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## Migration and Mortality: Social Death, Dispossession, and Survival in the Americas

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Hallett, Miranda Cady; Nevins, Joseph; Longazel, Jamie; Frank-Vitale, Amelia; Estrada, Alicia Yvonne; and Wheatley, Abby C., "Migration and Mortality: Social Death, Dispossession, and Survival in the Americas" (2021). *Conference: The Social Practice of Human Rights*. 19.  
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**Presenter/Author Information**

Miranda Cady Hallett, Joseph Nevins, Jamie Longazel, Amelia Frank-Vitale, Alicia Yvonne Estrada, and Abby C. Wheatley

## SPHR21 proposal – panel

Submitted by Miranda Hallett, [mhallett1@udayton.edu](mailto:mhallett1@udayton.edu)

**Title:** *Migration and Mortality: social death, dispossession and survival in the Americas*

**Abstract:** This panel presents research from the new edited volume *Migration and Mortality* (edited by Longazel and Hallett, Temple University Press, 2021). Death threatens migrants physically during perilous border crossings between Central and North America, but many also experience legal, social, and economic mortality. Rooted in histories of colonialism and conquest, exclusionary policies and practices deliberately take aim at racialized, dispossessed people in transit. Once in the new land, migrants endure a web of systems across every facet of their world—work, home, healthcare, culture, justice—that strips them of their personhood, denies them resources, and creates additional obstacles that deprive them of their ability to live fully. As laws and policies create ripe conditions for the further extraction of money, resources, and labor power from the dispossessed, the contributors to *Migration and Mortality* examine restrictive immigration policies and the broader capitalist systems of exploitation and inequality while highlighting the power of migrants’ collective resistance and resilience. The case studies and theoretical interventions presented in this panel explore border deaths, detention economies, asylum seeking, as well as the public health and mental health of migrants. Ultimately, these examples of oppression and survival contribute to understanding broader movements for life and justice in the Americas.

**Keywords:** immigration enforcement, inequality, borders, racialization, dispossession

### Presenters’ bios:

**Jamie Longazel** is associate professor of law and society at John Jay College and of International Migration Studies at the CUNY Graduate Center. His research examines how race and political economy intersect in law and politics, especially within the realms of immigration and crime. His recent book, *Undocumented Fears: Immigration and the Politics of Divide and Conquer in Hazleton, Pennsylvania* (2016), won the North Central Sociological Association’s 2017 Scholarly Achievement Award. He is also the coauthor of *The Pains of Mass Imprisonment* (2013) and the cofounder of Anthracite Unite, a working-class collective fighting for racial and economic justice in Pennsylvania.

**Miranda Cady Hallett** (PhD Cornell University 2009) is associate professor of cultural anthropology and research fellow at the Human Rights Center at the University of Dayton. She has published a number of articles centered on Salvadoran migrants’ diasporic experiences in such journals as *Latino Studies*, *Law & Social Inquiry*, *Geopolitics*, and the *Journal of Working Class Studies*. Over twenty years of ethnographic work among transborder communities, she has examined interrelated issues of labor exploitation, state violence, conditions of displacement, and the fraught impacts of exclusionary migration policies in social fields spanning the United States and El Salvador. A publicly engaged scholar, Hallett has frequently been cited in public media on immigration, displacement, and the politicization of asylum.

**Joseph Nevins** is a professor of geography at Vassar College. Among his books are *A People’s Guide to Greater Boston* (2020), *Operation Gatekeeper and Beyond: The War on “Illegals” and the Remaking of the U.S.-Mexico Boundary* (2010), and *Dying to Live: A Story of U.S. Immigration in an Age of Global Apartheid* (2008). His writings have appeared in a variety of publications, including *Al Jazeera English*, *CounterPunch*, *Boston Review*, the

*Conversation*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *NACLA Report on the Americas*, the *Nation*, *Tikkun*, the *Washington Post*, and *Z Magazine*.

**Alicia Ivonne Estrada** is a professor in the Chicana/o Studies Department at California State University at Northridge. She has published on the Maya and Guatemalan diaspora in Los Angeles, as well as on Maya literature, film, and radio. She is coeditor of *U.S. Central Americans: Reconstructing Memories, Struggles and Communities of Resistance* (2017). Estrada's work has appeared in *Romance Notes*, *Latino Studies*, and *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*, among other journals and anthologies. Her current book project focuses on the Maya diaspora in Los Angeles. Since 2006, she has collaborated with the Maya radio collective *Contacto Ancestral*.

**Amelia Frank-Vitale** earned her PhD from the University of Michigan and will begin a position as post-doctoral research associate this fall in Princeton University's program in Latin American Studies. Amelia's research examines how Hondurans navigate life after being deported back to neighborhoods tagged as some of the world's most violent. Her work connects regional immigration and security policies, organized crime, state violence, and the everyday experience of life in and around San Pedro Sula, Honduras. She has been published in *Geopolitics*, *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, *EntreDiversidades*, and *Public Anthropologist*. Her commentary has also appeared in the *Washington Post*, *Fortune Magazine*, *NACLA Report on the Americas*, *ContraCorriente*, and the *World Policy Journal*.

**Abby C. Wheatley** is an honors faculty fellow at Barrett, the Honors College at Arizona State University, and holds a Ph.D. in social and cultural anthropology. Her research spans two regions, the U.S.-Mexico and EU-Africa borders, and considers the mechanisms through which migration becomes a dangerous and deadly endeavor, as well as the strategies developed by migrants to survive precarious crossings. Incorporating her more than ten years of experience working with people in transit, her work examines the strategies developed by transnational communities to overcome a weaponized landscape created by border enforcement. Her recent work is published in *Human Organization* and the *Peace Review*.