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## The Miami Herald

Dominicans on the rise in numbers, but not clout  
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For years, immigrants from the Dominican Republic chose chilly Manhattan, but increasingly they have been moving to South Florida where the majority of newcomers are white-collar professionals.

The estimated 60,000 people in the Dominican community in Miami-Dade and Broward counties are more than 70 per cent middle class -- a mix of physicians, teachers, bankers, lawyers, entrepreneurs, computer technicians and artists, according to various studies.

Many arrivals, especially those coming from the Northeast, have a good command of English and Spanish, and tend to make the transition to life in the Miami area more easily than any other Hispanics, with the exception of Puerto Ricans, Dominicans say.

But they lack political power, even as they have prospered over the last 20 years of migration.

Dominicans creating a new life for themselves, however, have been building bridges to other ethnic groups to get that power.

"The truth about us here," says Wilfredo Vargas, an importer of electronic goods, "is that almost no one is aware of us but ourselves."

Miami resident and sociologist Carol Hoffman-Guzman says the South Florida experience has defined the Dominican community in the United States in a new way. New York and the Northeast, where Dominicans first settled in large numbers, still attract mostly blue-collar workers. Miami has become the place for college graduates.

"While some Dominicans are pleased that their South Florida community has not received the negative publicity given to Dominicans in New York," she says of crime problems there, "others lament their invisibility and related lack of power in South Florida."

They may display their red and blue flag with the white cross on their cars, or on their stores. Some join Dominican social or civic clubs or mostly Dominican amateur baseball teams, although non-joiners are probably the majority, Hoffman-Guzman says.

The monthly newspapers *Nosotros News* and *Kendall Drive News* serve their reading needs, and *quisqueyusa.com* -- a website run by Virgilio Garcia, an industrial engineer living in Hialeah -- has received 11,000 hits in the last 18 months from Dominicans in both countries eager to share news.

But despite their shared love for Quisqueya, as many Dominicans call home, and their passion for merengue, Dominican cuisine and ballparks, no single neighborhood is dominated by these mostly middle-class families who rent, buy or work mostly wherever they choose.

The Allapattah district of Miami where blue-collar Dominicans settled when violence marked the downfall of dictator Rafael Trujillo, assassinated in 1961, accounted for 13 per cent of Dominicans in the 1990 census. But the 2000 census indicates that only 9 percent live there now.

### OVERSHADOWED

Cubans predominate in areas where Dominican professionals live, like Doral, Fontainebleau, Hialeah, The Hammocks and West Kendall in Miami-Dade, and Hollywood, Miramar and Pembroke Pines in Broward.

But the Quisqueya community has yet to gain the political clout of either the Cubans or the Haitians.

Three Dominicans have run unsuccessfully for local office since 1983, attracting only a few hundred votes each, according to Garcia, who ran as the only non-Cuban among 21 candidates for a Hialeah City Council seat in 1993 and got 993 votes.

The lack of political power, however, is not just a question of numbers, those who know the community say.

## NOT AN ESCAPE

Peter Landestoy, 40, a computer graphics designer in Miami, says while some Dominicans emigrate to seek better economic or professional opportunities, they do not come to South Florida to escape the kind of political problems confronting Cubans and Haitians.

"We come here because we want to expand our monetary needs and make a better life for families," says Landestoy, who publishes the Revista Tropical bimonthly cultural magazine with his wife, Karina Arzeno. "We are not here because of persecution. Our community doesn't have a unifying bond or common goal to rally around."

Washington Collado, 39, assistant principal at Coconut Creek High School, received 700 votes when he ran as a novice Democrat for a Broward school district seat in 1998. It was not enough to win, but he says it helped put Dominicans on the Broward map as contenders.

Collado is part of the 65 per cent of the South Florida population who Hoffman-Guzman says was born or raised in the New York area, but which has opted for a warmer climate and the Hispanic culture of the Miami area. But he did not come from a privileged background.

His sister Carmen, who works as a teacher's aide in New York, helped raise Collado and his sisters, Isabel and Betty, when the family left their homeland in 1975. He got his degree and became a teacher in New York before moving to Broward in 1992.

Isabel also lives in Coconut Creek and runs an import-export business for the largest importer in the Dominican Republic. Betty, who lives in Doral, won a scholarship to the University of Miami and is married to a Dominican businessman who travels the world.

Collado maintains ties.

## TOUCHING BASE

He plays with the Aguilars -- a baseball team named after the same team in the Dominican Republic -- at Tradewinds Park in Coconut Creek.

He goes to San Isidro Catholic Church in Pompano Beach where many Dominicans are in the choir and where the 11 a.m. Mass has become such an attraction that it is televised. He is a member of the Dominican Lions Club, which has a meeting on Tuesday at the Merengue Restaurant on Southwest Eighth Street in Miami and which sends help to poor barrios of the Dominican Republic.

