Jennifer L. Shoaff, *Borders of Visibility: Haitian Migrant Women and the Dominican Nation-State*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2017. (Cloth US\$ 59.95)

In this multimethod study, Jennifer Shoaff confronts many obstacles to knowledge of gender-based violence and undocumented immigration, achieving a book that should be read both by regional experts and anyone seriously interested in the overlaps between these two difficult issues. More specifically, it addresses the way undocumented immigration may render women more vulnerable to violence and exploitation. It makes clear the many challenges to eliciting first-person testimony from Haitian-migrant and Haitian-ancestry women, from the strategic preference many of them show for evading the attention of status superiors to the shame of speaking out about experiences of sexual violence and exploitation to which they, as derogated but geographically mobile and highly visible racial/class subordinates, are disproportionately vulnerable.

Shoaff's sustained focus on gender helps to define an empirical baseline for approaching this understudied aspect of Haitian migration and minority identity formation in the Dominican Republic. Others such as historian Lauren Derby have written about gender relations as a useful lens through which to understand the relationship between these two nations. While Shoaff gives due notice to media representation, and more particularly to the way the discursive stereotype of the needy but fecund Haitian immigrant woman enters into cycles of episodic anti-Haitian panic in the Dominican mediascape, her main focus is on the details of women's stories and life circumstances. Her access to their narratives and the sense she brings to them are rooted in her patient accompaniment of their lives over a span of years even as her activist commitment to generating knowledge that can advance their struggle never lets readers forget how arbitrary and unjust the subordination of these women is.

The richness of the book's descriptions and theorizations is enhanced by complementing the gender focus with a far-reaching grasp of the manifold human rights infringements, injustices, and exclusions confronting Haitians and Haitian-ancestry Dominicans. Shoaff succeeds in balancing a broadly-inclusive analytic armature with the experiential dimensions onto which ethnography can open insight. The scholarly maturity in this balance confirms the wisdom of her decision to develop the book patiently over many years. Her "slow scholarship" is also mature scholarship.

Particularly appropriate is Shoaff's theorization of the situation of Haitian descendants and immigrants, not as marginality or exclusion but as *containment*. That containment includes the physical border and extends beyond it to the sites within the Dominican Republic to which Shoaff follows the subjects of

her study. It is a biopolitical project, which includes “diffuse, technical means of Dominican governance—immigration policy and legislation, national propaganda, border policing, and deportation” (p. 9). This emphasis on the biopolitics of anti-immigration and anti-Blackness makes Shoaff’s book a fine contribution to scholarly efforts to come to terms with what is old, and what new, amid the accelerated changes set in motion in the Dominican Republic since the late 1990s through both the rights mobilization of Haitian-ancestry people and the country’s neoliberal political and economic “reforms,” which have cast Haitian immigrants and descendants loose to find means of survival in economic niches from which they were previously excluded. It is quite appropriate (rather than *appropriative*), then, that Shoaff begins by describing a rally in the symbolic heart of Santo Domingo in late 2005, supporting implementation of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights’ landmark ruling in *Yean and Bosico v. Dominican Republic* that year. The book is made even more timely by the attention of the international media to the Dominican Constitutional Tribunal’s controversial *Sentencia 168* of 2013, which prescribed new legal statuses for both undocumented immigrants and Dominicans born of undocumented immigrant parents.

Shoaff duly honors the protagonism of female human rights pioneers, including the late Sonia Pierre, who rose from humble origins in a *batey* (sugar-plantation-worker compound) to become an internationally recognized icon of her people’s struggle. Particularly deserving of appreciative scholarly attention, within the anthropology of human rights and in the literature on gender and human rights, are Shoaff’s ethnographic perspectives on batey women’s community organizational efforts and the intersecting race/class, gender, and nationality asymmetries that structure female-led itinerant petty commerce along the Cap Haïtien-Santiago corridor across the countries’ northern frontier. These women are all justly, but without either exaggeration or romanticization, recognized by Shoaff as people who have found their voices, and not passive subjects waiting for an educated foreigner to speak for them. A fine line between appreciation and appropriation is again visible here, one that Shoaff handles admirably by situating the women activists who lead this struggle as her main theorists. Solidly reported, while humble in tone, *Borders of Visibility* deserves high regard in the anthropology of female migration and human rights.

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