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RACIST CAPITAL: THE RACIALIZATION OF MIGRANT
LABOR UNDER THE KAFALA SYSTEM IN BEIRUT

by
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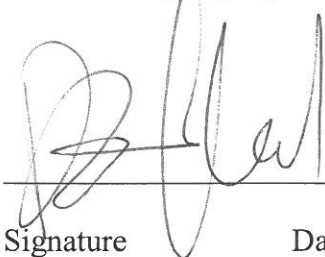
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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This project builds on the assumption that everyday racism targeting migrant workers in Lebanon constitutes a form of structural violence resulting from the Kafala system and more broadly, the consolidation of global capitalism and subsequent transformations in the global labor market. This operationalization of structural violence thus looks at racism as a microcosm of larger global and economic processes while remaining attentive to the various ways it materializes in the course of everyday life. This research is guided by questions about the inter-dynamics of law and society, with a specific focus on the process by which legal structures enable a process of racialization that manifests in everyday racist patterns and practices.

Employing an ethnographic investigation of the legal system governing migrant work, I explore how racism in Lebanon is linked to structures of power that materialize through the dynamics of the Kafala System and Lebanese labor law, and the larger global processes of accumulation and dispossession under global capitalism. In doing so, I aim to provide a better understanding of the processes through which migrant workers are racialized, inferiorized and exploited through embodied, socio-economic conceptualizations of race.

Key words: Migrant workers, racialization, structural violence, institutional racism, global capitalism

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The consolidation of global capitalism and restructuring of the global order according to neoliberal logic has precipitated increasing human rights challenges (Harrison 2005). In Lebanon, foreign migrant workers from African and Asian countries have filled the demand for unskilled labor, thereby racializing those forms of work found in the secondary labor market. Migrant labor in Lebanon and many other Arab countries is regulated through the Kafala (sponsorship) system, which enables abuse and exploitation of workers by requiring them to obtain visa sponsorship through their employers. While neoliberal logic frames migrant labor as a rational, individual economic choice, given that migrants choose voluntarily to emigrate, enter into “free” work contracts and can find higher wages abroad, the global economic conditions that shape those choices should be viewed as a form of structural violence that restricts the freedom and rights of migrant workers and inflicts pernicious forms of racism and exploitation.

Accordingly, this project builds on the assumption that everyday racism targeting migrant workers in Lebanon constitutes a form of structural violence resulting from the Kafala system and more broadly, the consolidation of global capitalism and subsequent transformations in the global labor market. This operationalization of structural violence thus looks at racism as a microcosm of larger global and economic processes while remaining attentive to the various ways it materializes in the course of everyday life. Thus, the analytical framework will combine a historical-structuralist

approach which focuses on the macro processes and conditions that have shaped the exploitative conditions on the ground, and an embedded transnational approach which highlights the subjectivities and experiences of migrant workers themselves.

Anthropological research has failed to adequately address issues of structural violence under conditions of globalization, and this research aims to contribute insight into how global processes affect local places and experiences.

This research is guided by questions about the inter-dynamics of law and society, with a specific focus on the process by which legal structures enable a process of racialization that manifests in racist patterns and ways of being in the world. An interrogation of the prevailing legal structure will lend a better understanding of the processes through which migrant workers are racialized, inferiorized and exploited through socio-economic conceptualizations of race. In doing so, I hope to invite critique of those systems and provide insight into effective methods for countering racism and socio-economic exclusion of vulnerable populations under conditions of globalization.

A. Background

The Arab world is one of the fastest growing migrant-receiving regions in the world, with an estimated migrant worker population of 17.8 million in 2013 and the highest proportion of migrant workers as a share of all workers globally (International Labor Organization, 2015). Migrant workers in the contemporary Arab world come primarily from African and Southeast Asian countries, including the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Ethiopia (Jureidini 2005). In much of the Arab world, including Lebanon, Jordan and the GCC countries of Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), migrant labor is regulated through the

Kafala (sponsorship) system under which workers are required to have an in-country sponsor who takes responsibility for their visa and legal status while they remain in the country.

The logic of the Kafala system derives from the Bedouin principle of hospitality which enumerates specific obligations in the reception and protection of foreign guests (migrant-rights.org, 2015). It emerged in its contemporary configuration in the Gulf in the 1950's alongside the development of oil production in the region and the large-scale infrastructural development projects that attended it (Hannieh 2011). Lebanon adopted the system's practices starting in the early 1960's to manage certain segments of foreign workers. While the practice originates in the Gulf, the configuration of the Kafala system in Lebanon is specific to its particular socio-economic landscape and history (Decree No. 17561 of 18 September 1964) (Kassamali 2017).

Given Lebanon's liberal and outward oriented economic structure predicated on the provision of services, the country has continually depended on foreign labor to fill jobs in the secondary labor market. At the inception of Lebanon's independence, these jobs were commonly filled by Syrian workers, who played an instrumental role in the development of the modern Lebanese state and economy (Chalcraft 2009), as well as Palestinians, Egyptians and Kurds (Kassamali,2017). The 1950's also saw a period of prosperity and expanding economic development that attracted extensive inflows of Arab labor. These workers enjoyed relatively easy entry and access to the labor market in Lebanon.

Furthermore, Lebanon's upper and middle classes have a long history of utilizing domestic labor within the home (Fawaz, 2005). Prior to the outbreak of the civil war, domestic labor was organized under the auspices of kin and patronage

networks. Young girls from rural villages in Lebanon, as well as Syria and Palestine would work in upper class homes in exchange for education and socialization into the workings of the middle- and upper-class society. Payment and terms of employment were negotiated through the respective families (Jureidini 2009). Thus, domestic workers were culturally (and ethnically) similar and were integrated into the prevailing social class structure. Yet, the onset of the civil war in 1975 radically changed the dynamics of domestic work, as many of the Arab workers departed and fraught political dynamics inclined preferences for non-Arab labor and especially non-Syrian labor (Jureidini 2009).

Accordingly, foreign migrant workers from Asia and Africa began migrating to Lebanon in the mid to late 1970's. Despite the war, migrant workers came in increasingly greater numbers and diversity throughout the 1970's and 80's (Kassamali 2017), though the large majority came in 1993 with the end of the war and onset of large-scale reconstruction efforts. The first recruitment agency opened in 1978 (Jureidini 2003) and agencies continued to proliferate throughout the war and post-war reconstruction periods. In addition to the formal recruitment networks, Lebanese expatriates in Africa (Congo, Togo, Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria) facilitated the recruitment of African domestic workers through their established personal relationships and networks (Bret 2007).

The system of laws and regulation that oversee the presence of migrant workers in Lebanon emerged just before the war in the early to mid 1960's. While technically all workers in Lebanon are subject to the Lebanese labor law regardless of nationality, the conditions of migrant workers' entry into the country relegates regulation of their legal status to the workings of the Sponsorship system (Longuenesse and Tabar 2013). Yet,

the law does not actually contain any reference to the Kafala system or a 'Kafil,' but rather sets forth the legal infrastructure through a series of decrees and regulations issued by the Ministry of Labor starting from 1962 onward (Diab 2005) (Ministry of Labor, 1964).

Under this institutional arrangement, an employer must obtain permission for the foreign worker's entry from the Ministry of Labor, which then issues a permit to the applicant with the name of the sponsor (Kafil), after which general security approves the longer-term residency permit. The sponsor is then responsible for processing the documents and residency permits, providing insurance, reporting run-away cases to the authority and paying for the flight to the country of origin. Once the worker arrives in the country, he or she must remain employed by the sponsor and cannot terminate the contract without the permission of the sponsor and availability of a substitute. (ILO 2016)

Labor recruitment agencies often take the role of the sponsor and thus avoid the requirement of a work request from a future employer. (Longuenesse and Tabar 2014) (M. Young, 2000). Once the worker is in the country the agency can match the employer with the worker and transfer responsibility as the sponsor to the employer. While Lebanese employers are legally allowed to recruit and employ foreign workers on their own, the overwhelming majority (83%) chose to go through recruitment agencies due to the complexity of the legal process and for reasons of convenience (ILO 2016).

