

**THE INDENTURED MOBILITY OF MIGRANT WOMEN:  
HOW GENDERED PROTECTIONIST LAWS LEAD  
FILIPINA HOSTESSES TO FORCED SEXUAL LABOR**

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In 2004, the U.S. State Department labeled migrant Filipina hostesses as sex trafficked persons. As the U.S. *Trafficking in persons report* (U.S. Department of State, 2004: 14) claimed,

On arrival at their destination, victims are stripped of their passports and travel documents and forced into situations of sexual exploitation or bonded servitude. . . . For example, it is reported that Japan issued 55,000 entertainer visas to women from the Philippines in 2003, many of whom are suspected of having become trafficked victims.

The phrase “trafficked victims” conjures up images of people who are held against their will, shackled, and unfree. Yet the definition of trafficking that has been advanced by the United Nations is more specific but at the same time much broader than enslavement. Trafficking consists of a three-part process: it must entail, first, the transportation of an individual; second, transportation that takes place under conditions of fraud, force, or deception; and third, transportation for the purpose of exploitation, with exploitation broadly meaning sexual exploitation, enslavement, forced labor, or servitude (United Nations, 2000: Article 3).

The identification of migrant Filipina hostesses as trafficked persons has directly affected their migration, resulting for one thing in a drastic decline in their numbers by around 90%, from more than 82,000 in 2004 to 8,607 by 2006 (Parreñas, 2010). While many would see this decline as a victory in the war on trafficking, I actually see this as a step backward for Filipino women. It has

threatened the advancements that they have made in labor migration, limiting their employment options and forcing their return to the Philippines. Identifying migrant Filipina hostesses as trafficked persons inadvertently results in their disempowerment, because it calls for their return migration. As trafficked persons, they are seen as victims of a crime as well as unwilling participants in their employment. Anti-trafficking pundits reason that these conditions justify the call for their rescue. However, migrant Filipina hostesses see rescue as a wrong solution that does nothing but eliminate their source of income.

In this essay, I would like to reconsider how we understand the subjugation of migrant Filipina hostesses, calling attention to their state of unfreedom but rejecting the view of this condition as one of trafficking. I propose that we think, instead, of their migration as constituting not trafficking but *indentured mobility*. Indentured mobility refers to the process of migration as producing economic mobility at the cost of the migrant becoming an unfree laborer. The term indentured mobility acknowledges the state of unfreedom of migrant hostesses, specifically their relationship of servitude to middleman brokers, but at the same time it recognizes the compliance of migrant hostesses and their conscious decision to place themselves in a position of indenture upon migration.

This essay begins with an illustration of the state of unfreedom of migrant Filipina hostesses, showing how their process of migration places them in relationships of indenture with various middleman brokers in both the Philippines and Japan. Then, it situates the experiences of migrant Filipina hostesses in the framework of human trafficking, illustrating the dangers of identifying Filipina hostesses as trafficked victims and presenting an alternative framework for understanding their subjugation as one of indentured mobility. The essay ends with recommendations for future research on labor migration in the 21st century.

### THE QUESTION OF TRAFFICKING

Let me now make the case for my belief that the identification of Filipina hostesses as trafficked persons has not helped them but instead hurt them as migrant women. I want to start with the story of Amy, one of the many hostesses I met in Japan while I was doing fieldwork for nine months in 2005 and 2006. I intentionally share the story of Amy, because as an underage hostess she technically fits the U.S. definition of a “severely trafficked person.” According to the U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, otherwise known as TVPA, “The term ‘sex trafficking’ means the recruitment, harboring, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act.”

This means, then, that regardless of consent, under this definition, a migrant worker who engages in prostitution will be considered a sex trafficked person. But the United States does distinguish a sex trafficked person from a severely trafficked one. According to TVPA, “severe forms of trafficking” refer to “(A) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or

coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such acts has not attained 18 years of age; or (B) the recruitment, harboring, transportation provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.”

Amy is a first-time contract worker in Japan who turned 18 years old not long after I met her. She started working as an entertainer, that is, a hostess, in Japan when she was 17 years old. Amy fraudulently entered Japan with the use of her older sister’s passport, but no one coerced or forced her to do so. On the contrary, it was Amy who was quite determined to venture to Japan before she turned 18 years old. She did so in order to assist her parents financially.

