The second largest island in the Caribbean is called Hispaniola. Hispaniola is split into two countries: Haiti and the Dominican Republic. From 1930 through 1961, the Dominican Republic was ruled by a brutal dictator president named Rafael Trujillo. Trujillo punished people who spoke out against him by kidnapping and killing them. The Dominican people were constantly fearful for their lives. Some of the most important people resisting Trujillo were the Mirabel sisters.

The Mirabel family had four daughters, three of whom were activists against Trujillo: Patria born in 1924, Minerva born in 1926, and Maria Teresa born in 1935. When the Mirabel sisters saw how badly Trujillo was treating citizens of the Dominican
Republic, they began to fight back and stand up to Trujillo. Patria, Minerva, and Maria Teresa created and distributed pamphlets speaking out against Trujillo. They also created homemade firecrackers at their kitchen table that they could use against Trujillo and his secret police. Despite Trujillo taking all of their family’s money and putting their husbands in jail, the Mirabel sisters kept doing what they could to encourage people to resist Trujillo. The sisters became known as *las mariposas* (which means “the butterflies” in Spanish) and were famous throughout the country for their efforts.

When Trujillo had enough of the Mirabel sisters, he ordered his secret police to kill them. On November 25, 1960, the secret police killed the three Mirabel sisters and pretended it was a car accident. However, the citizens of the Dominican Republic knew what really happened. People were so angry about their deaths that they rose up against Trujillo the next year and removed him from power. Today, the Mirabel sisters are honored around the whole country for the role they played in ending Trujillo’s reign. Almost every town in the Dominican Republic has a school or street named after them.
Around the world on November 25 (the day they died), countries celebrate the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women in their honor.