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**AWARD AMOUNT: $6,000**

Visualizing Dominican Blackness: Digital Media Infrastructures and Insurgent Black Consciousness in Santo Domingo

The SVA Robert Lemelson Fellowship funds have allowed me to: (1) participate in a film course at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts (Summer 2017); (2) plan an extended research trip to the Dominican Republic during the summer of 2018; and (3) to purchase the materials necessary for my training in semiotic anthropology (Fall Semester 2018). In May and June of 2017, I participated in an introductory documentary film course at the Tisch School of the Arts. This course served as my introduction to documentary filmmaking and was a required component for my certificate program in Culture and Media. The funds from the Fellowship allowed me to purchase equipment insurance and a hard drive to store my footage. After my film course experience, I used part of the research funds to cover the cost of materials for a Semiotics course with Professor Sonia Das in the Fall of 2017. I purchased class reading materials as well as several key texts in the field of semiotic anthropology. I used a portion of the funds for travel and accommodations for the 2017 American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting where I presented a paper about my preliminary research about the politics of race, gendered presentation and value production at a natural hair salon in the Dominican Republic. I used part of the funds to secure travel and accommodations in the Dominican Republic for the summer of 2018. In the summer of 2018, I will begin the archival research portions of my dissertation project, ahead of my grant writing season in the 2018-2019...
school year. I will be documenting and examining the writings and visual media production of a small group of Dominican scholars who dedicated themselves to researching, documenting and vindicating African heritage in the Dominican Republic from 1960 to 1990. I will be conducting oral history interviews with the living members of this countercultural movement of “new wave” scholars and mapping the networks of production and distribution of the visual media that they created and curated alongside their ethnological, folkloric and anthropological research of African heritage in the Dominican Republic. At the same time, I will continue to conduct ethnographic research in the salon space that is the primary site of my dissertation research (Miss Rizos Salon). I will be introducing documentary filming into my ethnographic analysis of the day to day activities of the salon. Similarly, I will be expanding my network to include other aesthetic professionals and Black “image brokers” (Gursel 2016) in Santo Domingo by shadowing them in their day to day media-related activities and filming/photographing them at work.

Testimonial about Benefits of Fellowship

As an anthropologist and documentary filmmaker in training seeking to combine these two forms of data collection and artistry, the SVA Robert Lemelson Foundation fellowship has been crucial in allowing me to travel to the field and to purchase key texts and documentary film equipment. As my project develops, I appreciate the ability to sustain relationships with my key informants due to my presence in the field (even if for short periods of time) each summer. The fellowship has allowed me to begin the archival components of my research early, an invaluable thing given that I am working with sources that are scattered in the personal and institutional archives of a cohort of scholars whose research predates and historicizes the contemporary interest in African heritage and Black identity in the Dominican Republic that I document in my ethnography. I am similarly grateful for the possibility of purchasing my own film equipment, a privilege for a young documentary filmmaker and visual anthropologist.