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PART III

Noncitizen Insiders and the Right to Belong

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CHAPTER 5

Noncitizen Insiders

Citizenship . . . is also experienced by those who lack presence within the nation and are unintelligible according to the master-narrative of sovereignty as they neither belong, nor are they outsiders, vis-à-vis the state.

—Ní Mhurchú

Whereas the two previous chapters examine how the human right to a nationality is instantiated in reality through the operation of a state's laws and practices, this chapter investigates the repercussions that being forcibly displaced in situ has upon the stateless. Far from being a mere legal anomaly, statelessness affects a person's ability to carry out key life projects and hampers her or his ability to enjoy many other human rights. Thus, like their stateless counterparts elsewhere in the world (see Chapter 2), stateless persons in The Bahamas and the Dominican Republic are unable to rely on their mere personhood to access rights, freedoms, and protections. Moreover, their peculiar form of forced displacement generates an ambiguous sense of place identity. They do not know where they belong, even though they remain physically rooted in the place of their birth.

Ambiguous Belonging

In their work on irregular citizenship, Peter Nyers (2011) and Aoileann Ní Mhurchú (2015) explain how people can be culturally and legally part of a nation as citizens, but outsiders nonetheless. These individuals, often the racialized other, are holders of “irregular citizenship.” The formal citizenship

status they possess does not function adequately “or is irregularized due to the negation of rights, duties, and obligations through informal and unofficial means” (160). These people, while having an officially recognized citizen identity,¹ often bear the image of the migrant outsider on their bodies. They exist in a world of “cultural limbo” where they belong neither to “the world of migration or the world of citizenship” (167).

The noncitizen insiders (Belton 2011) of whom I write are in a similar position to the holders of “irregular citizenship” in Nyers and Ní Mhurchú’s accounts. They exist in an ambiguous space of neither “here nor there”—the realm of liminality. What distinguishes the noncitizen insiders in this book from the irregular citizenship of which Nyers and Ní Mhurchú write, however, is that they do not formally belong to any state in practice. They are stateless. Furthermore, whereas the holders of irregular citizenship are made so via “informal and unofficial means,” as I illustrate in the two previous chapters, Bahamian- and Dominican-born persons of Haitian descent are displaced *in situ* by a confluence of formal and official means (as well as informal and unofficial ones).

The ambiguous position of noncitizen insiders is perhaps even more pronounced than that of irregular citizens. As I illustrate in the Bahamian case, their ambiguity is heightened in that they are officially denied citizenship for the first eighteen years of their life and then provided the possibility (but not the guarantee) of acquiring Bahamian citizenship upon reaching adulthood. During this time, their “out of place-ness” is doubly compounded if they are not recognized *in practice* as a citizen of another state (in this case, Haiti). As persons who are born of noncitizens in The Bahamas then, they bear the image of the migrant on their bodies, akin to irregular citizens. Unlike the latter, however, they are legally excluded from formal belonging in the country of their birth. As Dumercy remarks,

The Bahamas don’t want to claim you and Haiti don’t either. . . . Like we always say, “Bahamas don’t want us and Haiti don’t want us.” So we are on our own basically. We’re in limbo. We are on our own because we don’t really have anyone looking out for us or looking for our interests to protect us. [Haitians say], “You wasn’t born here, you’re a Bahamian.” But then . . . it’s the same thing where the Bahamians say, “Well you’re born of Haitian parents, you’re Haitian.”² So that’s why a lot of us [are] saying we’re stateless or we’re in limbo because the Haitians don’t look at us as part of them. . . . Haiti don’t

look at you as part of their country and, well, literally you could say The Bahamas don't want you to be part of their country until you're 18, until you're an adult.

In the Dominican case, individuals who were forcibly displaced into liminality (or "forced to be Haitian") via Sentence TC/0168/13 were, as I explain in the previous chapter, once Dominican citizens and grew up thinking they were Dominican. Some of them clearly identify with being Dominican, but admit they no longer know where they belong. Unlike irregular citizens, then, they, too, are rendered liminals by formal and official means. Like their Bahamian counterparts, and perhaps even more so given the racialized nature of anti-immigrant discourse in the Dominican Republic, they bear the imprint of the migrant on their body, but are excluded from the country of their birth. In both the Bahamian and the Dominican cases then, the stateless suffer an ambiguous place identity akin to irregular citizens, but their situation is all the more problematic because they lack citizenship and often the means to challenge their exclusion through the formal and official channels by which they are rendered stateless.

Using Victor Turner's (1984) work on liminality as a basis, I thus demonstrate how the realm of statelessness is more than one where the law ceases to operate. It is one in which an individual's place in the world becomes ambiguous, or even outright negated. We have not, therefore, come very far from Arendt's conclusion that "the loss of citizenship deprived people not only of protection, but also of all clearly established, officially recognized identity" (Arendt [1948] 2004, 364).

Liminality

Liminality is a term that has been used to describe the experience of stateless people (Thomassen 2009, 19). It refers to the condition of being between statuses (Riggan 2011), "be these fixed cultural classifications or more formalised legal statuses" (Hynes 2011, 2). One arrives at this liminal space through separation from one's former identity and only leaves it via a rite of passage, taking on another identity in the process (Beech 2011, 287). Sometimes the transition from one identity to the next does not go as expected, however, and people become stranded in the liminal stage (Higgot and Nossal 1997, 170). They remain in limbo, as "entities that are neither here

nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arranged by law, custom, convention, and ceremonials. . . . They elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locates states and positions in cultural space” (Turner [1969]1995, cited in Rumelili 2003, 220).

As I explain in the next chapter, the stateless fall outside the framework of international law and practice wherein each person is supposed to belong to some state as its national. They are “noncitizen insiders” (Belton 2011). They are insiders because they have not migrated from elsewhere. They remain, for the most part, in the states where they were born. Yet they are noncitizens because the state either rejects them as members or does not fully provide the means by which they can be prevented from falling into statelessness. The stateless have thus undergone the first stage of the initiation rite, separation. They are separated from formal citizenship through citizenship denial or deprivation in the countries of their birth. Yet, unable to take on formal citizenship, they remain “betwixt and between,” in a space of invisibility, impunity, rightlessness, and reflection (Turner [1984] in Beech 2011, 287).

Invisibility

As Nic Beech, interpreting Turner (1984), explains, “the liminar³ is socially if not physically invisible. Their ambiguity means that they are outside definition” (2011, 287). Statelessness scholarship is replete with terms expressing the invisibility of stateless populations. In Arendt’s time stateless people were referred to as “‘displaced persons’ . . . for the express purpose of liquidating statelessness once and for all by ignoring its existence” (Arendt [1948] 2004). Today adjectives such as “ghosts” and “voiceless,” and the use of euphemisms such as “without status” and “erased persons,” are used to describe them.⁴ Not only are the stateless described as invisible, but they are often numerically invisible as well. Most countries do not collect data on their stateless populations and neither The Bahamas nor the Dominican Republic does so.⁵ It is thus often hard to gauge the extent of statelessness, which, in turn, affects policy responses toward them.