The only time Kafala is mentioned explicitly by the state is in the regulations for recruitment agencies and the Ministry of Labor's recruitment guide for migrant domestic workers that was published 2012. (Longuenesse et al 2014). Still, the Lebanese labor law as outlined by the Ministry of Labor in the 1964 decree on

organizing the work of foreigners (tanẓīm al-‘amāl al-āǰānīb), articulates the structure of the Kafala system’s sponsorship dynamic, whereby the workers entry and legal status in the country is directly linked to a specific employer. (Ministry of Labor, Decree No. 16571). Thus, the Kafala system transfers responsibility for regulating the migrants’ presence in the country from the state to the employer (or recruitment agency). Yet, many of the obligations conferred on employers through the law, such as the requirement that they cover costs of medical insurance for workers, are easily reneged (Longuenesse et al 2014). At the same time, the legal framework for foreign workers imposes stringent restrictions on the freedom, mobility and conditions of residence and employment of workers. Consequently, migrant workers are denied protection under Lebanese labor law and the opportunity to file a labor disputes.

Consequently, migrant workers are susceptible to exploitative and abusive practices, including underpayment, non-payment, forced overtime work, no time off and sometimes physical and sexual abuse. Migrant workers and especially domestic migrant workers often have their passports confiscated by their employers/sponsors and thus face considerable restrictions on their mobility and freedom.

B. Contribution

1. Theorizing the Kafala System: Institutionalized slavery, Indentured Servitude, or Human Trafficking?

Academic, NGO and media coverage of Kafala has increased markedly within the last two decades in Lebanon, concurrent with reemergence of civil society since the end of the civil war and increasing proliferation of global discourses on human rights and social justice. Popular and scholarly conversations on the Kafala system traditionally center on its primary association with female domestic work and its role in

facilitating a wide range of abuse and exploitative practices against migrant domestic workers. Thus, existing theoretical frameworks position critiques of the Kafala system within the context of internationalized human rights discourses, often drawing comparisons to systems of slavery, indentured servitude and human trafficking. (Amnesty 2019)(Hall 2019) (Jureidini 2005)(Su 2017).

Such critiques of the system which draw on human rights frameworks primarily focus on the visible consequences of Kafala, in the many instances of abuse inflicted on domestic workers by their employers and recruitment agencies. While such perspectives are warranted and necessary given the pervasive extent of abuse that occurs, human rights-based approaches often foreground the identity of victims and perpetrators and thus direct the conversation away from the superstructural and global dimensions of the system, and its place within a rapidly consolidating global capitalist economy. For this reason I seek to momentarily draw the conversation away from the discursive landscape of human rights frameworks (which is not to deny the value of such approaches, but rather, to open up alternative discursive space from which to imagine alternative arrangements and modes of resistance), and situate the analysis of the kafala system within a larger global context of capitalist consolidation and the persistence of colonial forms of racism, domination and exploitation.

I suggest an alternative theoretical framework that is situated in the advent of neoliberal paradigms and decentralized governance structures that foregrounds the primary role of capital and market liberalizations in the extension and consolidation of oppressive, racialized global hierarchies within local contexts.

I argue that the form and function of the Kafala system, which relies on racial difference as a method of surveillance and control, operates as a free market economy

that facilitates the free movement of migrant bodies as objects of trade. The rationale of the system derives from capitalist modes of development and organizations of power which promote economic liberalization as the primary path toward advancement and prosperity, and thus operates within a similar institutional framework characterized by strong property rights, free markets and free trade, which *relies* on race as the price mechanism to facilitate the unregulated interactions of the market for migrant labor. Racism, then, is not an accidental byproduct of the economic arrangements and interactions set up by the system, but the primary mechanism by which the system operates.

By drawing attention to the construction of race in Lebanon and the localized manifestations of racism, I seek to demonstrate the extent to which the Kafala system, rather than being a relic of historical slave trades, or traditional Bedouin modes of hospitality, is a modern, neoliberal, capitalist institution which relies on and reifies global racial hierarchies of power and capitalist modes of domination.

Accordingly, Lebanon's reliance on cheap labor from African and Asian countries and the legal framework that governs the conditions of their entry and stay in Lebanon has facilitated a racialized labor system that propagates exploitation of and 'trans-migratory racism' against migrants. While the neoliberal logic frames migrant labor as a rational, individual economic choice, given that migrants choose voluntarily to emigrate, enter 'freely' into employment contracts, and can find higher wages abroad, the global economic conditions that shape those choices should be viewed as a form of structural violence that restricts the freedom and rights of migrant workers and inflicts pernicious forms of racism and exploitation. Further, this exploitative arrangement

develops and promotes racist subjectivities which structure relations of individual identity in terms of racial superiority and inferiority.

This project is based on the assumption that the legal framework regulating migrant workers in Lebanon is implicated in the racializing and exclusionary practices within Lebanese society, through the obligations and power relations it constructs between workers and their employers. Accordingly, an interrogation of the prevailing legal structure will lend a better understanding of the processes through which migrant workers are racialized, inferiorized and exploited through socio-economic conceptualizations of race and thus provide insight into effective methods for countering racism and socio-economic exclusion of vulnerable populations under conditions of globalization.

2. Theorizing Racism

“The habit of considering racism as a mental quirk, as a psychological flaw must be abandoned.” (Frantz Fanon 1967:77)

The UN International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination defines the term ‘racial discrimination’ as “any distinction, exclusion, or preference based on race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.”

The expansive definition and inclusion of various categories of identification in the term racial discrimination speaks to the fact that race is not a natural or biological fact but rather a socially constructed mode of identification. The unstable and changing

nature of race as a category thus allows for wide variation in the different variables and modes of identification used to construct it.

The term ‘racism’ is used commonly in Lebanon in a way that blurs the boundaries between race, ethnicity, nationality, and citizenship. “al-‘Unsuriyye” is the Arabic translation of the word “racism”, and is used most commonly to denote notions or practices of inferiority, exclusion, marginalization, discrimination directed toward particular social, cultural, or ethnic groups. The word al-‘araq, which translates to ‘ethnicity’ is also used to a lesser extent to denote identity-based discrimination of ethnic minorities. The words for racism are often used in combination with the word al-tamayiz, which means discrimination. In Lebanon the word al-‘Unsuriyye is used to denote various forms of discrimination, often against Syrian refugees¹, as well as Asian and African migrant workers and other ethnic minorities, and sometimes even to refer to class-based or sectarian discrimination.

The slippage in this term exemplifies the contingent and contested nature of race as a stable category of identification, and yet can also belie the concrete and material ways it is experienced by those deemed as racial ‘others.’ Conflating all forms of discrimination under the category of racism elides the ways in which race as a *physical and embodied experience* inflicts pernicious forms of abuse and exclusion for those physically marked as racially distinct from the dominant race.

¹ The term al-‘Unsuriyye is most often applied in the context of Syrian refugees and the escalation of discrimination and xenophobia that has accompanied the influx of Syrian refugees into the country since the war began in 2011. The incorporation of Syrian prejudice under the discourse of racism is fairly recent, gaining salience particularly after 2015 when the Lebanese government tightened the restrictions on Syrians entering the country thereby altering the structural conditions under which Syrians in Lebanon reside. While these new legal developments have rendered Syrians vulnerable to the similar forms of abuse and exploitation as Asian and African migrant workers, they are still quite new. More importantly, it is impossible to disentangle the issue of Syrian discrimination from the fraught histories and complex political dynamics attending the relations between the two countries. Thus, for the purposes of this paper, I have confined by analysis strictly to migrant workers from Asian and African countries.

The incongruity in the way the concept is deployed highlights the need for a concrete appraisal of the processes by which notions of race are constructed in Lebanese society. If we are to confront the pernicious forms of racism that pervade Lebanese society, we must have a better understanding of what exactly we mean when we use the term ‘racism.’ This requires disentangling the interchangeably applied forms of discrimination to form a more robust theoretical interrogation and understanding of race and racism.

Thus, by exploring ethnographically the forms of racialization and exclusion encountered by migrant workers under the Kafala system in Lebanon, I seek to engage and contribute to three particular bodies of scholarly literature:

3. Structural and Ideological Determinants of Racism: Racialized Social Systems

First, I seek to engage in the debate about the structural and ideological determinants of racism (Stavenhagen 1999, Wade 1997, Bonilla-Silva 1996, Allen 2002). Contemporary scholarship in the social sciences has shifted from locating racism in individual beliefs and attitudes to emphasizing the structural forces and social processes embedded within various institutional and organizational contexts. Such ‘theories of institutional racism’ emphasize a focus on systems, policies, practices and forms of organization, such as the labor market or nation-state.

