

## **Transcript for Episode with Ginetta Candelario**

### **SPEAKERS**

**Joe Aguilar, John Galante, Ginetta Candelario**

### **+++++MUSICAL INTERLUDE+++++**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

##### **John Galante**

Hi, I'm John Galante, I'm a historian of Latin America who specializes in migration and relations between South America and southern Europe. I also teach history and global studies at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, otherwise known as WPI.

##### **Joe Aguilar**

And I'm Joe Aguilar, a fiction writer. I specialize in speculative fiction and Chicano literature. I also teach creative writing and literature at WPI.

##### **John Galante**

And you are listening to *Crossing Fronteras*.

### **+++++MUSIC INTERLUDE+++++**

#### **19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY FEMINISM IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC; TRANS-CARIBBEAN ACTIVISM**

##### **John Galante**

Today we have with us Ginetta Candelario, a sociologist, a scholar of Feminism, and Race and Ethnicity, particularly in the Dominican Republic and Latinx communities in the United States, among many other things, which I'm sure we'll get into today. And she's also a professor at Smith College in Northampton, Mass. Thanks very much, Ginetta, for being with us today.

##### **Ginetta Candelario**

Thank you, it's my pleasure.

##### **John Galante**

So I thought maybe to start, we could look a little bit at some of the things, some of the work that you've been working on most recently, in fact, and then maybe sort of build your user profile and scholarly experience and teaching and learning and editing and all the things you do kind of around that.

And so, you know, there's a couple sort of collections you've been involved in, in interesting ways. And there's one in particular, there that encyclopedic kind of things, which doesn't, which makes it seem sort of too thin right? They're really kind of wonderfully researched and deep, kind of entries. Maybe you could talk a little bit about like the foundation of those projects. There's a couple, I think, profiles that you've included in those collections that could be particularly interesting to discuss.

##### **Ginetta Candelario**

So I think we're starting with a reference to the *Dictionary of Caribbean and Latin American Biographies*. In terms of the contributions that I made, so I wasn't involved in developing that project or as an editor in any way, I was really very much just an author who was invited to submit. But it was a real pleasure because it gave me an opportunity to share with the English-speaking US-based Caribbeanist and Latin Americanist scholarly and you could probably say undergraduate and mainstream audience, I think I did five biographies for that, all of which were drawn from the research that I've been doing for over 20 years now. But this larger project on feminists and feminism in the Dominican Republic, dating back to the 19th century.

So it was really lovely experience to to think about, how do I synthesize in, I think we got 750 words 1000 words per entry, if that, the story of each of these women, most of whom were Afro Dominican, visibly black Dominican women, whether or not they necessarily use that language to describe themselves. And the really critically important, but often unheralded and unrecognized work that they did as self-denominated feminists in the Dominican Republic and in the transnational sphere. So, yeah, it was just it was really wonderful experience. And I'm always surprised at how often they get read, which makes me very happy because it means people are learning a little bit about them and hopefully getting inspired to do their own research.

**John Galante**

Do you want to talk a little bit about about one or two of them, and maybe give us a sense of, of kind of who they were and and what they did, maybe the even some of the kinds of worldviews or intellectual and ideological kind of environments in which they operated and that sort of thing?

**Ginetta Candelario**

Yeah, I think I'm pretty sure I included Socorro, right, del Rosario Sanchez. She was one of the ones who is classically, on the one hand, known, occasionally venerated in the way that that happens in the Dominican Republic, for example, by having a street named in her honor, or a school named in her honor, because she was a school teacher, but really under recognized and underappreciated. She was a self-described actually black *cibaeña* from the Santiago region of the Dominican Republic, who was a school teacher who established one of the first coed free public schools for girls, *escuela laica*, in other words, not religious, which was also groundbreaking at the moment. The move away from the Catholic Church as *the* place where education happened to a kind of public, lay, non-religious school system. Right. So that itself was just part of this kind of dramatic transformation from a religiously defined system to one that was more liberal.

**John Galante**

And this sorry, just this was what period of time?

**Ginetta Candelario**

1860s

**John Galante**

Oh, wow. Right.

### **Ginetta Candelario**

And she established one of the first coed schools for elementary students, so K through eight. She also established a high school for girls, *una escuela normal*. And she also established a pharmaceutical training program for girls, those were several of the projects that she did, they're not the only ones, but those are three that immediately come to mind. And she did this by soliciting funding from both the municipal government and basically local elites to provide a combination of both public and private funding to provide a free lay education to students of various means, from from really poor sometimes orphan children to the children of the more established middle class or landed oligarchy or what have you. And she instituted a progressive vision based on scientific education, well before Eugenio María de Hostos, was invited to come to the Dominican Republic by Gregorio Luperón, in the 1870s, precisely to undertake that project.

So Socorro was doing this a bit 5-10 years before, right, these really commonly recognized and appreciated national and transnational figures in Latin American liberal thought, and progressive and revolutionary work, like Hostos and Luperon. Right. Before they began to work with people like Salome Henríquez de Ureña, who's more often recognized as one of the founders of a free public school system or of a teacher training program, which was happening somewhat simultaneously, but under really notable different circumstances in that Salome married into a wealthy landed, white in the Dominican context family of literati men and received some of the funding and support that comes with that. Whereas Socorro did not, she had to work really very independently. And she herself said once that, that part of the reason she had to struggle so much to undertake these projects, which she understood, by the way, as being explicitly feminist and in favor of women's and girls' citizenship and civic participation, she said that it was harder for her because she was, and I'm quoting, *una negra de tinta*, meaning an unequivocally black woman. This despite the fact that she was the sister of one of the founding fathers of the nation. Right, so she's the one hand part of the political history and part of a venerated and recognized family. But she's also a black woman.

### **John Galante**

Yeah, and this is very soon after the sort of final independence of the Dominican Republic, which is a long history that could take us two hours to discuss -- final official -- the final official and lasting, at least in a formal sense, independence of the DR. You mentioned her as a teacher and founding schools and that sort of thing. And I noticed that a number of the women in the late 19th century, early 20th century who are part of these, you know, sort of major feminist advances and the ones that you have sought to sort of shine additional light on were teachers, were educators first, established schools, and that sort of thing. It seems to have been an important entry point for advocacy and impact.

### **Ginetta Candelario**

Yeah absolutely. I mean that it's absolutely the case they were *normalistas feministas*, feminist school teachers, again, self-identified, which to me was also one of the things that was interesting about the research was realizing that they were using that term feminist *feminista* and feminism *feminismo* in the late 19 century. When I first began to do the research, I saw it, I didn't think much of it, sort of glossed over it. But then over the years as I kept going back to the documents and paying more attention, suddenly realizing, Wait a minute, they're calling themselves feminists, not suffragists, not, you know, *liberación de la mujer*, etc., other kinds of terms that we might have expected, but really feminist.

