

## I. APPLICATION FORM/COVER SHEET

APPLICANT(s): Dr. Yamile Silva, Dpt. Of World Languages and Cultures

TITLE OF PROPOSAL: Transatlantic Connections: Abigail Mejía's political essays in the Spanish newspapers

Total amount requested: \$ 2,000

Project Start date: 7/1/24 Project End date: 11/1/24

Approvals (if required)

IACUC	Date	_____	Reviewed	_____
	Date Approved	_____		_____
IRB	Date	_____	Reviewed	_____
	Date Approved	_____		_____
IBC	Date Reviewed	_____	Date Approved	_____

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### ABSTRACT

In May of 1916, the US Marines occupied Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic. There was confusion over their motives, but the occupation and dollar diplomacy continued until 1924. According to Lorgia García Peña, during this time, "The U.S. military and marines controlled the population for eight years through censorship, intimidation, fear, and military force." However, the occupation also opened opportunities for Dominican feminists. They wrote articles and gave lectures denouncing the invasion of the United States. Las Damas de Santiago led by Ercilia Pepín, even wrote a letter to the Commission of North American Senators and collected signatures in 1921. Patriotic evenings multiplied, and the Comité de Damas organized a "Patriotic Week" in August of 1922. This proposed grant will support a short stay of four weeks (July 1-July 31, 2024) to get access to Dominican writer Abigail Mejía's political texts located in the Biblioteca Francesca Bonnemaïson, the Women's Library of Barcelona, as well as the Archivo de la Ciudad de Barcelona to which I haven't been able to get access. The grant proposal aims to facilitate the project's fundamental research activities in two different archives and the transcription of the texts. After getting access to Mejía's political writings, and following Sarah Ahmed in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2015), I will write a chapter analyzing 1) how Mejía employs her writing to generate affects; 2) how does she manage the

affects produced by the American invasion; and, 3) in what way does she promote a project that is at once (trans)nationalist and feminist. This chapter, which is the second of a four-chapter monograph studying Mejía's journalistic work in Spain, will be written in Fall 2024. I hope to complete the book by Fall 2025.

## II. BUDGET

	Amount
<b>A. Salaries and Wages</b> ( <i>students and other personnel paid through University payroll</i> ) - specify no. of hours and hourly wage	0
<b>A. Total Salaries &amp; Wages</b>	0
<b>B. FICA</b> ( <i>0.0765 x total salaries and wages</i> )	0
<b>B. Total FICA</b>	
<b>C. Consultants and other Fee-for-Service Personnel</b> ( <i>personnel paid via check voucher</i> ) - specify no. of hours and hourly wage	0
<b>C. Total Consultants</b>	0
<b>D. Equipment</b>	0
<b>D. Total Equipment</b>	0
<b>E. Supplies</b>	0
<b>E. Total Supplies</b>	0
<b>F. Travel</b> ( <i>itemize mileage, per diem, hotel, airfare</i> ) <i>Airfare Newark-Barcelona-Newark 1,250</i> <i>Four week stay (300 per week X 4) 1,200</i> <i>Miles Scranton-Newark-Scranton 150</i> <i>Per diem (105 per day X30) 3,150</i> <i>Transportation in Barcelona 80</i>	
<b>F. Total Travel</b>	5,830

<b>G. Other</b>	0
<b>G. Total Other</b>	0
<b>H. TOTAL PROJECT COST</b>	5,830
<b>I. AMOUNT REQUESTED</b> (Max. \$2,000 individual; \$3,000 collaborative)	2,000
<b>J. Subtract I from H - If H is greater than I, explain in Budget Justification how the additional expense will be covered.</b>	3,830

### **III. BUDGET JUSTIFICATION** (one page)

This grant will cover round-trip airfare and per diem for one week. Personal funds will cover housing, transportation in Barcelona, remaining per diem, and travel between Newark airport and home. Per diem has been calculated as listed in

