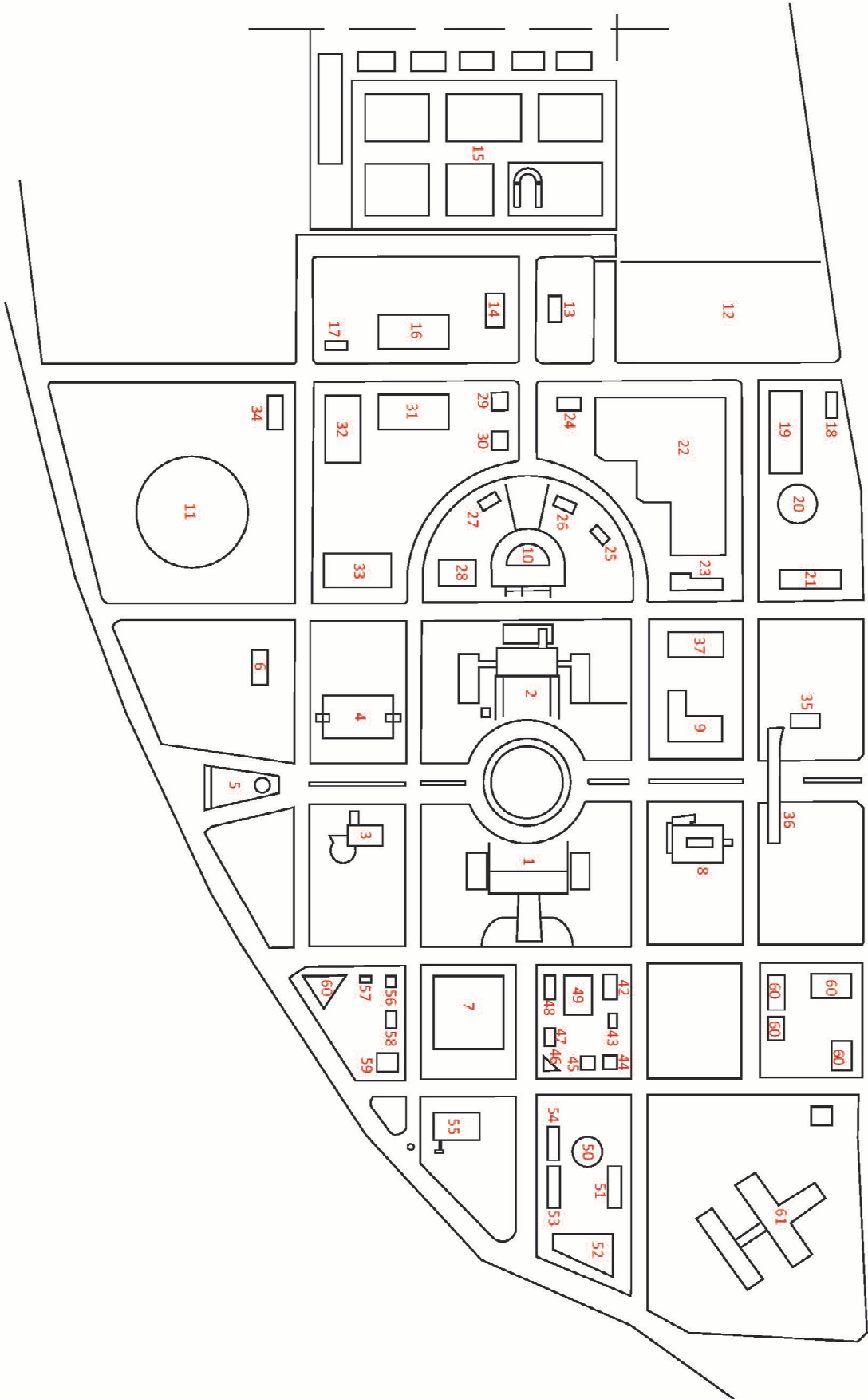
Figure 4: Advertisement for vacations in the Dominican Republic, featuring the Modernist Embajador and Jaragua Hotels. Published by Intercontinental Hotels. Author's collection. Unknown source.



