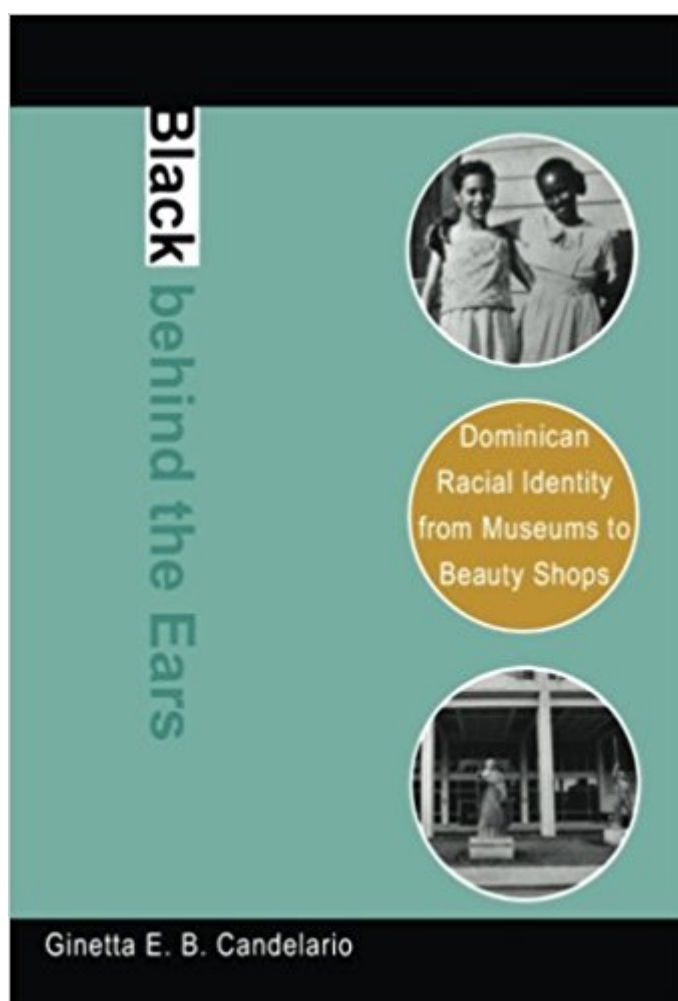


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# Black Behind The Ears: Dominican Racial Identity From Museums To Beauty Shops



## Synopsis

*Black behind the Ears* is an innovative historical and ethnographic examination of Dominican identity formation in the Dominican Republic and the United States. For much of the Dominican Republic's history, the national body has been defined as "not black," even as black ancestry has been grudgingly acknowledged. Rejecting simplistic explanations, Ginetta E. B. Candelario suggests that it is not a desire for whiteness that guides Dominican identity discourses and displays. Instead, it is an ideal norm of what it means to be both indigenous to the Republic (indios) and "Hispanic." Both indigeneity and Hispanicity have operated as vehicles for asserting Dominican sovereignty in the context of the historically triangulated dynamics of Spanish colonialism, Haitian unification efforts, and U.S. imperialism. Candelario shows how the legacy of that history is manifest in contemporary Dominican identity discourses and displays, whether in the national historiography, the national museum's exhibits, or ideas about women's beauty. Dominican beauty culture is crucial to efforts to identify as "indios" because, as an easily altered bodily feature, hair texture trumps skin color, facial features, and ancestry in defining Dominicans as indios. Candelario draws on her participant observation in a Dominican beauty shop in Washington Heights, a New York City neighborhood with the oldest and largest Dominican community outside the Republic, and on interviews with Dominicans in New York City, Washington, D.C., and Santo Domingo. She also analyzes museum archives and displays in the Museo del Hombre Dominicano and the Smithsonian Institution as well as nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century European and American travel narratives.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Black behind the Ears makes important contributions to our understanding of the Dominican experience. In this book, Ginetta E. B. Candelario shows processes of identity formation among Dominicans in different historical and geographical contexts, and she looks at the nuanced relationship between ethnic and racial identities. In my opinion, this is one of the best books written on the subject of racial, ethnic, and national identity formation in general.”