Bonilla Silva’s (1997) theory of ‘racialized social systems’ emphasizes the ways in which social, political and economic systems set up racial hierarchies that subsequently produce racist attitudes and behaviors. In this theoretical formation, racism does not just exist ideologically, but rather is tethered to the structural formations of the society and maintained by colorblind ideologies. Building off this

theoretical orientation, I apply a critical race approach to explore how racism in Lebanon is linked to structures and categorizations of power that materialize through the dynamics of the Kafala System/Lebanese labor law and the larger global processes of accumulation and dispossession under global capitalism. Lebanon provides a unique context for this sort of investigation as the dynamics of migration are quite novel and result from contemporary processes of globalization, as opposed to the historical ideological formations of racism in the US and Europe. While Lebanese racism does build off of older colonial legacies relating to Lebanon's position within French imperial hierarchies, the relationship is more contingent and complex and thus offers a compelling context to think through the way novel forms of racism emerge and advance amid changing global dynamics.

I thus employ the concept of 'Racialization' as a referent for the specific set of *processes* by which ideas about race are constructed and ascribed socio-cultural significance that eventually become embedded in social imaginaries of racial difference. The use of racialization as a vantage point draws our attention to the performative and dynamic nature of racial construction and allows us to look at racism as a structurally determined, historically situated and context-specific phenomenon, rather than a universal or fixed experience.

4. The Racialization of Global Labor

Furthermore, I seek to engage with the growing body of literature on the ways in which globalization and the consolidation of global capitalism have enabled new forms of racialization and racism. (Wallerstein 1991, Balibar and Wallerstein, 1988, Wade 1993, Kohler, 1978, Miles 1982, Hage 2017) This debate centers on the extent to which

global conditions play an integral role in the construction and development of ‘racializing practices, relations and ideologies’ (Harrison, 1995) in local contexts. Clarke (2004) addresses the ways neoliberal ideologies justify and conceal systemic racism through its discourse on open markets, flexible labor and the diminished role of government. This discourse conceals pernicious forms of structural violence by assigning structural inequality to problems of individual merit. (Mullings, 2005) In situating my analysis in this historical and global context, I hope to provide a better understanding of how local forms of racism connect to larger global processes and dynamics.

5. Epistemologies of Race

Furthermore, anthropological research calls for greater attention to the ways categories of race emerge and persist, with the assumption that a critical understanding of how race is constructed could lend crucial insights in ways to deconstruct it. In the academic debate about post-race cosmopolitanism (Gilroy 2000), post-race writers reject the ontological basis of social constructionist writings and have adopted an anti-foundational perspective which contends that “race is a fiction only ever given substance to through the illusion of performance, action and utterance, where repetition makes it appear as-if-real (Nayak 2006).” Yet while the anti-foundationalist critique of race as structural and performative is sound, calls for post-race approaches elide the consequences of racial difference as a modality of lived experience. Such color-blind approaches risk overlooking and discounting the very real experiences of racism and exclusion faced by those subjected to racialized social systems. The context of Lebanon illustrates the dangers of promoting color-blind approaches as it demonstrates the ways

new constructions of race and forms of racism emerge and consolidate rapidly within social and economic structures in light of the relatively recent arrival of new migrants from Africa and Asia. Thus, it provides an interesting context for thinking through the progression of racism over time and the changing conditions that underlie its persistence and evolution.

In focusing on the *processes* by which individuals are racialized and excluded, this project resists the tendency to essentialize ontological racial categories and instead looks at race as a dynamic and lived experience born out by structural realities. An ethnographic account of migrant workers' daily experiences with racism in Lebanon will lend useful insight into the concept of racialization as a mode of social organization (Murji and Solomos 2005) and help to attenuate the discord between academic theory and everyday practices and experiences.

B. Methodology

As Nayak contends, “race is a fiction only ever given substance to through the illusion of performance, action and utterance, where repetition makes it appear as-if-real (Nayak 2006).” But if race is really just a myth, then how can we study it? If race does not exist, how can it constitute the object of an ethnographic investigation? how can we discuss race in a way that does not reify the very categories we are seeking to abolish?

This methodological problematic is the reason I turn my ethnographic gaze to the workings of the Kafala system/Lebanese labor laws and the complementary structuration of power which attends it. Consequently, this research is not an ethnography of migrant workers, or racialized individuals, but rather an ethnography of the system of power—the institutional structures, processes and ideologies—which

confer meaning on aspects of physical difference and thus produce race as a speakable category in the first place. In order to trace those constellations of power which produce racial categories as meaningful socio-political identities, I investigate the rationale and function of the system at three particular levels: the sovereign, the governed and the racialized.

1. The Sovereign: Understanding the State's Rationale of Kafala

The first component of the research focuses on the rationale and function of the Kafala system as articulated by the state and its prevailing institutional and legal structures.

Accordingly, I ask: Why does the state give up its authority to regulate migrant workers to private citizens or companies? What are the implications of this delegation of responsibility? How does it govern relations between the Lebanese government and the sending governments? why is there so much ambiguity and confusion surrounding the legal infrastructure of the Kafala? Who benefits from this ambiguity? And lastly, how does the rationale of the system insert itself in global processes of labor commodification?

2. The Governed: Obligations and Power Under Kafala

Further, I investigate the various obligations that the legal system confers on those under its purview (employers, agencies, workers), and the power dynamics constructed between employer and employee by the state's delegation of authority over the regulation of immigration to its citizens. How do they understand the role of the Kafil and worker? How does the Kafil find and select their employees? What type of

requirements and characteristics do they look for? What obligations does the system confer on the Kafil and conversely, what obligations does it confer on workers? How are those obligations enforced (if at all) by the state? What happens if the Kafil reneges on their obligations under the law? What do the power dynamics look like between the employer and the worker? How do the specific legal procedures impact the working relationship? For example, do the financial obligations placed on employers in the process of contracting a foreign worker affect the way the employer treats or deals with their employee(s)? In investigating the obligations and relations of power enshrined by the system, I hope to better understand how the legal categorizations and power dynamics assembled by the Kafala enable racist patterns of thinking within social imaginaries of the racialized ‘other.’

These two investigations at the state and societal levels then allow me to raise the larger questions of how the prevailing social imaginaries of racial others are produced, articulated and experienced in Lebanese society, and the ways in which the prevailing legal system is implicated in the construction of those imaginaries.

3. The Racialized: Social Imaginaries of Race

In this section of my research, I investigate the various ways processes of racialization materialize in the daily lives of migrant workers and racialized individuals who are not migrant workers. How do migrant workers understand and interpret the ways in which they are racialized within the structures of this system? What forms of racism and exclusion do racialized individuals encounter in their daily lives? How is their racial difference made apparent in their movement throughout the city on a daily basis? How do they interpret and evaluate the instances of racism that they face? What

methods or practices have they developed to deal with the psychological strain of their conditions and work to resist racism? How do they characterize and reconcile their negative experience in relation to the goals they have and reasons they have come to Lebanon in the first place? And finally, how does their experience with racism in Lebanon compare to racial ‘others’ not under the purview of the Kafala system? In focusing on the process by which individuals are racialized and excluded, this project resists the tendency to essentialize ontological racial categories and instead looks at race as an everyday lived experience that results from the social and economic arrangements set forth by prevailing legal institutions.

My interviews with racialized individuals who are not migrant workers serve as a point of comparison with the experiences of those under the purview of the kafala system. While racial hierarchies emerge through structural formations, they are maintained through ideologies and discourses that proliferate through the process of racialization, and thus affect those outside the purview of the system. An understanding and comparison of the effects of racialization on those with more comprehensive rights and higher social status lends valuable insight into the ways that certain meanings are attached to race as a physical identifier and the extent to which greater access to legal and socio-economic rights may attenuate the effects of racialization.

These questions thus provide a guide for thinking through the way racism is linked to structures of power that materialize through the institutional dynamics set up by the Kafala system and the neoliberal governance structure of the Lebanese state. By utilizing an interdisciplinary toolkit that relies on both institutional and anthropological analysis, I aim to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the racializing *processes* by which race as a socio-political construction, crystalizes as an ideology in

social imaginaries and subsequently manifests in racist practices. Thus, in addition to formulating a coherent theoretical framework for understanding racial construction in Lebanon, I also seek to provide an effective methodological framework for deconstructing categories of race and illuminating the constellations of power which produce them.

This methodological approach, which draws on notions of Foucauldian governmentality in combination with material measures of political economy, allows me to highlight the local subjectivities produced by local governance structures while also remaining attentive to the manner in which these localized subjectivities insert themselves into larger global hierarchies constructed through the consolidation of global capitalism and proliferation of neoliberal ideologies which promote economic liberalization as the ascendant paradigm for achieving and advancing development objectives. In doing so, I hope to provide a useful model for advancing internationalized perspectives on Critical Race Theory.