While the previously stateless or at risk participants interviewed for this study do not describe themselves as invisible, those who were not stateless, but citizens of the Dominican Republic, Haiti, or some other third country, do use the term to describe them. The Dominican UNDP officer explains how without a national ID card (*cédula*), people are “invisible. . . . They are

not subjects of the law. They don't exist as citizens."⁶ While admitting that "Yes, as human beings [they exist] because they are present," the officer emphasizes that they "do not exist in the civil sense of the word." Leonardo agrees, observing that if an individual in the Dominican Republic does not possess a birth certificate or a national ID, "civilly you do not exist." This premise stands in direct contrast to the postnational claim that personhood is what counts in the contemporary era.⁷

In those instances when they are given formal citizenship, many formerly stateless persons are still "invisible" as they are denied social recognition as a Bahamian or a Dominican citizen. As Hanauer, discussing the different types of relationships migrants can have to their host communities observes, "Legal citizenship does not mean acceptance within the nation-state" (2011, 202).⁸ Several interviewees express this concern. Dolce observes how Bahamians "still see me as Haitian" even though he now has Bahamian citizenship. "For example when I go to work, if a Haitian comes into the office to make a complaint they say, 'You ga deal with your people.' They don't see me as Bahamian." Dumercy similarly states that even after obtaining Bahamian citizenship, "people are calling me 'this Haitian girl in the back of there.' Is there any change? No. So it's like the quality of life is still the same. I still have to battle. And the thing is, if anything, I have to now carry my passport everywhere—to maybe say, 'Yeah, okay, I'm a Bahamian.'" Dumercy and others like her are thus invisible as citizens or "true" Bahamians despite citizenship acquisition.

Julian Lockhart, a Bahamian of non-Haitian descent who wrote on Haitian Bahamian events as a journalist for the *Tribune*, observes how many individuals of Haitian descent born in The Bahamas are not considered fully "Bahamian" even when citizenship is acquired. Discussing the "negative connotation" that adheres to Bahamians' usage of "Bahaitian," "Bahamian Haitian," and "Haitian Bahamian," he says that "What it is, is Bahamians are letting you know, 'Hey, you may be Bahamian by status, but you're not a Bahamian. We might accept you [legally], but don't get yourself fooled [into] actually thinking you are a Bahamian.'"⁹ Dolce concurs, adding that "the real issue is being recognized as a Bahamian if you're born here or if you've spent all your life here."

The societal rejection of the naturalized "Other" is part of a "shift towards xenophobic restrictionism," which, according to Gaim Kibreab, "is increasingly a universal pattern" (1999, 400). Describing the rejection faced by refugees in host countries, Kibreab explains how

states, communities and individuals within geographically bounded spaces have become more territorial than ever before. Because of this, territorially-based identity has become a scarce resource which is jealously guarded and protected by those who perceive themselves as standing to lose by an influx of refugees or immigrants from other countries. (1999, 400)

In the Bahamian case at least, the guarding of a territorially defined identity is displayed when people are judged to be a “true true” Bahamian or not. “True, true” Bahamians are those who are able to trace their ancestry back to one of the Family Islands and who, in the words of one interviewee, “have a name that we can associate with one of those Family Islands, some settlement or community in one of those Family Islands.” “True true” Bahamians are also black,¹⁰ but not as black as their Haitian counterparts. As a prominent talk show personality points out,

the character, the tone, the construction that Bahamians have of Haitians is almost identical to so many racist constructions of them—of black people generally. . . . So they [Bahamians] did not create it, but they have embraced it. And they see themselves on a hierarchy of being in which the Haitian is beneath them. And that’s class prejudice as well as ethnic difference.¹¹

A lawyer and former government official concurs, stating that “the so-called true Bahamian sees himself as socially superior to these immigrants [the Haitians] and wants to maintain that social separation, doesn’t want equalization.”¹² This interviewee went on to say that it has little to do with race, however, but is more of a “class and status” issue. He continues,

Bahamian prejudice toward Haitians is something that transcends race altogether. It has nothing to do with race. It has more to do with the stratification of society along class lines and that historically a person who is born here of Bahamian parents is accorded a higher social status than a person who has either come here from Haiti or who is the immediate child of Haitian parents.

Whether or not the rejection of the Haitian noncitizen insider is due to perceived racial, ethnic, or class differences, it affects the way in which

Bahamians, Haitians, and Bahamians of Haitian descent interact with—and view—each other. Bahamians generally consider Haitians “an undifferentiated mass” (Craton and Saunders 1998, 455), made up of “illegal immigrant[s]” (Marshall 1979, 54; Fielding et al. 2008, 44). As one interviewee observes, “That’s where the problem comes, they just say illegal for everyone . . . because to most people every Haitian born in the Bahamas is an illegal.”¹³ A former Bahamian government official is also emphatic that children born to undocumented parents are illegal: “if you’re illegal, you should not be able to produce a person who becomes legal when they are born here.”¹⁴ Jn-Simon faced this forced categorization first-hand at the College of The Bahamas forum on “21st Century Slavery in The Bahamas: A Discussion on Statelessness” in October 2012.¹⁵ After she spoke about what it is like to be stateless in the country of her birth, an audience member approached her and “had the audacity to tell me that I was born here illegally.”

The premise that children born of Haitian descent are largely “illegal” is not specific to The Bahamas. The equation of Haitians with an unwelcome and unauthorized presence—domestic labor needs and evidence of work permits notwithstanding—is apparent in the Dominican Republic, too. Human Rights Watch captures then head of the Dominican Army Manuel Polanco, likewise stating that “An illegal person cannot produce a legal person” (2002, 22). Additionally, and as in the Bahamian case, many people in Dominican society view Haitians as an undifferentiated mass or illegals.¹⁶ As discussed in Chapter 4, the inability of many Dominicans to accept otherwise hails in part from the particularly strong and historical form of anti-Haitianism that exists in the country. This anti-Haitianism, while not rendering people of Haitian descent completely invisible, takes away their humanity.

Impurity

Even when not rendered invisible or emplaced in the space of their skin color, individuals of Haitian descent are often described in derogatory terms or associated with unclean or impure practices.¹⁷ This is a common phenomenon “when people, things and practices are seen as ‘out-of-place’” (Cresswell 2004, 103). During Arendt’s time the stateless were described as “the scum of the earth” (Arendt [1948] 2004, 341), “outlaw(s)” (360, 363) and “barbarians” (384). In the Caribbean context, they are often associated with unclean

animals such as pigs, hogs, or dogs. For example, Dominican anthropologist Tahira Vargas comments on how Dominicans often say that “all Haitians are dogs.”¹⁸ In their report to the UN Human Rights Council on the situation in the Dominican Republic, Doudou Diène and Gay McDougall¹⁹ also recount how “references [were] made to blacks as being ‘pig feed,’ ignorant or unhygienic” (UN HRC 2008c, 13).

One of the two local politicians interviewed in Abaco, Bahamas, consistently compares the people living in Haitian settlements in Abaco to hogs. For example, when describing the living conditions of those of Haitian descent, the person says that “only hogs can live like that.”²⁰ When discussing crime in the settlements and how locals attempt to get a “Haitian Bahamian” informant from within the communities to identify any illegal activity, the interviewee says that “the Bahamian-Haitian will say yes, but he never does [act as an informant] because *they don’t squeal on their own breed*. They don’t squeal.” The same participant, when asked about solutions to the issues surrounding citizenship denial and the problems confronted by people in the settlements, only offered to “bulldoze” the settlement because “as long as they’re left there in that square, they’ll be the same low-class pigs! Living like pigs.” The other local Abaconian official also thought that the settlements should be bulldozed. The individual stated the Bahamian government ought to “hire two big tractors and we push down all those houses which have been built here illegally. Put diesel and gas on it and burn it. *Purify the place.*”²¹

Associations with impurity are also present when the Bahamian-born persons of Haitian descent are associated with criminal activity due to their “betwixt and between” status. As one Abaconian official asserts, “The Haitian Bahamians is the ones that’s breaking in and stealing. They’re the worst. The Haitian-Haitians aren’t half as bad as the Haitian Bahamians.”²² The interviewee continues,

Haitian-Haitians are nicer people than Bahamian Haitians. The Bahamian Haitians is too biggity. They too sassy. They too stealing, into stealing. The Bahamian-Haitians are worse. A Haitian Haitian, like this man I’m talking about,²³ they’re more trustworthy. They don’t steal. I wouldn’t say you might find one out of a hundred that steals out of the Haitian Haitians, but the whole hundred of Bahamian Haitians will steal.

