

# Juana Gelofa Pelona: An Enslaved but Insubordinate Witness in Santo Domingo (1549-1555)<sup>1</sup>

*Juana Gelofa Pelona: testigo esclavizada pero insubordinada en Santo Domingo (1549-1555)*

Lisette Acosta Corniel<sup>2</sup> 

Borough of Manhattan Community College, CUNY



**Para citaciones:** Acosta Corniel, Lisette. "Juana Gelofa Pelona: An Enslaved but Insubordinate Witness in Santo Domingo (1549-1555)". *PerspectivasAfro* 1/2 (2022): 77-90. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.32997/pa-2022-3833>

**Recibido:** 15 de noviembre de 2021

**Aprobado:** 10 de febrero de 2022

**Editora:** Silvia Valero. Universidad de Cartagena-Colombia.

**Copyright:** © 2022. Acosta Corniel, Lisette. Este es un artículo de acceso abierto, distribuido bajo los términos de la licencia <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/> la cual permite el uso sin restricciones, distribución y reproducción en cualquier medio, siempre y cuando que el original, el autor y la fuente sean acreditados.



## ABSTRACT

In 1549, Juana Gelofa Pelona, an enslaved African woman, was a witness in a legal case in the city of Santo Domingo, on the island of Hispaniola. The defendant, Francisco Bravo, was accused of killing his wife, Catalina de Tinoco, and presented Juana as his witness to testify on his behalf. Both Francisco and Catalina had been Juana's enslavers; and, Catalina's family, in whose possession Juana had lived for multiple generations, warned her not to testify in favor of Francisco. Nonetheless, she testified with conviction, despite being threatened and punished severely by her new enslavers who resolved to sell her to another enslaver in a different city to avoid her continuous defiance of Catalina's family in court. This article proposes that Juana orchestrated her own sale to rid herself of her new owners who wanted to convince her at all cost not to say what she knew. The article also documents aspects of everyday life in sixteenth-century Santo Domingo by highlighting details shared by the witnesses.

**Keywords:** Santo Domingo; slavery; black women; witness; disobedience.

<sup>1</sup> A version of this study was presented at the CUNY Dominican Studies Institute's symposium "Colonial Slave Legislations and Slavery in the Americas," October 17, 2014 and on December 2, 2021 at the conference, "The Struggle for Freedom in La Espanola: Commemorating the 500th Anniversary of the First Slavery Revolt in the Americas." An encyclopedia entry about Juana Gelofa Pelona was also published in the *Dictionary of Caribbean and Afro-Latin American Biography*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Franklin Knight, subject editor Silvio Torres-Saillant, New York: Oxford, 2016. This study was made possible through a CUNY Dominican Studies Institute 2019-2020 Research Fellowship. I am grateful to the editorial team, especially Silvia Valero and María Alejandra Aguilar Dornelles and the anonymous reviewers for their comments and generosity. I especially would like to thank José Luis Belmonte Postigo, Ana Carolina Franco, Kwasi Konadu, James Louis-Charles, April Mayes, Colbert I. Nepaulsingh, Kate Paarlberg-Kvan, Igor Pérez Tostado, Juan J. Ponce Vázquez, Tanya L. Shields, Anthony Stevens-Acevedo, Silvio Torres-Saillant, and Elizabeth Zimmer, for their thorough comments and references. I am infinitely indebted to Laura Gutiérrez Arbulu for assisting with the transcriptions. My gratitude also goes to Chief Librarian, Sarah Aponte and staff members Priscilla Mejía, Jessy Pérez, and Jhensen Ortiz at the CUNY Dominican Studies Institute Library and Archives and the library staff at BMCC. My SWAT (Summer Writing Accountability Team, 2021) must also take credit for the completion of this article, Judith M. Anderson, Rigoberto Andino, Monica Foust, Prithi Kanakamedala, Shirley Leyro, RaShelle Peck, Kersha Smith, Anika Thrower, and Linta Varghese. This article followed—as much as possible—the suggestions in P. Gabrielle Foreman, et al. "Writing about Slavery/Teaching About Slavery" to emphasize the inhumane experiences of the enslaved.

<sup>2</sup> Ph.D. Latin American, Caribbean, and U.S. Latino Studies at State University of New York at Albany. Assistant Professor of Latin American Studies in the Department of Ethnic and Race Studies. Correo: [liacosta@bmcc.cuny.edu](mailto:liacosta@bmcc.cuny.edu)

## RESUMEN

En 1549, Juana Gelofa Pelona, una mujer africana esclavizada, fue testigo en un juicio legal en la ciudad de Santo Domingo, de la isla La Española. Francisco Bravo fue acusado de asesinar a su esposa Catalina de Tinoco y presentó a Juana como testigo para que declarara a su favor. Ambos, Francisco y Catalina, habían sido dueños de Juana, y los familiares de Catalina, quienes habían tenido a Juana en su posesión por generaciones, le advirtieron que no declarara a favor de Francisco. Sin embargo, Juana testificó con convicción a pesar de ser amenazada y castigada severamente por sus nuevos dueños, los cuales resolvieron venderla a un nuevo esclavizador en otra ciudad y así prevenir su continuo desafío en la corte para con la familia de Catalina. Este artículo plantea que Juana orquestó su propia venta para “liberarse” de sus nuevos dueños. También se documentan ciertos aspectos sobre la vida cotidiana en el Santo Domingo del siglo dieciséis resaltando detalles compartidos por algunos de los testigos.

**Palabras clave:** Santo Domingo; esclavitud; mujeres negras; testigo; desobediencia.

---

“How many African women were enslaved in Europe and the Americas? Also, how can we determine the answer?...African women outnumbered European women by four to one. The question that must follow is therefore not, were African women there? It is, rather, who were they?”

Jennifer L. Morgan, *Reckoning with Slavery: Gender, Kinship, and Capitalism in the Early Black Atlantic*, 2021.