C. Data Collection

My field work was conducted over a period of two months February and March 2019, during which I conducted 18 semi-structured interviews with 6 migrant workers, 10 interviews with employers of migrant workers, and 4 interviews with Asian and African residents of Beirut who are not migrant workers. The aforementioned interviews were tape recorded and subsequently transcribed and translated into English. Four out of the 22 participants requested not to be recorded during the interview, and thus I instead relied on detailed note taking to record the information conveyed during these interviews. Interviews were conducted in English or Arabic, or a mix of both for

those whose native language is neither English nor Arabic but have learned both during their time living in Lebanon.

The interviews with migrant worker participants were primarily conducted at the Migrant Community Center run by the activist NGO the Anti-Racism Movement, or at a second location of the participant's choosing. The nationalities of the migrant worker participants I interviewed included Sudanese, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan, Ethiopian and Filipina, while all of the employers I interviewed were Lebanese. My interviews with Asian and African residents of Beirut who are not employed as category 3 and 4 workers under the Kafala system included mixed-race Lebanese individuals, international students, and foreigners employed in professional occupations. The nationalities of these participants included Lebanese, Kenyan, Ugandan, Nigerian, and Somalian.

To supplement the information gathered in interviews, I conducted participant observation to investigate how racialization and racism materialize in the daily lives of migrant workers. My activities included following my interlocutors in their daily routines and observing their movements and interactions with others while being attentive to the ways they are distinguished and excluded from the Lebanese society in the course of everyday life. These observations allowed me to acquire a general impression of the positionality of migrant workers vis a vis the surrounding Lebanese society. I also attended events and activities organized by NGO's activists and migrant workers and observed group dynamics and strategies of solidarity, community building and resistance.

In addition to the interviews and scheduled participant observation, I worked as a fulltime volunteer at the Migrant Community Center in Beirut for a period of 3 months,

and sustained contact and involvement with members and staff thereafter. The various interactions, conversations and experiences I had over the course of my involvement with the community center greatly informed the direction of my fieldwork and subsequent analysis.

I also carried out a sustained observation and analysis of general Lebanese society, taking pictures of media advertisements, making note of content in movies and TV series, and observing interactions in public spaces, including the corniche, shopping centers and public transportation services (buses and services).

D. Outline of the Thesis

While racialization is a modern phenomenon which draws its origins from the emergence of Western capitalism and its consolidation through imperialist expansion, the particular motivations driving racializing processes are context-specific and vary according to the prevailing socio-political dynamics. The primary impetus driving the racialization of labor is the desire to more effectively dominate and exploit the cheap labor offered by subordinated groups (Alimahomed et al 2008). It accomplishes this by dehumanizing racialized groups and rendering them unintelligible to the society except as detached, laboring bodies.

The structural processes which dehumanize migrant workers are accompanied by ideological processes that inscribe racial meanings on their dehumanized condition. Once workers are dehumanized and racialized, their exploitation thus becomes morally palatable. Imaginaries of race, then emerge in the exercises of power performed in the course of those systemic processes and the modes of sociality configured around them.

Accordingly, by identifying the particular, systemic processes by which migrant workers are simultaneously dehumanized and racialized, I attempt to uncover the machinery behind racial socially constructed imaginaries of race and the interests of power it serves.

The racialization of migrant labor under the Kafala system occurs through specific processes that emerge from the institutional structure of the state: commodification, inferiorization, criminalization, and sexualization. Accordingly, each chapter deals with a particular process generated by the Kafala system through which migrant workers are racialized, dehumanized and exploited through embodied, socio-economic conceptualizations of race. I trace the trajectory of each process at the three levels enumerated above—the state, the governed and the racialized—in order to illuminate the constellations of power set up by the particular process and the manner in which race emerges as both a practical and ideological tool to uphold the oppressive power structures of the system.

Chapter one deals with the process of *commodification* that results from the state's deregulation of the labor migration industry and subsequent delegation of authority to recruitment agencies to oversee and manage employment relationships and working conditions. I briefly explore the history of the industry to recruit Asian and African workers and how the financial interests of labor recruiters were implicated in the configuration of the system as reliance on migrant work increased. The decentralized governance structure of the migrant labor market renders the regulation of migrant labor to the forces of the free market and thus empowers recruitment agencies and intermediaries to act on behalf of their financial interests.

These investigations reveal the manner in which the placement of the industry within the competitive framework of free markets, has led to a decentralized labor regime which applies standards and regulations according to nationality and bargaining power of the sending country, rather than a uniform and equitable system of regulation for all workers. As a result, foreign workers have become a commodity differentiated by national identity. Thus, we see how the differentiated commodification of migrant labor based on national conditions and characteristics has produced a racialized and hierarchical system of regulation and control and represents one of the primary mechanisms by which racial categories and their attendant associations emerge and persist within the prevailing social imaginary. Through the perspectives and experiences of my interlocutors under the purview of the system, I highlight the manner in which racial categories emerge in their narration of their everyday experiences under the purview of the system.

Chapter two interrogates the infrastructure of the foreign labor market and the process of *inferiorization* that results from the Ministry of Labor's system of classification which segments the foreign labor force according to nationality, occupation and gender.

From the social patterns and practices that emerge from this system of classification, we see how the juridical categories enter the social imagination and configure a caste system in which race emerges as a form of social capital. From the moments of exclusion and discrimination experienced by my racialized interlocutors, we see how the state-configured categories of race are used to produce a socially segregated landscape whereby the activities and mobility of racialized individuals are circumscribed around their labor and restricted through notions of inferiority.

Chapter three investigates the logic behind the state's delegation of supervisory authority to the employer in the form of sponsorship. The notion of a state delegating a fundamental pillar of state sovereignty—namely, control over immigration—to private entities (individual citizens and corporations) is counter-intuitive to the conventional wisdom of state administrative practices. The institutional dynamic of the state's delegation of sovereign authority in the form of sponsorship in effect reconstructs a relation of power between the employer and foreign worker that is modeled after the relation of state sovereignty with respect to non-citizens. Here, I explore the phenomenon of 'runaway workers' in order to demonstrate the manner in which race serves as the disciplining function that allows General Security to maintain tight control over workers within the kafala's decentralized system of control.

Chapter four explores the intersection of gender and race in order to understand the manner in which notions of sexual difference are operationalized to construct sexualized understanding of racial difference. I explore how General Security authority works to criminalize and police the sexual intimacy and reproductive rights of migrant women through the implementation of various administrative directives which serve to limit their movement, restrict their sociality and relations of intimacy, prohibit their procreation and deport their children. These General Security policies which place restrictions on the sociality, intimacy and family of migrant women are the mechanisms through which the state can ensure the temporal limits and labor function of racialized migrant women. Under this institutional arrangement, such exercises of state authority render racialized women as temporary, transient sexual objects, and thus lead to understandings of racial and sexual difference that are mutually constitutive—and demonstrations of racism that are highly sexualized. It is in these exercises of state

authority through which sexualized understandings of race emerge and proliferate to invite pervasive sexual harassment and abuse of racialized women.

CHAPTER TWO

COMMODIFICATION

The legal database for legislation regarding foreign workers is notably sparse. The foundational legal text regulating the presence of foreign workers is the 1964 Labor code with one revision in 2005 and brief, intermittent Ministry of Labor orders issued to further regulate the behaviors and practices of recruitment agencies and employers. While enforcement and respect for the law runs short in many sectors of the Lebanese state, the legal regime regarding migrant workers stands out in its ambiguity and informality. Thus, if one were to rely solely on the texts of legislation in order to understand the regulation of migrant workers in Lebanon they would be irrevocably lost.

Instead, a system marked by its informality and non-enforcement run in collaboration by various Lebanese ministries, primarily, General Security and The Ministry of Labor, regulates the entry, stay and exit of migrant workers in Lebanon. This system of decentralized control thus relies heavily on the influence and practices of recruitment agencies and employers (as well as the general public) for collaborating in the enforcement of those restrictions. This informality renders the institutional structure of the Kafala system quite ambiguous and unintelligible, which expectedly hinders adequate enforcement and oversight of formal legal processes (Young 2000).