The interviewee attributes the criminal nature of Bahamian-born persons of Haitian descent to the fact that “They don’t know where they belong. They’re not accepted. They’re not accepted by the Haitians and they’re not accepted by the Bahamians.” The other Abaconian official, after declaring that “Bahamians are peaceful people, generally speaking,” affirms that “Any time you find these fellas getting out of hand and they’re doing the serious, serious cruel acts, check it close—some kind of Haitian blood mix.”²⁴ Thus the fact that they are neither Bahamian nor Haitian, but some “impure” mixture of the two, results in their criminal inclinations in the latter interviewee’s eyes.

Due to their “impure” nature, individuals of Haitian descent must therefore be contained. As Beech explains, liminals “are regarded as unclean with contact being prohibited or curtailed during liminality lest they should ‘pollute’ those who have not been ‘inoculated’ against them” (2011, 287). The settlements where many persons of Haitian descent reside within The Bahamas and the Dominican Republic are often in poor condition, separated from citizens’ homes. Batey residents for example, housed in settlements adjacent to sugarcane plantations, “live in pitiable conditions with no access to running water, sanitation or electricity. . . . They live in informally constructed shelters with dirt floors” (UN HRC 2008c, 24). In its study of HIV/AIDS in the bateyes, the Center for Social and Demographic Studies (CESDEM)²⁵ found that nearly 40 percent of the homes of Haitian migrants lacked sanitation facilities, with only 12 percent having a fully operational toilet (2008, 21).

On my visit to the batey of El Caño in 2013, I was taken to the home of a person who had the only private latrine in the neighborhood. The only way to flush the toilet was to carry water from an outside water source and fill the tank. The home had cement floors, but no covering for the floors. It had several bedrooms, but no doors. Curtains served to separate one space from another. Inside the bedrooms, plywood, covered with a sheet, lay on top of box springs to serve as mattresses. The house was minimalist in nature, but it was not dirty.

During my visit to the settlements of The Mud and The Peas in Abaco in 2012, I noticed that the homes were haphazardly placed, many with barely a walkway between them. Due to the fact that many settlement residents in The Bahamas “still cook outside on charcoal burner stoves” (Weatherford 2011, 108) and that several homes illegally tap into one electricity source, fires often break out in these communities. Pastor Robin Weatherford, who has

worked with and ministered to the Haitian community in Abaco for decades, notes that “A feeling of dread never fails to enter our mind when we look out our windows to see a plume of black smoke rising from that area, knowing that it more than likely could be disastrous” (108).²⁶

Besides vulnerability to fires, the homes in *The Mud* and *The Peas* are surrounded by dirt roads that are prone to flooding whenever hurricanes or storms pass through because of the settlements’ location on reclaimed swamp land. As in many bateyes in the DR, the majority of homes in *The Mud* and *The Peas* also lack access to running water, sanitation, or electricity. When I visited *The Mud*, however, I did not observe any open cesspits (as are often rumored to exist), and the homes appeared to be well maintained despite their close proximity and largely wooden frameworks.²⁷ Instead, what struck me was how clearly the settlements were delineated from the surrounding “citizens’” homes.

Whether the delineation between the spaces where the descendants of Haitian migrants live and citizens reside is purposeful in either country, the offspring of Haitian migrants are made to feel separate from, and even “dirty” to, the citizens who surround them. According to Dolce, being a “Haitian” was made to “seem like it’s a bad thing. A child growing up . . . [is hearing] a Haitian is something bad” and ends up “thinking ‘I don’t want to be Haitian no more. Haitian is bad. Haitian is a bad thing.’” Louis agrees, stating that “the term Haitian, growing up for me, that stigma was always this concept that ‘They’re illiterate. They’re poor’ and such.”

Jn-Simon believes that it is worse than that, “it almost seems as if in this country [The Bahamas] to be a Haitian, you’re ostracized almost like a person who has HIV.”²⁸ She tells the story of her younger sister who was teased at primary school because of her Haitian ethnicity and how her sister stopped speaking Krèyol; “she would even tell you that she is not a Haitian. The way how she felt when she went to school and children would tell her—like this one girl in particular would tell her that she looks like garbage or ‘You need to go back on the boat with your mother.’” Akin to *The Bahamas*, Diène and McDougall found in the Dominican case that “‘Haitian’ is also used as a label for improper behavior, lack of civility, and often as an insult in Dominican society” (UN HRC 2008c, 15).

Petit-Homme insinuates that Bahamians’ pejorative use of “Haitian” is more than a means to label someone unclean or uncivil, however; it has strong connotations of enslavement:

it's almost like Haitians now are like the field niggas, you know what I mean? . . . Look at the way they call Haitians. Like if you have a Haitian gardener maybe you call him "My Haitian." . . . But then they [Bahamians of non-Haitian descent] don't like the other Haitians. They want to get rid of all the other ones, but then they want to keep "theirs." And sometimes they even use citizenship-residency papers as leverage. They own these people, you know?

Just as the Atlantic slave trade engendered the deaths of millions of persons of African descent in the New World, Beech explains that during the "impurity" stage of liminality, "there is a link to death" and the liminal "may be ritually buried/lie motionless/stained black/covered in blood" (2011, 287). The "link to death" reveals itself in various ways in the two cases studied here. First, there is the practice of "kill[ing] the juridical personality" of an individual (Arendt [1948] 2004, 577) through document denial and deprivation. According to Chidi Anselm Odinkalu, this is *civicide*. Describing denationalization procedures in Nigeria, Odinkalu explains, "There are two ways to kill in human community: you can kill a human being or you can kill the citizen. The first is biological; the second is sociological but no less real. The former is called homicide; the latter is *civicide*" (2009 n. pag.). I explain in Chapters 3 and 4 how the Dominican government (and to a lesser extent the Bahamian government) engages in *civicide* against its Haitian migrant descended population via practices of citizenship denial and deprivation.

Second, there is the association of blood and death not with the liminals or noncitizen insiders, but with the citizens. For example, when I question the aforementioned local Abaconian official about the effects of a "bulldoze and purify" policy on Bahamian-born children who could one day become Bahamian citizens, the official responds, "That's what's killing us now."²⁹ Former minister of state for immigration Branville McCartney similarly stated that "We need to stop the bleeding" when it comes to giving citizenship to children born in The Bahamas of "illegal immigrant[s]" (Dames 2011 n. pag.).

In the Dominican context, the portrayal is slightly different. It is not that the Haitians and their descendants are bleeding the non-Haitian citizens dry, but that the latter are perhaps out for the Haitian-descended population's blood. As reported by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights after its visit to the Dominican Republic in December 2013,

Ana María Belique, a leader and activist with Movimiento Reconocido [who had spoken up against Sentence TC/0168/13], reportedly received threats from individuals via the social media network Twitter: “We’re going to have to move Belique to the same barrio where Sonia Pierre lives” (a reference to a human rights activist and defender who died in 2011), and “we’re ready for anything; if it’s blood they want, blood they shall have.” (Organization of American States 2013a n. pag.)