[https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per\\_diem\\_action.asp?MenuHide=1&CountryCode=1107](https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem_action.asp?MenuHide=1&CountryCode=1107)

#### IV. NARRATIVE (maximum six pages)

##### Transatlantic Connections: Abigail Mejía's political essays in the Spanish newspapers

**Background and Significance.** On May 15, 1916, after ten years of tense relations between Hispaniola and the United States, U.S. American marines occupied Santo Domingo.<sup>1</sup> I refer here to the entire island of Hispaniola, because we must remember that the United States had already invaded Haiti in 1915. President Wilson's administration alleged that the Dominican government had not complied with customs regulations that were established in the so called Dominican-American Convention, signed in February 1907 during the presidencies of Ramón Cáceres and Theodore Roosevelt. The Convention granted the United States the right to collect Dominican customs through agents designated by the American government under the pretext of guaranteeing the payment of the Dominican Republic's external debt.<sup>2</sup> The political instability that the country was experiencing was not alleviated by the agreement. President Cáceres's six-year term, initiated in 1906, was cut short: Cáceres was assassinated in 1911 as uprisings intensified and the leadership structure of caudillismo<sup>3</sup> continued. As Ellen D. Tilda (2016) states: "The assassination of Cáceres and political uprisings, which plunged the country into the most devastating period of civil war to date, evidenced the resentment in various regions and economic sectors, especially as they fought against the centralization that favored U.S. interests over other exports" (107). The escalation of violence would also bring about diplomatic tensions between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. In 1912 Haitian President Jean Jacques Leconte died in an explosion that was determined by the Haitian government to be an accident, but which according to the U.S. government, "was a plot by Haitians, and perhaps also *Dominicans*, simultaneous as it was with

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<sup>1</sup> The United States had held a strong military presence in the Dominican Republic since 1905. See the chapter "Military Diplomats and Dollar Diplomacy" by Ellen Tilman.

<sup>2</sup> For an historical overview of the Dominican Republic's external debt, see the book *Los Estados Unidos y la República Dominicana: la verdad de los hechos* by Max Henríquez Ureña.

<sup>3</sup> Caudillismo is "the system of rule by a caudillo (from Latin *capitellum*, meaning head)" (Gonzalez 2024). There is no direct translation of "caudillo" into English, but the term "military strongman" approximates its meaning. According to the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics*, "Caudillismo surfaced as a consequence of the wars of independence in Latin America after 1810. The power vacuum left by the fall of the Spanish empire in the Americas was filled in by the rise of caudillos—usually regional military officers—who became the guarantors of basic social peace and political stability in the regions they controlled militarily" (Gonzalez 2024).

‘revolutionary outbreaks along the border’” (emphasis mine, Tilda 119). The various internal uprisings and political instability throughout the island were not in the interests of the United States. In 1916 President Wilson would argue that the Dominican government under Juan Isidro Jimenes had failed to comply specifically with Article 3 of the Convention of 1907, which states, “Until the Dominican Republic has paid the full amount of the bonds of the debt, its public debt shall not be increased except by previous agreement between the Dominican Government and the United States...”<sup>4</sup>. Thus, on May 15, 1916, the military occupation would begin, and by July all the strategic points of the country were controlled by the marines. In November of that same year, the U.S. declared “a state of military occupation with all the consequences thereof” as Captain H.S. Knapp would affirm in his November 29, 1916 speech. The occupation and so called “dollar diplomacy” would last until 1924. In the words of Lorgia García-Peña, “Despite the local armed and intellectual resistance, the U.S. military was successful in controlling Hispaniola’s population through censorship, intimidation, fear, and military force” (60). During the years of occupation, various antiimperialist groups emerged that brought together a range of sectors within Dominican society — labor leaders, former politicians, merchants, feminists, clergy — that animated the “foundation of diverse nationalist organizations; the realization of protest campaigns in cities in the United States, Spain, and Latin America; the celebration of civic demonstrations in urban spaces in the Dominican Republic; and, above all, the publication of a militant nationalist propaganda aimed at validating the right of the occupied people to exercise its full sovereignty” (De León, 111). 1920 saw the creation of the Juntas Nacionalistas Dominicanas, La Junta Patriótica de Damas, and La Unión Nacionalista Dominicana, among others. In a way, the U.S. occupation opened doors for Dominican women to participate in these public forums, removing limitations that had confined them to the private sphere of the home. As Quisqueya Lora notes in her introduction to *Ideario Femenino* by Abigail Mejía, “regular teachers were dedicated to holding conferences, giving lectures, and writing articles denouncing the U.S. invasion. The Las Damas de