Amy grew up as a member of the working poor in Manila. Her now 56-year-old mother has been a homemaker for as long as Amy can remember, and her father, whose age she does not know, hardly makes ends meet with his daily earnings as the driver of a passenger jeepney, a jitney bus used in the Philippines for public transportation. Like Amy, most hostesses are from the poorest of the poor in the Philippines. They pursue work in Japan in order to escape their life of dire poverty. Many grew up picking through garbage for food, selling cigarette sticks in bus terminals, and cleaning car windows in heavy traffic. Amy peddled pastries at a bus stop. According to Amy, the only way she could have escaped her life of extreme poverty in the Philippines was to pursue hostess work in Japan. Without financial resources, most other migrant employment opportunities were closed to her. For instance, she could not afford the US\$3,000 to US\$5,000 fee she would have needed to secure employment as a migrant domestic worker in Hong Kong or Taiwan. Yet even if she could have afforded the fees imposed on domestic workers, Amy had no desire to become a domestic worker, seeing such work as more difficult and dangerous than hostess work. For Amy, domestic work is made more dangerous by the fact that one has to work in the isolated space of a private home.

Securing a job as a hostess in Japan—while desirable—is difficult. Prospective migrant hostesses must undergo a highly selective audition in which they have to compete with around 200 other women for a handful of slots. At the auditions, which are held by various promotion agencies in Manila, prospective hostesses are judged not on the merits of their talent but instead on their looks. Prospective migrants do not have to sing or dance at an audition but must instead look more attractive than the hundreds of other women around them. The local staff of the agency along with a Japanese job recruiter physically evaluate prospective migrants at an audition, where women parade in front of them in a straight line as they would in a beauty contest.

Amy had to undergo an audition at least three times before she was finally chosen to go to Japan. She describes her slew of auditions as a disheartening process, one in which she had to undergo a series of rejections that she managed

to survive only with the emotional support of the woman who had designated herself as Amy's "talent manager." Amy's manager basically acted as her job coach, teaching her how to dress and apply makeup. In exchange for her services, the manager would receive at least 50% of Amy's salary, not only for Amy's first contract but apparently for her next six. Upon signing a contract agreeing to be one of her manager's "talents," Amy also had to agree to the completion of six contracts in the next few years. However, securing six job contracts is not easy. Neither is it automatic. Unless Amy is requested by her club to return for another six-month contract, she will have to go through another round of auditions in various promotion agencies.

It is not only Amy's manager in the Philippines that is entitled to a portion of her salary. Also entitled to a portion are the promotion agency in the Philippines and the job recruiter, otherwise known as the promoter, in Japan. Between the two of them, they can legally obtain up to 40% of Amy's salary. For a number of reasons, a club in Japan technically cannot employ Amy; as I will explain later, the promotion agency in the Philippines and the job recruiter in Japan are her official employers. In most cases, a club will pay the job recruiter and the promotion agency the salary of entertainers such as Amy prior to their arrival in Japan, but the recruiter and the agency in turn will withhold this salary from the entertainer until her very last day of work. In fact, Amy has yet to be paid any of her earnings although she has already worked in Japan for at least four months. Amy will not be paid the wages given by the club owner to her job recruiter until her very last day on the job. To survive, she lives off the tips she receives from customers, the commissions she receives every 10 days for her sales, and a daily food allowance of 500 yen, or US\$5, that she receives from the club owner. Some advocacy workers in Manila have said that the practice of withholding wages forces entertainers such as Amy into prostitution. Also making Amy vulnerable to forced labor is the fact that the job recruiter in Japan has confiscated her passport. He told Amy that he will return the passport to her at the airport after she completes her six-month contract. Without her passport, Amy is discouraged, even prevented, from leaving her job. Yet Amy likes her job and has no qualms about having her passport withheld. However, she does realize that being without a passport could pose a problem if she ever wants to quit her job prior to the end of her contract.

Amy earns far below the minimum wage of 200,000 yen per month, approximately US\$2,000, for migrant workers with an entertainer visa. Instead, she earns only \$500 per month, which is the average salary for first-time contract workers. Like Amy, most migrant entertainers from the Philippines cannot explain the precise distribution of their earnings, but they know that various middlemen shave off a portion of their earnings as a commission for their services. Disgruntled by her small salary, Amy admits to selectively engaging in paid sex with customers. She has sex only with customers she finds physically attractive.