Jn-Simon relates the story of a Bahamian woman (of non-Haitian descent) who insinuates that death is the best response to, and place for, Bahamian-born Haitians: “the best Haitians in The Bahamas are those in the cemetery.” Despite sporadic episodes of violence in the Dominican Republic, however, the stigmatization of and discrimination against Bahamian and Dominican-born persons of Haitian descent has not engendered the type of ethnic conflict that occurs in other parts of the world when a minority group is oppressed or the ethnic majority feels threatened. Nonetheless, and contrary to postnational assertions of the severance of human rights from citizenship, it has generated a group of people whose access to human rights is seriously curtailed because of their liminal status.

Rightlessness

Beech writes that “during liminality, the liminar has no rights” (2011, 287). As I illustrate in Chapter 2, statelessness is a condition wherein the fulfillment of rights is contingent at best or nonexistent at worst. This is because citizenship is an intrinsic human right—important to hold in and of itself—but also because it is an instrumental human right. Its nonfulfillment leaves almost every other right in the UDHR susceptible to violation (Belton 2015). As the IACtHR states in *Yean and Bosico*,

nationality is a prerequisite for recognition of juridical personality . . . the failure to recognize juridical personality harms human dignity, because it denies absolutely an individual’s condition of being a subject of rights and renders him vulnerable to non-observance of his rights by the State or other individuals. (2005, 67)³⁰

As individuals who occupy a liminal space, the stateless encounter difficulties in accessing many of the rights, freedoms, and protections that citizens take for granted. Specifically, those who are stateless, or at risk of statelessness, in The Bahamas and the Dominican Republic face limits in the areas of education, employment, access to health care and justice, as well as restrictions upon their movement.

As parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN 1989), both The Bahamas and the Dominican Republic should provide free public elementary education to those children resident in their territories. This does not always occur in practice, however. One participant, who ministers in the Haitian community in The Bahamas, notes that when Haitian migrants go to register their children for school they are sometimes turned away and told that registration is not taking place for a few more weeks yet when, in fact, registration is underway. When the Haitian parent returns, registration is closed. This interviewee also says that some Haitians have set up a school of their own to get around this type of discrimination, noting that children coming from Haiti are even less likely to be able to attend public school than their Bahamian-born counterparts: “children who [are] born in Haiti, who come here, you have a 90% chance they will never take them in [public] school. . . . They will have to go to private school.”³¹

While an elementary school administrator in Abaco asserts that all children are provided elementary school education, the interviewee also states that “we will not register a child without any documents” because “we risk exposing the children to danger in terms of health if we do that. . . . That’s why we say that the immunization card must be up to date.” This school official was unable to provide information on how many children have been turned away from this particular Abaco school because of lack of documentation or an up-to-date immunization card, but the participant’s comments lead one to question how many children of Haitian descent are being prevented from attending school due to their parent’s irregular status/lack of documentation.

Even when these students manage to enroll in school, a few of the Bahamian case study interviewees remark that this education is not free from exposure to discriminatory teachers or classmates. Dumercy, for example, relates how confrontations between Bahamians of non-Haitian descent and “Haitians” would become violent when she attended school. “They would go to war. It became physical. It’s not like you [just] feel it mentally, socially, or whatever—it

became physical to some extent. It affects every aspect of your life as a child.” She narrates how children of Haitian descent do not feel the hostility until “they get to school” because their parents “are very protective” of them.

So when they get to the schools, a lot of kids, they don’t know how to handle it. So they react to how they’re being treated. You’d be surprised at how young these little Bahamian kids would come to school and they already feel hostile toward Haitians. Why? Because that’s what they’re hearing from their parents. So they already have that hostile feeling towards us. So they start picking on these kids or start picking fights—and trust me, you fight, they’ll fight hard. . . . So then they’ll always have war.

The aforementioned elementary school administrator in Abaco admits that sometimes “quarrels” occur between the two groups where one accuses the other of being “Haitian,” “Bahamian,” or “black,” but that the confrontations do not get “to the point where it’s something that we have to deal with or it becomes a school problem where we have to look into it.”³²

As concerns the Dominican case, until 2012, the country limited children’s access to post-elementary school education if they lacked a birth certificate (Féliz 2012).³³ This is one of the reasons why UNDP-DR placed so much emphasis on registering school children in its strengthening the civil registry system program, discussed in Chapter 4. However, a fact-finding mission to the Dominican Republic, conducted by Georgetown University Law School’s Human Rights Institute (GULSHRI), found that primary school students of Haitian descent continue to encounter problems accessing education:

problems of arbitrary denial of education in primary school still exist. Although the Ministry of Education has stated that children are allowed to attend primary school while pursuing documentation, not all schools seem to understand this policy. Of those interviewed, fourteen school officials and families reported that some primary schools turn away children without birth certificates, and some officials have publicly stated that they are opposed to letting “Haitians” attend school. (GULSHRI 2014, 28)

Moreover, high school students allegedly still need to possess a Dominican birth certificate in order to take the national high school exams, which are

required in order to attend university (UN HRC 2008c, 23). Francía Calis García,³⁴ for example, a twenty-one-year-old born in the Dominican Republic to Haitian parents had difficulties finishing high school because the local Junta Central Electoral office would not give her a certified copy of her birth certificate. After overcoming many obstacles, she finished high school, but has been unable to attend university or secure a job because the authorities will not grant her a *cédula*. Participants in the Georgetown study report similar stories, noting that “In contrast to the capricious implementation of state regulations regarding high school enrollment, graduation, and national testing, access to university is uniformly denied to those students over the age of eighteen who are unable to obtain a *cédula*” (GULSHRI 2014, 36).

Several of the participants from El Caño confirm that they were unable to pursue their university studies after completing high school. One notes that although she received good grades in high school and was the recipient of a scholarship for her work, the scholarship was never given to her because she was “from a batey.”³⁵ She feels like she was discriminated against because of her Haitian heritage and adds that the denial of scholarship opportunities to Dominican-born students of Haitian descent “happens a lot.”

Interviewees in Civolani Hirschjakow’s work (2011) similarly observe how their inability to procure a certified birth certificate from the JCE prevented them from taking the national exam, continuing their postsecondary studies, or taking part in overseas athletic opportunities.³⁶ “*It prevents me from doing many things,*” says Eduardo Dierdito Exilien, such as attending workshops and traveling, visiting the doctor, and continuing his studies, which “is what I most want to do” (2011, 29; italics added). Nico Paredes and Rogelio Exil de La Rosa explain how their athletic careers were cut short and that they were unable to continue their studies as well (31). In addition, the rate of illiteracy among those located in bateyes, such as El Caño, is particularly elevated. Nearly a third of those ten years and older are illiterate (CESDEM 2008, 15), and a quarter of the children aged six and older have no schooling whatsoever (13). The latter statistic is more than double the national rate of 11 percent (15).

The Bahamian-born interviewees of Haitian descent also faced limited educational prospects or roadblocks on their way to finishing high school and attending college. Several explain how they had to pass up educational opportunities overseas because they could not travel to study in the United States using the aforementioned Bahamian-government issued “travel document,” or Certificate of Identity. Others note how they had to pay the

non-Bahamian school tuition or “foreigner’s fee” at their tertiary institutions in The Bahamas, while most lament their inability to apply for scholarships or take part in extracurricular activities. The immobilization they feel as a result of their forced displacement in situ is revealed in the italicized portion of the comments below.

