

## Women on the Fast Track? Coloniality of Citizenship and Embodied Social Mobility\*

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The most recent Oxfam report entitled “Reward Work, Not Wealth” alerted the world to the fact that the year 2017 had seen the biggest increase of billionaires in history – at the incredible pace of one more every two days (Oxfam 2018). In one year, the very wealthy saw their fortunes grow by \$762 billion. This amount itself – how much richer the very rich became in the past twelve months – is seven times higher than the one needed to end extreme poverty worldwide. The current gap between the rich and the poor at the global level – maybe more appropriately termed an abyss – makes today’s world more unequal than it has been at any previous time in history (Reid-Henry 2015).

At the same time, wealth is disproportionately gendered – i.e., overwhelmingly male. Although the number of women on the Forbes World’s Billionaires list reached an all-time high in 2018 and their collective net worth outpaced the total gains of men and women for the past year, only 1 out of 10 billionaires worldwide are women and only 1.4 percent of them are first-generation billionaires (Forbes 2018, Bloomberg 2018). In turn, women own less than 2 percent of the world’s land, represent the majority of the world’s poorest, and provide \$10 trillion in unpaid care annually (Oxfam 2018). At both ends of the world wealth and income distribution, gender disparities explain a large part of the currently rising global economic inequalities.

The same is true for the possibilities of counteracting inequality and poverty. As the gaps in average incomes between countries have been increasing alongside the global gap between the rich and the poor, international migration has become one of the most effective strategies of upward mobility (Korzeniewicz/Moran 2009, Milanovic 2016, Shachar 2009, Reid-Smith 2015). Although more people migrate internationally within the Global South, rather than from the Global South to the Global North, accessing the territory and resources of a country relatively better-off than one’s country of birth or residence awards immediate economic benefits to people in most parts of the world. In order to explain that being born in a very rich country equates being better-off than someone born in a very poor country at any point of the income distribution, Branko

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Milanovic (2016) has recently coined the term “citizenship premium”. Just by being born in the United States rather than in Congo, a person would multiply their income 93 times (Milanovic 2016). Depending on where they are located and where they can migrate to, citizens of poor countries can thus double, triple or even increase their real incomes ten-fold by moving to a rich country. As Korzeniewicz and Moran have shown, anyone in the poorest seven to eight income deciles of Bolivia or Guatemala could move up several global income deciles by migrating to Argentina or Mexico, respectively. Even more strikingly, anyone but people in the top decile in both Argentina and Mexico could “skip” several global income deciles by entering Spain or the United States’ second-poorest decile through migration (Korzeniewicz and Moran 2009: 108f.)<sup>†</sup>. In all these cases, the upward economic mobility of migrants is considerably higher than the income gains that either a further education, better pay at home, or their country’s economic growth would have allowed them during a lifetime.

Yet access to international migration to a richer country is itself unequally distributed. Knowledge about possible travel routes and better economic prospects, transportation costs (whether legal or unauthorized), and travel expenses require considerable physical mobility as well as material and immaterial resources. Such resources are much less available to the poorest strata, the lower-skilled, racialized people, and women (especially when accompanied by children), than to the middle and upper classes, the educated, the racially unmarked, and men able to travel alone. In addition, the limitation of women’s rights, mobility and access to capital, which has historically made them more vulnerable to physical and sexual violence in Western societies (and all the more so in the context of colonialism and enslavement), continues to do so today. Currently, non-Western women – and other marginalized persons of non-conforming gender performance – still are the most vulnerable migrants.

Hence, while it is true that “as a global redistribution tool, migration fails to reach those at the bottom of the distributional matrix” (Shachar 2009: 84), fast tracks are open to those higher up the income ladder. This is particularly visible in the commodification of citizenship rights for non-Western investors throughout the Western world in recent years. So-called “investor citizenship” or “investor residence” programs allow a wealthy,

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<sup>†</sup> The data refers to the average incomes of the mentioned countries *before* the 2008 economic recession and would thus have to be adjusted to reflect the impact of the recession. Incomes of European countries were thus considerably lower after 2008, but still award considerable economic mobility to migrants from outside of Europe.