So that sent me down a track of trying to understand well, first of all, when was this word developed? Where it was it developed? Why are these women on this little *media isla* the middle of the Caribbean using it well before, say, the women that we tend to think of as standard bearers of feminism, Anglo women in the United States, for example, or even black women to a certain degree in the US? These women are using this term. why? Where did it come from? So we can come back to that, but they called themselves feminist school teachers. And they did that because number one, they embraced feminism, what it meant to them in that context, but number two, because they really perceived *educación laica*, in other words, non-religious lay education as the cornerstone of developing a liberal progressive democracy by developing a citizenry that was literate in every sense of the word, so literate, actually, in terms of being able to read and write and undertake arithmetic and basic science.

So a kind of progressive vision, and this is the Hostosian positivist model. But also in terms of political literacy in order to transform political succession and political conflict from armed *caudillista* conflict, which is what predominated and, you know, predominated for a very long time in the DR might even say continues to predominate in some places, to an institutionalized regularized kind of bureaucratic Weberian state where political conflict and political succession and political change would happen through a system a process. And for that you needed an educated citizenry.

And so these women really saw themselves as the vehicle for promoting an engaged citizenry. And in fact, the language that I thought was interesting when I would read their primary documents from the 19th Century that they would use in writing letters to one another is, *estimada conciudadana*, *estimada conciudadana*, meaning co-citizen, right. Which again, it just blew my mind when I started thinking about what does this mean, in terms of what their agenda was, was really very collectivist and progressive and liberal in the best sense of the word, not the word we think about it, liberal feminism, that wasn't their agenda.

### **Joe Aguilar**

And kind of along those lines, there was a mention of the first feminist periodical *Femina* and I was curious about the importance of that periodical how it became influential enough to elicit death threats to its publishers. And just that sort of early feminist literature. What was the shape of it? What did that look like?

### **Ginetta Candelario**

It's interesting because *Femina*, which was founded in 1922, by one of the women I profiled for the dictionary, Petronila Angélica Gómez, was the first explicitly and solely feminist publication. And it was established under the context of US military occupation. In fact, it was founded just two years before the occupation, which lasted eight years, ended in 1924.

And part of the reason it received death threats, apart from the fact that it was explicitly a feminist periodical and took up feminist topics and themes and questioned masculine violence and patriarchy and, and understood patriarchy actually, and masculinist violence not only in terms of interpersonal but really in terms of structural and political violence, such as occupying forces from the US, many of whom were from the South, Jim Crow South who brought their really negrophobic racist anti-black systems for

population management with them. But also from some of their fellow citizens, some of the men in the Dominican Republic, who took issue with some of the claims that Petronila and her sister editors and authors and contributors were making. And by claims, I don't mean claims about society, but claims-making.

But that came, *Femina* came, 40 years into a tradition that was well-established already of feminist women journalists participating in the public discourse through their writing and their work in newspapers and periodicals more broadly. So they were sending letters to the newspapers, they were publishing, self-publishing often. Many of them were creative writers, right? So in addition to being school teachers, they were also writers. And they were participating in this public discourse.

One of them who I don't write about in the bibliography, but she's kind of an interesting player in this story, is a woman named Virginia Elena Ortea who wrote a *zarzuela*, which is basically a one act like operetta called *Las feministas*, which was put on in the public square in 1899, in in Puerto Plata, right in front of the *catedral*, right in front of the city hall. And the whole premise of that storyline was, was critiquing marriage as a repressive institution for women, in front of the *catedral*. And proposing that women would be better off staying single, because it would enable them to actualize themselves fully as citizens and as human beings. It's pretty radical, right? And the staging of it, and the location was, you know, very clearly an explicit political strategy.

So that's, you know, 20-plus years before *Femina*. So, so part of what I'm trying to work on is to really make clear time and again, feminism is not new to the Dominican Republic, it wasn't imported from outside. It's very much autochthonous. It's indigenous to the place. And it's responsive to local circumstances, even as those local circumstances are very much inflected by geopolitics. And by the ongoing legacies of settler colonialism and US imperialism and hegemony.

So yeah, so Petronila, establishes *Femina* in 1922. She does so again, self-funding. I mean, these women are so amazing, when I think about what they managed to do in this era, just with no funding, with working with oil lamps, right, and pen and paper or a typewriter, having to literally ride *un burro* to get their magazine into the post, corresponding internationally under those circumstances with other feminists throughout the Caribbean and Latin America and the US and Europe. It's pretty astounding.

### **John Galante**

This is this is activism at its core. And I was struck you, you alluded to this, I was struck by their class, not just their race, but also their class, because, as you mentioned, a lot of times in the US context, or even a sort of Anglo-American kind of North Atlantic context, early feminism is often thought of as the suffragist movement, and this sort of coming out of abolitionism to a degree in wealthy salons. And I was really struck by the origins of these women being oftentimes impoverished, there was another one Mercedes Mota, who is half Chinese, and there's no historical record of her father, also. Just to demonstrate, you know, kind of the background of these figures that become so so prominent, and it really changes the point of view of where feminism comes from, right?, in important ways, not just geographically, but in terms of race and class and those kinds of things.

### **Ginetta Candelario**

Yeah, absolutely. And glad you mentioned Mercedes because I almost forgot about her, which is ironic, given that she's the figure that started me down this path. It was her biography, her autobiography, actually, that I first came across in 2001 when I was researching my first book, *Black Behind the Ears*, at the National Archives, *El Archivo General de la Nación* and it was stunning to me that here is this self-published essentially autobiography written by a woman named Mercedes Mota, who actually ended up living out the last 30 years, I think it was, of her life in the United States, and specifically the last 20 years of her life in Cedarville, New Jersey. I'm a Jersey girl myself, so I was really blown away by that like, wait, what?

### **John Galante**

Yeah, I had to look it up.

### **Ginetta Candelario**

Right? Because it's in the middle of *la nada*.

And she was the daughter of a Dominican woman of of somewhat humble means, we don't really know a whole lot about her mom either, apparently Afro-Hispanic, I guess we could surmise, and a Chinese father who it seems, based on Mercedes' own account and some ancillary accounts and some things I've found in the archives over the decades, that her father was a migrant from China, who was part of that 19-Century Chinese migration to the Caribbean, to Cuba, Dominican Republic, etc. And it's not even clear that her parents were married, right? So this may have also meant that she was illegitimate in the parlance of the time. And she was, in fact, accepted into basically an orphanage in Puerto Plata, a nunnery/orphanage where she was educated by the nuns along with our sister Antera Mota de Reyes, eventually she got married, Antera.

And that's where she gets discovered by Demetria Betances, who's the sister of Emeterio Betances, Ramón Emeterio Betances, the renowned Afro-Dominican Puerto Rican doctor, Pan-Antillean activist who collaborated with Luperón and Frederick Douglass and Antonín Fermin right. So Betances the brother is very well known, well, his sister, Demetria, was a school teacher, who was invited to Puerto Plata/the DR by Gregorio Luperón, as part of this project of liberal republicanism, and, and again, you know, educating a citizenry.