*Figure 5: Photograph of Float in the Floral Parade Celebrating the Coronation of Angelita, Trujillo's Daughter. Album de Oro Vol. I. Ciudad Trujillo: Distrito Nacional, 1956.*



FIGURE 6- ORIGINAL PLAN FOR THE FAIR  
Traced from Administrative Council of the Fair's Plan



List of Buildings:

- |     |   |  |
|-----|---|--|
| 1.  | National Exhibitors Pavilion  |  |
| 2.  | Administrative Council  |  |
| 3.  | Interior, Police, Communications Pavilion   |  |
| 4.  | Armed Forces Pavilion   |  |
| 5.  | Pavilion of Nations and Symbol of the Fair  |  |
| 6.  | Dominican Party Pavilion  |  |
| 7.  | National Exhibitors Pavilion  |  |
| 8.  | Agriculture, Public Works, Economy and Treasury                                   |  |
| 9.  | Education, Exterior Relations, University, Social Welfare, Public Health Pavilion |  |
| 10. | International Sector Pavilion   |  |
| 11. | The Agua Luz Theater  |  |
| 12. | Agriculture Exhibition  |  |
| 13. | Birds Pavilion  |  |
| 14. | Italo-Spanish Restaurants   |  |
| 15. | Livestock Fair  |  |
| 16. | International Exhibitors Pavilion   |  |
| 17. | Engel Pavilion  |  |
| 18. | Carni Pavilion  |  |
| 19. | Abarca Pavilion   |  |
| 20. | Traditional Restaurant  |  |
| 21. | Sugar Pavilion  |  |
| 22. | International Exhibitors Pavilion   |  |
| 23. | María Martínez Trujillo Book Fair   |  |
| 24. | Ferre Businesses Pavilion   |  |
| 25. | Regent Pavilion   |  |
| 26. | ESSO Pavilion   |  |
| 27. | Radio Corporation of America Pavilion   |  |
| 28. | Venezuela Pavilion  |  |
| 29. | ACROW Pavilion  |  |
| 30. | Shell Pavilion  |  |
| 31. | International Exhibitors Pavilion   |  |
| 32. | Agricultural Implements Pavilion  |  |
| 33. | U.S.A. Pavilion   |  |
| 34. | Texas Pavilion  |  |
| 35. | Administration  |  |
| 36. | Entrance to The Fair  |  |
| 37. | Book Pavilion   |  |
| 38. | Cement Factory Pavilion   |  |
| 39. | Bermudez Rum Pavilion   |  |
| 40. | Dominican National Brewery Pavilion   |  |
| 41. | Tavarez Rum Pavilion  |  |
| 42. | Dairy Pavilion  |  |
| 43. | Printers Pavilion   |  |
| 44. | TARIM Pavilion  |  |
| 45. | Alfarsca Pavilion   |  |
| 46. | ALCOA Pavilion  |  |
| 47. | Barcelo Pavilion  |  |
| 48. | Tabacco Pavilion  |  |
| 49. | Agriculture Bank Pavilion   |  |
| 50. | Restaurant  |  |
| 51. | Shoe Industries Pavilion  |  |
| 52. | Spain Pavilion  |  |
| 53. | Furniture Pavilion  |  |
| 54. | SID Pavilion  |  |
| 55. | Temple of Peace (Temple of the Holy See)  |  |
| 56. | Tavarez Rum Pavilion  |  |
| 57. | Pepsi-Cola Pavilion   |  |
| 58. | Chocolate Pavilion  |  |
| 59. | Concessions   |  |
| 60. | Textile Industries Pavilion   |  |
| 61. | Tourism Hotel   |  |