overwhelmingly male, non-Western minority to acquire a residence permit or a second citizenship in a rising number of European Union and Commonwealth member states in exchange for a sizeable investment in real estate or government bonds (Boatcă 2015, 2016). Such programs were either revamped or implemented in independent Caribbean countries as well as Southern and Eastern European Union member states in the wake of the global 2008 recession. They provide male, non-Western investors with the right of visa-free travel to core countries, the citizenship of a Commonwealth or European Union state, the right to reside and work anywhere in the European Union (in the case of the European programs) or exemption from personal income tax (in the case of some Caribbean programs). Their main beneficiaries have been Chinese, Russian, but also Lebanese, Egyptian and Syrian investors (Arton Capital 2017) – evidence of the fact that the number of billionaires in middle-income countries tripled in just six years despite the 2008 recession. Brazil, Hong Kong, and India registered a twofold, Russia almost a threefold, and China a staggering twelve-fold increase in their respective number of billionaires from 2006 to 2012 (Albrecht/Korzeniewicz 2018: 103). At the same time, China and India are expected to contribute disproportionately to the prospected growth of the billionaire population by nearly 80% before 2020, an increase of 1,700 billionaires (Arton Capital 2017). Unlike older residence and green card programs in the U.S., Canada, or Australia, investor residence and citizenship programs do not require their beneficiaries to move to the national territory or spend regular amounts of time there. Investors thus often sidestep the actual migration process altogether. Instead, they use the “citizenship premium” they purchased for business and travel purposes as well as in order to send their children to European schools, especially in the UK.

It is important to note that, while any state’s citizenship could theoretically be commodified by becoming the object of investor programs, it is only the citizenship of few states that lends itself to being commodified by virtue of being a scarce good awarding (relatively) rare benefits. From this point of view, states whose citizenship include the advantage of visa-free travel to core countries or even the right to legal employment in them – those that Milanovic sees as having a “citizenship premium” can thus in turn offer “premium citizenships” that are attractive to investors. States that are not part of the core, may use the residual benefits of former colonies that today share, among other things, a visa-free travel area, as in the case of the British Commonwealth. This, however, hardly compares to the rights accruing from EU citizenship, which include free movement, residence and non-discrimination within the EU, the right to vote for and stand as a

candidate in European Parliament and municipal elections, diplomatic protection outside the EU, etc. Citizenship for sale is not only unavailable to the majority of the world's population, but would not prove a viable economic strategy in any but "premium citizenship" states, among which European Union member states rank highest.

For wealthy individuals of non-Western countries, investment citizenship clearly represents a means of global social mobility that eludes both ascription and migration, and at the same time trumps race. In this regard, it is a globalized instance of what, in the context of racial inequalities in Brazil, has been referred to as 'whitening with money' (Hasenbalg, 2005) – a capital-facilitated symbolic move up the racial ladder (Boatcă 2017). Such monetary – and momentary – disconnect from the racialized body through possession of a Western passport is however no reason for celebrating a post-racial order. On the one hand, it belies the experience of the great majority of transnational labor migrants, for whom border-crossing awarding upward economic mobility simultaneously entails the opposite risk – being reclassified as non-white and thus experiencing downward racial mobility<sup>‡</sup>. On the other hand, disconnecting from the racialized and gendered body is an option unavailable to most women, who have significantly less access to both capital and existential resources worldwide. As Ayelet Shachar has argued, for a girl born in 2001 in Mali, one of the poorest countries in the world, the chances of surviving to age five, having access to clean water, or getting an education were incomparably lower than for a baby born at the same time in the United States, where chances for boys and girls on all these counts are nearly identically high. Contrary to the tenets of an entire Western tradition of citizenship theory (from Max Weber through TH Marshall and Talcott Parsons to Bryan Turner), citizenship and gender, two ascribed statuses, are the most decisive factors accounting for these extreme inequalities between individuals in poor and rich countries in the twenty-first century.

Women therefore often rely on strategies of social mobility anchored in the body. What we call the *embodied social mobility* of women and feminized Others can thus be said to represent the counterpart of the *monetized social mobility* disproportionately available to wealthy men.

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<sup>‡</sup> The fact that such racial reclassification poses very different degrees of difficulty depending on the colonial and imperial history of the context where one's racial identity is being negotiated only reinforces the hierarchies underlying the constructed racial continuum.