Under international conventional practice, the role and function of an employment agency should be limited to the matching of employees and workers and arranging the transport of the worker to Lebanon, whereupon a state agency should take

over in monitoring and regulating labor relations in line with the prevailing regulatory legislation (ILO 2013). Yet, while it is typically the state labor agency which would oversee the regulation of workers and labor conditions, in Lebanon private recruitment agencies enjoy an expansive mandate (legally and informally) to oversee and manage the conduct of migrant work in Lebanon.

The aspects of migrant work under the purview of private agencies include an extensive range of capacities: matching worker and employer, obtaining the prior approval and visa, arranging transport and arrival of the worker, administering the requisite residency and work permits, mediating and settling conflicts between employees and their workers (even after the probation period), overseeing and managing “tanazuls” (sponsorship waiver) and changes in employers/sponsors, hosting and replacing workers when the employment relationship disintegrates. Many of these functions are stipulated through state decrees issued by the Ministry of Labor, while others manifest through the inertia and inaction of the state (ILO 2013). Thus, the Ministry of Labor has essentially privatized the regulatory function of the state by contracting out state obligations—and thus state authority—to recruitment agencies.

In this chapter, I investigate the logic and function of this institutional arrangement which delegates such a vast mandate of authority to recruitment agencies. Why do agencies have such extensive authority in the oversight and management of migrant labor, and how does this effect the prevailing balance of power between workers and their employers?

I begin by briefly tracing the history and evolution of the recruitment industry for migrant labor in Lebanon. This history reveals the manner in which recruitment agencies were able to play a formative role in determining the structure and processes of

the system as it evolved over time and hence deter efforts by the state and third parties to increase regulation and accountability of the sector. The decentralized logic of the system thus aligns with the financial interests of recruitment agencies by allowing them to capitalize off their asymmetrical information and barriers of access to labor pools and recruitment networks.

The second section explores the prevailing balance of obligations and power that emerges in light of the state's deregulated system of control. From the balance of power that emerges, we see how the deregulated institutional arrangement positions employers as a consumer of a commodity rather than an employer entering into a reciprocal work contract. As employers entreat the services of recruitment agencies and pay the associated recruitment fees, they then become empowered as customers. It is in the transactional interactions among recruiters, intermediaries and employers, in which race emerges as a category of identification used to denote and differentiate the extensive supply of workers available. As they 'shop' for workers at the agencies, the use of nationality/race as the referent to measure the value of the worker—rather than skills, qualifications or experience— contributes discursively to their dehumanization and reifies their positionality as commodities in the Lebanese social imaginary.

Thus, the third section explores how race emerges as a salient category of identification in the rent-seeking strategies and practices employed by recruiters to secure their financial interests on the free market for global labor and market their services to employers. Further, I explore the role of country of origin recruiters in order to show how the deregulated nature of the system inserts itself into the global processes of labor commodification and the construction of globalized racial hierarchies.

These investigations reveal the manner in which the placement of the industry within the competitive framework of free markets, has led to a decentralized labor regime which applies standards and regulations according to nationality and bargaining power of the sending country, rather than a uniform and equitable system of regulation for all workers. As a result, foreign workers have become a commodity differentiated by national identity.

From these dynamics, we see how the differentiated commodification of migrant labor based on national conditions and characteristics has produced a racialized and hierarchical system of regulation and control and represents one of the primary mechanisms by which racial categories and their attendant associations emerge and persist within the prevailing social imaginary. Through the perspectives and experiences of my interlocutors under the purview of the system, I highlight the manner in which racial categories emerge in their narration of their everyday experiences under the purview of the system.

A. History of Recruitment Industry in Lebanon

The country's first recruitment agencies emerged during the civil war when the state's regulatory capacity was virtually nonexistent. Thus, when Asian workers began arriving in Lebanon after the onset of the civil war, there were no standardized procedures or state regulated mechanisms of control in place to facilitate their arrival and entry into Lebanon's labor market. Padma, one of my Sri Lankan interlocutors who first arrived in Lebanon in 1976, reported being held with a group of other Sri Lankan women at the airport in a large, enclosed cage bound by chicken netting before getting picked up by the recruiters and brought to their 'office.'

Me: So when the plane landed and you got to Beirut what was that experience like? Like coming of the plane into the airport did general security meet you or did someone else meet you, or how did things unfold after you landed?

*P: I think there is no general security at that time. We just came out, we waited, Rafic Harriri airport is really good with the facilities now, but at that time, it's like how can you say, the thing that's like that thing blowing in the wind, I don't know... [tumbleweed]
Anyway so we get out of the plane and we walk inside, they didn't let us get in the bus, we walk, we walk inside to the airport and then the first word I hear, 'yalla yalla,' and they open our bag and they hold the bottom form the bag and put everything down, like you know, throwing everything down. How the way they check our bag that time. There is no human right, no rights nothing. So after, they put, they put us in cage.*

Me: wow a cage?

P: yeah, it's like, it's a cage, like how we put the dog or like...

Me: wow were there windows or anything?

P: no, no windows. There is, what we make the chicken nets, this net material, and after they put big lock and close. So, all of us is like you know inside and we are like looking at each other, you know, after because man is explain to me someone will come and show your passport and call your name and at that time you have to run to them. Really, can you imagine the situation. Like this, this is slavery, and selling human. [sic]

Padma remained in the chicken-netted cage until the recruiters came to retrieve her and some of the other women and bring them to the agency. The office of the agency, located at the top floor of a dilapidated building in the Hamra area, housed the group of women in a small, unfurnished room with a makeshift and unkempt toilet corner, until they were successfully matched with their employers. These women spent days, and for some weeks, sleeping on the cold tiled floors of this room without pillows, blankets, food, or water.

These conditions borne out by the unregulated and lawless environment to which the first Asian domestic workers arrived set the tone for the industry practices in the years to come as the migration of Asian and then African workers increased, particularly after the end of the civil war and the enterprise of reconstruction that ensued. Given that the establishment of recruitment agencies preceded the configuration

of a formal legal and institutional structure, the agencies were able to play a formative role in determining how the entry and exit of foreign workers was to be regulated. Thus, given the unregulated power of agencies at the nascent stages of the migrant labor industry, their practical and financial incentives figure prominently in the regulatory environment which emerged and the current institutional and regulatory structures we see today (Jureidini 2005).

B. Legal Regulation of Agencies

In 1977 the legislative decree No. 80 established the National Employment Office (NEO), a public institution endowed with the responsibility and sole authority to recruit foreign workers. Accordingly, the legislation technically forbids the establishment of private employment agencies. Yet, recruitment agencies in Lebanon skirted this regulation by changing their description from private employment agencies (PEA) to private placement agencies. Further, the designation of domestic work as “unqualified” work afforded agencies greater legal cover to continue operating. The devaluation of domestic labor as a legitimate and respected category of work thus contributes discursively to its exclusion from standardized labor practices and protections. These legal nuances also prevent the Lebanese government from ratifying ILO Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181), which enumerates state obligations in the oversight and regulation of employment agencies (ILO, 2013). Thus, the regulatory dynamics conventionally applied to employment agencies under international and national legal custom do not apply to the private agencies which profit off the ‘importation’ and trading of migrant labor.

Accordingly, recruitment agencies managed to circumvent significant forms of state regulation, up until 2003 when the Ministry of Labor implemented order no. 5 (decree 1/5 of January 2003), in order to regulate the activities and increase the accountability of employment agencies in their recruitment of workers and management of employer-worker relations. In line with the order, agencies were obligated to preserve records of the contracts between sponsors/employers and domestic workers in order to facilitate better management of employer-worker relations and protect worker rights. Agencies were thus obligated to provide a contract specifying the terms of employment and a signed commitment by the sponsor to ensure adequate treatment of the worker.

While it is the obligation of the Ministry of Labor's agencies (Division of Inspection, Prevention and Safety and the Division of Investigation and Labor Matters) to investigate all labor violations, it is the responsibility of the private agencies to alert the ministry of those violations (OHCHA 2015). Thus, state investigations of disputes or violations only occurred when the agency—a private entity with a clear financial interest in delimiting the power of workers and maintaining the disproportionate power of employers— brought the violation or dispute to the state's attention. Further, while the decree designated the MoL's Labor Inspection Department with the responsibility for monitoring the agencies and producing biannual reports of their findings and assessment, reports have indicated that the labor inspection systems do not have adequate capacity to monitor the agencies and does not in fact perform the stipulated oversight and reporting functions as the decree obligates (Esim, Kerbage, 2011).