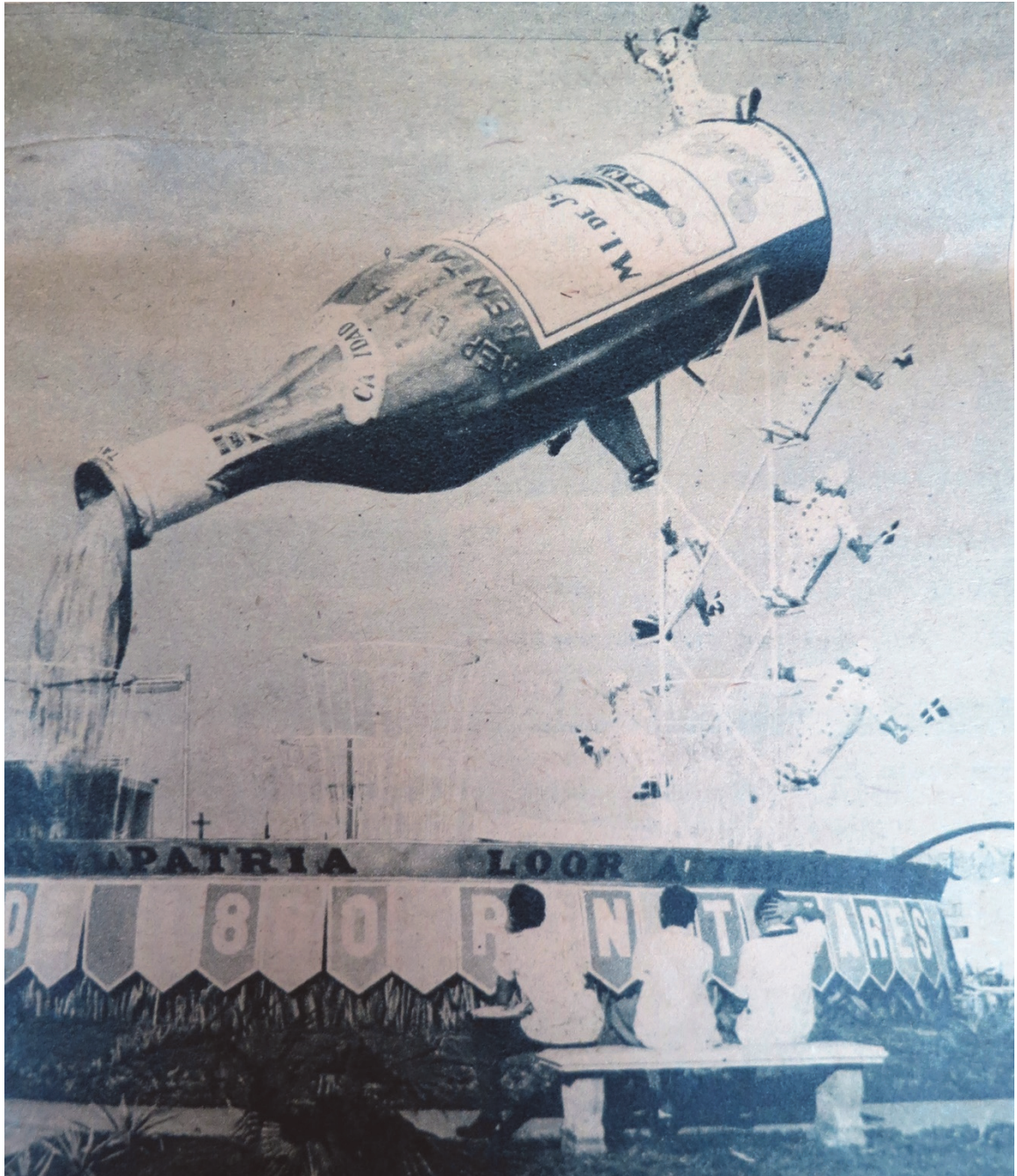


Figure 7: Ron Tavares Pavilion. 1955. Published in *Feria de La Paz y Confraternidad del Mundo Libre. Dominican Republic International Peace and Progress Fair; a Picture Report on the Dominican Republic's Fabulous \$30 Million World's Fair*. Havana: *Diario la Marina*, 1956.





*Figure 8: Looking Northward towards the Plaza of the Americas, formerly the Pavilion of Nations and Symbol of the Fair. Moira Nadal, 2013.*



Figure 9: Aerial View of the 1939 World's Fair Site in Flushing, Queens. The Trylon and Perisphere are located near the center of the image. Published in *Designing Tomorrow: America*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010. 34.