Akin to the participants who were denied athletic opportunities in Civalani Hischnjakow’s study, Bahamian-born Louis describes how

growing up there are many opportunities that came my way, but because I didn’t have a passport, it kind of like *hindered me*. I could just give you one [example]. In high school, I was in athletics, into sports pretty good. I had an opportunity to be a part of the Bahamian national soccer team, but that chance was crushed because, you know, they said that I don’t have a Bahamian passport. . . . I was hurt.

Dumercy similarly notes how her younger sister was encouraged by a local police officer in Abaco to apply to the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture for a sports scholarship. This officer was so impressed with her sister’s athletic ability that he personally took the application to Nassau, confident that she would get a scholarship. As Dumercy relates, however, the Ministry never even sent a letter of acknowledgment about the application.

So to this day what she’s doing now actually, is she is working in my [other] sister’s store—because she has a children’s store. That’s what she’s doing now. But this girl could have gone on to run in the Olympics. This girl had the fastest time. Like, she broke all kinds of records. But because of her last name, *she never got anywhere*. There’s a lot of talented kids out there who *could have been achieving so much more*.

Dumercy also notes that Bahamian-born students of Haitian descent are often passed over for prestigious positions in high school. “I’ve seen kids who they don’t give you valedictorian because you’re Haitian. They’ll give you maybe salutatorian.” She says that this type of discrimination happens “every day . . . it’s so regular.” Jn-Simon faced this discrimination first-hand. She became Deputy Head Girl, but was actually threatened by a parent of another (non-Haitian descended) student. This parent, whose daughter had been in the running for Head Girl, grabbed her and “told me she was investigating

me. . . . Teachers started shifting me in my seats in class. . . . *I was so depressed.* I didn't even want to go to school anymore. It was that serious." Her grades plummeted due to the harassment.

After-school programs, such as the police and nursing cadets, were also off-limits to the Bahamian-born interviewees of Haitian descent. St. Cecile explains how in grade twelve she "wanted to join the cadet corps and I remember the police officer—she was a lady—telling me 'You can't join the cadet corps because you don't have a Bahamian passport.' Yes, I remember that. And then *it hinders you from moving forward.*" Jn-Simon similarly adds how the police cadets, which is "a very, very good program . . . once you go to school under them, they pay for your school tuition," is off-limits to Bahamian-born students of Haitian descent. She adds,

If you don't have a [Bahamian] passport, you can't join the police cadets. Then there is the nursing cadet program where they have this nursing program in high school and then when you get out of high school, they pay for your tuition to go to nursing school. However, if you don't have a passport, you don't get the nursing grant.

Desmangles says that many Bahamian-born children of Haitian descent want to be included and want to participate "in the economic well-being and the growth and the building of this nation. . . . They want opportunities, but *it gets to the point where they are stagnated* from these opportunities." Former attorney general Sears agrees, stating that

some of the highest achieving students are Haitian Bahamian students. The challenge for many of these young people is when they finish high school. They would have done well. Some would have gotten distinction and awards for their academic, athletic, and civic performance within the school, but *they cannot advance . . . they are faced with this roadblock.*

Due to the varied obstacles that immobilize them during high school, and the limited prospects they have of attending a tertiary education institution, Bahamian- and Dominican-born students of Haitian descent often end up either unemployed, underemployed, or engaged in 3D work—work that is dirty, degrading, or dangerous. Jn-Simon, for example, relates how her Bahamian-born friend was a great basketball player and had been offered a

basketball scholarship to study in the United States. Once his Bahamian passport was revoked, however, this opportunity was taken away.³⁷ He ended up not graduating from high school, has two children—and “one on the way”—and is unemployed. She explains how another friend “who got the highest [Bahamas Government Certificate in Secondary Education exam results] in the government schools in her year . . . didn’t even have an opportunity to go to [university] because . . . she wouldn’t be able to get a scholarship.” Jn-Simon says that after working so hard in high school, her friend now “has to work and *settle for mediocrity*. Like certain jobs that she would never see herself doing, she has to settle for them in order to get where she wants to get in life.”

Jn-Simon, who is currently a College of The Bahamas student, adds that many of the young female students of Haitian descent in her neighborhood see limited opportunities post-high school because of their ethnicity. They thus decide to “jump out of school pregnant. And then they’ll tell you *you’re wasting your time going to school cause you still can’t do anything* because you’re a Haitian.” The Dominican-born interviewees of Haitian descent in the Georgetown Law report relate similar experiences of frustration and “impoten[ce]” (GULSHRI 2014, 40), finding their ability to carry out key life projects severely disrupted.

Several of them dropped out of school, either fearing that they would be asked to show documents that they did not have or because they knew that even if they did well in high school, it would not matter because they would be unable to attend university afterwards. Juan, who had been denied his cédula and prevented from attending university “despite an excellent academic record,” laments that “*my future has been destroyed*. . . . Very early I had a vision that at twenty I would finish high school, go to college, and earn a degree and by 25 have a family. Now I am 25 and I have not even begun” (GULSHRI 2014, 37; italics added). Lack of citizenship thus leaves many of these Bahamian- and Dominican-born persons of Haitian descent with little hope for the future.

Government jobs are out of the question without a Bahamian or a Dominican passport, as are many jobs in the private sector. Desmangles notes how many young Haitian Bahamians “take menial positions and then some of them *they get stuck in them*” because of difficulties in securing Bahamian citizenship. Dumercy adds that “The stigma of the last name” haunts those who get an education and who try to advance in a career. She says that “local employers here, they look at your name and not at your qualifications.”

St. Cecile, who previously worked in the healthcare industry, explains how, “when I applied for jobs . . . they see the qualifications there” but that “just by looking at my name . . . you *won’t get hired*.” Petit-Homme describes how one’s last name automatically places a person in certain menial positions in the eyes of many non-Haitian Bahamians. He describes how he was at The Bahamas National Film Festival holding a conversation with an American filmmaker when

this lady, this Caucasian Bahamian, decides to interrupt our conversation. “Oh I haven’t met you two guys. Are you filmmakers?” And he said, “Yeah.” He told her his name and I told her my name and she asked me where my name was from. And I told her my name was Bernard Petit, and she said, “Where’s that from?” And I said, “That’s from Haiti.” “Oh really? Do you mow lawns and weed gardens?”

Apparently some Bahamians have difficulties envisioning individuals of Haitian descent in any profession other than manual labor. Dumercy argues that it is not in their interests to do so. She says that while it is common to find persons of Haitian descent in “risky and life-threatening” jobs, you will not find them “in tourism or some of the other key areas that might be useful to have international, multicultural knowledge” because “The stigma of the last name” is so great.