Well, Demetria was a devout Catholic woman, she went to visit the *orfanatorio* and the nuns and there she ran into Antera and Mercedes and adopted them -- in quotes -- I'm doing air quotes for people in the room -- and adopted them and took them under her wing and mentored them into, first of all, literacy. *Las alfabetizó*, she taught them how to read and write, and then she trained them into becoming teachers. And they became the kind of anchors to the feminist school teacher community in Puerto Plata.

And Mercedes is the first documented example of a Dominican feminist who attends an international gathering at the Buffalo World's Fair, also known as the Pan American Exposition, in 1901, where she participates in the International Council of Women's meeting at the Pan-Am, and she is the only Latin American woman allowed to offer public remarks at the ICW gathering/at the Pan Am, the only one. And her remarks were published in the local newspapers and so forth, right. So here's this Afro-

Hispanic Chinese woman who gets mistaken for Filipina by the way at the Pan Am because of her looks. And you might recall at the Pan Am they had a Filipino display because what they were celebrating was US taking over former Spanish colonies like the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Cuba, and so forth. So they have these living tableaux and villages, African village, Filipino village just, you know, horrific entertainment for the masses. But Mercedes, again of these humble origins, makes her way from Puerto Plata to Buffalo and represents, unofficially, because women weren't given official posts at the time, but represents literally the Dominican Republic, and one could say, Latin American feminism writ large.

She's a woman of extremely humble means. But she manages to write, get published, which is why she was selected. She won an award for her writing. And she moves in circles with for example, Salome's son Pedro Henríquez Ureña, who becomes actually an internationally renowned scholar of Hispanic American letters. He was her childhood playmate, because when Salome was trying to recover from her tuberculosis, she went to Puerto Plata with her younger sons. And they were the same age as Mercedes, and they they played together, *jugaron juntos*, they grew up together. And so Pedro and Mercedes traveled to Buffalo together to represent the DR. When Pedro's father was the Minister of Foreign Relations for the DR.

### **John Galante**

You've mentioned Puerto Plata a few times, and there was another town, San Pedro de Macoris. There's these these two spaces, I think, Puerto Plata and San Pedro, where it seems like this stuff is kind of happening? I think we all know that a lot of our intellectual growth comes from our collaborations. Right. And so I was so curious as to why those places, of all places, in the DR would end up as these kinds of incubators for progressive thinking and not just feminism, you know, radical socialism and, and all kinds of different things. But if we if we stick to kind of feminism, you know why do these places become these like hotbeds for people experimenting and advocacy, institution building, international linkages, so on and so forth?

### **Ginetta Candelario**

Puerto Plata is in the north west of the country, not too far, actually, from the Haitian border about maybe an hour or so from from Haiti. And it's a port city, as the name indicates, San Pedro de Macoris is in the southeast, almost directly across the country, right, and it two is a major port city. As is Santo Domingo, which is the third location for the story of feminism in the DR that I had been trying to tell and what they have in common is exactly that their port cities, their crossroads.

Puerto Plata itself actually was really important and interesting, because many of the exiles and refugees from other Caribbean liberation movements, including abolition in Cuba and Puerto Rico. Because remember, slavery lasted in in Cuba and Puerto Rico well into the late 19th century, right into the 1870s and 1880s. And that the *Grito de Lares* and the *Grito de Yara* happened in the 1860s. So resistance to Spanish colonialism, moves for independence and abolitionism, all created multiple waves of of exile from Cuba and Puerto Rico especially. And one of the places they often went to was Puerto Plata, because it's very close to both of those countries. It's literally almost like in the middle between Puerto Rico and Cuba.

So what you had then, and then also, of course, Haiti. You had people coming from Haiti, who again, were part of more progressive liberation movements, to Puerto Plata. So you have this kind of space of foment, and it's a port city. So in addition to those kind of intellectual and political diasporic elites, and we could say revolutionaries, right? You also had literally wayfarers, people from all over the Caribbean and Latin America who are coming through this city and staying there for days at a time and the population is really very small. So contact is very prominent and prevalent. And you also had really important US Afro-diasporic figures like, again, the Douglas family, Charles Redmond Douglas was the US console in Puerto Plata in this period. His father's Frederick Douglass. So that makes Puerto Plata also a locus of, of US-based black liberation movements. So it's that context. It's a port city. It's a cosmopolitan crossroads.

The same thing can be said of San Pedro de Macoris 30 years later, or 20 years later at the turn of the 19th century. So these are port cities and their cosmopolitan and their sites of massive migrations from, from throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. So San Pedro had fairly large and substantial migrations from the British West Indies, from again, the United States, Marcus Garvey established a UNIA outpost in San Pedro, for example. So it's that kind of place, right? So it makes sense that feminists and feminism would have interlocutors right in those spaces.

### **John Galante**

I wonder if there would ever be change without port cities. And you know, just like such dynamic spaces And in the Caribbean, above all, in some sense. I mean, it's the ultimate port, right.

But you mentioned other parts of Latin America and this did make me think when I was looking through some of the materials and as you're talking now, and because I have primarily focused my work on which, you know, I'm a historian, although this does sound like a historical project, even if your it is degree in sociology.

### **Ginetta Candelario**

It is. I'm a closet historian.

### **John Galante**

You know, my work focuses primarily on Argentina Uruguay and Brazil. And it sounds like there are parallels, but it doesn't sound like the same history. And how do you manage that, right, as a scholar of the Hispanophone Caribbean, dealing with this monolithic Latin American Studies.

### **Ginetta Candelario**

You know, that's so interesting, because I, I guess I used to think, like that earlier in my career. But as you're, as you're speaking, John, I'm trying to figure out what why don't I think about it that way anymore?

And I think it's probably because my frame is Afro-Latin American Studies. And so I'm always looking for and seeing the continuities, I guess you could say, and the connections between Black experiences in say, Argentina and Mexico, and obviously the Caribbean, right, Brazil. And so those places they have their particularities in terms of what enslavement looked like, what abolition looked like, what

emancipation looks like, what black citizenship looks like, or even what identity looks like. Because you know that it's a perennial topic of conversation, Who was black? What does blackness mean? How does each nation state manage this, both in terms of the state but also in terms of the the Black-identified an Afro-descendant populations, and so on and so forth. And I think that, because that's the, the scholarship and the conversation that I've been involved in for 25 years, that I think of them more as continuities and connections in that history.

And I would dare say in a similar vein around the histories, and as a tip to my actual profession, the Sociology of feminism, that what we see is that the women themselves very explicitly from the beginning, engaged in a lot of correspondence with one another, both public and private. Like literally we're writing letters to each other and either sending them by post or publishing them in, again, in their newspapers. They use the newspaper, the way we use Facebook today, in a lot of ways they were literally posts right so which is wonderful for us as researchers going into the archive.