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<sup>4</sup> All the historical documents related to this agreement are available at <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1907p1/d263>.

Santiago, led by Ercilia Pepín in 1921, wrote a missive to the Commission of North American Senators and collected signatures. More and more, veladas patrióticas<sup>5</sup> were held and the [Comité de Damas] organized a “Week of Patriotism” in August 1922”.<sup>6</sup> The occupation, therefore, afforded agency to these women and granted them political participation. In her book *Feminism for the Americas*, Katherine Marino points out that less than a decade later, in 1928, thanks to the anti-imperialist movements that responded to the various U.S. interventions in Latin America, “the Pan-American feminism would gain profound influence and would shape new activism for international women's rights at the 1928 Pan American Conference in Havana, Cuba.” Almost ten years earlier, Dominican feminists strategically used the space opened by anti-imperialist protests.

Abigail Mejía, who had lived in Barcelona since 1908, was in Spain at the time of the 1916 invasion. The cultural production of this Dominican writer (1895-1941)<sup>7</sup> follows very closely after the social, political, and cultural evolution of the Dominican Republic and Spain. During her years in Barcelona, she obtained a degree in normal school in 1919 and published *Por entre frivolidades* (1922), a miscellaneous collection of short-stories and literary essays, the novel *Sueña Pilarín* (1925), the essay collection *Brotos de la raza* (1926), *Historia de la Literatura Castellana* (1926) and several articles in the Spanish newspapers *La Vanguardia*, *El Día Gráfico*, *El Hogar y la Moda*, *El Cine*, *Revista de Dones*, *Or y Grana* and *Hojas selectas*. Thanks to a semester long research residency (2022), I was able to find some of her writings at the National Library of Catalonia. After analyzing them, I published two peer-reviewed articles and wrote two papers that were presented at international conferences in Switzerland and Mexico. Additionally, I received an invitation to give a talk at Texas Tech University last January.

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<sup>5</sup> Political forums.

<sup>6</sup> In the first volume of *Cien años de feminismos dominicanos (100 Years of Dominican Feminisms)*, Ginetta Candelario, Elizabeth Manley and April Mayes gather various documents that demonstrate the active participation of women: letters, articles, and reports written during the occupation.

<sup>7</sup> See the annotated chronology of Abigail Mejía by Nacidit-Perdomo, included in *Abigail Mejía. Una vida en imágenes 1895-1941 (Abigail Mejía: A Life in Images 1895-1941)*.

Thanks to Mejía's travel accounts, we know that she wrote weekly entries related to the political conditions in the Dominican Republic during the six years of the U.S. occupation, but I have only located four of her political texts. The task of locating these documents is difficult for various reasons. This is partly because a single publication that compiles all Mejía's journalistic production does not exist; access to the archives that contain her documents is difficult — due to distance, cost, bureaucracy — and once inside the archives, there is the absence of a catalogue listing her complete production as well as they are not digitalized.