In this chapter, we therefore argue that, unlike predominantly male, wealthy investors, who can achieve almost instant global mobility<sup>§</sup> in exchange for a check, women and feminized Others, particularly LGBTIQ and racialized individuals, exchange their gendered bodies in lengthy arrangements eventually resulting in upward mobility through residence or citizenship. Thus, women's and feminized Others' access to social mobility as mediated through economic capital both involves more precarious means (their own bodies) and yields more precarious results than in the case of men and unmarked individuals. We contend that women's economic power partially counters the coloniality of power that has systematically relegated them to more precarious positions in the global mobility structure, yet in the process creates ambivalent fast tracks that change the content, yet reproduce the terms of the same coloniality.

We accordingly want to zoom in on the structural distribution of such unequal means of access to fact tracks to mobility in the case of women and feminized Others, who consciously employ their gendered bodies as alternative means of bettering their economic prospects. In the following, we explore how the colonial legacy embedded in current citizenship arrangements that we have termed the coloniality of citizenship is complicated by gendered strategies of embodied social mobility. By discussing women's and feminized Others' strategies of accessing citizenship rights as forms of "embodied social mobility", we examine the gender dividend enforced by the coloniality of citizenship and the way it is currently destabilized by women and feminized Others with limited or considerable economic power.

### **I. Coloniality of Citizenship and the Colonial Traffic in Women**

From a global perspective, the institutionalization of citizenship rights in Western nation states coincided with the legal (and physical) exclusion of non-European, non-White and non-Western populations from social and cultural rights. The Western construction of gender in the course of the European colonial expansion (McClintock 1995, Oyewumi 1997, Stoler/Cooper 1997, Lugones 2007) – has shaped the modern/colonial institution of citizenship since it came into existence. Inside and outside the West, citizenship rights were granted to women only gradually, while men and women of other regions were engendered along colonial lines. In line with the literature on coloniality (Quijano 2000, Mignolo 2000, Lugones 2007, 2008) we view the structural distribution of unequally and

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<sup>§</sup> Citizenship rights through investment in state bonds or real estate can be purchased in as little as four weeks (Arton Capital 2017)

en-gendered citizenship rights as a crucial component of coloniality/modernity (see Boatcă/Roth 2016). Not only the naturalization of women, but also that of peasants and slaves in the colonies occurred temporally and (ideo)logically parallel to the process of housewifization of bourgeois women and to that of the proletarianization of male non-wage workers in the industrial centers. Both were conceived as dimensions of the larger civilizing process (Mies, 1996; von Werlhof et al., 1983). Pnina Werbner und Nira Yuval-Davis accordingly describe the exclusion of women from citizenship rights as “intrinsic sign of their naturalization and as embodiment of the private, the family and the emotional” and thus as “crucial for the construction of the public space as masculine, rational, responsible and respectable” (1999, 6, our translation). By relegating women, children and foreigners to the (however recent) past of the civilizing process that adult men had presumably accomplished, the implementation of seemingly universal principles of citizenship created constantly racialized and en-gendered particularisms. The corresponding exclusions historically ranged “from colonial subjects to women, particular classes and racialized minorities, up to people with different sexualities and abilities.” (Dobrowolsky and Tastsoglou 2006, 10). Gender positions have been racialized and ethnicized along colonial patterns, creating the image of the White virtuous woman and ‘mother’ of the race/nation – and later housewife – to be monitored and protected from black male aggression, or of the sexually threatening, eroticized and permanently available black female body, accordingly deprived of (the right to) protection and motherhood. It is at this juncture of gender, race and ethnicity as products of the colonial crucible that the institution of citizenship is revealed to be a key element in the maintenance of the coloniality of power of the modern/colonial world-system (Mignolo 2000). It is to the specific mechanisms of its functioning throughout the history of the system that we refer as the coloniality of citizenship.

By targeting the racialized and eroticized body, the coloniality of citizenship has made the circulation of the female body as a commodity a central part of the colonial order of gender relations ever since its emergence. In her 1975 essay “The traffic in women”, Gayle Rubin described the ‘sex/gender system’ as a ‘set of arrangements’ through which sex is translated into gender and which serves as a prototype of all social and economic relations. In this system, men exchange women among themselves on a continuum ranging from prostitution to marriage (Rubin, 1975). In turn, Jean Franco maintained that particular forms of the ‘exchange’ of colonized women – such as enslaved indigenous women given as a gift to the Spanish conquerors or being exchanged between Aztecs and

Spanish men – were already part and parcel of the conquest (Franco, 1999: 71ff.). Gender has thus informed the modern/colonial institution of citizenship from its emergence, while gender and citizenship have been entangled in complex ways with other dimensions of stratification and inequality such as racialization and enslavement that placed men, women and transgender persons at very different positions in racialized colonial hierarchies.