Maximo Caminero, 39, is an artist whose large oil paintings are exhibited in Miami, Santo Domingo and Latin America. His small studio on 77th Street just off Biscayne Boulevard is the scene on some Friday nights of gatherings of young Dominicans and other Hispanics who play acoustic and percussion instruments, drink rum, smoke cigars and share laughter.

He says he does not really see himself as a resident of either the United States or the Dominican Republic, even though he is now an American citizen.

A trained architect, he travels frequently in the Caribbean and Central America.

But he chooses to paint in the United States because, he says, "If you get recognition outside your country [the Dominican Republic], when you go back they know who you are. You are a success."

Garcia, who has been a U.S. citizen since 1970 and is married to a Dominican, says the popularity of his website is an indication that Dominicans in South Florida and in New York may choose to be assimilated -- but hunger for their own culture.

Every month, he says, there are more listings of social events on his website.

The site offers daily news from several sources in the Dominican Republic, including Listin Diario, the major daily in Santo Domingo, and is increasingly running news from the United States and the world geared to Dominican interests.

"When I got here in 1970," says Garcia, "you could count the number of Dominicans on your hand. I mean it -- on your hand! I came when I was 21 with my mother, and I graduated from FIU in 1974."

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Papers serve ethnic groups, and in their own languages  
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In South Florida, all the news that's fit to print is probably not going to be in English or geared to American readers.

More than 75 newspapers inform and entertain one of the nation's most complex ethnic landscapes, including scores in Spanish and eight in Portuguese for Brazilians -- not to mention Korean, Vietnamese, Thai, Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, Chinese, Hebrew, French, Iranian, Japanese, Russian, Yiddish and Tagalog.

The future of South Florida is written in their typefaces and mastheads, say the editors and publishers of this often colorful and squabbling array of papers. Yet many have tiny circulations and are known only in one neighborhood, or even on only a half dozen blocks, making their influence on the body politic questionable. Yet they share the same mission: to reach groups they feel are underrepresented in the mainstream press.

Only two of these papers are dailies: El Nuevo Herald, the nation's second largest Spanish-language paper with 84,200 copies, and Diario las Americas, circulation 68,600. Most are weekly, biweekly or monthly and, if their budget is tiny and the staff is a lone reporter who is also editor and owner, the paper may appear only when there is enough advertising to finance the next issue.

#### TWO-MAN OPERATION

Take the Kiskeya Herald, a new French-language paper that's one of four targeted at the Haitian immigrant middle class. Two thousand copies of its third issue appeared last week, the product of a two-man staff: Ernst Jean Louis, 41, a Miami security guard and photographer, and Norluck Dorange, 38, a Haiti-based editor.

#### Financing?

"It comes out of our pockets," Dorange said. "We use our cars to take our papers around" to stores in Haitian neighborhoods.

But the two have dreams: to expand circulation of the biweekly to Haiti, New York and Canada, where there are large Haitian communities. They have a target of 5,000 copies at the end of the first year, but they don't have the budget to promote their paper and hope they can spread the word by talking about it on radio.

"The Kiskeya Herald wants to address the problems of Haitians," Dorange said. "We have leaders of the Haitian diaspora elected [mayor and council members in North Miami], but Haitians do not understand the American political system. We want to urge them to consolidate their strength."

The dominant language of the ethnic press is Spanish.

#### PRIME DESTINATION

Hispanics are a majority in Miami-Dade County -- 57 percent of the total population, according to the 2000 Census -- and Miami is the prime destination not only for Cubans, the largest group, but also for people from countries in crisis, like Colombia, Venezuela, Peru and Ecuador.

Headlines in papers like El Colombiano and El Venezolana reflect the troubled situations back home and are packed with ads for immigration and legal services and prime real estate in Weston and Aventura.

Some media experts say Miami may become the first American city to sustain a press in Spanish, perhaps forever.

"Normally, foreign language papers die out a generation after" the first immigrants arrive, said John Virtue of the International Media Center at Florida International University. "But because of the preponderance of Hispanics here, the Hispanic press will go on."

## SPANISH-ONLY CITY

"One can live in Miami-Dade without speaking a word of English, and you can achieve everything you need," Virtue said. "That doesn't happen anywhere else in the U.S."

Alberto Ibarguen, publisher of The Herald, wonders, however, if South Florida's Hispanic papers "have the staying power of a place like New York City," where he once worked for New York Newsday. Many come and go.

"This community changes itself faster than New York," Ibarguen said. "People in New York have longer histories, whether they are Irish, Jewish or African American, and their papers have a much longer history than Miami papers."

Papers serving the Cuban community, 28 percent of Hispanics, dominate in South Florida.