These Bahamian-born interviewees’ Dominican counterparts encounter similar obstacles in employment. Calis García explains how although she took courses in accounting, computing, and basic English, without a *cédula* she cannot find employment as a teacher. Once, when she found employment as a teacher’s aide, she was paid very little money and told that she could not continue because she did not have a *cédula*. She has faced many such career limitations and it has left her despondent. “*Many times I don’t feel like going on*,” she says. Exilien likewise expresses dejection: “*They killed me morally* because when you are in a society and you cannot have a career, you cannot be in a job unless you are doing things that a person who has no worth does,” it is like being “an immigrant, an unknown, an undocumented person” (Civolani Hischnjakow 2011, 35; italics added). He says that he has had to take on jobs that he would not have chosen if he had been given his *cédula* and been able to pursue the opportunities that had been presented to him (42). Other interviewees agree and lament their inability to advance economically as a result.³⁸

Although part of the lowest economic classes, poverty affects Haitian descendants in The Bahamas and the Dominican Republic differently when it comes to healthcare. Like their citizen counterparts, noncitizens are readily able to access healthcare in The Bahamas. In fact, one of the biggest complaints from Bahamian society is that undocumented or “illegal” persons are using the nation’s hospitals and clinics without paying for the services. Dr. George Charité, who runs his own medical clinic in Abaco and who is a Bahamian of Haitian descent, “[does not] know if it is true or false that they are overcrowding the public system because once it’s affordable, they pay” for private care. He states that not only are persons of Haitian descent “paying for their services,” but “there’s a preference, even the ones who go to the public system, they go to the public doctor’s private residence and they pay to see him at his house.”

Moreover, those who have to use the public clinic end up paying a higher fee, according to Dumercy. “We’re paying two to three times what you’re paying,” she says, “and then you’re criticizing me for going to see the doctor when I need it.” In contrast, in the Dominican Republic, health care services for people who are undocumented are limited, whether due to lack of proximity to such services or because of discrimination. NGOs, like Batey Relief Alliance-Dominicana, end up providing vaccines, gynecological and dental care, and a range of other health services to those who live in the bateyes, irrespective of their status in the country.³⁹

Although the health care situation is different for the noncitizen insiders in The Bahamas and the Dominican Republic, similarities exist when it comes to lack of freedom of movement and access to judicial remedies. Beside the aforementioned inability of some interviewees to travel overseas for athletic and educational activities, participants in both countries explain that when authorities perform roundups to deport individuals, many individuals of Haitian descent, both legal and illegal, feel trepidation and are reluctant to leave their communities. As described earlier in the Dominican case, being black—whether of Haitian descent or not—can get one forcibly removed to Haiti. As Human Rights Watch reports, “The threat of deportation causes Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent to restrict their travel, avoiding cities and remaining within the bateyes, which migration officials rarely enter” (2002, 12).

That many of these people lack Dominican identity documents due to the various practices described in Chapter 4, and “that Dominicans are legally required to carry the national identity card (*cédula*), the lack of official doc-

umentation also imperils individuals' right of free transit within the country" (Martínez 2011, 61). One of the participants in Civolani Hischnjakow's study, Feliciana Pelsien Yan, reveals for example that she leaves for work very early and returns late because she is afraid of being rounded up and deported to Haiti for lack of a *cédula*. "I feel very insecure," she admits (2011, 28).⁴⁰ Organization of American States representatives heard a story from a woman who, "out of fear of being deported to Haiti, 'where I don't have anyone,' . . . does not travel to see her grandchildren, who live in a city less than an hour away from where she lives" (OAS 2013a n. pag.).⁴¹

These comments reveal how "deportability" (De Genova 2002) affects the everyday lives of persons of Haitian descent by causing them to restrict their activities—a form of self-immobilization that results from fear due to their liminal status.⁴² Children may be especially vulnerable in these situations. Diène and McDougall report, for instance, that "Deportations occur so rapidly that family members are not informed. Parents are deported leaving children unaccompanied" (UN HRC 2008c, 5). Several years later, Charpantier affirms that this activity is still occurring. "And they leave the children behind," he says, "and we are also denouncing that they are leaving children abandoned."

In the Bahamian case, Bahamian-born and educated students sometimes spend weeks or months in detention because of their parents' undocumented status, while an untold number are uprooted via deportation: "sometimes you find more children who born in The Bahamas than Haitians themselves" in the detention center, notes one interviewee.⁴³ Even those who hold Bahamian government issued travel documents are deported, according to this participant, who adds that this happens "All the time. All the time." Jn-Simon concurs, "I know a lot of Haitian children whose parents are deported and they have to live with, you know, Haitians. They have all sorts of family. Everybody is their cousin—and then they have to live with a cousin's cousin. The things that happened to them, it's depressing. And my mother takes in a lot of people. So I could tell you, these people go through a lot."

Dr. Charité sees the problem of deportation of Bahamian-born children as particularly pressing when it comes to their identity. He explains how the Department of Immigration rounds up irregular migrants and departs their Bahamian-born children along with them.

When the child reaches Haiti that child knows nothing about Haitian culture. Most of them can't even speak Krèyol. So what's going

to happen? That child has to now try to learn the culture, which he or she might not be able to fit in. When that child reaches Haiti, that child is going to be also a misfit because the people in Haiti don't understand the child either. Whenever the child reaches 18 . . . that child is going to pine to come back to The Bahamas. That child now comes back to The Bahamas, knows nothing about Bahamian culture, knows not how to read English or write in English. So what [do] you do with that child now? *You put that child in an environment where he or she can't function.*

Dumercy explains how in The Bahamas some Haitian migrant parents are trying to counteract this situation by enlisting a service wherein they “sign these papers to say if something happened to you [e.g., deportation], this person can be a legal guardian for your child. So now a lot of persons in Nassau are filling out these documents in advance. So if something happened to them, their kids would still be able to go to school and have a life here [in The Bahamas] because they don't know anything about Haiti.” Others find themselves in a situation of family separation, unable to accompany their sick children to overseas hospitals or unable to join their partners in another country.⁴⁴ The right of a family “to protection by society and the State” (UN 1948, Article 16) is therefore jeopardized when one is stateless.

As pertains to legal remedies and access to justice, one of the main problems that stateless people face is that they lack a juridical personality. As I note earlier, the IACtHR asserts that “The right to the recognition of juridical personality implies the capacity to be the holder of rights (capacity and exercise) and obligations; the violation of this recognition presumes an absolute disavowal of the possibility of being a holder of such rights and obligations” (2005, 66). A stateless individual, the court continues, “ex definitione, does not have recognized juridical personality, because he has not established a juridical and political connection with any State” (66–67). Lacking this connection, stateless people are unable to lawfully acquire property, obtain loans, credit, enter into contracts, or sue. Thus, as Leonardo points out, the stateless

really have nothing to lose. The only thing [those who were denationalized] had was their juridical personality. They are poor people, extremely poor. The only thing they have is their juridical personality, which allows them to develop in society; to get married, purchase,

sell, open a bank account—all of these possibilities were taken from them arbitrarily by the State. They have nothing to lose. They don't have anything.

On their recent trip to the Dominican Republic, OAS representatives “spoke with many people who stated that without a *cédula* they are unable to file a claim or follow through with a judicial proceeding. One mother informed the delegation that, since neither she nor her son have documents certifying that they were born in the country, she cannot sue her son's father for child support” (OAS 2013a n. pag.). Not only is it nearly impossible to press a case in the courts, but those who are stateless also encounter difficulties registering the births of their children. As I noted previously, three of the five participants from El Caño were mothers and related how they were unable to register their Dominican-born children because of their own lack of a birth certificate or a *cédula*. “I feel terrible,” confesses one, knowing that her child's ability to carry out key life projects has diminished as a result. Not only do the stateless “live in a state of extreme vulnerability” (OAS 2013a n. pag.) because of these various challenges, but the rejection they feel from society poses an additional hurdle on their quest to carry out key life projects and to establish their place identity (who they are and where they belong).

