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FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT STAFF/POST GRADUATE SEMINAR SERIES

Beyond the “Women-and-children” Bias: Regendering Human Trafficking



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Global and regional
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The anti-trafficking agenda has faced at least two main criticisms – it privileges criminal justice over human rights and it focuses excessively on sexual exploitation and prostitution. Human trafficking has historically been linked with sexual exploitation of women and children, and despite attempts to broaden the scope, these associations have persisted. Scholars have called for new ways of framing trafficking which can effectively capture the complexities of this phenomenon and adequately represent the affected populations. This paper argues that an excessive focus on “women-and-children” victims precludes an examination of a wider cross-section of vulnerable populations. It proposes that a human security perspective that explores intersectional identities is best suited for studying human trafficking as it examines how different social categories intersect to produce insecurity and render certain groups vulnerable to various forms of exploitation – trafficking. Using the case of Haitians in the Dominican Republic the paper argues that race, gender and class operate as categories of discredit for these migrants who consequently find themselves susceptible to trafficking. Yet gendered conceptualizations of victims of trafficking exclude both Haitian men and women from antitrafficking initiatives. The regendering which this paper calls for, therefore, is an intersectional lens which would highlight different forms of trafficking and different groups of multiply marginalized people who are vulnerable to trafficking.

January 23, 2020 at 2:30 pm
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