Such stratification patterns went hand in hand with distinct forms of embodiment. Vice versa, differently positioned actors have applied different practices and strategies of embodiment to counter and/or gain agency within these hierarchized positions. The subjection of bodies to normalizing practices (Butler 1990, 1993, 2004) becomes not only a way in which already male and female bodies seek to approximate an ideal, but the very process whereby sexed and gendered subjects come into existence.\*\* Femininity and masculinity become, broadly, bodily styles which bodies incorporate to yield a gendered subjectivity. The Others created in the process – women, homosexuals, LGBTIQ persons, those with differently abled bodies – are treated socially as outsiders, ‘the abject,’ and subject to social punishments. Embodied practices are therefore always already also marked by – and produce – not only en-gendered, but simultaneously sexualized, racialized and classed subjectivities (see Fanon 1963, Lorde 1984, hooks 1990, Ahmed 2000).

## **II. Women on the Fast Track and Embodied Social Mobility**

It is precisely such strategies of “embodied social mobility” based on the gender dividend enforced by the coloniality of citizenship that we are interested in. As we argue, women and feminized Others, particularly LGBTIQ and racialized individuals, exchange their gendered bodies for upward mobility through residence or citizenship – unlike predominantly male wealthy investors, who can ‘buy into’ global mobility and Whiteness. Their strategies provide fast track access to citizenship and/or upward social mobility and economic power for those who cannot exchange such privileges for a check. In the process, they challenge and sometimes revert the content of the coloniality of citizenship, but not its terms. In other words, they bend the rules in the favor of women and racialized Others, but cement them by following their logic. In the following, we examine marriage

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\*\* See e.g. also already de Beauvoir 1953, Rich 1979 and 1980, Foucault 1979, Bartky 1990, Fausto-Sterling 1992 as well as Halberstam 1998.

to the owner of a Western passport, (sex) tourism, and childbirth as ways of anchoring social mobility in unequally gendered bodies and thus as distinct forms of the “body-politics of knowledge” that put their respective colonially en-gendered epistemologies to use (Mignolo/Tlostanova 2006; Tlostanova 2010).

### ***Fast Track 1: Marriage – The International Market Option***

For middle-class women from many parts of the Americas, the range of options for getting on a fast track to advantageous citizenship is much broader than for lower-class, undocumented women, yet it is narrow compared to those of the wealthy elites. Unlike lower-class migrants of any gender, middle-class women can count on the social and financial capital to make it to a richer country as well as capitalize on positive exoticized stereotypes ascribed to their bodies in order to actively em-body social mobility.

A telling recent example comes from the work of Katherine Braun (2016), who has examined everyday practices of middle-class Bolivian migrant women from Santa Cruz de la Sierra in Geneva, Switzerland. Since the 1980s, the former Bolivian middle class has lost its relatively privileged position. The modernization programs initiated in the Santa Cruz de la Sierra region by the US development ministry in the early 1950s focused on investments in the industrialization of the agrarian sector through credits. The resulting formation of a new agro bourgeoisie and the accompanying land reform however did not break with the agro bourgeoisie’s clientelist land concentration (Braun 2016: 212, cf. Prado et. al. 2007). The region’s economic boom and the implementation of a neoliberal order also saw the rise of a new “narco bourgeoisie” and new forms of social mobility (Braun 2016: 212). Against this background, women striving for education and for entering the labor market become the protagonists of the necessary break with the formerly rigid class structures, particularly when it comes to mobility and the transformation of gender relations. Their family’s loss of privilege in the new economic context forced former middle-class Bolivian women into small entrepreneurship and migration and led to the unemployment of the men – the previous bread-winners. Their privileged class status, European heritage and light – “golden” – skin gained these Bolivian women the label *chicas de oro* (“golden” girls). The first of their class to migrate internationally, they describe themselves as “pioneers” who, unlike labor migrants, have not migrated to Europe primarily for economic reasons, but in search for marriage to a European Union citizen. Legal residence in Europe as a result of such a marriage earns