Thus, while the new legislation nominally improved accountability by increasing the legal obligations of the agencies by specifying minimum actions required by the agency to standardize and regulate the employment relationship, the state's lack

of enforcement of those obligations empower agencies to violate the limited rights of workers with impunity. Under this decentralized regulatory formulation, mediating the relationship between the employer and employee is the responsibility of the agency, an entity which has a clear financial interest in maintaining the power of the employer to control migrant workers and not only benefit from but also participate in exploitative and abusive practices themselves.

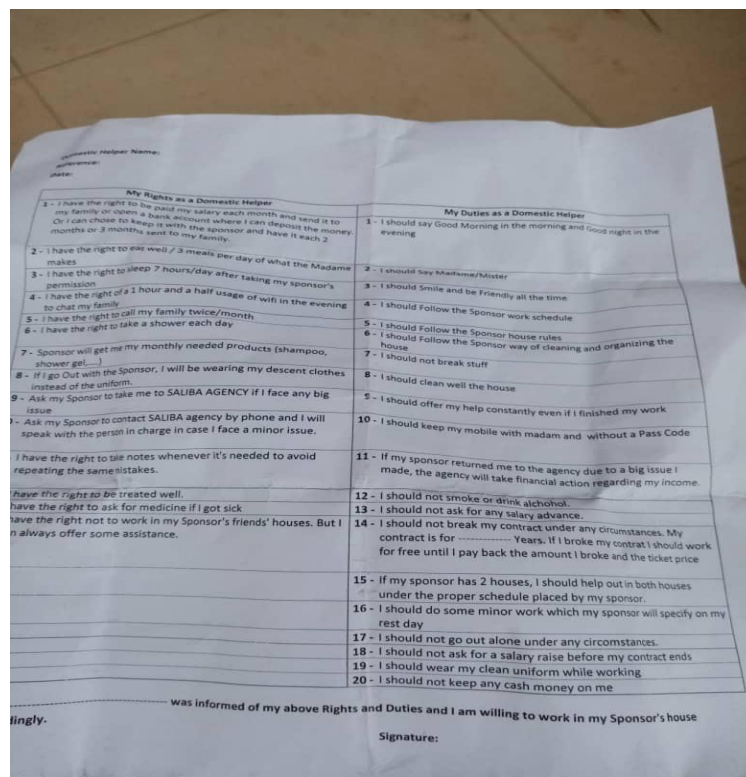


Figure 2.1. Picture of Contract Provided to Domestic Workers By a Recruitment Agency As They Are Matched With Their Employer/Sponsor.
Source: Anti-Racism Movement

The image above depicts a contract created by Saliba Services agency, a recruitment agency which contracts male and female migrant workers in a wide range of industries out to employers. The agency reportedly provided the above contracts to

domestic workers to sign as they match with, and are subsumed under the sponsorship of, the agency's designated employer (Anti-Racism Movement, 2019).

The stipulated conditions clearly intonate the dynamics of power configured between employer and employee by virtue of the agency's unregulated discretionary authority: *"I should say Madame/Mister," "I should follow the sponsor work schedule," "I should offer my help constantly even if I finished my work," "I should do some minor work which my sponsor will specify on my rest day," "I should follow the sponsor house rules," "I should keep my mobile with Madame and without a pass code," "I should not go out alone under any circumstances," "If my sponsor returned me to the agency due to a big issue I made, the agency will take financial action regarding my income," etc.*

Despite the fact that most of the enumerated conditions are not subject to any law and directly contradict the rights and conditions laid out by the Standard Unified Contract (implemented in 2009), the agency reportedly forced their recruited workers to sign the fabricated contract as they are matched and transferred to the sponsorship/authority of their employers (Anti-Racism Movement, 2019). Thus, we see how the wide mandate of recruitment agencies and concurrent noninvolvement of the state in the regulation of agency operations, subjects the worker to the unmitigated authority of the agency, and subsequently, that of the assigned sponsor/employer.

The aesthetics and language of the contract demonstrate the extent to which the deregulated nature of the system has constructed a culture of informality that subjects workers to exploitation. In a neoliberal imaginary that extols the virtues of a market-based order, the free contract is the ascendant form of social relation underpinning individual freedom. Yet, the Saliba contract exposes the absurdity of relying on this

unregulated form of mediation amid such pronounced disparities in power. Thus, the unequal power relations among those participating in the market system unmask the farcical notion of the “free” contract under conditions of structural violence imposed by a neoliberal governance structure. In this case, the mechanism that is theoretically meant to protect the rights and entitlements of the worker is repurposed as a tool of exploitation as workers are forced to sign their agreement to a contract detailing their own subjugation. The contrived contract from Saliba agency clearly demonstrates the imprudence of relying on recruitment agencies— who have a clear financial interest in maintaining the subjugated condition of workers and undue power held by employers— to oversee and enforce appropriate standards and working conditions that protect worker rights.

Since 2003, the Ministry of Labor has made further reforms to the regulatory infrastructure, tightening oversight and increasing the reporting responsibilities of the agencies. Decision No. 13/1 of 22 January 2009 included explicit prohibitions on the violent abuse inflicted on domestic workers, including ‘beating’ and ‘insulting.’ Yet, the restriction of the language to physical and verbal abuse neglects the aspects of economic and psychological forms of abuse experienced by domestic workers, and further does not account for the exploitative exercises of power which delimit the agency, rights and autonomy of the workers (Esim and Kerbage 2011).

Further, the 2009 decision did not include any provisions relating to the obligations of the Labor Inspection Department in monitoring the agencies. Thus, the Ministry of Labor’s function remained limited to intervening in the case of complaints they receive, through the very limited and ineffective channels and complaint mechanisms they provide. The Ministry of Labor’s inspection department instituted a

crisis hotline in 2010 for domestic workers to contact in cases of abuse (for those who have access to a phone and know the number to call). Yet, advocacy organizations tested the hotline and proved it to be not functional (Esim and Kerbage, 2011).

In an interview with Amnesty International, the president of the Syndicate of owners of recruitment agencies in Lebanon admitted that “agencies are authorized on an arbitrary basis even if they are not qualified. Opening an agency is like opening a grocery shop or a mini market; the agencies do not stick to the standards of this profession and they do not fear the government” (Amnesty International 2019).

“Opening an agency is like opening a grocery shop or mini market.” From this admission by the president of the organization which represents the interests of private recruitment agencies, we see how the state’s structuring of the system positions migrant workers as simple commodities bought and sold in grocery shops or mini markets. This institutional structure thus sets up the dynamics of commodification whereby private recruitment agencies are empowered to treat migrant workers as objects of trade to be bought and sold on the free market.

C. Employers as Consumers

Lebanese agencies are prohibited (in theory) from charging workers with recruitment fees. Therefore, given that it is the employers who are paying the agencies for their services, ensuring customer (i.e.) employer satisfaction is the primary objective. Consequently, the entire recruitment and matching process is structured entirely around employer preferences and requirements, while the goal of maximizing profits and efficiency elides any considerations for the wishes or well-being of the workers themselves.

Furthermore, recruiters do not take any action or initiative to ensure the recruiter counterpart in the country of origin is employing adequate, humane and safe practices in recruiting their workers. Whether the worker was deceived, kidnapped, or prepared for their migration is irrelevant as it does not prevent placement with an employer and thus detract from the efforts to maximize profits. The only metrics which figure in the success of their business are the volume and efficiency with which workers are imported and matched for employment, whereupon they collect their fee. The goal of maximizing profits and efficiency thus elides any consideration for the wishes, well-being or protection of the workers themselves. These adverse incentives demonstrate how the deregulated nature of the industry position workers as units of product to be traded, exchanged and sold on the free market, rather than human beings entering into fair and protected employment contracts.

Thus we see how the state's delegation of its regulatory obligations transfers sovereign authority over the workers to the recruiters, which in turn transfers power to the employers. The state's lax regulation of agencies allows them to shirk their obligations to protect workers, and instead caters to the preferences and power of employers. Thus, we see how the deregulated nature of the system construct vastly unequal relations of power between the employer and worker, which resemble that between a consumer and their private property. Under this configuration of power, employers are positioned as customers consuming a commodity rather than employers entering into a reciprocal work contract.

D. Workers as Commodities

Worker Warranty: Ministry of Labor decision number 1/168 (2015)

The language of the Ministry of Labor's decision number 1/168 (2015)

“Concerning the organization of the work of recruitment agencies for domestic workers” demonstrates the manner in which state delegations of authority render migrant bodies as consumer products. Article 18 of the decision reads:

The owner of the office shall undertake to return the worker to her country at his own expense and to provide a replacement for her, or usually the amount paid after deducting the value of the consumption of the contract in accordance with the three rules.