You know, here's Abigaíl Mejía's letter being published or Petronila using *Femina* to publish the letter she received from Elena Arizmendi, who was Vasconcelos' lover by the way, who was a northern Mexican/Tejana nurse who established the White Cross during the Mexican Revolution, but is based in New York when her love affair with Vasconcelos ends. She got as far away as she could run Vasconcelos in Texas, and establishes La Liga, right? I always forget the full name of La Liga, but basically an international Hispanic American and Spanish feminist network, which she invites Petronila to become a part of by virtue of their shared friend, Pedro Henríquez Ureña, who's in New York City when Elena is. And they met as part of this diasporic Latin American community in lower Manhattan. In Little Spain.

So *Femina*, Petronila routinely publishes letters. The letters she received from Elena, the letter she received from Bertha Lutz in Brazil, the letters she received from Doris Stevens, in in Washington DC. So they they are corresponding across these borders, across these communities, across these histories, literally. And from the beginning, engaging in, in networking in in social and political networking, as a way of advancing their respective causes.

So because of that, I think that I approach Latin American Studies and Caribbean Studies in a similar in a similar way, right, that I think always comparatively, but also collectively that there is I think something to be said about the hemisphere as hemisphere. And in fact, you know, that's how I teach about, say, when I teach about the US and race in the US, it's always hemispheric. You cannot talk about race in the United States without talking about Spanish America, because it was Spanish America that established chattel slavery. Right? And Luso-Brazilian America, and that established the discourse of race and racial categorization, that then gets adopted by Anglo America. So I don't know if that's a clear answer. But I think I always see them as unique, particular, distinct, *and* integral to one another.

**+++++MUSICAL INTERLUDE+++++**

**20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY FEMINISM IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

**Joe Aguilar**

I was wondering if you could maybe talk a little bit more about the current book project, how these profiles fit into this larger project. And I think you had mentioned you've been working on it for 20 years. I would love to hear more.

### **Ginetta Candelario**

The book is tentatively called *Voices Echoing Across the Seas*, which is a translation of *Al echo de su voz allí en las mares*, which is a phrase that was used by Abigail Mejía one of the feminists from the Trujillo period, actually, from the 1920s, 30s, and 40s. She dies in 42. And the subtitle is *Dominican Feminists from Trans-Atlantic* -- or possibly Transnational I'm still debating that first part -- *to Trujillista*. So I want to start with Mercedes Mota in Buffalo at 1901.

And I'm going to end with a really controversial figure in the history of the Dominican Republic, in general, but definitely in Dominican women's history. And she's a woman named Minerva Bernardino, who was explicitly a *trujillista* feminist and a functionary of the Trujillo regime, a representative of the Trujillo regime, and also very much a dedicated feminist, who was one of the founding members of the group *Nosotras* and of what becomes the *Allianza Feminista Dominicana*, the AfD, that was founded by Abigail who I mentioned earlier. And who becomes the second Latin American/Caribbean woman to head the *Comision Interamericana de Mujeres*, the Inter American Commission of Women, which was established in 1928, in Havana by the Pan American Union gathering, by Doris Stevens and the women of the National Women's party from the US.

And so Minerva manages, and I say manages because she does so through some really underhanded chicanery, to assume the presidency of the CIM/IACW, within about a decade of having come on the scene as a feminist in the Dominican Republic and transnationally. And she holds that position for over a decade. And in that capacity, she's one of only four women alongside Eleanor Roosevelt and Bertha Lutz and a woman from Norway, to sign the UN Charter. Right. And she becomes a founding member of the UN Project on Women and Gender. And she time and again insists on incorporating "and women" into all the UN documents considering gender as a factor in Human Rights, in the prevention of war, in the provision of health and human services that, say through UNESCO and so forth. I mean, she is very much a committed feminist.

And she's a committed *trujillista*, who helped to sustain the regime, by even some would say, helping to kidnap and assassinate dissidents, like Jesús de Galíndez who it is rumored, it's a rumor, so I'm not gonna say it's fact, was taken to her apartment in New York City on route to his eventual death in the Dominican Republic. So, you know, she is very much a character with blood on her hands and responsible for the longevity, to a really important degree, of the regime, and for the attempt to manage and curtail the activities of Dominican exiles, and dissidents of the regime. And she is also a really committed and successful transnational international feminist.

So I'm going to end with her because, and this goes back to what we were talking about Dominican relations with black women in the US, in the midst of all that complexity, one of the highlights of her life, according to her own biography, and her own repeated public statements, was when she was awarded recognition by the National Council of Negro Women in 1950, as a woman of the year. Now, you have to think about this, when you consider that the Trujillo regime, by definition, was anti-black, anti-Haitian,

Hispanophile, deeply invested in whitening. Minerva herself was a very light skinned what in the Dominican Republic we would call *mulata*, but very light skinned, she would have been considered, you know, Dominican white, especially given her high status in the, in the government, and in the regime, and then in international affairs. How did Minerva get awarded by them?

And what I've concluded is that she, as she did with everything else, she made it happen. She actively engineered being seen by Mary McLeod Bethune and Dorothy Farabee and the the black women of the NCNW, many of whom, by the way, were black bourgeoisie women, not Mary McLeod, but certainly these other women. Edith Sampson, who becomes the first black appointee to the UN by the US and so forth. She made sure they saw her and that they recognized her work on behalf of women and she was proud of their recognition, right?, which, you know, to me in some ways exemplifies the relationship between Dominican feminists of various political stripes and African American women and US white women.

### **John Galante**

Those connections between feminism and populism, nationalism, developmentalism, 20<sup>th</sup>-century modernization, fascism in some people's opinions, and the feminist line, is fascinating. What makes that attractive, I guess, on the other side, right?, I mean on the Trujillo side, because that's an extreme contradiction, as you just mentioned in a couple different ways, right? This is a very top-down corporatist, you know, misogynistic, racist regime that lasts for 30 years, 31 years. Nevertheless, significant advances in feminism during that period of time, right. You know, in the Dominican context, but I think that there's a wider frame also to consider, but what do you think could potentially drive that ? I don't even know if that's the right word for it.

### **Ginetta Candelario**

What's in it for Trujillo, right? So I'll say a couple of things about that. One is that by the time Trujillo came along, feminists in the DR had been articulating and pursuing basically a social welfare agenda for 40 years, more than 40 years, without success in the sense that what they were asking for, as I said, a little while ago was a rationalized bureaucratic administrative state, that would assume responsibility for several of their key agendas. One of them was maternal child health. Another is free public education throughout the country. Disease Control and Prevention, so public health, particularly around malnutrition, tuberculosis, leprosy, which were really serious problems, and malaria, right, so those four. And then more contemporarily in the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century, venereal diseases, for example, as well as kind of property rights and workplace protections broadly conceived.

So those were feminist agendas, you know, all the way through, right? They, they did not have a state context in which to be able to really actualize those agendas, so there were small projects happening here and there, the school system thing kind of happening. Then you have US occupation, and that actually opens a weird window of opportunity as well, because of the occupying forces projects around infrastructure development, actually, and women's incorporation into the labor force, Dominican women's incorporation. Alan McPherson with this great article about that.

