



**Dominican Republic: Development and Environment**  
**Summer Institute for Educators**  
**Thursday, July 14<sup>th</sup>, 9:00 – 10:30 a.m.**

**Moderator:**

**José Martínez Brito**

*Executive Project Coordinator, Fundación Global Democracia y Desarrollo (FUNGLODE)*

José Martínez Brito has held positions in the Ministry of Foreign Relations and in the Embassies of the Dominican Republic in France and Germany from 2007 to 2009. He also coordinated the Project for the Modernization and Strengthening of the Senate for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and has served as a political advisor for the Congressional Legislative branches. His most recent Congressional work was as the coordinator of the legal team for the National Assembly during the constitutional reform of 2010. He also served as the coordinator of the legislative department of the Dominican Political Observatory (OPD) of FUNGLODE, and for 2 years was the Secretary General of the youth movement of the Social Democratic Revolutionary party. He currently serves as a political strategist for one of the 2012 Presidential candidates. Martínez Brito has also held positions in the Supreme Court, various private law offices and has served as the President of a number of student organizations. He has a degree in Law from the Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra (PUCMM) in the Dominican Republic.

**Presenters:**

**Patricia Thorndike Suriel**

*Director, The Mariposa Foundation*

In 1992 Muriel founded Iguana Mama Mountain Bike and Adventure tours, an eco-tourism company that helped put the Dominican Republic on the map as an international adventure destination. Offering her clients discounts up to 25%, if they donated children's books in Spanish; Suriel was able to build three small libraries at local schools. The building of these libraries led to the founding of her first "not for profit" in 1999, "The Friends of the DR." In 2002, with Suriel at the helm, this same organization moved into working full time and became the Dominican Republic Mentoring And Education project, also known as the DREAM project. In the winter of 2009, Suriel began to develop the concept that would become the Mariposa DR foundation, which was granted 501(c) 3 status in October 2009.

**Katherine Cantrell**

*Cultural Attaché*

*Centro Franklin, Public Affairs Section of the United States Embassy in the Dominican Republic*

In the position of Cultural Attaché for more than 2 years, Katherine Cantrell manages the broad portfolio of academic and cultural affairs of the United States Embassy in Santo Domingo. Katherine Cantrell joined the Department of State in 2010, having previously worked as Program Coordinator in the Office of International Programs at Texas A & M, Texas, where she graduated. She also taught bilingual second grade in public school the year after completing her thesis. Mrs. Cantrell received a Master's degree in International Affairs and a BA in Languages , with a focus in Spanish, both from the University of Texas A & M. The Cultural Section of Centro Franklin manages a wide range of educational, cultural and professional exchange programs focused on issues of bilateral interest that both support American foreign policy objectives, and address local development goals. Management of the prestigious Fulbright and Humphrey programs assistance to English-language teaching initiatives outside the U.S. Embassy, and promotion of professional institutions within the United States is all done through the Cultural Section.

**Dora P. Plavetic**

*Program Office Chief, USAID Dominican Republic*

Since June 2010 Plavetic has directed the Program Office and manages two U.S. Direct Hires and six Foreign Service Nationals for USAID Dominican Republic. Before assuming this position she served as Deputy Program Officer from her arrival in the country in September 2008. For the past two years Dora has backstopped the Economic Growth Team, managed the Living Museums in the Sea - Captain William Kidd Project with Indiana University and served as the Gender point of contact for the Mission. Her first overseas tour with USAID was in Ghana from June 2006 to June 2008, where she directed the Food for Peace Program and was Deputy Program Officer. Ms. Plavetic has over 16 years of international working experience in the Balkans and Latin America with organizations like the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, International Rescue Committee, USA for UNHCR, World Relief, and Croatian Democracy Project. Ms. Plavetic also worked as a Personal Service Contractor with USAID/Montenegro's Democracy Office.

**Stervins Alexis**

*Consultant, Batey Relief Alliance (BRA Dominicana)*

Dr. Alexis is a civil engineer with a PhD in Environment, Global Change and Sustainable Development from the University of Alcala in Madrid, Spain. For over a decade and a half he has worked in design, management and monitoring plans, programs and regional development projects, local and rural development of social infrastructure and management of natural resources. He has participated in several consultancy studies on the effects of climate in Central America, the Dominican Republic and Haiti. In addition, Dr. Alexis has consulted on research projects on tropical and island ecosystems with different universities in Madrid and the Higher Council for Scientific Research (CSIC) in Spain, as well as on several projects funded by international institutions, such as the European Union, the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECI), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Dutch Cooperation (ICCO, Novib, Woord & Daad, Cordaid), the United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the ministries of Education and Environment of the Spanish Government and others.

**Gerald McElroy**

*Field Director, Yspaniola*

Gerald graduated in 2009 from Yale University with majors in French and International Studies, with a special focus on Latin America and the Caribbean. During his studies, he conducted research projects in Cuba, Argentina and France, which culminated in two final theses: one on the relations between Cuba and China, and one on integration problems in the slums of Paris. At Yale, he served as President in the student organization "Yspaniola," which has since become a nonprofit organization whose purpose is to provide sustainable solutions to underserved communities of Dominicans and Haitians. After more than a year working in Paris, he returned to the Dominican Republic in November 2010 as a Fulbright scholar researching the implementation of microbusiness projects in bateyes, under the tutelage of Professor Yolanda Leon, Grupo Jaragua, and Technological Institute of Santo Domingo. In recent months, his work at Yspaniola has consisted of implementing: a Leadership Institute, a microbusiness, a college scholarship program, and a service-learning programs. He also conducts research and is a fluent speaker of Spanish, French and Haitian Creole.