them a better social position and enables them to care for the families they left behind in Bolivia. To this end, the *chicas de oro* particularly target men from Southern Europe, who up to the 1990s had made up the largest number of migrants to Western Europe. Having since regularized their residence status, the men now possess the legal papers and the employment opportunities that make them attractive as marriage partners for middle-class Latin American women. The exoticized erotic capital the *chicas de oro* apply in order to attract Southern European men – a strategy they refer to as “fishing *bacalaos*” – draws from the repertoire of colonial hierarchies in order to re-create an exchange economy in the migration context. In line with feminist scholar Gayle Rubin’s concept of the “traffic in women”, the circulation of the female body as a commodity can be viewed as continuing a long tradition as part of a colonial order of gender relations in Bolivia, where entering sexual relationships with men of higher social strata led to the upward social mobility of entire families and therefore became an organizing principle of social relations in rural areas. Following Braun, this hierarchy has also been crucial for the organization of gender relations: “the lighter the (skin) pigmentation, the higher the esteem and the chance to ‘conquer’ an economically well-situated man. Following this paradigm, the *chicas de oro*’s largest resource as *mestizas* of European origin is their ‘golden’ skin.” (215), resulting in the sexualization and economization of their bodies. As Braun concludes, the “logic of their depictions is closely entangled with the forms of engendering and the meaning of the body in transforming economies of survival in Bolivia.” (Braun 2016: 214). An attractive appearance and related “techniques of the body” play a crucial role for that matter. In line with the logic of the coloniality of power (Quijano 2000), “beauty” has been identified with “being white” as dominating paradigm of femininity in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, expressing a racialized hierarchy of population groups (215).

Similar eroticized and exoticized colonial ascriptions apply also to women of lower social strata. However, due to their lower economic power and physical mobility, they are more likely bound to their country or region of origin to look for partners with a privileged passport as a fast track to social mobility. To many destinations, possible candidates (first) travel as tourists.

### ***Fast Track 2: Sex (and) Tourism – Mobility through Erotic Capital***

Given the rise in business mobility, North-South tourism and communication technologies which facilitate the maintenance of far-distance relationships, tourist encounters in many spaces provide the only means to fast access to social mobility or even a privileged

citizenship status for those who lack the economic power to travel to the respective destinations. Kamugisha (2007) defines the “coloniality of citizenship” as the “complex amalgam of elite domination, neoliberalism and the legacy of colonial authoritarianism” (21) which continue to limit the aspirations of Caribbean citizens and their access to full citizenship rights. Following this notion, citizenship encompasses a broad range of practices and “tropes of belonging and identity” experienced by Caribbean people and their institutions for which Caribbean actors have developed numerous strategies to undermine persistent colonial structures (Kamugisha 2007: 21). We are particularly interested in these concrete (embodied) practices as material means for gaining access – or even a fast track – to upward social mobility beyond “tropes of belonging and identity”. As Kamugisha points out, the “tourism economy” in (Anglophone) Caribbean states follows a colonial pattern, given that in many destinations the number of tourists outnumbers the number of citizens, which – in combination with the high dependency on tourism – blurs the line of who is a (legitimate) citizen. Tourists enjoy a sort of “extra-territorial citizenship,” since they provide a decisive part of the national income.

As shown above, marriage to the owner of a Western passport provides one of the few legal and comparatively easy means of access to social mobility and privileged citizenship status as opposed to life-threatening illegalized border-crossings. In some regions, tourism serves as platform of options for all parties. Yet North–South tourism – and sex or ‘romance’ tourism in particular (Pruit and LaFont, 1995) – is based on deeply unequal power structures. Who can be a tourist and where, and by whom s/he is being served, is related to highly asymmetrical and colonial axes of stratification, deeply marked by racial and gendered dimensions. Owners of a Western passport (with a medium or high income) can use their citizenship privilege to travel to racially eroticized ‘fantasy islands’, e.g. to the Caribbean (O’Connell Davidson and Sánchez Taylor, 1999; see also O’Connell Davidson, 2001). In most formerly colonized regions, highly dependent on the tourism industry, romance and/or sex are often part and parcel of the package dream holiday of Western tourists of all genders. Against the backdrop of a long tradition of exoticizing and sexualizing the colonial ‘Other’ (McClintock, 1995; Tlostanova 2010), Western men and women’s disadvantageous age, gender and/or class positions are crisscrossed with the ‘cultural/racial capital of whiteness’ (Stam and Shohat, 2012: 191) derived from their class and citizenship privilege as sex tourists to a poorer country. Sex workers in tourist destinations like the Caribbean, in turn, can transform their class and citizenship disadvantage into erotic capital rooted in colonial and racialized erotic imaginations of

the black body and thereby gain financial advantage in a structurally unequal encounter (Roth, 2013). In many places, tourism provides one of the few ways of access to hard currency, consumer goods or luxury products. In some cases, encounters with tourists even result in such global mobility prospects – or fast tracks – as a holiday abroad through a tourist visa, permanent residence, up to marriage and a Western passport. However, the non-Western partners are highly dependent on their privileged passport partners, and women are, again, particularly vulnerable to physical, psychological or sexual violence.