**Objectives, Methodology and Dissemination.** The proposed grant will support a short stay of four weeks (July 1-July 31, 2024) to get access to her documents located in the Biblioteca Francesca Bonnemaison, the Women's Library of Barcelona, as well as the Archivo de la Ciudad de Barcelona to which I haven't been able to get access. This grant will provide financial support for conducting primary source archival research, transcribing, analyzing, and writing. The grant proposal aims to facilitate the project's fundamental research activities in two different archives and the transcription of the texts. However, due to the delicate nature of the documents, photocopying privileges may not be permitted. After getting access to Mejía's political writings, and following Sarah Ahmed in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2015), I will write a chapter analyzing 1) how Mejía employs her writing to generate affects; 2) how does she manage the affects produced by the American invasion; and, 3) in what way does she promote a project that is at once (trans)nationalist and feminist. This chapter, which is the second of a four-chapter monograph studying Mejía's journalistic work in Spain, will be written in Fall 2024. I hope to complete the book by Fall 2025.

Over the past year, two significant events have recognized Abigail Mejía's contribution to women's suffrage rights and her cultural work in support of the Dominican Republic. The first is the promulgation of Decree 132-23 by Dominican President Luis Abinader in March 2023, which declares May 16 as National Suffragette Day. The decree acknowledges the crucial role of suffragists, including Abigail Mejía, in securing voting rights for Dominican women, recognizing their political-electoral rights, and strengthening democracy in the country. The second is the transfer of Abigail Mejía's mortal

remains to the National Pantheon (Panteón de la Patria), where national heroes reside, by presidential decree 164-23 on Sep 28, 2023. As an expert on Mejía's work, I was invited by the Dominican Government to attend this event. These two watershed moments signify the much-needed, long-overdue recognition of Mejía's contributions. My research contributes to this crucial moment and is primed to help make her cultural production more accessible. Through this grant, I will recover her political discourses in local archives in Spain to draw attention to her underappreciated and overlooked cultural productions.

### References

- AHMED, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, Edinburg, Edinburgh University Press 2014, p. 256.
- CANDELARIO, Ginetta, April J. Mayes, Elizabeth S. Manley (Eds). *Cien años de Feminismos dominicanos : Una colección de documentos y escrituras clave en la formación y evolución del pensamiento y el movimiento feminista en La República Dominicana 1865-1965*, Santo Domingo, Archivo General de La Nación Departamento de Investigación y Divulgación Área de Publicaciones, 2016, p 269.
- GARCÍA PEÑA, Lorgia. *The Borders of Dominicanidad: Race, Nation, and Archives of Contradiction*. Durham, Duke University Press, 2016, p. 274.
- HENRÍQUEZ UREÑA, Max. *Los Estados Unidos y la Republica Dominicana; La verdad de los hechos comprobada por datos y documentos oficiales*. Habana, Imprenta "El Siglo XX ", 1919, p. 206.
- LORA, Quisqueña. "Prólogo", *Ideario Feminista : (Y Algún Apunte Para La Historia Del Feminismo Dominicano) (1939)*, Santo Domingo, Instituto Superior de Formación Docente Salomé Ureña (ISFODOSU), 2020, p. 9-20.
- MARINO, Katherine. *Feminism for the Americas: The Making of an International Human Rights Movement*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2019, p. 354.
- MEJÍA, ABIGAIL. *Por entre frivolidades*, Barcelona: Hermenegildo Miralles, 1922, p. 232.
- TILLMAN, Ellen. *Dollar Diplomacy by Force: Nation-Building and Resistance in the Dominican Republic*, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 2016, p. 273.



SILVA, Yamile. “Introducción”, *La Sonrisa del paisaje (Viajes)*, Santo Domingo, Editora Nacional, 2020, p. 13-23.

### **Additional Funding Sources**

This grant will cover round-trip airfare and per diem for one week. Personal funds will cover housing, transportation in Barcelona, remaining per diem, and travel between Newark airport and home.