“I am Juana Gelofa Pelona and I believe that I am seventeen or nineteen years old.” As if in response to Jennifer Morgan’s question “Who were they?”, Juana began her testimony in the 1549 judicial case *Tinoco v. Bravo* by telling us, half a millennium later, exactly who she was. Francisco Bravo was sent to jail for allegedly killing his wife Catalina de Tinoco, whom he accused of committing adultery; and as result, Juana Gelofa Pelona became the property of Catalina’s sister and her husband.<sup>3</sup> The case lasted from 1549 to 1555 and Juana appears in brief glimpses throughout a massive trove of documents when she is interrogated—what appears to be three times—in the course of the trial, and in witnesses’ testimonies.<sup>4</sup> Her new enslavers sought to coerce Juana through bribes and violence to retract her statements. However, she stood firm. Juana insisted on testifying against Catalina and her family, publicly shaming them in the process and ensuring that people knew of their intentions of hiding the truth. This article analyzes Juana Gelofa Pelona’s testimony and argues that her disobedience was a strategy to “free” herself from her new owners’ captivity by pushing them to sell her.

According to José Luis Belmonte Postigo, in 1821 Santo Domingo, enslaved Africans were able to orchestrate a transfer of household by using different behavioral tactics such as escaping often and disobedience. This was the strategy used by people in bondage when they could not request to be sold by claiming harsh treatment. When the enslaved succeeded, it worked out both for the enslaver and the

---

<sup>3</sup> Not all of the details about the case *Catalina de Tinoco v. Francisco Bravo* are discussed in this article; rather, I focus on Juana’s testimony and its consequences. The details of the case, discussing family, gender, sexuality, and patriarchy in colonial Santo Domingo will be covered in a forthcoming study, tentatively titled “Colonial Yolo: Women, Power, and Disobedience in Sixteenth Century Santo Domingo.”

<sup>4</sup> The details about Juana can be found in the bundle that contains the *Catalina de Tinoco v. Francisco Bravo* judicial case found at the CUNY Dominican Studies Institute. Collection of Colonial Documents. Justicia 103A. Several of the folios are cited in this piece where most appropriate. The case contains over 1,000 folios, many of which do not follow the chronological order of the case from 1549 to 1555. For example, folio number 4196 is dated March 25, 1554 and folio number 5030 is dated February 27, 1552.

enslaved. The enslaved changed location or owner, and the enslaver received monetary compensation for the sale (“Las dos caras” 462-63). Although the cases studied by Belmonte Postigo took place over 250 years later, they show what appears to have been a pattern of resistance among the enslaved in Santo Domingo, a pattern which was demonstrated by the story of Juana Gelofa Pelona, who ultimately left the household where her enslavers whipped and burned her in order to secure her retraction after she refused to change the testimony that forms the subject of this piece.

I argue that Juana Gelofa Pelona planned her “freedom” from cruel enslavers through refusal and strategic defiance, crafting a space of agency and “freeing” herself from one set of enslavers to another. Studies of colonial slavery in Cuba, Peru, and New Granada, for example, show that enslaved people used the judicial system to circumvent the slavery system. According to Gloria García Rodríguez, Juana Evangelista Suazo, a free morena in Havana, petitioned to the court on behalf of her sister, María Cayetana, who asked to be in bondage under another enslaver (García Rodríguez 96). In the petition, Juana Evangelista explained that her sister María Cayetana had been working as a slave “belonging to Juan Ignacio Rendón, from whom she [did] not receive the treatment commensurate with her good service and disposition” (García Rodríguez 97). Ignacio Rendón missed several scheduled court meetings to avoid the sale, which had been arranged between María Teresa Lima de Elosua, the guarantor who would become María Cayetana’s new enslaver (García Rodríguez 96-97). Juana Evangelista’s and María Cayetana’s efforts are evidence of the ability of enslaved people to challenge their working conditions, end their bondage to an individual, and seek an improvement of their life situation. Still in bondage, enslaved Africans used many strategies to exercise various levels of agency. For example, contrary to Juana Evangelista and María Cayetana who made several attempts to speed up Cayetana’s sale, in Lima, the enslaved were in no rush to complete their bondage transfer. Bianca Premo explains that “it was certainly in the slave’s interest to drag the case out, particularly if they had managed to get placed with a guarantor of their own choosing” (215). Dragging the case out allowed the enslaved to enter “the status of being ‘in litigation’” (Premo 216). Such status granted the enslaved the opportunity to move about while the case was in process.

Sherwin K. Bryant examines a similar case in Popayán, New Granada. According to Bryant, an enslaved Afro-Criollo named Francisco took his enslaver, Fray Diego Revelo de Chaves, to court for his abusive treatment. The author explains that although there are important details missing about Francisco’s case, including its conclusion, Francisco’s use of the court system shows that the enslaved took legal action against their enslavers (115). Bryant asserts that it is important to place Francisco’s actions “within the context of the potential for radical resistance [...] to understand how, when, and why they were able to take advantage of openings within the system” (120). Contrary to Francisco, Juana Evangelista, and María Cayetana, Juana Gelofa Pelona did not file a lawsuit for maltreatment against Pero Rodríguez and his wife Juana Tinoco. However, it seems that as stated by Bryant, Juana saw “an opening within the system” through the opportunity to publicly expose her enslavers for their cruel treatment. It was as if Juana was building a case for herself within the lawsuit against her former enslaver.

The special circumstances of Santo Domingo, and enslavement in the colony, may also explain why Juana was able to leverage her refusal to secure freedom from cruel enslavers. In this setting, it seems that

Catalina's family was aiming to develop a trusting relationship with Juana - one that would secure Juana's loyalty and Catalina's and the family's honor. If this sought-for relationship had flourished between Juana and Catalina's family, the Tinocos would have enjoyed Juana's sense of duty-bound behavior in court. According to Juan José Ponce-Vázquez, members of the upper class competed for social and political status in seventeenth century Hispaniola and used their slaves as artillery against those who threatened their success. The author also explains that the maneuver sometimes worked both ways, as the enslaved benefited from the loyalty and alliances they formed with their enslavers (*Islanders and Empire* 706).<sup>5</sup> Although Ponce-Vázquez's case discusses events taking place almost a century later, it allows us to suggest how certain members of society managed social relations in Hispaniola from the sixteenth century onwards. For instance, in 1519, an enslaved African who committed a crime was released from his punishment of having his hands nailed to the pillory. His sentence was reduced to two weeks because he was owned by an *Audiencia*<sup>6</sup> judge, Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón.<sup>7</sup> All this to say that the Tinocos' intent to buy Juana's silence with favors or by force, as it seems was customary on the island, were futile. It is because of this dynamic that we can see Juana's actions through the lens of infrapolitics.<sup>8</sup> Her defiance was a public act of resistance against sixteenth century Hispaniola's *status quo* with a clear goal that would become apparent on the day of her sale.