There are more than 30 regular weeklies and biweeklies in locales like Hialeah and Sweetwater. Others appear only as a partisan press during elections, when candidates need a way of reaching voters. These periodiquitos (little papers) are often delivered in bundles out of the trunks of cars that pull up to grocery stores and street corners.

Some free weeklies are aimed at the entire Hispanic community, a new trend.

## RUNNING THE GAMUT

They include the 28-page El Noticiero in Broward County, circulation 15,000, which specializes in giving immigrants practical advice about how to live in America, and the entertainment-loaded El Popular of Miami-Dade, launched in 1998, with a 40,000 to 50,000 circulation, whose latest issue has Madonna on the cover.

But most Spanish-language publications are geared to nationality.

There are four papers for Dominicans, for example, and three for Argentines. Venezuelans and Colombians have two huge papers each.

Why four for a Miami-Dade community of only 36,500 Dominicans?

"We are the kind of people who will pay to get their picture on the front page," said Fernando Almenzar, who took a job with Univision Online after his four-page paper, El Dominicano, folded.

At least one Dominican, Virgilio Garcia, has started a digital paper at [quisqueyaUSA.com](http://quisqueyaUSA.com).

"My idea was for Dominicans who get online two or three times a week and who want news from home but also want to know about events affecting us in South Florida," Garcia said.

## ARGENTINE APPETITE

Emilio Yahn, publisher of Argentina Hoy, was a newspaperman in Buenos Aires who saw a need for yet a third paper for his 33,000 countrymen in Florida.

The front page of his paper is a blur of headlines: soccer, Argentina's economic problems and U.S. immigration reform. The back page features a woman in a bikini pitching "Pampa Motors Inc. Tu amigo" on Miami's Southwest Eighth Street.

"After 20 issues, I am very happy to be here," he said.

Prosperous Brazilians support eight papers, some as fat as 84 pages, jammed with sports, show biz and photos depicting members of the 41,000-strong Brazilian community in Florida living it up at parties.

Zigomar Vuelma, publisher of Fort Lauderdale's weekly Gazeta, which circulates 15,000 copies, said his paper is the state's second oldest Portuguese-language paper. It has become such a business success that in November he intends to revive the Italian-language La Gazzetta, which folded 14 months ago. His goal for the Italian paper: 10,000 copies.

## BEYOND U.S. BORDERS

Vuelma is pushing out beyond Florida to the more than 184,000 Brazilians across the United States. He is shipping 5,000 copies by UPS to the Brazilian capital, Brasilia.

"The president of Brazil reads our paper. I know this for a fact," he claimed. "People want to know what is happening here."

Marco Laureti is co-publisher of the rival Brazilian biweekly Florida Review, with more than 15,000 circulation. His paper is loaded with entertainment news and many photos of scantily clad Brazilian women. Pages in the Brasilia Urgente section, however, discuss news from Brazil in brief.

Laureti wonders if one day there may be a national Latino daily. He did a test marketing of a Portuguese language daily from 1993-94, but \$500,000 later the project folded. Although Florida Review may go weekly, he said, "Nowadays, with TV and the Internet, no one is going to pick up a paper to read news."

The idea of targeting several nationalities has also spilled over into the Asian community.

One new paper, the English-language Asiana Post, has 5,000 readers. A second -- the International Asian American -- is on its way, each copy featuring seven languages including Chinese, English, Hindi, Korean, Tagalog, Thai and Urdu, says Winnie Tang, who serves on the paper's advisory board.

#### STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

It's a reflection of the need for the rapidly growing Asian community to forge an alliance, Tang said. Strength in numbers means political clout.

The number of Asian papers is expanding. Two are Korean, five are Chinese, three are in Vietnamese, and there is at least one each in Japanese, Thai and Iranian. Several are printed in the South Asian languages of Urdu, Hindi, Gujarati and in Arabic.

Annie Liu, a correspondent in the Chinese-language World Journal bureau in Davie, says 8,000 of the paper's 400,000 daily copies are sold in South Florida. Three times a week, she said, the New York City-based paper publishes a Florida edition dealing with "anything that happens to the Chinese here, but also Florida news, like the presidential elections."

Joel Cruz, a contributing writer at Basta Pinoy (Only Filipinos), a 32-page monthly published in Pompano Beach for Florida's 41,000 Filipinos, says the free paper has won 20,100 readers in only two years.

"Our need was growing," Cruz said. "We didn't have a way to be informed . . . or even any way of keeping touch with our homeland."

He said the founder of the paper, Maria Rosario Barrameda, first started Basta Pinoy to serve the many Filipinos working on cruise ships. But the paper also made an impact among Filipino professionals.

"We tried to get our news into the mainstream press," Cruz said. "But everyone totally ignored us. So we decided to do it ourselves."