Amy tells me she does this in order to guarantee that she will amass some financial gain from her time in Japan. She knows that relying solely on her salary will not get her far. Interestingly, some of Amy's coworkers ostracize her, as most of them will not engage in commercial sex, suggesting that Amy's actions are the exception and not the norm among Filipina hostesses in Japan. Amy's actions do raise the question of whether or not she is a "severely trafficked person" as defined by the United States, not only because she is underage but also because it was her salary reductions that pushed her into sex work in the first place. Some would say yes, but Amy herself would say no and insist that it was her own choice to engage in commercial sex.

Without doubt, entertainers such as Amy should be given the right to quit their jobs when they wish to do so. They are without this right because of the stranglehold of middlemen brokers over their migration process. What explains this stranglehold? Why can't clubs in Japan directly employ entertainers such as Amy? How can middlemen brokers withhold Amy's salary until her last day, when they receive all of Amy's salary in advance prior to her arrival in Japan? Why are middlemen brokers in Japan and the Philippines entitled to at least three-quarters of her salary? Let me address these questions by explaining the migration process for entertainers.

### THE PROCESS OF MIGRATION

As we see in the case of Amy, the migration of Filipina hostesses to Japan is not as simple as going from A to B; instead it involves various middlemen brokers. The presence of most of these brokers is legally mandated by the Philippines, which put in place certain laws designed to protect hostesses while they are in Japan. In her cross-country study of migration policies in the sending countries of Asia, sociologist Nana Oishi (2005) noted that "value laden policies" control the mobility of women. Countries limit the kinds of jobs women can pursue, impose age requirements on certain jobs, and require the authorization of men for women to leave the country. In contrast, the sending countries do not make similar regulations with regard to the emigration of men. In similar fashion, the Philippines regulates the movement of migrant entertainers to Japan and controls them with what we might call "value laden policies" but what I prefer to call "gendered protectionist policies," as they are not just value driven but are instituted to protect women from harm when they venture into the migrant labor market. These policies include, among others: (1) the requirement that the labor conditions of migrant entertainers in Japan abide by the labor standards existing in the Philippines; and (2) the requirement that prospective Japanese employers hire at least 50 entertainers per year. Both policies are intended to discourage the abuse of migrant entertainers in the workplace, the latter policy supposedly preventing entertainers from landing in fly-by-night operations, but the policies ironically leave them vulnerable to abuse. Let me explain.

To ensure that clubs in Japan comply with Philippine labor laws, the Philippine government requires prospective migrants to arrange their employment through a local promotion agency in the Philippines, one that has been granted a Special Power of Attorney by the prospective Japanese employer. This means that club owners cannot hire entertainers directly. The Philippine government requires a local promotion agency to broker the labor migration of the prospective migrant, for the supposed purpose of protecting the migrant from unscrupulous employers in Japan. In recent years, the Philippine government has accredited 322 promotion agencies, not only to train and deploy but more importantly to employ migrant entertainers in Japan (Villalba, 2002). Accreditation to become a promotion agency requires initial capital of 2,000,000 pesos (approximately US\$50,000), the operation of a TESDA-certified training program, and, finally, proof of a Special Power of Attorney granted by a Japanese employer to hire on its behalf a minimum of 50 overseas performance artists from the Philippines per year (Philippines Overseas Employment Administration, 1997). With regard to migrant entertainers, “academic training” interestingly refers not to their aptitude but instead to their moral values. According to Villalba (2002: 24–25), “academic training is designed primarily to help dancers in their early twenties, who perform on stage in a club or hotel from evening till dawn, to manage their unique and hazardous work environment. Contents of the academic training include positive and appropriate values, behavior and attitudes development, communication and language skills, good grooming and social graces, spirituality and human relations. In other words, women are taught to ‘entertain’ the male audience without sexual services.”

In Japan, most clubs employ no more than 25 overseas performance artists, which consequently means that most clubs *cannot* directly hire prospective migrants, even through a promotion agency in Manila. To circumvent the requirement of a minimum of 50 hires per annum, hostess clubs have resourcefully turned to Japanese middlemen, that is, job recruiters or promoters. Working as additional middlemen, such persons will hire at least 50 entertainers in the Philippines per year and then assign them to work in different clubs in Japan, thus operating like the “body shops” that supply Indian information technology workers to businesses in the United States and Australia (Biao, 2006).