### **A Portrait of Sixteenth Century Santo Domingo in a Court Case**

Juana's experience is only one example of the many stories that could be told about life in sixteenth century Santo Domingo. Although the judicial case studied here tells us a great deal about Catalina, a woman of lower nobility, and her husband Francisco Bravo, a hidalgo,<sup>9</sup> it also contains references about the common people, their occupations, their habits, and their conflicts, allowing us a glimpse into their quotidian life. The testimonies of other witnesses also reveal details about the everyday lives of enslaved and free people of African descent in sixteenth-century Santo Domingo. Luis Rafael Buset Flores explains that "daily life is responsible for highlighting individual acts, which are found opposite to the so-called 'historical events;' and as such, become part of microhistory" (736).<sup>10</sup> This article surfaces details that have remained submerged in the historical record about other free and enslaved Africans to provide the context which allows us to understand Juana's refusal and defiance to follow her owners' orders as a demonstration of agency. And while not much can be drawn from the limited details found in the court case in which Juana was a witness, we are still able to contribute to the missing narrative about the life of free and enslaved Africans in early colonial Santo Domingo.

---

<sup>5</sup> For information on masters' and slaves' relations see the works of Juan Ponce-Vázquez listed in the bibliography. For example, in *Islanders and Empire*, Alonso Pimentel, an enslaved *mulato*, attacked and injured Juan López in revenge for his owner, Rodrigo Pimentel.

<sup>6</sup> The Real Audiencia was the tribunal court established by the Spaniards in the Americas.

<sup>7</sup> See manuscript No. 43 in the First Blacks of the Americas website [firstblacks.org](http://firstblacks.org).

<sup>8</sup> James C. Scott explains that "the strategic imperatives of infrapolitics make it not simply different in degree from the open politics of modern democracies [...] All political action takes forms that are designed to obscure their intentions or to take cover behind an apparent meaning" (199).

<sup>9</sup> Someone whose lineage descends from Spanish nobility.

<sup>10</sup> "La cotidianidad se ocupa de hechos individuales, encontrándose en el extremo opuesto a los llamados eventos 'históricos'; por esto, queda atendida por la microhistoria" (736).

These details can be used to reconstruct and make inferences about the early developments of the first colony in the Americas. For instance, we know that Juana Gelofa Pelona lived near the Dominican convent and monastery. A free woman named Morales described as “*de color prieta e libre*” lived in the house of Luis Guerra on Calle de las Damas.<sup>11</sup> The fact that Morales lived on Calle de las Damas may be an indication that Blacks were not segregated into certain neighborhoods, unless she was Luis Guerra’s servant or if there was a personal relationship between her and Guerra. The case also lends itself to a demographic study of the people in the city of Santo Domingo. Approximately 85 witnesses were called to testify and they are identified in the document by age, gender, ethnicity, and profession.<sup>12</sup> For instance, a witness named María is described as Morisca and as being a *colchonera* or mattress maker and/or seller. Most of the women were not listed as having a profession but as being the wife or widow of someone. Males, for the most part, including free and enslaved Africans, were listed as employed or with specific skills. Free blacks were listed as working in masonry, as vendors, smiths, and in one case, as a bar owner.<sup>13</sup> Some of the details about everyday life also include food enjoyed by the people at the time. Enslaved witnesses discussed some of the food their enslavers ate, although there is no specification as to who cooked that food. For example, some of the foods mentioned include *manjar blanco* or *dulce de leche*, bacon by the leg, *ajiaco* or stew, and chicken soup.<sup>14</sup> Another interesting detail in the case are the instructions to obtain the testimonies of those who are in prison willing and able to testify, as well as several married and widowed women who were allowed to give their depositions from their homes.<sup>15</sup>

There is also a brief story about an enslaved man named Francisco who was owned by a colonist named Anton Ginobes. Francisco had been imprisoned for questioning about the Catalina de Tinoco and Francisco Bravo case because he was at their house the night of the murder. He was taken to jail for questioning and kept in prison. His enslaver pleaded with the prosecutor to release his slave because, he, Anton, was very poor and Francisco, the enslaved man, helped him sustain himself and get his daily bread: a clear indication of the way enslaved Africans supported poor whites. Anton also explained that Francisco was innocent and that although he was at the Bravo’s house when the murder took place, he had nothing to do with it. Francisco happened to be spending the night with one of Bravo’s enslaved females, but they did not become aware of or hear the murder because they were asleep.<sup>16</sup> Francisco’s story is important because it allows us to learn personal details about the enslaved. It also sheds light on some of the personal

---

<sup>11</sup> “Morales de color prieta e libre en casa de la de Luys Guerra en la calle de las Damas” (fo. 5040). Damas Street is known in Dominican history as the street where the town’s fine women would go for a walk. The translation to Calle Las Damas is Ladys’ Street and its buildings and street structure have been preserved in the Colonial Zone of Santo Domingo. The street carries this name because Diego Colon’s wife and Vice-queen used to walk through Calle de Las Damas to and from Church with her court of beautiful single ladies who were referred to as doncellas. The stroll or *paseo* was an opportunity for Spanish ladies to be noticed by the men of the city. For more information on this subject see Lisette Acosta Corniel’s dissertation *Towards a Theory About Spanish Women in Sixteenth Century Hispaniola: A Research Guide and Case Studies* (36). See also Carlos B. Vega, 59. If Morales lived on Calle Las Damas as a resident, it may be an indication that free Blacks were not forced to live in specific places, especially if Morales was renting from Luis Guerra.

<sup>12</sup> Information about all 85 witnesses is not included in this article.

<sup>13</sup> Juan Moreno, albañil, fo. 4116; Juan Moreno, tratante, fo. 4117 (it is not clear if it refers to the same person with two different skills or two different people); Juan Moreno, tavernero, hacendado y dueño de una esclava, fo. 4812v; and, Antonio, negro, owned by the church in the town of La Vega, albañil, fo. 4162.

<sup>14</sup> They refer to bacon as *pernil*, a word still used today in Latin America to refer to pork shoulder (fo. 4228). As for *ajiaco*, it is a national dish in Cuba and it is also popular in Colombia (fo. 4100). However, the word *ajiaco* did not survive in the Dominican Republic. A similar type of stew is called *sancocho* in the Dominican Republic.

<sup>15</sup> Francisco Bravo appealed that married women, single respectable women, and widows presented their testimonies from their home. He also appealed for those who were disable and/or in jail. Fo. 3992v.