Within three years of its entry into the Lebanese territory:

- 1) If she is found to be carrying an infectious, *work-related*, psychological or mental illness, unless the disease cannot be detected within the first three months, the period shall be extended to one year.
 - 2) In case of incompatibility, provided that the time limit in this case starts from the date of commencement of work with any employer
 - 3) In the event of a disability that *does not enable the worker to perform her work*
Second: Within one year from the date of commencement of work with any employer:
 - 1) If the worker is found to be *pregnant* before entering Lebanese territory or before moving to work for a new employer, unless the employer's knowledge of pregnancy is established before that.
 - 2) If she *refuses to work* without legal justification
 - 3) In case of leaving the employer's house (*escape*)
- (Ministry of labor decision no. 1/168, 2015) [emphases added]

The language employed here discursively constructs the commodified relations amongst employers, agencies and workers. The lexicon drawn upon to mediate the transactional obligations of the two parties, echoes that of a corporate manufacturer warranty policy, in which the sale of a product is underwritten by a guarantee of the condition, quality, function and durability of its product. Just as in a warranty, the stipulation *obligates* the provision of a replacement in the event that the product does not function as it was intended or described, contingent on particular terms and situations for a specified amount of time from the date of purchase.

The conditions set forth by the ‘worker warranty,’ highlight the extent to which the commodifying dynamics of the labor regulation system dehumanize workers and circumscribe their existence around the bounds of their labor. As Marx (1990) explains in his theoretical formulation of commodity fetishism, “the commodity remains simple as long as it is tied to its use-value.” Per the above conditions stipulated by the Ministry of Labor regulation, the worker must be returned and replaced by the agency “in the event of a disability *that does not enable the worker to perform her work*”, “*if she refuses to work* without legal justification”, or if she is “found to be *pregnant*.” In such cases where the presence of the worker exceeds her *use value*, her presence is no longer authorized in Lebanese territory and must be summarily sent back to her country of origin and replaced with another.

After escaping an abusive marriage, Diana came to Lebanon from the Philippines to work as a domestic worker in a private Lebanese home. For 10 years she has worked for the same family—a now divorced Lebanese couple with three children for whom she has cared for most of their lives. She resides in the home of the father along with the three now adolescent children. Through the experience of Diana, we see how this juridical positioning of migrant bodies as commodities translates into employer power and practices:

*Diana: yes, I never have enough sleep, so I said, I was fed up also with his kids, because they are not telling their dad where they are. That’s why the dad always, they are always calling asking where are their kids, they don’t answer, they are always neglecting the call of their dad, and then the dad, he knows that I am close with the kids, so if I send a message to the kids where are you, please tell your dad where you are, because your dad is keep calling me and disturbing my sleep, what, if I will be sick what will happen to me? **Of course, if I am sick, he will send me in the Philippines, because I am useless already.** So that’s why I’m telling them that, please, please, please, tell your dad where you are.*

Here we see how the agencies' delegated obligation to repatriate non-laboring migrant bodies configures the power relations between employer and worker and invites dehumanizing treatment. His ability to send her back to the Philippines, and acquire a new, fresh worker better able to perform the required duties, incentivizes his disregard for her needs and well-being as a person.

This feature of '*interchangeability*' that results from the commodified processes of the kafala system figures prominently in the management and exploitation of male migrant workers, many of whom are sponsored by large cleaning corporations and contracted out to employers in restaurants, hotels, offices and public services. Under this configuration the sponsor and employer are decoupled and operate as a confederated arbiter of control. As a result, migrant workers are subjected to two distinct yet coterminous poles of authority.

Bashir is a Sudanese refugee from Darfur who came to Lebanon in 2008 by way of Khartoum and Syria. After arriving in Syria by plane, he paid \$200 to traffickers to get him across the border into Lebanon in order to find sustainable work. Once in Lebanon, he was able to procure a job as a cleaner through a company sponsor which undersigns his residency permits and contracts his labor out to employers. Each year he must pay \$1,000 to his company sponsor in order to renew the residency permit required to maintain a valid working permit.

Me: so the company is the Kafil?

Bashir: The company is just a name. again, we have to pay.

Me: okay, and so if there is a disagreement or misunderstanding between you and the employer, what will happen? What would you do if there's a disagreement you have with the employer?

Bashir: He immediately would contact the company and say 'this guy is not working out, send me another one.'

Me: oh okay so he can just contact the company whenever...

Bashir: yeah he only talks to the company, not you. Even if something happens to you, if something happens to you while you're at the place of work they can just say send me another one.

If they are a good one and have humanity, he keeps them, they don't contact the company.

But if they don't have humanity ['iidha ma 'eindah 'iinsania] they can just contact the company and ask them to send another one, they contact the company and say for example, hey this one, something happened to him, he's sick, he can't work, please send me another one.

Me: ah okay, so there are a lot of other people they can send instead?

*Bashir: yeah exactly, **it's not like we're people**, they don't care, they just call the company and say bring me another one and take this one from me.*

Me: okay so if you're sick or have a problem there's nothing you can do?

Bashir: this is the company I worked for for 10 years. if I'm sick and I can't go to work, they get someone else and they take from me, they take the salary and give it to him. If something happens, you're responsible, not the company or employer. Like, if I were sick and had to go to the hospital, something connected/related to the work.

Under this formulation with the decoupling of sponsor and employer, the interchangeability of the worker is compounded by the sponsoring company's large pool of existing, identical labor, already in Lebanon and ready to be mobilized at a moment's notice. It's interesting how Bashir explains the outcome of these dynamics as a function of the employer's level of 'humanity' ['iinsania]. Because the power relations constructed by the system place all of the power squarely in the hands of the employer, the only way to avoid abuse and exploitation is to rely on the goodwill and sense of 'humanity' of the employer.

As Peter Bloom (2017) explains in his research on neoliberal ethics, "neoliberalism strategically co-opts traditional ethics to ideologically and structurally

strengthen capitalism. It produces ‘the ethical capitalist subject’ who is personally responsible for making their society, workplace and even their lives ‘more ethical’ in the face of an immoral but seemingly permanent free market.” As a result, “rather than altering our morality, neoliberalism ‘individualizes’ ethics, making us personally responsible for dealing with and resolving its moral failings.”

From Bashir’s explanation of the dynamics of employment relations under the sponsorship framework— wherein the worker must rely on the ‘humanity’ of their employer to avoid exploitation— we see how the Kafala system operates by the logic of neoliberal ethics. In the absence of sufficient legal oversight, the personal ethics of the employer are the only available means to fill the regulatory void left by the deregulated system.

Abdul, a migrant worker from Bangladesh who is sponsored by the same large cleaning company as Bashir, reiterates this dehumanizing practice:

Abdul: all of the work I do, because all the work he give me, I do. What I do, because I work in the company, he go and say I am not good, this guy is crazy yalla go Bangladesh

Me: okay so if the employer disagrees with you, he can contact the company and get someone else?

*Abdul: yes if there is a problem, the supervisor comes, and after he will yell at you, “why aren’t you doing this work, **if you’re not going to work then yalla go to Bangladesh**”*

Me: ahh okay

Abdul: and I have to be afraid and work, and I can’t go to my country.



2.2. Picture Taken in Lebanon of Domestic Worker Stowed in Trunk of Car Among Various Items

Source: Anti-Racism Movement, 2019

1. Facebook Marketplace

From the Facebook group 'Lebanon Market': "Providing housemaids from Ghana and Nigeria salary \$200." Attached is a screenshot of an excel sheet, with a picture of a young African woman dressed in a vibrant, bold printed African dress with her associated details filled in the chart. (religion: Christian, nationality: Nigerian, height, weight, contract period, salary, marital status, number of children, etc.)

Another ad in the Facebook group "bey3 w shira2 lemusta3ml" lists the sale of an "Ethiopian domestic worker who speaks good Arabic and is very clean (nizeefeh jiddan), the tanazul [waivre] offered \$500"

Another, in "TRIPOLI MAZAD BUY & SELL / MARKET (TRIPOLI--LEBANON), the product title listed is "Ethiopia," the price, \$1,111. "Ethiopian in Lebanon since 7 months, good Arabic language, good in housework." [sic]

The fact that domestic workers are bought and sold on the social-networking site Facebook illustrates the extent to which the legal structures follows a market-oriented rationale which views and empowers employers as producers and consumers of a

commodity, rather than individuals legally responsible for the rights and well-being of their employees.