A number of studies on sex tourism illustrate how much such encounters are based on colonial structures that persist in unequally distributed economic power and the racialization and sexualization of colonized bodies. Julia O’Connell Davidson’s research (2001) on hardcore sex tourists who exchange information on their travel destinations in internet blogs provides an illustrative example. Numerous heterosexual male sex tourists on the one hand naturalize their partners’ racialized bodies and veil the inequalities and economic dimension of their encounter by maintaining that sex “comes naturally” to them. On the other hand, a number of interviewed males state that longer-term relationships with (one or several) much younger women in the Caribbean enable them to outdo the ageism they face in their home countries, where they would be reduced to dating same-age women. Moreover, many Western hardcore sex tourists see their fantasy island romances as a way out from feminist gains in Western countries, where women (can) sue their partners for violent behavior.

Films like “Paradies: Liebe” (2012), “Heading South” (2006) or “Sand Dollars” (2015) show that, since women in Western countries have been integrated in large numbers into the labor market and enjoy economic power, independence, and mobility, neo-colonial tourism encounters are no longer restricted to males (or heterosexual desires)<sup>††</sup>, even though studies of such phenomena often refer to female sexualized tourism as “romance tourism” (thereby masking the structural similarities to male sex tourism). Their example points to the colonial dimension of gender relations and the colonality of citizenship which positions intersectionally differently en-gendered men and women at very distinct social locations on a global scale. The single rituals might differ, but, like their male counterparts, female (sex) tourists take advantage of their economic power, privileged

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<sup>††</sup> Studies on same-sex tourist encounters in Brazil or Cuba (Stout 2014) or heterosexual male sex workers (many of whom are family fathers) in the Dominican Republic who cater to male clients for lack of a heterosexual female “clienteles” show the complexities and ambiguities of sex tourism encounters which also vary from context to context (see Padilla 2007).

citizenship status and racial capital to counteract the age (and, often, gender and class) disadvantage they face at home, where their options on the marital market are small. Vice versa, the sex workers in tourist destinations make use of embodied practices based on stereotypical ascriptions and expectations and their (exoticized) erotic capital to make up for their highly disadvantageous economic power and reduced mobility. However, their situation is often precarious, since, unlike in the case of “classical” sex work encounters, the mostly veiled character of the economic dimension also often makes the receivers entirely dependent on the tourists’ (or expats’) benevolence. This might vary and range from providing food, drinks, sometimes clothes or expensive gifts and accommodation in a luxury hotel during the stay, regular payments, or even a ticket and a visa to a Schengen destination. For some, what started as tourism encounters even result in long-term relationships or matrimones.##

The case of (sex) tourism in the context of the increasing economic power and social and physical mobility of a small elite provide an insightful example of the revival of intersectional inequalities based on colonial power and knowledge structures on a global scale., in their study on male and female sex tourism to the Caribbean, Julia O’Connell Davidson and Jacqueline Sánchez Taylor maintain:

The demand for sex tourism is inextricably linked to discourses that naturalize and celebrate inequalities structured along lines of class, gender and race/ Otherness; in other words, discourses that reflect and help to reproduce a profoundly hierarchical model of human society. [...] That the Western sex tourists pocket can contain sufficient power to transform others into Others, mere players on a pornographic stage, is a testament to the enormity of the imbalance of economic, social, and political power between rich and poor nations. (O’Connell Davidson and Sánchez Taylor 1999: 52, 53, original emphasis)

The sexualized and racialized coding and exploitation in an unequal world system becomes even more apparent in our next example, in which childbirth as the ultimate embodied social mobility, provides a strategy of ensuring citizenship rights for the next generation.

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## In numerous European states – among them Germany, Greece, Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia – the legal residence permit of both partners is the precondition for marriage or same-sex partnership in case one partner is a EU citizen and the other is not. However, in most Western countries, bi-national couples have to face permanent suspicion, control and illegalization for years after marriage – measures which patently violate international human rights standards, especially the right to family life and privacy (Messinger, 2013: 377).