In his book *Global “Body Shopping,”* Xiang Biao (2006) describes “body shopping” as a system of subcontracting in high technology. Body shops function like temporary placement agencies that assign migrant employees to companies on a short-term basis. Under this arrangement, the body shop remains the official employer of the workers, and as such maintains responsibility for their temporary work visas, salary, and accommodations. A similar scenario of subcontracting occurs in the nightlife industry of Japan. In the case of Japan, foreign entertainers are not employed by the clubs where they work but technically by the middlemen, that is, the promotion agency and job recruiter, who place them at a club in Japan. On behalf of the promotion agency in the Philippines, the job recruiter is

responsible for finding an eligible place of employment for the entertainer, providing the entertainer with transportation to and from the airport at the beginning and end of her contract, and escorting her to the club officially listed as her workplace at the Office of Immigration in Japan. Not all clubs are eligible to hire foreign entertainers. For instance, eligibility is restricted to clubs with, among other things, a stage, five full-time employees, and an operator with three years of experience working with foreign entertainers. For a fuller description of the guidelines for the recruitment of foreign entertainers into Japan, see chapter 1 of Parreñas (2011).

Middlemen brokers ironically emerge from the impulse of the state to morally protect overseas performance artists from harm. However, the state's impulse to protect entertainers results in their unequal dependence on brokers, who, instead of overseeing the legality of entertainers' migration, actually enforce the legality of their abuse and indenture.

### **THE VULNERABILITY OF MIGRATION: INDENTURE**

Middlemen brokers bind entertainers to a relation of indenture in many ways. First, job recruiters do not compensate entertainers for their labor until their very last day in Japan, literally at the airport soon after they check in for their return flight to the Philippines. In other words, they do not financially compensate entertainers for their labor during the entire time they are contract workers in Japan. The withholding of wages by promoters (who notably have been paid in advance by club owners) not only deters entertainers from quitting prior to the end of their six-month contract but also puts them at risk of never getting paid or being unable to contest any questionable wage deductions imposed on them. Second, job placers deter entertainers from quitting by withholding their passports and thus restricting them to an alien registration card as their only proof of legal residency in Japan. Third, entertainers must sign a legal document with the promotion agency in the Philippines prior to their departure, stipulating that they will incur the severe penalty of 150,000 to 200,000 pesos, approximately US\$3,000 to 4,000, if they renege on their contract in Japan; the low end of this penalty reflects an amount equal to the cumulative earnings of most entertainers completing a six-month contract (Parreñas, 2008, 2011). Amy for one had to sign such a document. Promotion agencies hold entertainers accountable with regard to this fee by having them sign a blank check prior to their departure and/or by collecting the funds from their families in the Philippines.

Why do promotion agencies wish to deter hostesses from quitting? Basically, they do not want to lose their commission from the labor of hostesses. Also, they do not want to have to pay back to the club the hostess's salary that the club already gave to the agency prior to the arrival of the migrant hostess in Japan.

The way the system works is this. A club wishes to hire a migrant hostess, but cannot. The club has to go through a broker to do so. The club pays this broker the entire salary of the hostess before she arrives at the club. This broker—who does not want to give this money back to the club—withholds the salary of the hostess until her last day in Japan so that she will not quit.

In addition to the promotion agency, it is also the talent manager who binds entertainers to a relationship of indenture. Prior to escorting an entertainer to her first audition, the talent manager usually forces the prospective migrant into a contract stipulating that the manager will receive a sizable percentage of the migrant's earnings in the next three to five years.

One could argue that middlemen brokers, by indenturing migrant entertainers, force them to abdicate their freedom when they migrate to Japan. When migrant entertainers choose to enter an indentured relationship with brokers and are stripped of the freedom to quit their jobs, one could argue that they are technically agreeing to a slave contract. Many would argue that indenture, regardless of context, is nothing but indenture. As John Stuart Mill, quoted in Pateman (1988: 74–75), argues, “he abdicates his liberty; he foregoes any future use of it beyond that single act. He therefore defeats, in his own case, the very purpose which is the justification of allowing him to dispose of himself. . . . The principle of freedom cannot require that he should be free not to be free. It is not freedom, to be allowed to alienate his freedom.” Following Mill's argument, the abdication of freedom when agreeing to indenture translates to enslavement.

