

## Making Race and Health in Migration and Development

June 3/4, 2021, online via Zoom

*Workshop hosted by Nina Mackert (Leipzig Lab “Global Health”, Leipzig University) and Rebecca Brückmann (History of North America and its transcultural context, Ruhr-University Bochum), funded by the Forum for the Study of the Global Condition.*



In 2013, the New York Times lamented the “health toll of immigration.” According to this narrative, formerly healthy immigrants—the article was talking about Hispanics, the largest group of immigrants in the US—were getting sick in the United States due to their changed consumption habits. Studies had shown that the longer they lived in the US, the shorter their statistical life span became. As an explanation, the studies suggested that, once in the US, Mexican immigrants switched from their “traditional Mexican foods like cactus and beans,” high in fiber and low in meat, to an American fare of giant hamburgers and fried chicken—because it was now available and affordable. Consequently, obesity and diabetes rates increased among immigrants and shortened their life span. The article highlighted how the changed food choices of Mexican immigrants made them sick.

Such a newspaper story fits seamlessly into contemporary narratives of migration from countries of the global South to the global North. These narrative frames re-establish racial boundaries by depicting people from supposedly underdeveloped societies, who struggle with life in industrialized and technological nations. Simultaneously, these narratives negotiate notions of health and belonging: By pitting traditional lifestyles against modern consumption habits, they not only determine what can be considered as a healthy diet but also flag health as a result of proper choices by responsible individuals in a society.

Notions of racial difference and bodily health are mutually constitutive. This workshop explores the making and unmaking of race and health in globalization processes between the nineteenth century and the present day. Drawing upon newer research in postcolonial studies and dis/ability studies, the workshop aims to analyze health, migration, racialization and transculturation as historically contingent, fluid, and intersecting phenomena. In particular, the workshop analyzes the entanglements of race and health in migration and development by asking how health discourses and practices contributed to create and/or challenge racial boundaries, how racist concepts shaped notions of health, and how these discourses continue to be mutually constitutive to migration, citizenship, and belonging, from the late 19th century to the current SARS-CoV-2 pandemic.

Please get in touch via [nina.mackert@uni-leipzig.de](mailto:nina.mackert@uni-leipzig.de) to register for the workshop or request the Zoom link for the keynote by Sabrina Strings and the conversation with Alison Bashford.

## Thursday, June 3, 2021

12:00 – 12:25 Welcome and Introduction

12:30 – 14:00 **Panel I: Social Sciences**

Fenneke Sysling (Leiden): Race and Constitutional Types in Mid-20th Century Anthropology

Cécile Stehrenberger (Wuppertal): Race, Health and Disaster (Research), 1949-2021

14:30-16:30 **Panel II: Life Sciences**

Sandra Widmer (Toronto): Post-War Pacific Islands Nutrition Research and the Framings of Public Health: On the Racialization of Healthy Bodies and Behavioural Change in the Context of Land Anxieties

Veronika Lipphardt (Freiburg): How “Isolated Populations” are Racialized in Medical Genetics. The Case of the Roma.

Roberta Bivins (Warwick): Proving or Polluting Identity? Piloting DNA Fingerprinting for Family Reunification in Britain and Bangladesh 1985-1991.

18:00 – 19:30

**Keynote**

Sabrina Strings (Irvine): The Racial Roots of Fatphobia: The Pre- and-Post Script of the “Obesity Epidemic”

## Friday, June 4, 2021

9:00 – 10:30

**In Conversation with** Alison Bashford (Sydney): Making Race and Health in Quarantining Strategies

11:30 – 13:00

**Panel III: Epidemics**

Rebecca Brückmann (Bochum): Reconstructing Biopolitics: The 1867 Yellow Fever Epidemic in the Gulf Region

Nina Mackert (Leipzig): Pandemic Space: Race, Health, and Responsibility during the Spanish Flu