So all of that is true, but it's not until Trujillo comes along, and basically establishes the first orderly Dominican state, which is an extension of his power. So this was not, you know, a democratic state, but

it was really self-serving vision. So he's establishing a regularized rational bureaucracy for managing the population so that he can control the population.

In exchange, though, and this is where Abigail Mejia comes in. Abigail is very adept at managing Trujillo and his ego in an interesting way, because she comes back to the DR. She's Dominican, by birth, lived in the DR until she was 13. But her family leaves to Spain, and they live in Barcelona for 15 years. And so she returns to the DR just after the US occupiers leave. She's now a woman in her late 20s, early 30s. And she has come of age and into her own in terms of her education and training, in Barcelona, you know, just as the Fascists are gonna start taking over, right. And she's part of this kind of Barcelona sort of somewhat revolutionary dissent culture-based place that knows how to deal with authoritarian figures like Primo de Rivera, right?

So she comes trained for Trujillo. And she's white. She's white in the Dominican Republic, and she speaks Spanish Spanish not Dominican Spanish, right?, so she's got all the capital. And she knows how to present to Trujillo basically a package right of of programs beginning with suffrage and granting women the vote in a way that appeals to his desire to represent himself to the world as a great leader of the New World, anti-communist, while also caring for the people. And *progreso*, right, which was a kind of key theme again.

So these projects of infrastructure development, maternal child health, public education, they played well with the Trujilloist vision. So what he got in exchange was a way of essentially covering the the truth of repressive phallocratic, misogynist, patriarchal violence, right, of which he was the grand exemplar. And that became especially important in the aftermath of the 1937 massacre that he organized, where upwards of 10 to 15,000, Dominicans and Dominicans of Haitian descent and Haitian migrants were systematically massacred over a period of three weeks in October of 1937. Literally six months later, Minerva appears in the DR with Doris Stevens, and Abigail hosts the party, to thank Trujillo for the test vote that he organized as a prelude to granting Dominican women the right to vote. So it completely occluded the story of the massacre.

I think that it plays well with the kind of, you know, a public discourse of *progreso*, of *trujillista* democracy, of modernization, of you know, caring for the people. And,

**John Galante**

And Minerva is able to maybe notice that right, and she can pull those strings.

**Ginetta Candelario**

Absolutely

**John Galante**

Which does not exonerate her, ut it does demonstrate how you said that she she got things done, she got noticed.

**Ginetta Candelario**

And so did Abigail. And this again, this is heretical to say because Abigail is, is very much beloved, but she also, you know, played nice with the regime.

Now, that said, I want to say I forgive them, it's not my job to forgive them. But I understand what they were doing, which, honestly, I think of my mother's motto, and it's, I think it's a generalized motto in the Caribbean and Latin America, *no hay mal que dura cien años*, right?, meaning, eventually he's going to die. But these structures will remain, right, the right to vote will remain access to higher education will remain, the right to have a job and keep your own salary, the right to the *división de bienes* in marriage, the right to a divorce. All of those things that these women accomplished will outlive the dictatorship. And they were right. It just came at a cost.

### **Joe Aguilar**

Okay, so, we've talked a bit about Minerva and collaboration with the Trujillo regime. I'm wondering if we can maybe move toward talking about folks who were dissenting from this regime and what that looks like.

### **Ginetta Candelario**

So one of the women that I write about whose biography is included in that dictionary, but who's also going to be a fairly central character in the book that I'm writing on the history of feminism and feminists in the DR, is Evangelina Rodríguez Perozo, who was the first Dominican woman licensed to practice medicine in the DR.

But Evangelina, like some of the others that we've talked about, comes from very, very humble origins. In fact she was orphaned at a very young age and was raised by her grandmother, who was an itinerant *marchanta*, vendor woman, who sold *cofio*, which is a cornmeal based sweet, in the streets of San Pedro de Macoris, and who was contracted by her grandmother to provide housekeeping and care to a pair of brothers, named the Delinde brothers, who were part of the literati elite of the country, they were poets and writers. Definitely one of them had leprosy and Evangelina cared for him through his leprosy. And in turn, they were so grateful to her for that, that they funded her education. They helped her get through grammar school and high school and college and eventually helped her make her way to the University of Paris School of Medicine in the 1920s, where she spent five years taking an advanced degree in OB GYN and puericulture, meaning postpartum care for infants.

And she returned to the Dominican Republic just after again the US occupiers left in 1925, and immediately began to undertake a series of public health, feminist public health projects in San Pedro, but also actually throughout the country. Things like handing out condoms to sex workers in front of the San Pedro cathedral, establishing tuberculosis care houses, establishing leprosy care houses, establishing *gota de leche*, in other words milk dispensaries for poor mothers and children. All of this self-funded or by collecting donations from from people throughout the region, Oh, and I should also mention she collaborated with Petronila on *Femina*. She was one of the people who submitted articles to Petronila and was on her advisory board.

So when Trujillo comes into power in 1931, Evangelina continued to not only undertake these sort of self-funded self-directed public health projects that served the poorest and most vulnerable sectors of

Dominican society, including Haitian cane workers and black Dominicans, but also was outspoken in her critique of the regime. She very publicly and repeatedly called out what she saw almost immediately as the writing on the wall of his authoritarian and eventually, you know, protofascist dictatorship.

And that meant not only that she became increasingly isolated from people who were afraid that affiliation with her would mark them and cost them their jobs, their homes, their lives, which was in fact a valid fear, because that is what happened to people. But she also was repeatedly targeted by the regime's functionaries and would be summarily arrested, and tortured in a variety of ways. And throughout she never, she never stopped dissenting, she never stopped critiquing the regime. And for that she was denigrated as being *fea*, *negra*, *lesbiana*, right? So like, stigmatized as all the things that is horrible to be in *trujillista* Dominican Republic: black, queer, ugly, because of her bravery.

And eventually, it cost her her life. The last time that she was arrested, and held for several weeks and tortured. She was then released onto the road in tropical heat barefoot and trying to make her way back home in those situations, she collapsed and eventually died. And I just find her such an inspirational case study because she never, ever abdicated her her feminist and human principles. She never collaborated. And she's part of a small but I think important group of Dominican people/women, especially, who took that posture. For some that meant exile. My mom, for example, she was exiled because of the regime.

So yeah, so those women were there. Some of them also, were actually in the Dominican Republic and working in those Dominican feminist projects, quietly, waiting for the moment, right, biding their time, managing the regime, getting what they could, personally and politically, and just waiting, waiting it out. You know, Audrey Lord said survival is an act of resistance. So I also give those people their credit.

#### +++++MUSICAL INTERLUDE+++++

#### INTERSECTIONALITIES

##### **John Galante**

So the the term intersectionality is relatively new. And we can talk about what it means to you and that sort of thing and how it's been important to you. But I also, I wonder, to what degree, some of these women even without that term, were thinking intersectionally, and that was even at the center of their thinking. Is that history much longer than we think?