However, prospective migrants might see advantages, particularly in terms of financial mobility, provided by their relationship of indenture with middlemen brokers. This mobility would not be available to the migrants if they were to stay in the Philippines, where they would face a life of abject poverty. Choosing between indenture and poverty, migrant entertainers evaluate their limited choices and make the “autonomous” decision to agree to a relationship of indenture with middlemen brokers. In examining the position of migrant Filipina entertainers, we need to recognize that the entertainer is a freely consenting person who has acted of her own will. Saba Mahmood (2005) makes a similar assertion in her theorizations of women who choose to reject secularism in Egypt. A Filipina entertainer has made the illiberal choice as an autonomous person to become indentured and in so doing “has accepted subservience” (Christman, 2001: 206) for a few years in exchange for the opportunity to earn money in Japan. While many of us would be uncomfortable with her illiberal choice to become subservient, we cannot deny that she had the attributes of autonomy when making that decision—“normal cognitive function, basic perceptual and inferential abilities, and those reasoning capacities considered basic to elementary thinking and reflection” (Christman, 2001: 201). As an autonomous person, a migrant Filipina entertainer is one who *freely* chooses to sign herself into a relationship of indenture with middlemen brokers.



## CONCLUSION

I have tried to illustrate the vulnerability of migrant Filipina entertainers to what we know as human trafficking. This vulnerability has resulted in their identification as trafficked persons and consequently has led to a drastic reduction in their numbers. In other words, it has led to their “rescue,” which is the universal solution advocated by the United States in its war on trafficking. The United States—in its war on trafficking—has imposed a top-down universal solution—forcing countries to implement the solutions of the 3Ps and the 3Rs. The 3Rs are “rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration,” and the 3Ps are “prosecution, protection, and prevention.” Countries that fail to design a solution to trafficking that abides by these two models are presented as pariahs in the annual *Trafficking in persons report* released by the U.S. Department of State.

The drastic decline in the number of Filipina hostesses surely suggests a victory in the war on trafficking. However, many of the Filipina entertainers I met in Japan resent the intervention of the United States in their lives and reject the “rescue” solution that has been imposed on them. For them, working in Japan has been their sole path of economic mobility from their life of abject poverty in the Philippines. In their perspective, their identification as trafficked persons and the consequent denial of their reentry to Japan has not constituted their rescue; instead it has resulted in the eradication of their occupation.

What do we make of these conflicting views? Without doubt, it forces us to revisit the construct of human trafficking and the “rescue” solution that has been advocated by most antitrafficking groups. Migration arguably strips migrant hostesses of their freedom and autonomy. Hostesses who enter Japan are subject to middlemen brokers who place them in a relationship of debt bondage, which in turn discourages them from quitting their job prior to the end of their contract. Middlemen brokers withhold their passports in both the country of origin and the country of destination, retain their salaries until the end of their three- or six-month contract, and penalize those who quit before their contract ends. All of these examples suggest that migrant Filipina entertainers are nothing but trafficked persons. However, this “nothing but” perspective strips entertainers of their agency, fails to consider their choice to enter a relationship of indenture, and discounts the financial gains that they make, even as indentured persons.

Does indenture, however, automatically result in trafficking? Is it indicative of human trafficking? An indentured worker who wishes to quit her job but is unable to will constitute a trafficked person. But what if the indentured worker does not wish to quit her job? Is Amy, for instance, a trafficked person? We should acknowledge that vulnerability to trafficking does not always result in trafficking. If we are to recognize the vulnerability to trafficking of migrant entertainers, then the challenge for us is to construct policies that will increase their control over their labor and migration. Rescuing them and barring them from

their employment, the antitrafficking solutions currently in place, do not increase migrant entertainers' control. Instead, they merely strip migrant workers of their agency, reject the idea that hostess work is viable labor, and deny migrant Filipina workers the option to become hostesses in Japan. Rescue does nothing but disavow their identity as labor migrants.

