



MFJMCE FACULTY EU RESEARCH GRANT

Gender & Solidarity Networks among Transit Migrants to the European Union by Dr. Heide Castañeda



Dr. Heide Castañeda, Professor and Associate Chair, Dept. of Anthropology, University of South Florida

On August 24, the MFJMCE invited Dr. Heide Castañeda, Professor and Associate Chair, Department of Anthropology, University of South Florida, who was awarded with the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence Faculty Research grant 2020, to present the results of the fieldwork she conducted during Summer 2021. Dr. Markus Thiel held the online event. From MMC campus, numerous students could listen to our guest lecturer. The lecture was titled “Gender and Solidarity Networks among Transit Migrants to the European Union.”

In view of the rise of forced immobility in Morocco due to its geographical proximity to Europe and the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Castañeda asks about the implications of such a situation for EU migration policies. She highlighted that 700,000 Sub-Saharan Africans currently reside in Morocco while the EU has increasingly pressured the country to secure its borders and limit maritime passengers. The bilateral agreements between Morocco and Spain are critical in this regard. To address this issue, her qualitative research included participant observation and interviews with male and female sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco during summer 2021. Furthermore, Dr. Castañeda also interviewed migrant organizations and stakeholders from the Moroccan government,

social service agencies, and NGOs. In her work, she tackles various essential dimensions of this complex problem, including the role of migrant women in the area and the racial and religious dynamics underlying the issue.

Her migrant-centered approach to this space allows for a close understanding of how migrants create new forms of home, kinship, and social life. She concluded that the study provides insights into the formation of migrant networks of exchange and support in transit sites within a context shaped by postcolonialism, complex racial dynamics, and novel regional political demands. On the one hand, Dr. Castañeda’s research contributes to the growing literature on transit spaces, immobility, and migrant agency. On the other hand, her work raises several questions about the implications of this situation for the European Union.

The students who attended the conference engaged in a fruitful dialogue with Dr. Castañeda at the end of the event. They asked very interesting questions and appreciated her presentation.

By Ernesto Fiocchetto

▶ To view Dr. Castañeda’s bio, [click here](#)

▶ To view Dr. Castañeda’s PPT, [click here](#)