<sup>16</sup> The declaration of Anton Ginobes can be found in folios 4211v, 4212r. Anton Ginobes also refers to the enslaved woman Francisco was visiting as “su muger.”

mobility to which the enslaved did have access, such as the ability to leave their master's home to go sleep with their loved ones. Although this is only one example, the information, albeit brief, lets us know more about how the enslaved lived and what some of them may have been allowed to do. These stories paint a portrait of the environment where Juana lived and some of the people by whom she was surrounded.

Free and enslaved Blacks first arrived or were forcibly taken to Santo Domingo following European invasion. Transatlantic slavery was institutionalized in Santo Domingo through the granting of *asiento* in 1518 by the Spanish Crown.<sup>17</sup> African slavery was the strategic solution to replace the Indigenous population, which nearly disappeared as a result of enslavement, overworked labor, and illness. Juana Gelofa Pelona may have been among those held captive and taken to Santo Domingo, or she may have been born on the island. The population of enslaved Africans began to outnumber the white population in the early 1520s.<sup>18</sup> On the island, the Spaniards constantly reinvented punishment in order to exert control on the major internal challenge of fugitive slaves and their Indigenous allies.<sup>19</sup>

Law and punishment are key to understanding the power dynamic of a slave society. They tell what behavior was being regulated and the consequences if the laws were broken. In addition, some of the laws allow for a critical analysis of their intention and also how the enslaved and the free population, including whites, might have responded. For example, it appears that the slave code of 1522 may have played a role in injecting some amount of flexibility, particularly in the area of mobility for the enslaved. Many of these punishments were inflicted following laws created to control the enslaved, free Africans, and whites who might aid them in breaking the law. The slave laws of 1522 were created to control the enslaved after the first major slave revolt of 1521, which took place on Christmas Eve in the plantation of Diego Colón. Laws limiting the space, time, and mobility of the enslaved and anyone who favored them speak volumes about the social behavior of some of the residents of early colonial Santo Domingo. The laws do not only call for the punishment of the enslaved Blacks and Whites who broke the law, but also for free Blacks and Whites who assisted going against the established rules. For example, the laws of 1522 allowed a ten-day grace period without punishment for fugitive slaves, but ordered the severing of a foot if they were fugitive for more than ten days. One can imagine that many enslaved Africans may have taken advantage of this law and taken their own freedom, even if it was for ten days.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Juana Gelofa Pelona found ways to circumvent the system through disobedience, an act of refusal that took place three times despite being

---

<sup>17</sup> An *asiento* was a business license given to a company or individual to traffic enslaved Africans to the Americas.

<sup>18</sup> Anthony Stevens-Acevedo, Tom Weterings and Leonor Álvarez Frances offer a compilation of the estimated population in sixteenth century Santo Domingo. The Indigenous population is said to have been 4,000 in 1533 from the original estimated 400,000 found in 1492. The enslaved African population is represented by 4,000 in 1518; 27,000-30,000 in 1542; 20,000 in 1568; and, 10,000 in 1586 (65). In addition, Santo Domingo continued to receive captives from the neighboring French colony of Saint Domingue either legally or illegally all the way to the eighteenth century (Belmonte Postigo, "Bajo el negro velo"). There is no listing for the free African population. Similar to other colonies, the White population was significantly smaller with 3,500 reported in 1516; 500-2,165 in 1528; 1,100 in 1542; no listing corresponding to 1560-1585; and 2,100-5,545 in 1586.

<sup>19</sup> For more information on the subject of marronage in sixteenth century Santo Domingo see Jane G. Landers' "Cimarrón and Citizen: African Ethnicity, Corporate Identity, and the Evolution of Free Black Towns in the Spanish Circum-Caribbean," emphasis on pages 117-121. See also Erin Woodroff Stone who discusses the alliance and its complexities between Taino leader Enriquillo and African maroons, in "America's First Slave Revolt: Indians and African Slaves in Española, 1500-1534."

<sup>20</sup> For more detailed information about the Slave Laws of 1522 see the work by Anthony Stevens-Acevedo *The Santo Domingo Slave of 1521 and the Slave Laws of 1522: Black Slavery and Black Resistance in the Early Colonial Americas*. In his monograph, Stevens-Acevedo explains that after the revolt, the enslaved were not allowed to carry weapons and were also prohibited from visiting other enslaved Africans in other plantations. The implementation of these regulations shows some of the things that the enslaved were allowed to do and how they may have used these allowances to their advantage.

threatened; she also would escape for three months.<sup>21</sup> These small details add to the representation of quotidian life in sixteenth-century Santo Domingo not only as essential to better understand Juana's story, but also for the brief accounts of the many free and enslaved Africans found in the judicial case and for those that we have yet to learn about.

Personalized slave narratives about sixteenth century Santo Domingo are scant; however, Richard Lee Turits has recently made an important contribution. The author examined the lawsuit of Rodrigo López, a free Black who contested his freedom from Cape Verde, to Cubagua, and then to Santo Domingo in 1531.<sup>22</sup> More detailed work about the free and enslaved in early colonial Santo Domingo can facilitate conversations about its development. Such periods provide the space for open resistance and struggle in a society that is very much in formation and lacks a strong, established system of social control. Elsa Barkley Brown explains that in her view, history is similar to *Gumbo ya ya*, a term used in creole to define people talking at the same time. This cacophony of voices challenges historians to communicate like jazz musicians who, while playing, listen to the rest of the group as if in a conversation, to know how to respond (297). For Barkley Brown, "history is also everybody talking at once, multiple rhythms being played simultaneously. The events and people we write about did not occur in isolation but in dialogue with a myriad of [sic] other people and events" (297). As such, historians must be able to direct the conversation and prove that it is in dialogue with others. The story about Juana Gelofa Pelona and Turits' Rodrigo López are only a fraction of the missing dialogue about the personal experiences of free and enslaved Blacks in sixteenth and seventeenth century Santo Domingo. This study aims to focus in on one ingredient of Barkley Brown's *Gumbo ya ya*, teasing out its role in the historical dialogue. It highlights Juana's role and character in a high-profile judicial case in which Juana is not meant to be read as a lead performer. But in this reading, Juana performs. This article brings her into the conversation and out of the archival silence.<sup>23</sup>

## **Juana Gelofa Pelona<sup>24</sup>**

It is uncertain when and how Juana Gelofa Pelona arrived in Santo Domingo, but she lived with her enslavers on what today is the junction of Hostos and Padre Billini Streets.<sup>25</sup> This information comes to us directly from Juana, who confirms the identity of the defendant and her deceased enslaver, and lists their

---

<sup>21</sup> It is not clear how Juana Gelofa Pelona was able to escape and be away for three months. The slave codes of 1535, 1542, and 1545 established that enslaved fugitives would be killed if they joined other fugitives and did not return in 30 days. The codes also sanctioned free blacks, enslaved blacks, or others who assisted them by giving them food and shelter. For more information on these slave codes see Javier Malagón Barceló, *Código Negro Carolino* (1974).