##### **Ginetta Candelario**

Yeah, I mean, I would say yes, for a couple of reasons. One is, so as I said, you know, they were feminists before, long before, they were suffragists. Suffrage is a 20th century agenda that essentially enters the feminist public discourse in 1922 with *Femina*, and ironically, it's under US occupation. So it's really as much about being anti-imperialist, and kind of highlighting the hypocrisy of US occupiers, of promoting democracy while occupying a country and subjecting its population to fairly brutal, racist, and misogynist repression, as they were doing at the same time in Haiti, which again, another good friend, colleague, Gray Sanders, new book, is a phenomenal study of of Haitian women's organizing as well during occupation in that period.

So what they meant by feminist was always, yes, intersectional in that they understood. Well, the thing that immediately comes to mind is the Alicia Garza's her story of the Black Lives Matter movement, where she has a line that she says, When Black women get free, we all get free. The idea being that, you know, black women who live at the crossroads of so many structures and systems of oppression, exploitation and exclusion. If we create a society, like a kind of universal design principle, that that enables them to live as fully human, that benefits everyone in the same way that a ramp benefits everyone.

And I would say that a similar principle was operating for Dominican feminists in the first 40-50 years of their of their work before Trujillo, in the sense that when they were talking about women, they were talking about the most vulnerable population in the country. Even when the women who were feminists, you know, were in the Dominican context white women, or were elite or middle class, which was the case in some instances, the vast majority of the population was poor, rural, illiterate, malnourished, operating in extremely challenging public health circumstances around disease control and management, potable drinking water, I mean, you know, just things as basic as that. And women were responsible for those things, right, because women as as as caretakers and mothers were held responsible for the health and well-being of the family, and of the community. So if you have a population that is largely economically disadvantaged, landless, or operating on like small *conucos*, small subsistence kind of economy basis and dealing with what what really should be dealt with as policy issues. If you address the needs of the women and the children, then in essence, you're addressing questions of class of race as well as of gender. Like that was the kind of thinking that was embedded there.

So, a *gota de leche* milk dispensary program is a nutrition program, nutrition is for the greater good. But it's women who are nursing and it's women who take care of children. So you frame it as a women's or a feminist issue. But it's for the greater good. And you see that in their correspondence and in their public discourse. You know, time and again, the argument they make is the things that we are asking for is for everyone.

### **John Galante**

It does seem like the concept was there, if not the term intersectionality, right?, and the understanding was there. But since then, right, as you've been a part of the field, in some ways emerging, you're the editor of *Meridians*, which is a journal that is 20-something years old at this point of time, and you've been the editor since 2017, I believe, and have kind of watched the field evolve. And it is explicitly an intersectional, feminist journal on the front of the website. It's not hiding that. What's the value of the term, then, now that it does exist now that it's part of the conversation? Now that it's explicit, and so forth?

### **Ginetta Candelario**

Yeah. Well, it's interesting, because you said a little while ago, it's relatively new. And so I started thinking, okay, when did Kimberly Crenshaw first publish it? And it was actually in the 80s. So we're actually 40 years now we're talking about intersectionality. But I think it's become more of the public discourse in the last 10 years, I daresay, right? In the same way that CRT now is a word that's being thrown around even on Fox News, not that they know what they're talking about. But CRT has been

around for 30 years, and now it's in the public discourse. So I think the use of the term is that it's a shorthand, right? Like like any of these terms, they they help us express very succinctly, what are we talking about.

Patricia Hill Collins had coined another term, around the same time, a little bit later than Kimberly Crenshaw, but she called it the domination matrix. It's really the same idea because Crenshaw is a legal scholar, so she was coming at it, literally grappling with how pragmatically, How can attorneys, how can lawyers, civil rights lawyers and public law lawyers, help judges think about the complexity of positionality for black women, when historically the idea was that that cases were being brought civil rights cases, either on the basis of race, in which case gender disappeared for black women on the basis of sex/gender, in which case race disappeared. The law and judges didn't have a paradigm, a framework for understanding the simultaneity, the simultaneity of race and gender and we could say class, right.

From that, you know, we have expanded it to more explicitly include, for example, sexuality, which she didn't explicitly mention at all. And some of us who are Area Studies scholars and Latin Americanists and Latino Studies scholars, actually, Ethnic Studies scholars have gone even further and talked about geopolitics, right? So like LatCrit, Latino Critical Theory, which also comes out of law, explicitly advances beyond CRT to say, Okay, you have to think outside the US, you can't just think about race as a US construct. Race is part of us imperial history and ongoing imperialist foreign policy. Right. So geopolitics are also part of intersectionality. Right positionality, and relationship to citizenship and the nation-state.

So having this term is a really useful shorthand for for for thinking about the simultaneity of these systems of power, and how they operate and are mutually constitutive. Because that's really the key.

#### **+++++MUSICAL INTERLUDE+++++** **MERIDIANS (JOURNAL)**

##### **Ginetta Candelario**

So yes, you know, the journal itself was founded 23 years ago, *Meridians* was founded at Smith, by four faculty members, Susan Van Dyne, who was the founder of Women's Studies at Smith and actually was nationally renowned as a scholar who helped other universities and institutions establish their own Women's Studies programs. Nancy Saporta Sternbach, who was actually my professor at Smith when I was there in the 80s. And she was a scholar of feminism in Latin America and the Caribbean and was very much doing work on Transnational feminist movements. Ann Arnett Ferguson, who was a sociologist who did work on black boys experiences of presumptive criminalization in schools. And Elizabeth Alexander, who's the current president of the Mellon Foundation, and, as you know, was a Poet Laureate of the United States and wrote Obama's inauguration poem, and so forth.

So the four of them went to President Ruth Simmons in 1998, which was right around the time I returned to Smith as a as a faculty member, actually, and proposed the establishing of a journal that would center intersectionality. And this being in response to the fact that the journals that existed at that point, now about 20 years into Women's Studies being established as a field, were white women's

studies, basically the presumptive subject was a race neutral subject, right?, or a class neutral subject, as is often the case in Liberal feminism. And the idea was, let's move women of color knowledge production from the margins and from the add one and stir model that even, you know, radical feminist or progressive or, you know, groundbreaking feminist scholars were were engaging in to, again, the notion that if you center this subject, literally this person, or you know, people who occupy this category, women of color, then we'll get the whole picture.

Race wasn't considered as a central axis, or class or sexuality or geopolitics, because the interesting thing about *Meridians* is that, that it brought geopolitics in right from the start because it's feminism race, transnationalism, right? So and I credit Nancy with this, Nancy Saporta Sternbach, because she was doing that work herself. So really kind of insisting on not being US-centric, not being, you know, limited in that way to really be thinking geopolitically globally transnationally about what we mean by feminism, what do we mean by race? Right? What do we mean by intersectionality?

### **Joe Aguilar**

Something that intrigued me as a writer of fiction and sometimes poetry about *Meridians* is that you also accept poetry and fiction, which felt surprising to me for a more academic journal. And I was wondering how the poetry and fiction fit in with the larger project of the journal.

