

Notice of Doctoral Dissertation Examination

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PhD Global Governance

“Fanm Pa Chita: Mobilities, Intimate Labour and Political Subjectivities among Haitian Women on the Move”

Thurs November 28th
8:00 AM

Balsillie School of
International Affairs,
Room 1-23

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation asks: how does intimate labour interact with the mobility and political subjectivities of Haitian migrant women and women of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic (DR)? It answers this question in three specific ways. First, it explains the relationship between intimate labour and the spatial trajectories of women of Haitian ancestry who work as domestic workers. Second, it examines how the interaction between intimate labour and human mobility plays out in the Dominican border regime. Third, it explains how these subaltern women act politically in the midst of the intersections between borders, mobilities, and intimacy.

The dissertation proposes the use of ‘intimate-mobility entanglement’ as a concept that explains the deep inter-relation between intimacy and human mobility. Intimate labour requires a certain immobility, while it also affects the pace and motivations of mobility. In tandem, mobilities may set the conditions under which social reproduction occurs and intimate labour is provided. The dissertation argues that the intimate-mobility entanglement has relevant geopolitical implications that affect the ways borders function, demonstrating, among others, some of the ways sexual violence is used as a form of control that is enacted by diverse state (i.e. border officers) and non-state (i.e. smugglers) actors and affect

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black women of Haitian ancestry. The dissertation identifies two ways of acting politically in the midst of the intimate-mobility entanglement. It argues that embodied struggles for survival and bodily integrity are a primary form of political claim-making that coexists with discursive claim-making practices such as labour union activism, and local-international grassroots organizing by and for subjects that experience precarity of status.

These contributions are the result of fourteen weeks of fieldwork, and qualitative analysis based on ethnographic methods that include participant observation, interviews, and focus groups with 165 domestic workers, migrants and activists in the DR, in communities located in 4 different geographic regions of the DR including the Haiti-DR border strip. One of the main contributions of the dissertation is to bridge scholarship on transnational social reproduction (which is mostly grounded on global political economy, feminist geography, and international political sociology) with scholarship on migrant studies, geopolitics, and the mobilities paradigm. In particular it contributes to Hyndman's embodied mobilities, and Sheller's reproductive mobilities, by emphasizing the centrality of the sustenance of life to why we move, how we do it, as well as how mobility is controlled.

Thinking about the intimate-mobility entanglement brings livelihoods to the forefront of international relations and identifies existing ways of acting politically in a global context where new forms of differential inclusion and gradations of belonging continue to emerge. This research may be further developed by looking at the relationship between sexual and reproductive health, human mobility, and border politics in contexts of forced migration and denationalization.

Dissertation will be on deposit in the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and available for perusal.

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