—Joselyn Itzigsohn, author of *Developing Poverty: The State, Labor Market Regulation, and the Informal Economy in Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic*

“Based on first-rate ethnographic and historical research, *Black behind the Ears* provides fresh and original insights into the construction and representation of racial identities in the Dominican Republic and the United States. It is the most comprehensive, focused, and balanced treatment to date of Dominican racial and gender ideologies in the United States.”

—Jorge Duany, author of *The Puerto Rican Nation on the Move: Identities on the Island and in the United States*

—Ginetta E. B.

Candelario’s *Black behind the Ears* argues compellingly that any serious effort to understand Dominican ideas and practices of race in the ancestral homeland as well as in the diaspora requires a large conceptual framework, a triangular geography of knowledge, and a cultural history formed by Dominican nation-building projects, the difficult plight of the Haitian Republic in the midst of a negrophobic world, the impact of U.S. racial thought, and the Latin American glorification of the Hispanic heritage. Candelario’s book remarkably dares to bring apparently disparate discursive sites to interact convincingly and engagingly in her analysis. The author renders facile readings of the Dominican chapter of the black experience in the Americas as exceptional or pathological simply unsustainable. She shows instead that it invites White Americans, African Americans, and other Latinos to revisit long-held assumptions about racial categories, ethnic identity, nationality, and the ideologies behind taking the

“invisible” for “real” in matters of race.”

—Silvio Torres-Saillant, coauthor of *The Dominican Americans*

“*Black behind the Ears* is a fascinating, richly documented, and innovative exploration of racial, ethnic and national identity formation in the Dominican Republic and among the Dominican diaspora in the United States. . . . In exploring the paradoxes of Dominican ethno-racial identity so creatively, Candelario has produced a fascinating template for scholars and students of race, ethnicity and national identity in

general. (Sherri Grasmuck Contemporary Sociology) "[A] stimulating book. . . . Candelario breaks new ground with her analysis of racial formation in Dominican communities in the United States . . . . [Black Behind the Ears] should be widely read by historians, anthropologists, and sociologists in the fields of Latin American and Latina/o studies. (Frank Andre Guridy Hispanic American Historical Review) "[G]roundbreaking. . . . Black Behind the Ears is a well-researched analysis of the cultural sites through which various actors produce racial understandings in relation to national discourses. It is an important contribution to the study of race, gender and national identity within the Dominican Republic and its US-based migrant communities. (Takkara Brunson Bulletin of Latin American Research)

"Ginetta E. B. Candelario's "Black behind the Ears" argues compellingly that any serious effort to understand Dominican ideas and practices of race in the ancestral homeland as well as in the diaspora requires a large conceptual framework, a triangular geography of knowledge, and a cultural history formed by Dominican nation-building projects, the difficult plight of the Haitian Republic in the midst of a negrophobic world, the impact of U.S. racial thought, and the Latin American glorification of the Hispanic heritage. Candelario's book remarkably dares to bring apparently disparate discursive sites to interact convincingly and engagingly in her analysis. The author renders facile readings of the Dominican chapter of the black experience in the Americas as exceptional or pathological simply unsustainable. She shows instead that it invites White Americans, African Americans, and other Latinos to revisit long-held assumptions about racial categories, ethnic identity, nationality, and the ideologies behind taking the 'visible' for 'real' in matters of race."--Silvio Torres-Saillant, coauthor of "The Dominican Americans"

I was married to a Dominican man (RIP) and we live in the DMV (DC, MD, VA area) and I also know some of the individuals she mentioned in the book in the area. I am familiar with the Dominican issues regarding racial identity. I believe the issues are more prevalent once a Dominican leaves Dominican Republic and live their lives in the USA. The author, Ginetta E. B. Candelario (my former last name from my marriage was also Candelario) really hit on all aspects of the identity issues.

Candelario has an excellent collection of essays here that examine how Dominican's identify in order to have the most success, and how government actions have not allowed them, oftentimes, to fully accept their African heritage despite obvious African roots. Very interesting work.

Riveting.

Great for reading for everyone

my Smith College prof's book. very important.

I couldn't stay awake long enough to get past the 2nd chapter. The author uses long pompous words but seems to have very little to actually say.

The book came just as advertised; no bends in the papers and perfect condition. Will buy books from again.

Trash

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