### **Ginetta Candelario**

Yeah, right out of the gate, there was an understanding and again, Elizabeth Alexander, who's a poet, was one of our founders. There was an understanding that women of color feminist knowledge production, always has included art, creative writing, performing arts, visual arts, etc. So that's why I use the term knowledge production, not scholarship. Because scholarship is one form of knowledge production. And while that's the core of *Meridians*, and it's a core that we are very proud of, and we work really hard to sustain the rigorousness of that, we have always engaged in double anonymous peer review, precisely because we want to ensure that the scholars, the academics, the faculty that we publish, that their work is counted by their tenure and promotion committees, right? Because it's part of the agenda to grow the the faculty representation by women of color scholars.

But we also understood knowledge production to be really much more broadly conceived to include poetry, to include short story, to include memoir and *testimonio*, which is a Latin American political genre, right? To include visual art, to include work on media, right, to include submissions that either are coming from activists or about activism, such as the "In The Trenches" feature that we have. And importantly, for my historian friend over here, we have a section called in the archives, where what we do is publish a primary document that comes from the Sophia Smith collection, which is the second largest women's history archive in the country, to showcase you know that there is an archive of women's history, it's here at Smith, and here are primary documents that prove things like, women in Lebanon in 1924 were calling themselves feminists and engaging in public discourses. That's one of the pieces I published not too long ago, right? Like, here's the here's the thing, right, we're not making this up. It wasn't imported from outside, you know, it's actually from here. It was feminist knowledge production writ large. And so obviously, creative writing has to be a part of that.

### **John Galante**

This sounds like *Femina* in a way, right?

**Ginetta Candelario**

Yeah, I guess.

**John Galante**

There is an interesting parallel there, I think. I really appreciate the fact that *Meridians* is more diverse in its in the type of knowledge production that it includes. So I was wondering how potentially a journal like that can persist, though, to be able to sustain something is such a challenge. What's that process been like? You know, it must be exhausting. But it also must be really invigorating in other ways.

**Ginetta Candelario**

Yeah, I mean, I will say it's been invigorating. It's some of the best work I feel I've done at Smith actually. I've come to realize that editing the journal is right up there with teaching for me now too. And it was totally unexpected, because I never thought of myself as a journal editor. It wasn't an identity or a goal or aspiration, that I had it. It happened by virtue of circumstance. As I mentioned, *Meridians* was being conceptualized and was being founded as I as I joined the faculty, And in fact, the the founders solicited one of the chapters of my dissertation as a piece for the first issue of *Meridians*, Volume One Number One, which was published in fall of 2000. It then brought me into the *Meridians* fold because I then became a member of their editorial advisory board, and was in that role for for many, many years, and would review pieces for them from time to time.

As the journal went through various transitions, which I'll tell you about in a moment. And so, when the third editor of the journal who was Paula Giddings who our listeners surely know, was one of the founders of Black Women's Studies in the United States, Paula was getting ready to retire in 2017. I was away and that she had gathered together this group of faculty to kind of begin to strategize, What do we do? Who's going to take over, you know? What will happen now that I'm leaving, and one of those faculty members remembered that, that I had been involved with the journal for more than 20 years.

And then we began the serious conversations about assuming the editorship of the journal. And as part of that, I insisted that we get expanded office space, that we go from the two offices facing a brick wall that weren't even connected. That we get a proper space to conduct the work. And that we get a one FTE, full-time dedicated staff person, as opposed to a temp, and an operating budget that that made sense, given what the journal was doing. And luckily, with Paula's support and the support of the advisory board members and my colleagues, we were able to pull that off. And I assumed the editorship in 2017.

However, what I didn't get, that every other editor had gotten before me, was two course releases, I only got one. And as I began to do the work and realize the enormity of the work, it became clear that, that that the gap between the budget and the project was being assumed by the person in the role. Right, and that's not sustainable over the long term.

As the editor I control content, right? I can establish the kind of intellectual frame of the journal and so on and so forth. That's, that's by definition, under my control. What was not in my control was funding. The journal is now part of the college's operating budget, we're actually a line in the budget, right. I have five student workers and editorial assistant, my full time admin, and a casual worker who are all helping to advance the journals visibility, and advance the the endowment campaign.

### **John Galante**

Another piece, I think of the editorship that I'm interested in, is what you're seeing change in the field, or what's coming or what's next, or like, that's gotta be one of the coolest things about being an editor. What are you receiving that's really cool, that's really interesting, that is moving the journal in one direction or the other?

### **Ginetta Candelario**

Yeah. You know, one of the things that has been so much fun about, and again, it's not something I could have ever anticipated. Being in the role of editor, as you point out, and receiving hundreds of submissions every year, I get to read work that is coming from all over the map. It's interdisciplinary, it's coming from, you know, scholars across the world and across the country, really, right?

So one of the first things I did when I stepped into the editorship was to do an audit of what has *Meridians* published already, and what are our weaknesses. So we are really outstanding and have history, we can be really proud of a black feminist scholarship, period, full stop. I mean, it is the majority of what we have published, we've done so really well. So much of what we've published is now again, canonical, just like Paula's work. Surprisingly, the second strongest area for us was South Asian feminist work. That surprised me. But but in fact we have published consistently and quite well work from and by and about the Indian subcontinent and Pakistan and so forth. Thirdly, I would say Latina Latin American feminist work was the work that was then, you know, more represented. And then kind of generally some Middle Eastern, you know, women of color in general.

Our weakest area was indigenous feminism like next to nothing, right, which is why actually, I then put out a call and organized two special issues on indigenous feminisms across the world, which I'm co-guest editing with Basuli Deb, who's a scholar of indigenous feminism, All of which is to say that I get, yes, to read and to kind of shape issues based on that.

And I would say, and I don't know if this is a product of, of my own marketing and branding and the kinds of conferences that I attend and the kind of work that I find interesting and really encourage submission of, or if it's because it's just happening organically or some combination. But but we are really becoming much more global. So that transnational part of our mission is being much more highlighted now. And some of that is purposeful, because that was the vision I brought, and, you know, related to that was like multilingual, I'm publishing work in Arabic and publishing work in Spanish and Portuguese and so forth. Pursuing, you know, having a scholar from China on our board, because I want, I want that global international dimension to really be visible and as core part of what we're doing, right.