*Figure 10: View of the Entrance to the Fair from Independence Avenue. Album de Oro Vol. I. Ciudad Trujillo: Distrito Nacional, 1956.*





*Figure 11: Central Fountain designed by Carles Buigas. Album de Oro Vol. I. Ciudad Trujillo: Distrito Nacional, 1956.*



*Figure 12: Administrative Council Building. Album de Oro Vol. II. Ciudad Trujillo: Distrito Nacional, 1956.*





*Figure 13: National Congress Building. Album de Oro Vol. II. Ciudad Trujillo: Distrito Nacional, 1956.*



*Figure 14: Venezuela Pavilion. Album de Oro Vol. II. Ciudad Trujillo: Distrito Nacional, 1956.*





Figure 15: Agua Luz Theater. Album de Oro Vol. II. Ciudad Trujillo: Distrito Nacional, 1956.



*Figure 16: View from the Embajador Hotel towards the Fairgrounds. Album de Oro Vol. I. Ciudad Trujillo: Distrito Nacional, 1956.*



FIGURE 17- CURRENT FAIRGROUNDS/CENTER OF THE HEROES  
Traced from Google Satellite View



List of Buildings:

1. **National Congress (Senate and House of Representatives)**
2. City Hall
3. Superior Electoral Tribunal
4. **Supreme Court of Justice and Attorney General's Office**
5. Ministry of Labor, Secretary of Labor
6. **National Institute of Hydraulic Resources**
7. **National Lottery**
8. **Dominican Corporation of State Electrical Businesses**
9. **Palace of Justice of the Center of the Heroes**
10. Monument to The Heroes of Constanza, Maimon, and Estero Hondo
11. Church of Our Holy Lady of Peace
12. Loyola School
13. Dr. Robert Reid Cabral Children's Hospital
14. Alliance Francaise
15. Our Lady of Peace School
16. Central Electoral Board
17. Dominican Council of Coffee
18. **Military Cartographic Institute**
19. The French School of Santo Domingo
20. The Agua Luz Theater
21. **Migration Services Office**
22. **Dominican Postal Institute**
23. Muraloa Night Club and Casino
24. Fantasy Nightclub
25. Aborigen Baseball League
26. **Electricity Distribution Company of the South**
27. **Latin Antenna**
28. La Farandula Sports Club
29. Dominican Radio Club
30. Venezuela Pavilion
31. Dominican Sugar Council
32. Garage and possible former pavilions
33. Bank
34. Car Paint Garage
35. Car Mechanic Shop and former pavilions
36. Plaza of the Americas
37. **Dominican Journalist's Association**



*Figure 18: The Center is Full of Parked Cars during Business Hours. Moira Nadal, 2013.*





*Figure 19: Outside of Business Hours the Center is Mostly Vacant. Moira Nadal, 2013.*



*Figure 20: The Spain Pavilion by Javier Barroso. Album de Oro Vol. II. Ciudad Trujillo: Distrito Nacional, 1956.*





*Figure 21: Tall Walls and Barbed Wire Obscure the Spanish Pavilion, Now The Loyola School of Santo Domingo. Such Security Measures are Found Throughout the Center. Moira Nadal, 2013.*





*Figure 22: The Venezuela Pavilion Now Sits Empty. Moira Nadal, 2013.*



*Figure 23: The Agua Luz Theater Has Fallen into A State of Advanced Decay. Moira Nadal, 2013.*





*Figure 24: The Supreme Court of Justice and The Office of the Attorney General, designed by Luis Moré and Juan Cristobal Caro. Moira Nadal, 2013.*



*Figure 25: Gates to the Monument-Pantheon Honoring the June 14<sup>th</sup> Expeditionaries. Moira Nadal, 2013.*





*Figure 26: The Monument-Pantheon featuring the “Angel of Freedom”, a sculpture by Domingo Liz. Moira Nadal, 2013.*





*Figure 27: Memorial to the Three Mirabal Sisters. Sculpted by Juan Gilberto Nuñez. Moira Nadal, 2013*

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