**Dr. Yamile Silva**  
**Scholarly Selected Publications**

**Invited Editor for a special issue in refereed journal (1)**

- " 'Yo llana estoy': jerarquías, transgresiones y despliegues de género en América hispana colonial (1492- 1898)" Co-edited with Ana María Díaz (Oberlin College). Thematic Dossier. *Revista de Estudios de Género y Sexualidades/Journal of Gender and Sexuality Studies* (Michigan State University Press) Vol. 48.1 (June 2022), Introduction, 5 essays, 2 academic interviews. 50,000 words.

**Edited volumes, editions and anthologies (6)**

– Silva, Yamile (Ed). *Entre Frivolidades*. Santo Domingo: Ministerio de Cultura de la República Dominicana, (Forthcoming).

Silva, Yamile (Ed). *La sonrisa del paisaje. Diarios de Abigail Mejía*. Santo Domingo: Ministerio de Cultura de la República Dominicana, 2020.

-----, Diane Marting and Eva Paris. *Rendir cuentas: Historia y Agencia como fabulación/ History, Agency and Gendered Narratives*. Santo Domingo: Ministerio de la Mujer, 2018.

----- and Daniel Torres. *Utopías en la Literatura. Selección de ensayos del Segundo Programa Académico del Festival de la Palabra*. Revista CRUCE, 2018. pp. 110.

-----and Daniel Torres. "Raza, género y diáspora en el Caribe (Race, gender and diaspora in the Caribbean)". Dossier. *Cuadrivium: Revista de la Universidad de Puerto Rico*, 2017.

----and Hank Willenbrink. *Palabras: Dispatches from the Festival de la Palabra*. NoPassport Press, 2013.

**Refereed book chapters (6)**

- "La conquista del espacio en la relación de Gerónimo de Ypori" in *Literatura colonial en transición*. Buenos Aires: EDUVIM (Summer 2024).

-"Space, land and territory in Gerónimo de Ypori's relation (1580)" in *Colonial Latin American Literature in Transition. Cambridge Literature in Transitions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023. pp 48-62.

- "Prólogo" in *Rendir cuentas: Historia y Agencia como fabulación/ History, Agency and Gendered Narratives*. Santo Domingo: Ministerio de la Mujer, 2018. pp. 5-16

- "Spatiality and Identity in Women's Colonial Petitions: the Cases of Maria de los Cobos, Isabel de Becerra and Maria Osorio de Narvaez" in *Women and Gender in the Early Modern World*. Eds. Rocío Quispe-Agnoli and Mónica Díaz. U.K.:Ashgate Publishing, 2017. pp. 153-176.

- "Soledad Acosta de Samper y su proyecto de la Nación." *Gendering Citizenship and Globalization*. Ed. Auxiliadora Pérez. Sevilla: Alfar, 2011. pp. 45-60.

- "Cartas para la educación del bello sexo: Estrategias de inclusión/exclusión del sujeto colonial femenino." *La constitución de identidades subalternas en el discurso jurídico y literario latinoamericano en el s. XIX*. Ed. Farid Benavides Vanegas. Bogotá: UNAL/Editorial Gustavo Ibáñez, 2008. pp. 40-72.

**Articles in peer-reviewed journals (Last four years)**

- "Políticas domésticas en arenas (trans)nacionales: Abigail Mejía sobre la Invasión de Estados Unidos a la República Dominicana" *Les Cahiers ALHIM*. (Accepted for publication Spring 2024)

- " Narrativas de lo gótico en «La extraña» (1922) de Abigail Mejía" *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* No. 8 2024.

- "'I, humble servant of your grace': Isabel de Salazar's and Ana de Nabarrete's Petitions" *Revista de Estudios de Género y Sexualidades/Journal of Gender and Sexuality Studies*. Vol 46, no. 1-2, 2020. pp. 1-18.

-Ramirez, Andrés, María Márquez, Cristóbal Salinas and Yamile Silva, "Different when I Opened My Mouth: Experiences, Reflections, and Perspectives of Faculty Members with Foreign English Accents in Higher Education." *Meridians*, vol 20, no.1, 2020. pp. 295-320.