### ***Fast Track 3: Childbirth – Deferring Mobility to the Next Generation***

One roundabout way of accessing US citizenship is giving birth on US soil. Since being born in the country's territory ensures citizenship rights, any child born on US soil becomes a US citizen and can extend US citizenship to their parents at the age of twenty-one. This right goes back to the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the US constitution granting citizenship to "all persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof." Adopted in 1868, the amendment was a repudiation of the Supreme Court's 1857 ruling, in *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, that people of African descent could never be American citizens. In 1898, the Supreme Court, in *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*, interpreted the citizenship provision as applying to a child born in the United States to a Chinese immigrant couple (Lacey 2011, NYT). The 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment denied citizenship to Native Americans, even though they obviously were "born" in the US, because they were subject to the jurisdiction of their tribal governments. Congress did not grant citizenship to Native Americans on reservations until 1924, 56 years later. Babies born in the US to aliens are clearly citizens of their mother's country, so granting US citizenship creates the possibility of dual citizenship, which the United States has never recognized as valid.

Although a waiting period of twenty-one years can easily be described as the opposite of a fast track to social mobility and has rightfully been deemed a poor immigration strategy, it provides instant social mobility to the next generation. For non-Western women of the upper class, such legal loopholes to an otherwise rigid regime of citizenship ascription systematically provide the basis for a fast-track to US citizenship. Paradoxically, for wealthy Russian investors, it is in the Florida Trump properties that they take advantage of this option. So-called "birth-tourism" companies offer Trump apartments as part of packages costing upwards of \$75,000. The privately owned condos are investment properties for Russia's hyper-wealthy, a safe place to store savings in US dollars.<sup>§§</sup> The Miami-based company Status-Med offers a Trump Royale penthouse apartment for \$7,000 a month alongside full access to the Sunny Medical Centre, which organizes get-togethers, beach yoga, and medical care for expectant mothers. Sunny Medical Center openly advertises citizenship as one of the primary benefits their clients receive, and the women using its services openly tell US officials that the aim of their

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<sup>§§</sup> "Pregnant Russians flock to Florida for sun (and US passport)" by Rhys Blakley and Tom Parfitt, *The Times*, January 12, 2018, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/pregnant-russians-flock-to-florida-for-sun-and-us-passport-67c7395wf>

travel is giving birth on US soil in order to obtain citizenship for their babies (The Evening Standard, 2017).\*\*\*

For the growing middle- and upper classes in Russia and China, US citizenship secures their children financial aid at US schools, easier access to jobs in the US and the possibility to gain green cards for their offspring and family. In Los Angeles, birth-tourism agencies cater to largely Chinese clients. In New York, the Manhattan hotel Marmara offers mothers from Turkey an all-inclusive package for delivering their babies on US soil: \$17,000 for two months in a hotel suite, including a cradle and a gift set for the newborn. The hotel directory estimates that their twelve clients in the year 2009 paid up to \$30,000 in addition for their hospital bills. When rich women make use of the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment and check into a luxury hotel to deliver, president Donald Trump's immigration policies are seemingly suspended. Lower-class migrants' children and the recipients of the DACA program that shields children of immigrants (the so-called "dreamers") are instead in constant threat of deportation. Such politics point to the 14<sup>th</sup> amendments' persistent racial-colonial bias as part of the coloniality of citizenship.

The described strategy of giving birth on US soil is currently subject to sanctions and criminalized through the ethnic and racial profiling when practiced by poor and/or illegal immigrants who are accused of having abused the right of soil. Several Republican attempts at amending the US Constitution since 2010 have mobilized terms like 'anchor babies', 'birth tourism' and 'accidental citizens' in order to end the automatic granting of citizenship to poor migrants, arguing that the provision attracts high numbers of unauthorized migrants (Feere, 2010; Huffington Post, 2013). For lower-class immigrants arriving to give birth in the United States, US citizenship for their newborn is however by far not the reason for migrating. The overwhelming majority of expecting mothers are frequent border crossers with valid visas who travel legally in order to take advantage of better medical care – one of the main advantages of the citizenship of a wealthy state.†† Also, many poor women crossing the Mexican border from Honduras eventually abandon their initial plan to continue all the way to the US along highly insecure paths and