<sup>22</sup> To learn more about Rodrigo López see Richard Lee Turits, "Slavery and the Pursuit of Freedom in 16th-Century Santo Domingo." *Latin American History: Oxford Research Encyclopedia*, (2019). This is an online publication. The link is included in the bibliography.

<sup>23</sup>For broader discussion of archival silence and women colonial Santo Domingo see Lissette Acosta Corniel, "Elena: Running to Dance and Other Defects in Colonial Santo Domingo (1771-73).

<sup>24</sup> Juana is mentioned in Carlos Esteban Deive's, *La mala vida: delincuencia y picaresca en la colonia española de Santo Domingo*. (Santo Domingo: Fundación Cultural Dominicana, 1997). She is mentioned as being one of the witnesses in the judicial case discussed in this article and the one person who challenged the plaintiff (68). "Los deudos de Catalina se dedicaron a amenazar a los testigos si declaraban la verdad. A Juana Gelofa, Alanis la pringó bien pringada por haberse atrevido a ello y luego la vendió a un vecino de Puerto Real." (68).

<sup>25</sup> Several witnesses in the case describe the houses in this area as having been built with rocks and *tapia*. However, in early sixteenth century Santo Domingo, the houses were made out of palm trees the way the Taino Arawaks built their homes. It was in 1502, after the arrival of Governor Nicolás de Ovando that the sturdier structures began to be built. See Fray Cipriano de Utrera for more information, *Dilucidaciones Históricas de Santo Domingo*. (659).

residence as being located on the street that met with the Dominican Convent.<sup>26</sup> It is also unclear how old Juana was at the time of the trial. She also may not have known. During one hearing in 1554, she described herself as a 17-year-old, but then, at another hearing that same year, she gave her age as 19 or 20 years old. Meanwhile, many of the plaintiff's witnesses who testified in 1552 claimed that she was an adolescent between twelve and fourteen years of age. The plaintiffs' witnesses were also prone to use diminutives of her name as a way of suggesting her young age. Although diminutives were commonly used to refer to enslaved people, even when they were adults, in this case, they were likely used to make Juana appear younger as a way to question the credibility of her testimony. They referred to her as "Juanica" and "Juanilla" interchangeably. The court reporters only added to the confusion regarding her name. In the trial transcripts from 1549 to 1554, various scribes recorded her name as Juana Pelona Gelofa, Juana Gelofa Pelona, Juana Jelofa, and Juana Pelona. At times, they simply labeled her only as "the enslaved black woman mentioned in the question." Witnesses in the trial showed confusion about Juana's status within the colony's emergent caste system. In the document, she is referred to as a *criolla/creole*, and also described as a *mulatta*. Juana's first surname, Gelofa, suggests that she was captured within or belonged to the Jolof empire, which according to Michael Gómez extends from Senegal to Sierra Leone, with various vassal estates and multiethnic and linguistic groups (9).<sup>27</sup> The Gelofes were well known in Santo Domingo. Spanish authorities blamed them for the 1521 slave revolt that erupted on Diego Colón's plantation and resulted in the 1522 Slave Codes.<sup>28</sup>

In 1532, the Spanish Crown prohibited the sale of Gelofes in the Indies because they were believed to be a threat to the productivity and peace of the colonies due to their uncontrollable, arrogant, and disobedient behavior.<sup>29</sup> If Juana was indeed a Gelofe she would have either been among the last brought to the Indies or would have been trafficked illegally. As for her second surname, *Pelona*, it can mean having a large volume of hair, very short hair, or no hair at all depending on the Spanish-speaking region (Real Academia Española 2022). However, what we ought to know about Juana is not revealed to us by the name given to her as an enslaved woman, but through the clues she left when she was given the opportunity to speak at the trial of her enslavers. Witnesses for both the plaintiff and the defendant agreed that Juana escaped often to the woodlands near Santo Domingo and for long periods of time. One witness who ran into Juana while on an errand asked her why she was marooning, and Juana allegedly responded that she escaped because her owner had burned her with hot wax for testifying at the trial.<sup>30</sup> The layers of symbolic,

---

<sup>26</sup> The Dominican Convent is still fully operating and is located on Padre Billini Street on the neighborhood of the Colonial Zone in the city of Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic. A quick Google search for the Dominican Convent in Santo Domingo would take readers to Juana's neighborhood in the Colonial Zone of today's Santo Domingo. The following is a Spanish transcription of Juana's response to the question, "A la primera pregunta dixo que conoçe e conosçio a todos los contenidos en la dicha pregunta e a cada uno dellos porque [e]sta testigo era criada y esclava de la dicha Catalina Tinoco e que tiene notiçia e conoçimiento de las casas nuevas en que el dicho Françisco Brabo bibia y sabe que son en la calle que van a dar al monesterio del señor Santo Domingo porque [e]sta testigo estava en ellas con su ama Catalina Tinoco e con su amo Françisco Brabo e que ansimismo conoçe e tiene notiçia [f.4191v] de las casas del capitan Peña questan junto a las casas nuevas del dicho su amo fazia la parte del dicho monesterio." The Dominican Convent also operated as a university and according to Juan José Ponce Vázquez, "was staffed by university trained priests, friars, and other residents" (*Islanders and Empires* 50-51).

<sup>27</sup> During the presentation of this study at "The Struggle for Freedom" conference hosted by the CUNY Dominican Studies Institute on Dec. 2, 2020, Pauline Kulstad González suggested that Juana could have carried the name Gelofa after her mother.

<sup>28</sup> For more on this topic, see Anthony Stevens-Acevedo's monograph discussed on note 6, *The Santo Domingo Slave Revolt of 1521 and the Slave Laws of 1522: Black Slavery and Black Resistance in the Early Colonial Americas*.