While I have trouble with reducing our understanding of Filipina migration to Japan as one of trafficking, I do not think that we can simply call the Filipina hostesses "labor migrants." Doing so would disregard the severe structural constraints that hamper their autonomy in migration. The fact is that the binary categories we currently have for thinking about the migration of Filipina hostesses—either as free subjects (migrants) or enslaved subjects (trafficked persons)—fail to capture the complex dynamics of coercion and choice that are embodied in their labor migration experiences. We need to dismantle the binary framework that presents two separate forms of migratory flows and construct a middle ground that recognizes the agency of migrants without dismissing the severe structural constraints that may hamper their freedom and autonomy. The labor migration of Filipina hostesses inhabits a middle zone between human trafficking and labor migration, which I describe as a process of *indentured mobility*. This paradoxical position frames their labor migration as one of simultaneous progress and subjugation; the financial gains afforded by labor migration come at the expense of their freedom. This paradoxical position is also one of both coercion and choice; most migrant Filipina hostesses do not want to leave their situations, but if they did want to quit their jobs as entertainers or protect themselves from unscrupulous employers, they could not do so without facing criminalization as undocumented workers. The framework of *indentured mobility* provides a nuanced picture of the subjugation of Filipina hostesses as labor migrants, one that acknowledges their susceptibility to human rights violations but simultaneously rejects the prevailing discourse on human trafficking that paints hostesses as helpless victims in need of "rescue." Underlying the construction of trafficked persons as "victims" in need of rescue is the moralistic view that women must stay close to hearth and home so as to protect their femininity (Cheng, 2010). Laura Agustin (2007) argues that the conflation of migrant sex work and trafficking romanticizes female domesticity. Constructing migrant sex workers as trafficked victims in need of protection suggests that women migrate (i.e., leave the comforts of home) only when "pushed, obligated, coerced, or forced" (Agustin, 2007: 111).

*Indentured mobility*—labor migration under severe structural constraints—is a result of policies that limit the control of individuals over their labor migration. This is perhaps one of the more important points that I am making in this article. At the moment, various pundits present human trafficking as a problem of organized crime. An article on human trafficking that appeared in the *Miami Herald*, for example, cites a U.S. Homeland Security officer, who

claims that “This is organized crime where humans are used as products. We are talking about selling a person over and over and making large sums of money” (Burch, 2011). But the situation of migrant Filipina entertainers—whether one calls it indentured mobility or human trafficking—suggests that human trafficking is not a problem of organized crime but is instead a problem caused by stringent migration policies that strip migrants of control over their labor and migration. Gendered protectionist laws—as in the case of migrant Filipina entertainers—constitute one such set of laws that remove migrants’ control over their labor and migration. This tells us that abiding by the 3Rs, with their focus on rescue, and the 3Ps, which are centered on prosecution, will not solve the problem of human trafficking. Instead, what we need to do is revisit migration policies worldwide, including various exclusionary laws that limit migrant laborers to contract labor, and work toward implementing policies that ensure migrants retain greater control over their labor and migration. Human trafficking is not a problem of organized crime; it is a labor migration issue.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the topic of “human trafficking” has become a major international policy concern. This is despite the low count of actual persons identified as trafficked persons by the International Organization of Migration (IOM). For instance, the IOM database shows that less than 8,000 victims of trafficking were assisted by IOM missions in 26 countries between 1999 and 2005, which is significantly fewer than the 800,000 trafficked persons estimated by the United States (Andrijasevic, 2010). Labor and migration researchers should act on the public concern over human trafficking and pursue research projects that document the unfree condition of labor migrants the world over. We should no longer assume that migrants are free workers, meaning workers who are in a position to choose their employers or select their occupations after their migration. In fact, servitude is a prerequisite of migration for many labor migrants, as many are guest workers, meaning temporary labor migrants whose residency is conditional on their employment by a citizen sponsor. Today, we find guest workers throughout Asia, Europe, and the Americas. This is despite the end of the two most famous guest worker programs in recent history: the *gastarbeiter* program, which ushered in the postwar labor migration of Turks to Germany that lasted until the early 1970s (Castles, 1984) and the preceding *bracero* program, which facilitated the arrival of about 4.5 million Mexican workers who came to work in the agriculture, railroad, and construction industries in the United States between 1942 and 1964 (Ngai, 2005; Pitti, 2003). While we do not know the exact numbers of guest workers or temporary labor migrants, we know that the majority of economic migrants fall into this category. In fact, only a few nation-states allow economic migrants to enter as permanent residents: these include Australia, Canada, and the United States (Martin & Zurcher, 2008). How servitude shapes experiences of labor migration, whether servitude results

in forced labor, human trafficking, or indentured mobility, and, more importantly, what types of subjugation servitude imposes on labor migrants are questions that are ripe for research by scholars concerned with the status of workers in the global economy.

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