And it's so illuminating. I mean, one of my favorite pieces that that is coming out, is a piece written by a sociologist, I believe she is, in California named Zeynep Korkman, who wrote this fantastic essay on how the president of Turkey has, has co-opted the Black Lives Matter movement, and its discourse, in order to justify and advance an anti-Kurdish, anti-Christian, anti-Jewish, proto-Islamist and patriarchal vision for the country. I mean, it is a brilliant, brilliant analysis, right, of what's happening in Turkey politically, and how Erdogan has used the Black Lives Matter discourse to claim a kind of solidarity as Muslim, right?, because, in fact, there is a basis for solidarity between BLM and people who are responding to anti-Muslim racism, right? But he has, in a way perverted that in order to advance a kind of regressive, pro-Islam, pro-Muslim movement, right. And not not religiously fundamentalist, and that's why it's so brilliant, this analysis, right and, and this is a classic *Meridians* piece because she really brings together the question of gender, the question of race, the question of geopolitics, right, the question of class, because class is in her analysis as well, to explain for those of us who are not Turkish, who don't follow and understand Turkish politics, even though we see it in our news, right? So that we can get a sense of like, oh, this is what's happening when they say this, or when he's doing that now. Okay, this makes sense to me. Right?

**John Galante**

Yeah. It sounds like Trujillo co-opting feminist.

**Ginetta Candelario**

Right?

**+++++MUSICAL INTERLUDE+++++**

**LATINX**

We're don't have a ton of time, but I do have a question for you related to some of this most recent stuff, which is a little bit provocative, maybe. But what do you think of the term Latinx, given your the fact that you came from, you know, your first book was mostly about race, your second book was mostly about gender. You've obviously built this profile in Intersectionalities highly rooted in your experience of studying the Hispanophone Caribbean and extending that to the US, not to mention the fact that you're, you know, your background is potentially you know, labeled as such.

And, you know, understanding that these terms are always in flux. Right? And it's not always clear what will stick or how long it will stick for and then. You know, you mentioned Intersectionalities, right, like that became the term. And Latinx I notice that with my students, for sure, it's it's this moving target. From a scholarly, academic, professorial, even just creative standpoint and social standpoint, what's your impression of that term?

**Ginetta Candelario**

I'm ambivalent. I'm ambivalent about it. Well, okay, so I think that what it's trying to address, and this is a project that I do embrace is the gendered and therefore somewhat inherently androcentric/patriarchal nature of the Spanish language. Right? So that in Latin America and the Caribbean, you know, that's been a bone of contention.

Actually, you know, the very first book I actually published was called *Miradas desencadenantes*. And it was a collection of the, the presentations at the conference on the study of gender that I organized in the DR during my first Fulbright in 2003. And in my intro for that book, I write about the debates that were happening. And this is, you know, 20 years ago now, right, that were happening in the *Real Academia de la Lengua Hispana* in, in Spain, around feminists who were who were trying to advocate for the *a/o*, to like, include women, right, and to kind of think about how one guy in the room changes the gender to male, right? So there's 100 women in a room, then it's Latinas. A dude shows up, it's Latinos. Right? Like, like his penis occludes everybody. You know, that's a problem, right? So I'm, I'm, I'm sympathetic to that problem. And I, you know, I think it's helpful to have us address it. And it's really clunky, actually, especially in speech, in writing not so much, but in speech, to always have to say, *a/o*, you know, and I've seen my feminist colleagues in Dominican Republic, do that and try to really, you know, be mindful of of gender, right?

So, I'm sympathetic to the, to the problem that is trying to be solved. I also understand that some folks have posited “*e*”, “*Latine*,” a as as a possible alternative which again, okay, I get it. It's just kind of clunky.

### **John Galante**

Do you remember when *arropa* was...

### **Ginetta Candelario**

Well, that's the one I use usually, actually, because I like that one. There's something about that one that really appeals to me.

The other thing is that it's my understanding that the “*x*” actually. Because at first I thought that it was a product of US Latino movements. But apparently, actually it was being used in Latin America by LGBTQ-IR movements for a while, so that it actually didn't originate here, that there are, as I say LGBTQ-IR movements and communities in Latin America that we're proposing and trying to use the “*x*” which then gave me, Okay, well, you know, then that that's something to seriously consider, right?

### **John Galante**

Because one of the critiques of it is that it's this US, right, imperialist, cultural imperialism kind of thing that's being imposed on the region.

### **Ginetta Candelario**

Yeah, and also, you know, some of the pushback comes from, like, Latino immigrants themselves in the US, right. And so the critique is that, okay, these are, I'm not saying that I'm saying this, but like, what I've heard said is that, these are young people, they're third generation, they don't even speak Spanish, you know, trying to say, “*Latinx*,” and, you know, Latinos themselves, by which they mean, Latino immigrants, don't use this terminology, you know. We're perfectly comfortable with the “*a*” and the “*o*,” and, you know, we we think we have bigger fish to fry, like. We actually have a bigger problem to deal with them than whether the “*x*”, right? Which again, you know, that's another argument that I am sympathetic to, to an extent.

So, all of which is to say that, I don't think we need one answer to that question. I think that there is room for all of us, right, that some of us will do as I do the *arroba*. That's the one I prefer, because I feel like it is elegant in a way visually, that it kind of captures what we're really talking about, which is the kind of simultaneity right of being. But if people want to use the "e," you know, go for it. And if they want to use the "x" go. So as an editor, I allow all of them, right.

We just had this conversation actually about whether or not to capitalize "white," because it is standard practice not to capitalize B in Black, Latino gets capitalized because it's a pronoun, right? I mean, a subject, Native American Indian gets capitalized, Mena gets, all of those. But the question came up like, Okay, do you capitalize "white" when you're referring to a racialized group in the United States? And the debates are all over the map? Some people say yes, because they exist as a race. That's the whole point to white supremacy is to make it invisible and to normalize and naturalize, you know, whiteness as the as the normativity. So we have to capitalize it to show this exists as a power structure. Others say no, because that feeds into white nationalism. It feeds into the kind of regressive. So, you know, I think it's a similar set of concerns around, how do you address the problem of power that's in our midst, without reproducing the problem itself in your response, right?

**John Galante**

Well, thank you so much for your time. An excellent endnote to a really excellent conversation. I can't tell you how grateful we are for all the insights and and just to take us through everything you've kind of done and, and experienced and and the work that to come and so on and so forth. So thanks for, thanks for joining us today.

**Ginetta Candelario**

Thank you, John. Thank you, Joseph. It's really been a pleasure.

**Joe Aguilar**

Thank you.

**+++++MUSICAL INTERLUDE+++++**  
**CREDITS**

**John Galante**

You've been listening to *Crossing Fronteras*. I'm your co-host John Galante, a historian of Latin American and an Associate Professor at Worcester Polytechnic Institute as well as the creator and executive producer of the podcast series.

**Joe Aguilar**

And I'm your co-host Joe Aguilar, a fiction writer and an Assistant Professor at WPI, and an executive producer of the podcast series.

**John Galante**

This show surveys the unique ecosystem of contemporary scholarship and art being generated by scholars and creatives in New England who are working in Latin American and Caribbean Studies.

**Joe Aguilar**

Our series producer is Jill Ruby. Original music for our series was written, performed, and by Carlos Odria. This podcast was recorded at PRX Podcast Garage in Boston, Massachusetts, with the help of Magdiela Matta. Additional support came from a fellowship provided by the Global Labs at WPI, with special assistance from Steve McCauley, Varun Bhat, and Sam Ollari.

**John Galante**

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