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\*\*\* "Wealthy Russians are flocking to give birth at Trump's luxury US resorts so their kids can have dual-citizenship", by Harriet Pavey, *The Evening Standard*, September 7, 2017, <https://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/london-life/russians-flock-to-give-birth-at-trump-s-properties-in-the-us-so-their-kids-can-have-dualcitizenship-a3628971.html>

†† Likewise, great numbers of US citizens cross over to Mexico for cheaper medical treatment, and numerous dental clinics catering in English to US clients can be found in the Mexican region to the US (a trend that can also be observed in Europe, where West Europeans escape to a rapidly growing market of medical services in East European countries that due to the immense income discrepancies offer services at costs much lower than in the rich countries).

therefore are increasingly exposed to sex crimes and enforced prostitution. A number of women stuck in a migrant shelter in this border region get pregnant, as a baby born on Mexican soil promises permanent residency for the mother (and the father), as well as access to health care and education (Guevara González, 2015). Moreover, although the total US immigration population continues to grow, unauthorized immigration has slowed in the past decade (Pew Research Center, 2013). Nor do children born on US soil to undocumented parents represent a guarantee against their parents' deportation. In 2014, the state of Texas stopped issuing birth certificates to children born on its territory to undocumented migrants and bearers of a Mexican passport without a valid US visa, making it impossible for parents to authorize medical treatment for their children or enroll them in daycare or school (Texas Observer, 2015).

For poor women and women with the “wrong”, i.e., non-Western, passport, giving birth to a child on US soil thus provides no fast track to citizenship and the corresponding upward social mobility. Their pregnant bodies are not pampered in luxury condos, in spas and yoga sessions, but exposed to exhaustive travels, precarious housing, hygiene, and health conditions and sexualized violence. Non-Western women who travel to the US on a business or first class ticket to give birth do not face the criminalization and sanctions to which poor migrant women are exposed. Nor are they affected by the same sort of restrictions, violence and vulnerability that poor migrant women or (expectant) mothers face who cross the borders by foot, on the back of trucks, or with the help of *coyotes*. Nevertheless, both make use of the same strategy of embodied social mobility for themselves and their children, with widely different prospects of success.

As in the case of non-Western male investors with access to disembodied monetized social mobility, women's embodied social mobility only works for a select few – those who already are members of the upper class or have economic power and access to upper-class conditions at the global level. In this case, wealthy non-Western women use the terms of the coloniality of citizenship to their advantage – they literally embody social mobility for the next generation by securing Western citizenship rights for their children. They thus “trump” (pun intended) their gender and racial disadvantage. The gender and racial hierarchy underlying the coloniality of citizenship is however only momentarily – and monetarily – suspended and is left unquestioned for the next contenders to the same rights.

## **Outlook: Fast Track to What Mobility?**

The boom in the number of non-Western capitalists seeking the advantages of residence and citizenship in the U.S. and Europe points to the paramount role that race continues to play for a global stratification in which the “premium citizenships” of core Western states highly correlate with whiteness; and to which only very wealthy non-whites have recently gained access through the commodification of rights in semiperipheral states that share a visa-free travel zone with core Western states. For wealthy non-Westerners, investment residence and citizenship of Western states constitute global social mobility as well as a means of “buying into” whiteness.

All three embodied strategies for fast tracks to privileged citizenship and upward social mobility –marriage to the owner of a EU passport, sexualized encounters with Westerners in tourist destinations, and giving birth on US soil – are crisscrossed and counteracted by colonially stratified axes of inequality which mark economic power and mobility on a global scale. Embodied practices of citizenship are thus highly ambiguous since they offer completely distinct options and also bear very different risks to en-gendered actors of different socio-economic classes and forms of racialization.

Our three exemplary attempts to “fast tracks” to citizenship and social mobility attest to the en-gendered dimension of global inequalities. Unlike male wealthy investors, women and feminized Others are often forced to exchange their bodies in search for a visa or a passport. They apply embodied practices that revive colonial racialized gender hierarchies and the respective exoticized eroticized images and imaginations ascribed to non-White bodies (of all genders). Their break with the colonality of citizenship is therefore a limited one: While their strategic use of their own bodies reverses and momentarily overcomes both gender hierarchies and colonial power relations, it does not change the systemic logic of operation that their actions target. It does not become a transformative project grounded in the body-politics of knowledge, but, as a form of “everyday politics” (Braun 2016: 223), makes embodied social mobility a systematic option.

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