Reflection

Lack of citizenship from the countries of their birth not only immobilizes the stateless in terms of life opportunities and rights enjoyment, but it also leaves them without a psychological home, even though the majority remain physically rooted in the countries of their birth. As persons stuck in a state of liminality, stateless interviewees, or those who had been at risk of statelessness, readily reflect⁴⁵ upon what their “betwixt and between” status means to them in terms of their place identity.

It was commonplace for the Dominican interviewees who were stateless or who had been at risk of statelessness to evince a strong sense of Dominican identity. The five persons interviewed in El Caño felt Dominican, even though they were facing problems in obtaining their *cédula* or in registering their children as Dominican.⁴⁶ Tejada contends that “They feel like Dominicans because they were born here. They learned our cultural system and our history and they talk Spanish and they don't practice voodoo. They're

Dominicans in the whole sense of the word.” Paraison agrees, “They are culturally much more Dominican than Haitian. . . . They all know the Dominican national anthem, but not the Haitian national anthem. They play baseball; they don’t play football.”

The participants in Civolani Hirschjakow’s study also “All felt very Dominican despite the discrimination they had received” (2011, 45). Yan, for example, states that “I am Dominican even if they keep my document: I am Dominican . . . it is an identity that is mine, not theirs” (24). She adds that “I am simply of Haitian descent, but I carry Dominican culture in my blood. . . . I have no knowledge of Haiti” (25). Gamboa contends, however, that the strength of one’s sense of Dominican identity depends on whether a person feels entitled to Dominican citizenship or not:

there’s people who will say, “No I am Dominican and I feel Dominican. I have documents that say I am Dominican. They are just now trying to discriminate against me.” . . . There’s other people who say, “Well we’ve always been discriminated [against]. The government has not wanted us and they are making us stateless.” . . . And then there’s the other people who do not necessarily feel entitled to Dominican nationality because it’s been so hard for them to actually even get it or to have their children obtain it. . . . Not sure if stateless would be the word they would use. But [they are] definitely unwanted here and [are] not able to access Haitian nationality either.

While a stronger sense of “being Dominican” exists among many of those who have been rendered stateless in the Dominican Republic, a strong sense of “being Bahamian” does not as readily exist among the study participants from The Bahamas. Arguably what accounts for this difference is the sense of entitlement that Gamboa spoke of. As noted earlier, those born in The Bahamas of Haitian descent, or of noncitizens generally, have no right to Bahamian citizenship. Most of them know that they can apply for Bahamian citizenship at eighteen,⁴⁷ but few of them grow up thinking they are Bahamian. As Desmangles states, the possession of a Bahamian government issued Certificate of Identity, which demonstrates where and to whom a noncitizen child is born so that they may apply for Bahamian citizenship at eighteen, only leads a person to being “treated as though you are a foreigner.” Anyone born in the Dominican Republic prior to the 2010 constitutional amendment, however, had the right to Dominican citizenship. Thus, as ex-

plained in Chapter 4, many of the persons who are being rendered stateless now once held Dominican citizenship documents and this affects the strength of their sense of belonging to the Dominican state.

Although the Bahamian-born interviewees of Haitian descent were under no illusion that they were Bahamian citizens, they did not consider themselves Haitian either. Dumercy explains how there were two soccer teams in her neighborhood when she was growing up. One “was a ‘real’ Haitian team” while the other was made up of “Haitian Bahamians.” “I’d side with the Haitian Bahamians as a spectator compared to the real Haitians,” she says, “because I’m Haitian Bahamian” and she feels that “unless you’re part of the family,” the “real Haitians” reject those of Haitian descent. “The real Haitians look at us, they’re like, ‘Oh yeah, you born here, you little Bahamian,’” she remarks in a pejorative tone.

Despite her self-identification as a “Haitian Bahamian,” Dumercy then states something that reveals how ambivalent she is about the “Bahamian” side of her identity. Describing how she would “pick who I like” if two Haitian soccer teams played against each other, she adds that she would “side with the Haitian team”—whether or not they were good players—if they “went up against Bahamians.” Yet when asked by the Haitian ambassador during her Haitian “renunciation” procedure for Bahamian citizenship if she was “sure you want to give up” Haitian citizenship, Dumercy did not hesitate to renounce Haitian citizenship and become a Bahamian. “So when I finally got to see him, he asked the question [of whether she knew what she was giving up]. I was like, ‘Yes! Where do I sign?’” Dumercy admits that she feels “conflicted” over where she belongs, but this is because of the rejection she—and others—feel from the Haitian and Bahamian communities. “I don’t feel like, you know, if they had to pick between me and them, they’d pick me. They would always pick themselves.” So she identifies with the “Haitian Bahamian” even though she is now a Bahamian citizen.

Discussing the use of “Haitian Bahamian” to refer to children born of Haitian descent in The Bahamas, Jn-Simon asserts that she feels “neither” Bahamian nor Haitian. She admits, however, that “I feel more comfortable saying that I am Haitian.” When asked why she is uncomfortable calling herself a Bahamian, Jn-Simon relates, “Okay, let’s say I am in class and I am asked ‘What are you?’ And you say, ‘Bahamian.’ You get that look. You know? And let’s say, you’re filling out an application; you put Bahamian and they look at your last name. You get the look” of disapproval. A person of Haitian descent cannot be a “true true” Bahamian. When questioned whether her

answer could change once she naturalizes, Jn-Simon says she will still call herself Haitian.

Yes. Most definitely. Because, I mean, them giving [citizenship] to us when we're 18 it's like, "Oh, I've been holding it from her long enough. Let me just give her it for giving's sake." It's not like it was ever mine and they gave it to me. It's not like that. It's just, I guess, so other nations would see that they're not that cruel. I think that's why they do the [allowing you to apply at age] 18. Otherwise they would not have given [citizenship] at all in my opinion.

Additionally, when I asked the study participants about any Haitian nationality or identity documents they possessed growing up, they were perplexed. They did not have any. While a few were unaware of the possibility of going to the Haitian Embassy in Nassau to try to obtain a Haitian birth certificate or passport, Dumercy openly admits, "frankly, I didn't even want one. I'm like why should I have to get a Haitian passport when I was born here?" Others comment on the strangeness of renouncing a nationality (Haitian) they never felt they had as part of the Bahamian citizenship application process. "That was always something that I questioned," says Louis. "Why? Because I am denouncing a nationality that genetically I have. However, according to [the] State, I am not a Haitian." When I asked why he thought he was not considered a Haitian by Haiti, he responded, "I did not have a Haitian passport. I was not born in Haiti."

Jn-Simon, who is in the Bahamian citizenship application process, calls her alleged Haitian nationality her "quote unquote citizenship," while Dumercy, who never had a Haitian passport, comments that "we don't know what we're giving up" when they go to the embassy and renounce Haitian citizenship. "We're just going through the motion. You don't understand it. But okay, this is what I need to get my [Bahamian] passport. I'm gonna do it." Participants thus renounce a nationality they either never knew they had or never felt like belonged to them. As Petit-Homme remarks, "I felt like I wasn't really a Haitian citizen because I never saw the place and I didn't really feel a direct connection to Haiti other than through my parents and speaking some of the language and some of my associations."

