

Affective Publics - Lecture Series

Ulla Berg, Ph.D.:

The Affect of Deportation

AFFECTIVE SOCIETIES

Thursday, 3rd June

06.00 pm

online

[Meeting Link](#)
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Each year the United States government deports several hundred thousand migrants many of whom have significant family ties in the US and are long-standing members of local communities. This policy is met with both approving applause and scornful denunciation illustrating the complexity and polarization of current publics in the US and across the Americas. This talk explores the affect of deportation and proposes a nuanced examination of “affect” that foregrounds political economy and historical context as inseparable from the subjective complexity of racialized migrant populations, who both mobilize and are mobilized by global capitalist transformations and local neoliberal aspirations. I begin with a diachronic examination of how affective registers came to be constitutive and foundational in the US immigration debate and in the production of the figure of the deportable Latin American and Caribbean migrant. I then follow these constructions through the social process of deportation as they travel across international borders and digital spaces to significantly intersect with local constructions of citizenship, race, criminality, and social worth in migrants' countries of origin. Drawing on anthropological fieldwork among deported migrants in Peru and Ecuador and on critical and intersectional approaches to affect theory and the public sphere (in particular, my work with Ana Ramos-Zayas (2015, 2018) on affect and race), I show how affect drives the way that contemporary publics produce immobile subjects whose emotive dispositions are either flat, because they are “underperforming” or excessive because they are unable - or unwilling - to perform affectively commensurate with broader economic regimes. Finally, I contrast this discursive arena for and against deportation, with the radically distinct and unequal ways in which affective practices, emotive manifestations, and evaluations of personhood are experienced and lived among deported migrants in Latin America.



Ulla D. Berg is Associate Professor of Anthropology and Latino and Caribbean Studies at Rutgers University where she also directs the Rutgers Center for Latin American Studies (CLAS).

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