<sup>29</sup> "han sido la cabsa los negros Gelofes que enellas estan por ser como diz que son soberbios e ynobedients y revolvedores e yncorregibles." (CDU Vol. 10, #52).

<sup>30</sup> This declaration can be found in folio 5152v.



legal, and ontological violence that circulated around Juana coalesced into a material violence that facilitated her actual presence in the archive. In this setting, the archive became the tangible evidence for the violence that Juana experienced. Marisa Fuentes explains that “with no method of escape from their violent confinement, enslaved women forced themselves into history with their screams—insisting that someone reckon with their battered bodies” (142). Juana “forced [herself] into history” with her actions and the violence inflicted on her.<sup>31</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot contends that history exists in silences, and also that “history does not belong only to its narrators, professional or amateur. While some debate what history is or was, others take it into their own hands” (152-153). In this sense, Juana Gelofa Pelona becomes a narrator of history as she moves within the archive by refusing to obey her enslavers throughout the duration of the trial.

## The Trial

On the morning of June 24, 1549, Catalina de Tinoco was found dead in her room with several stab wounds and a slit throat. The murderer was alleged to have been Francisco Bravo, who fought for his innocence during the duration of the trial from 1549 to 1554. A formal lawsuit was submitted on September 2, 1549 by Catalina de Tinoco’s sisters, Leonor Díaz and Juana Tinoco, who presented a power of attorney on behalf of their husbands, Baltasar de Alanis and Pero Rodríguez. The plaintiffs claimed that Francisco Bravo killed their honorable sister Catalina for no reason. Francisco, on the other hand, claimed that he was innocent and argued that Catalina was having an affair and if he wanted to kill her, he would have been permitted to do so under the law.<sup>32</sup> Francisco maintained that Catalina was dead when he arrived and that she was probably killed by her lover, López de Salazar, who fled, Francisco claimed, through the window, and who had departed to New Mexico.

Francisco Bravo presented several witnesses during the course of the trial including Catalinica, one of his former enslaved women; Francisco, a shoemaker; Diego, known as “indio”, and Juana Gelofa Pelona. Although this article focuses on Juana Gelofa Pelona’s testimony, the statements presented by Catalinica, Francisco, and Diego are included as supportive evidence of the argument that Juana Gelofa Pelona purposely and publicly disobeyed her new enslavers to motivate them to sell her to a different owner. Catalinica is described as an enslaved ladina who spoke clearly. In her statement, Catalinica explained that her enslaver brought her lover in the house several times while her master Francisco was out and that she was instructed to be the lookout. Catalinica narrated how López de Salazar would take off his cape and lay it on the floor to have sex with her mistress Catalina de Tinoco. Catalinica added that she was sent to the front of the house to make sure that the dog did not bark. The judges asked Catalinica if she had spoken with Francisco Bravo or anyone else related to the case before testifying, to which she gave a negative

---

<sup>31</sup> Robin Mitchell discusses a similar challenge and reward at the same time when writing about the lives of Ourika, Sarah Baartmann, and Jeanne Duval, in *Venus Noire: Black Women and Colonial Fantasies in Nineteenth-Century France*, (49). Like Juana’s, the lives of these women were even more fragmented before the author put their story together. Most importantly, enslaved African women were literally fragmented with pieces of their bodies torn apart, along with their wombs, their dignity, and, as in the case of Juana who was burned, whipped, and burned with hot wax, their flesh.

<sup>32</sup> The Spanish colonial laws of Las Siete Partidas allowed the husband to kill his wife and lover if they were caught but not one or the other.

response. Witness Francisco Díaz added that he saw López de Salazar jump into Catalina's house several times aided by two of his slaves who assisted by lifting him up. Diego, one of the other witnesses, explained that, while he was doing some construction work, he saw López de Salazar and Catalina de Tinoco speak a couple of times through a hole in the wall. Like Juana Gelofa Pelona, the witnesses discussed here offered details about what they knew related to Catalina's alleged affair. However, it was Juana who challenged her new enslavers and publicly denounced their intentions.

We first see evidence of Juana's testimony on January 31, 1554. However, it seems that there had been a previous hearing because on that day, Juana explained that Catalina's sister, Juana Tinoco and her husband, Pero Rodríguez, demanded that she retract her previous statement and offered her a bribe. Juana was asked a total of 33 questions related to her enslavers' alleged adultery and murder case. She bravely shared the details of what she had witnessed and explained how, on several occasions, Catalina secretly met with her alleged lover, using Juana as a lookout and that in one occasion she was sent to make sure the dog would not bark but that the said dog bit her and Catalina had the dog killed days later. Juana added that she once saw Catalina and Francisco argue and that Catalina pulled his beard, spat on his face, and threatened to leave with a black man. This retaliation from Juana's mistress toward her husband Francisco seemed to imply that threatening to leave with a black man was the ultimate disgrace. Juana also implicated Catalina's sisters in the matter, stating that all three of her mistress' sisters knew about the affair and that she overheard them say that Catalina was the cause of her own death.

The session ended with Juana's response to the last question, as noted by the scribe: "to the 33<sup>rd</sup> question, the witness said that Juana Tinoco, her new owner and enslaver, said to this witness not to say what she knew and what she had seen in front of the judges and that Pero Rodríguez, her enslaver's husband, said that he would whip her if she said what she knew."<sup>33</sup> The scribe indicated that Juana's testimony was going to be excluded and that Juana would have to return to the court and rectify her statement as per the plaintiffs' request. However, on February 10, 1554, Francisco Bravo appealed to include Juana's testimony. The second time we hear Juana's voice is on March 6, 1554, when witnesses were asked 23 questions related to Catalina's alleged affair. Juana's response to question twenty is the most relevant to this study:

The court: Respond if you know that Pero Rodriguez, husband of Juana Tinoco, deceased, and who initially accused Francisco Bravo, upset because Juana Pelona Gelofa, his slave, said the truth about what she knew regarding the case, presented as a witness by Francisco Bravo, the said Pero Rodriguez whipped and burned her with hot wax. And later, so that she could not rectify her statement, sold her to Alonso Hernandez, resident in the town of Puerto Real. And said Alonso Hernandez took Juana with him. Witnesses, say what you know.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> This reference to Juana's testimony can be found in folio 4169v.