Despite the Haitian identity that is firmly attributed to these Bahamian-born interviewees by non-Haitian Bahamians, Haitians from Haiti do not necessarily consider these persons "Haitian" either. Dolce observes how, "You have

one group of people saying, 'You are this' and the other person saying that you are not. It's like *you are stuck in between*. . . . You're saying I am Haitian, but if I go to Haiti they say that I am not Haitian. I am Bahamian." Desmangles concurs, explaining how when he visited Haiti at age fifteen people told him,

"Oh, no, no. You're not Haitian, you know." They look at me. . . . I say, "Ah my parents are Haitian. I understand that once you're Haitian, you're Haitian." "No, no, no! That's not the case. You have to be born here." . . . And the thing is, with Haiti, they don't really want individuals who born in The Bahamas to be Haitians. That's not something that they want to practice.

Although Jn-Simon, as noted earlier, says she will continue to call herself "Haitian" even if she naturalizes, she admits that when her mother took her on a trip to Haiti, "how I was treated, I can't ever say that I'm, okay, a Haitian." When I ask her whether the Haitians on that trip considered her to be a Haitian, she declares, "No. Not at all." Disturbingly, in a revelatory comment made during his 2012 Bahamas country visit, former Haitian president Michel Martelly said that "until they're 18 [persons born in The Bahamas of Haitian descent] *don't belong to anywhere*, and yet they were born here, meaning do I have to tell anyone if you send them back to Haiti they probably don't know anybody or won't recognize the place where they land?" (K. Rolle 2012b; italics added). That the president of the country whose laws *in theory* are supposed to cover these individuals as nationals did not recognize them as Haitian only compounds the forced displacement they already suffer via formal rejection from their state of birth and residence. They are thus truly "betwixt and between" national classification statuses, unrecognized by either Haiti or The Bahamas as belonging.

St. Cecile, discussing the personal and societal rejection that many of them feel from both The Bahamas and Haiti, remarks that "to be stateless means you have no identity. You have no say in what's going on. . . . It feels like you're nonexistent. . . . *You feel like you're trapped; you're held a prisoner*. . . . Yeah, you feel like you're trapped and there's no way out for you. You have no identity."⁴⁸ Louis had a similar definition of statelessness: "to be stateless is to not have a nationality that is publicly known or I can say that falls under a country's group of identity."

The relationship that St. Cecile and Louis observe between identity and nationality is revealing in that the Convention on the Rights of the Child is

explicit that nationality is a fundamental part of one's identity. Article 8 of the convention asserts that "States Parties undertake to respect the right of the child to preserve his or her identity, *including nationality*, name and family relations as recognized by law without unlawful interference"⁴⁹ (UN 1989; italics added).

Dr. Charité believes that lack of (place) identity is one of the greatest problems facing the Bahamian-born population of Haitian descent. "They don't have an identity, even though they've been in The Bahamas for all the days of their lives."⁵⁰ He adds that this is why "they're stateless according to them. Cause they don't know Haiti and they'll never go to Haiti. They'll never go to Haiti. The only place they know is The Bahamas."

Gustavus Smith, writing for the *Haitian Times*, explains how "lack of citizenship certainty provides *an inability to plan for a prosperous future* and is one of the primary reasons that Generation Y Haitian-Bahamians mentally check out of the Bahamas at an early age" (G. Smith 2012 n. pag.; italics added). Citing a "lack of identity" and feeling as if they would not "ha[ve] a future in the Bahamas," yet "ha[ving] no history or roots in Haiti," Smith describes how some Bahamian-born persons of Haitian descent seek to live in the United States. Dumercy, describing how frustrating the citizenship application process was for her, admits that she "was actually at the point where I was ready to give up. That's how bad it was. Just move and leave the country."

Their limbo-like status weighs heavily on their sense of worth and many of the Bahamian-born persons of Haitian descent question where they belong. "They don't make us feel like we belong here [in The Bahamas]," says Dumercy. "So it's a sense of belonging. . . . You shouldn't be stateless in the place [where] you were born and where you feel like you're not included or not wanted." Like some of the youth in the Smith article, Dumercy describes how the sense of rejection is so strong that some persons, born in the country of Haitian descent, feel the need to embark on dangerous sea journeys to try and find a more welcoming community. "And it's so sad you know, where *you feel you have to leave your country to get better treatment.*"

Reflecting on the death of the young woman who had embarked on such a journey (discussed at the beginning of this book), Dumercy asks, "If the Bahamas is so great, why [do] you think they'd rather die than stay here? If people would rather risk their lives and die that means something is wrong, drastically wrong." Lack of citizenship, compounded by societal rejection, thus drives some of these individuals to the extreme. Their peculiar form of forced displacement can thus, at times, lead to treacherous border crossings.

The participants in Civolani Hischnjakow's study also evidence uncertainty as to where they belong. Although more youth of Haitian descent born and raised in the DR feel Dominican, in comparison to the "Bahamianness" felt by those born in The Bahamas, the former also become "confused about what their nationality is and where they belong" (2011, 24). The participants in her study readily admit that it affects them to the point where "your personality changes. If you're not from here or there, where are you from?" (24). Ramona Petión declares, "*We don't know where we belong. It's like when you have an animal and you let it loose without its brand. . . . We're not even in that position. We're not even branded animals because without those documents, nobody recognizes us*" (25; italics added).

De la Rosa adds that without any Dominican documentation it is as if "I were a stranger, but in my own country or in my own nation . . . *it's like I am physically here, but when it comes to the laws it's as if I don't exist*" (Civolani Hischnjakow 2011, 26; italics added). Tejeda explains that although these individuals "feel like Dominicans" and "want to be Dominicans and integrate in the nation," denationalization is very hard upon them. "They're Dominicans in the whole sense of the word and it's very difficult for a child when in an instant they say, 'No, you're not Dominican anymore.' It's very, very hard from a human rights perspective to accept this situation." As a result, these Dominican-born individuals of Haitian descent feel "anguish, anxiety and insecurity," humiliation, confusion, and frustration (36; see also 27 and 34)—sentiments shared with their Bahamian-born counterparts to the north.

Conclusion

The chapter illustrates that noncitizen insiders of Haitian descent exist in limbo in Caribbean democracies such as The Bahamas and the Dominican Republic. They are neither citizen, nor migrant, but displaced in situ within the countries of their birth. They are largely immobilized through various exclusionary membership practices and unable to carry out key life projects. They exhibit many of the features associated with persons caught in liminality—invisibility or nonrecognition of belonging; treatment or association with impure practices or death (civicide); limited access to rights and protections; and, in the reflective stage, a pronounced realization of their ambiguous place identity. They do not fully belong to the countries of their birth as they are legally (and typically socioeconomically) excluded.

Yet when these individuals are removed from their enforced liminality, it is only to be forcibly emplaced within the classification of Haitian national although most have never been and never will go to Haiti (and even though it is questionable whether Haiti considers them nationals).

Their noncitizen insider status, combined with a lack of effective citizenship—or proof of such citizenship—from Haiti, highlights how difficult it is to enjoy the rights, freedoms, and protections that supposedly adhere to personhood in the contemporary era. It also brings to the fore not only the ambiguity and precarity of belonging (even within democratic states), but it illustrates the need to move beyond an understanding of statelessness as an either/or legal phenomenon: either one is a citizen or one is not. The issues surrounding statelessness surpass the legal realm, touching upon the very core of what it means when “belonging to the community into which one is born is no longer a matter of course and not belonging no longer a matter of choice” (Arendt [1948] 2004, 376). The nature of the stateless’ forced displacement thus reveals the need to address the fulfillment of the human right to a nationality and the resolution of global statelessness from an alternative framework.