<sup>34</sup> "Yten si saben etc. que Pero Rodríguez marido de Juana Tinoco difunta que primeramente acusaba en esta causa al dicho Francisco Brabo de enojo porque Juana Pelona Gelofa su esclava dixo la verdad de lo que sabía en el dicho negocio siendo presentada por testigo por parte del dicho Francisco Brabo el dicho Pero Rodríguez la açoto y pringo muy cruelmente y despues porque no se pudiese retificar en lo que avia dicho la vendio a Alonso Hernandez vezino de la villa de Puerto Real el qual dicho Alonso Hernández la llevo consigo por tal su esclava digan los testigos lo que saben." (Fo. 4174v)

Juana: To the 20<sup>th</sup> question she responded that she is Juana Gelofa Pelona and that Pero Rodriguez whipped and burned her with hot wax because she had said the truth. And that he said “didn’t I tell you not to say anything” while he whipped and burned her.<sup>35</sup>

By February, Juana had become Alonso Rodríguez’s property. Rodríguez was the local judge of Puerto Real located in the northwest bank of the island and close to what today is the border between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, over 165 miles away from Santo Domingo. Clearly, something had changed. Juana told the story this way: Pero Rodríguez accosted her on the stairs while she was carrying some plates as she worked in Martín García’s kitchen, offering her slips and shirts in exchange for her silence.<sup>36</sup> Alonso Rodríguez, Juana’s new enslaver, then testified that Martín García, one of the plaintiff’s relatives, offered to sell him a black woman for 130 pesos, a discount from her real value.<sup>37</sup> Alonso Rodríguez admitted that Martín García reassured him that Juana did not engage in marooning; rather, they wanted to sell her away from Santo Domingo to prevent her from testifying in court. Alonso Rodríguez also stated that Juana told him that Rodríguez and Tinoco used to whip and burn her. It is worth noting that when attempting to discredit Juana, the plaintiffs accused her of marooning for long periods of time. However, when negotiating the sale, it was assured that Juana was a good slave and did not engage in escape attempts. Although as mayor, Alonso Rodríguez enjoyed a much better reputation than that of the other witnesses, Pero Rodríguez appealed Alonso’s statement, alleging a friendship between Alonso and Francisco. As is common in court cases, both parties continued to contest the testimony of their witnesses and to discredit their witnesses’ statements, citing various flaws such as gossiping, thievery, drunkenness, lasciviousness, and gambling. It is possible that Catalina’s family insisted on trying to prove her innocence not on behalf of Catalina and her reputation, but on behalf of the family and the family’s honor. If Francisco Bravo proved his innocence, it would mean that Catalina had ruined the family’s honor and name. However, what is clear is that Juana Gelofa Pelona continued to contest her enslavers in public despite repeated threats. Neither Catalina, Francisco, or Diego, the witnesses presented earlier, received threats. And if they did, they did not give away whoever made them. Juana, on the other hand, was unbending about unmasking her new enslavers and offered a detailed account of the events every time she was on the stand.

## Conclusion

Juana was not afraid of Juana Tinoco and Pero Rodríguez, her new enslavers. She demonstrated this the first time she testified and twice again until they finally resolved to sell her away from Santo Domingo where they thought she could not be reached to testify. Her disobedience first got her whipped, and then

---

<sup>35</sup> “A las veynte preguntas dixo questa testigo es la dicha Juana Gelofa Pelona e quel dicho Pero Rodriguez la açoto e pringo con una candela de çera porque abia dicho la verdad e que quando la açotaba e pringaba le dezia no te dixes nada e questo sabe desta pregunta e questa es la verdad e lo que sabe deste caso.” (Fo. 4193)

<sup>36</sup> Juana’s declaration can be found in folios 4191-4192. It is not clear if Martín García had rented her from her new enslavers but in her statement Juana indicates that she was at Martín García’s house completing some chores.

<sup>37</sup> This author has not been able to find a conversation from the currency in sixteenth century Santo Domingo. However, one peso was said to be equal to eight silver reals (ocho pesos reales).

burned, and yet she stood firm.<sup>38</sup> Jessica Marie Johnson explains that “refusal mattered enough to African women and women of African descent that they risked their lives to engage in it” (171). Rather than accepting the bribe and the benefit of receiving gifts, Juana chose voice and agency over some new garments, despite the foreseeable brutal consequences for her actions. Her refusal and insubordinate behavior were risks well taken, given the end result of being sold. Tamara J. Walker comments that “as scholars of slavery, we tend to think of juridical freedom as the holy grail for enslaved men and women” (251). In this setting, it is possible to conclude that Juana planned her own sale to ‘free’ herself from her abusive owners. Aisha K. Finch contends that “freedom is an inherently slippery thing. Rather than try to capture it, [historians should explore] the ways that it could be experienced, the intangible moments that forged it, and the possibilities of its constant mutation” (310). Juana, whose defiance allowed her to stand out as an enslaved African woman, was determined to tell the truth to gain something “intangible” that perhaps she longed for, like “intangible” freedom of being sold to a different owner even if it meant taking the risk of ending up with an even worse enslaver. A popular Spanish adage says “*más vale un malo conocido que un bueno por conocer*.”<sup>39</sup> However, Juana Gelofa Pelona chose to go against the adage and risked finding out what it would be like to be owned by someone else. The details of Juana’s future with her new enslaver are unknown. Documents pertaining to Alonso Rodríguez, mayor of Puerto Real in 1554 Hispaniola, have yet to be found. For now, Juana moves out of official history with the end of the judicial case where she appears as witness. Nonetheless, Juana Gelofa Pelona’s actions of disobedience have allowed for an interpretation of a narrative of her life as an enslaved woman in sixteenth century Santo Domingo. More stories like Juana’s could add to the history—complex and polyvocal, a duet of agency and subordination—of the free and enslaved Africans in Santo Domingo, the first slave society of the Americas.

## Bibliography

Acosta Corniel, Lissette. “Towards a Theory About Spanish Women in Sixteenth Century Hispaniola: A Research Guide and Case Studies.” Dissertation N.P. State University of New York at Albany, 2013.

\_\_\_\_\_. “Elena: Running to Dance and Other Defects in Colonial Santo Domingo (1771-73).” *Women, Gender, and Families of Color*, 9/2 (2021): 189–207.

Bailey, Anne C. *African Voices of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Beyond the Silence and the Shame*. Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2007.

Belmonte Postigo, José Luis. “Las dos caras de una misma moneda: Reformismo y esclavitud en Santo Domingo a fines del periodo colonial.” *Revista de Indias* LXXIV/ 261 (2014): 453-483. doi:10.3989/revindias.2014.015.

\_\_\_\_\_. “Bajo el negro velo de la ilegalidad: Un análisis del mercado de esclavos dominicano 1746-1821. *Nuevo Mundo Nuevo, Debates*. 07 de Julio (2016). Consultado el 16 de septiembre, 2021. DOI:10.4000/nuevomundo.69478.

<sup>38</sup>It could also be argued that her new enslavers sold her so that she would not testify, but if that was the case, why not do that from the beginning, or the second time she denounced their bribe?

<sup>39</sup> “A familiar evil is better than an unfamiliar good,” in other words, better the devil you know than the devil you don’t.

- Borucki, Alex, David Eltis, and David Wheat. *From the Galleons to the Highlands: Slave Trade Routes in the Spanish Americas*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2020.
- Brown, Elsa Barkley. "'What Has Happened Here': The Politics of Difference in Women's History and Feminist Politics." *Feminist Studies* 18/2 (1992): 295-312. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3178230>
- Bryant, Sherwin K. *Rivers of Gold, Lives of Bondage: Governing Through Slavery in Colonial Quito*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018.
- Burset Flores, Luis Rafael. "Cotidianidad en el Caribe colonial, 1590-1620." *Revista de Indias* LXXVIII/274 (2018): 735-756. <https://doi.org/10.3989/revindias.2018.022>
- Catalina de Tinoco v. Francisco Bravo. CUNY Dominican Studies Institute. Collection of Colonial Documents. Justicia 103A.
- Deive, Carlos E. *La mala vida: delincuencia y picaresca en la colonia española de Santo Domingo*. Santo Domingo: Fundación Cultural Dominicana, 1997.
- Finch, Aisha K. "Cécile Fatiman and Petra Carabalí, Late Eighteenth-Century Haiti and Mid-Nineteenth-Century Cuba." *As if She were Free: A Collective Biography of Women and Emancipation in the Americas*. Erica L. Ball, Tatiana Seijas and Terri L. Snyder, eds. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020. 293-311.
- Foreman, P. Gabrielle, et al. "Writing about Slavery/Teaching About Slavery: This Might Help" community-sourced document. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1A4TEdDgYslXhKzLodMIM71My3KTN0zxRv0IQTOQs/mobilebasic>
- Fuentes, Marisa J. *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.
- García Rodríguez, Gloria. *Voices of the Enslaved in Nineteenth-Century Cuba: A Documentary History*. Translated by Nancy L. Westrate. Chapel Hill, N.C: University of North Carolina Press, 2011.
- Gómez, Michael A. *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Johnson, Jessica M. *Wicked Flesh: Black Women, Intimacy, and Freedom in the Atlantic World*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020.
- Lavrin, Asunción. *Latin American women: Historical Perspectives*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1978.
- Landers, Jane G. "Cimarrón and Citizen: African Ethnicity, Corporate Identity, and the Evolution of Free Black Towns in the Spanish Circum-Caribbean." *Slaves, Subjects, and Subversives: Blacks in Colonial Latin America*. Jane G. Landers and Barry M. Robinson, eds. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006. 111-145.
- Malagón Barceló, Javier, *Código Negro Carolino*. Santo Domingo: Ediciones Taller, 1974.
- Morgan, Jennifer L. *Reckoning with Slavery: Gender, Kinship, and Capitalism in the Early Black Atlantic*. Durham: Duke University Press. 2021.
- Mitchell, Robin. *Vénus Noire: Black Women and Colonial Fantasies in Nineteenth-Century France*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2020.
- Ponce Vázquez, Juan José. *Islanders and Empire: Smuggling and Political Defiance in Hispaniola, 1580-1690*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "Unequal Partners in Crime: Masters, Slaves and Free People of Color in Santo Domingo, c. 1600-1650." *Slavery and Abolition* 37/ 4 (2016): 704-723.
- Premo, Bianca. *The Enlightenment on Trial: Ordinary Litigants and Colonialism in the Spanish Empire*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Real Academia de la Historia (España). Colección De Documentos Inéditos Relativos Al Descubrimiento... De Las Antiguas Posesiones Españolas De Ultramar. Madrid: "Sucesores de la Rivadeneyra", 1885-1932. Vol 10. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=miun.bad4150.0010.001&view=1up&seq=254&skin=202>
- Real Academia Española. *Diccionario de la lengua española*, 23.ª ed. <https://dle.rae.es/pelón>. January 11, 2022.
- Scott, James C. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven, Ct.: Yale University, 1990.
- Stevens-Acevedo, Anthony, Tom Weterings, and Leonor Alvarez Frances. *Juan Rodriguez and the Beginnings of New York City*. Dominican Research Monograph Series. New York: CUNY Dominican Studies Institute, 2013.
- Stevens-Acevedo, Anthony, *The Santo Domingo Slave Revolt of 1521 and the Slave Laws of 1522: Black Slavery and Black Resistance in the Early Colonial Americas*. Dominican Research Monograph Series. New York: CUNY Dominican Studies Institute, 2019.
- Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2015.
- Turits, Richard Lee. "Slavery and the Pursuit of Freedom in 16th-Century Santo Domingo." *Latin American History: Oxford Research Encyclopedia*. 30 September 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199366439.013.344>
- Utrera, Ciprano Fr. *Dilucidaciones Históricas de Santo Domingo*. Santo Domingo: Secretaría de Estado de Educación, Bellas Artes y Cultos, 1995.
- Vega, Carlos B. *Conquistadoras: mujeres heroicas de la conquista de América*. Jefferson: Mc Farland & Company, 2003.
- Walker, Tamara J. "María Hipólita Lozano, Eighteenth-Century Lima (Peru)." *As if She were Free: A Collective Biography of Women and Emancipation in the Americas*. Erica L. Ball, Tatiana Seijas, and Terri L. Snyder, eds. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020. 236-252.
- White, Sophie. "Marion, Eighteen-Century Natchitoches, Louisiana (US)." *As if She were Free: A Collective Biography of Women and Emancipation in the Americas*. Erica L. Ball, Tatiana Seijas, and Terri L. Snyder, eds. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020. 171-189.
- Woodroff Stone, Erin. "America's First Slave Revolt: Indians and African Slaves in Española, 1500-1534." *Ethnohistory* 60/2 (2013): 195-217. DOI 10.1215/00141801-2018927