The fact that Lebanese individuals feel comfortable publishing an ad on social media selling a human being, using their own personal accounts with their name and information attached, demonstrates the extent to which the commodification of migrant labor has become a normalized and accepted practice in day to day social interactions. The seller does not even try to mask their dehumanization of the worker, using the words “for sale” (l-lbay‘a) to market. Again, we see how the Kafala’s institutional structure, which relegates authority to supervise foreign workers residency to private employers, results in workers being bought and sold like chattel.

The posts circulated on Facebook and eventually caught the attention of rights advocates who decried the dehumanizing practice and language used. Newly designated labor minister Camille Abousleiman responded to the outcry of activists on twitter, declaring that “this new act of slavery will not be accepted. Thank you @sobhiyanajjar for reporting it, I immediately asked the ministry of labor to investigate and we will refer the case to the judiciary. This is a human trade that violates human dignity, distorts the image of Lebanon and is contrary to its values [translation from Arabic, March 9th, 2019].

It is interesting that the labor ministry easily and vehemently condemns this practice of selling workers on Facebook but still refuses to disavow the oppressive system which facilitates such practices, i.e. the Kafala system. While his office has indicated that they are open to investigating abuses and implementing incremental reforms, it has remained firm in its refusal to uproot the sponsorship system entirely (Ministry of Labor 2019).

Following Sleiman's proclamation on twitter, the Ministry of Labor issued the following update on the case: "the inspection will move on Monday morning and will not close the file even if it was a 'slip of the tongue,' the use of the term 'sale' is sufficient to refer the subject to the judiciary on charges of trafficking in human beings and take the judiciary track" (LBC News Bulletin, 2019).

Thus, we see how the Ministry of Labor's inspection agency only responds to abuses and violations when they are brought to their attention— though of course not by the recruitment agency in this case, but through the work of human rights advocates. Because of the institutional inertia inherent in the regulatory structure, civil society organizations remain the only effective entities upholding and enforcing the accountability of agencies and employers. As this incident demonstrates, only when facing the prospect of public shaming and damage to the reputation of the Lebanese state, do the state agencies move to perform the required regulatory functions.

Further, by designating the use of the word sale as an admission of human trafficking, the Minister redirects the blame for the practice of selling workers on Facebook toward individual employers and recruiters, rather than the deregulated, privatized system of labor migration which positions workers as commodities and incentivizes dehumanizing and exploitative practices. Thus, we see how the deployment of human rights frameworks to address the abuse that occurs as a result of the system's exploitative configurations of power, redirects legal culpability toward individual employers and recruiters rather than structurally produced dynamics and the incentives emanating from the institutional structure of the state.

Thus, while there are certain standards and regulations required by law to which the agencies must adhere, they are sparingly enforced by the government. The state's

practice of not enforcing regulations on agencies stems from the neoliberal governance practices which promote deregulation and decentralization as efficient (and lucrative) modes of control. Abousleiman's righteous condemnation which emphasizes the actions of the individual employers calls on the discourse of neoliberal ethics whereby individuals participating in the system are held responsible for rectifying the moral void left by the deregulated, market-based system.

Again, we see how the structure of the Kafala system fits into this logic of neoliberal governance whereby the governing function of the state is spread out to other interested non-state actors (employers and agents). This form of management typically employed in the private sector "recreates the mechanisms of a free market for the decision-making process" (Ives, 2015). This is the administrative logic under which agencies are surmised with the task of regulating the employment relationship between migrant workers and their employers rather than the state.

2. From Commodification to Product Differentiation: The Racializing Dynamics of the International Labor Trade

The Kafala system's deregulation of the global labor trade has enabled the proliferation of various interests and actors that form the network which facilitates the flows of migrant labor. The international labor recruitment sector has become a booming, global economic enterprise, with all sorts of private sector intermediaries and government bodies arising to partake in and manage the increasing flows of migrant labor.

In the previous section we saw how the decentralized logic of the Kafala system aligns with the interests of recruitment agencies by allowing them to capitalize off their asymmetrical information and barriers of access to labor pools and recruitment

networks. By relegating the industry for the international labor trade to competitive free market forces, this institutional arrangement incentivizes rent-seeking strategies and business practices which reduce migrant workers to commodities and accordingly heightens the potential for dehumanizing practices and exploitation.

Furthermore, the placement of the industry within the competitive framework of free markets, has led to a decentralized labor regime, which applies standards and regulations according to nationality and bargaining power of the sending country, rather than a uniform and equitable system for all workers. As a result, foreign workers have become a commodity differentiated by national identity. The differentiated commodification of migrant labor based on national conditions and characteristics has thus produced a racialized and hierarchical system of regulation and control and represents one of the primary mechanisms by which racial categories and their attendant meanings and associations emerge and persist, within the social imaginaries of Lebanese society.

3. Race to the Bottom

In the late 1970's, amid global economic turmoil and slowdown of economic growth, the exportation of labor became an increasingly valuable and relied upon source of income for underdeveloped Asian and African countries facing high unemployment, lingering poverty and stagnating growth. The flow of cash offered by remittances from abroad were instrumental in bolstering the programs of economic liberalization back home (Kelegama 2000). By 1999 Sri Lanka's total remittances from workers abroad was \$1 billion, representing 20% of foreign goods imports from the previous year (and more than the trade deficit of .7 billion). Thus, sending country governments actively

pursued policies which promoted the overseas employment of their nationals, and provided a ripe environment for profiting off the exportation of workers at both ends of the migration journey (Jureidini and Moukarbel 2001).

These dynamics have forged the contours of a robust migration industry that has expanded markedly since the mid-1990's, in accommodation with the rising trends of international labor migration. The global industry for migrant labor is comprised by a diverse network of private sector entities, including but not limited to recruiters and sub-agents, pre-departure training centers, travel and transportation agencies, medical screening centers, insurances companies, visa consulting agencies. The privatized and deregulated nature of the industry for migrant labor allows all these business enterprises to extract rents from the recruitment, migration and placement of migrant workers between different countries (Jones, 2015).

Labor recruiters in the country of origin are essential for supporting trade flows and setting up trade networks with their counterparts in countries of destination. In Sri Lanka, around 75% of migrants relied on the help of licensed domestic recruiters to procure employment abroad. As of 2009 there were 746 licensed recruiters (up from 626 in 2008) operating in Sri Lanka (United Nations, 2012). One of the largest and oldest agencies, called "Manpower Sri Lanka," which began operating in 1987, published the following appeal to potential customers on their website:

"Sri Lankan manpower has the highest literacy rate of 94.2% in Asia and it has the strength and the capability to afford to all kinds of manpower.

Sri Lankan people are by nature intelligent, industrious and hardworking and have the ability to adapt themselves easily to any new job placements in the Middle East countries. Warm hospitable and generous by generations. They are quick to grasp any job requirements, which will keep foreign clients (recruiters) satisfied and happy. Sri Lankan employees became quickly acclimatized and oriented in foreign countries. They find it easy to find job satisfaction and contentment, which is essential for good and successful employer-employee relationships.

Sri Lankan workforce has been a pillar of strength in building economies worldwide. Especially the Middle East has benefited significantly from the huge magnitude of workers Sri Lankan workers being recruited annually.

*Sri Lanka has traditionally been **a major supplier** of skilled workforce. **Equipped** with some of the finest technical and vocational training centers, Sri Lanka **produces** some of the finest skilled workforce to meet the **huge demand** the world over.” [emphasis added](Man Power Sri Lanka)*

The language the agency employs draws on a lexicon endemic to the capitalist vernacular— Sri Lanka is “*a major supplier*” and “*produces*” skilled workers to meet the “*huge demand*” in the global marketplace. This discursive rendering of foreign workers as commodities, is a logical strategic advertising tactic that arises when the flow of human beings is relegated to the free market forces of the global capitalist system.

In this discursive formulation, the sending countries become corporations that bring together various inputs to produce uniform products (workers) that can be bought and sold on the free market. The culture and level of development specific to each country/corporation thus become the mechanisms by which sending countries can aim to differentiate themselves from other countries and reserve higher prices (wages) for their products (workers).

As a result, the sending countries that are more economically developed (like the Philippines) and consequently have better living conditions and greater education, training and vocational systems, have greater bargaining power vis a vis their less developed counterparts in securing higher wages and better conditions for their workers. Such is the reason we see the observed wage differentials in migrant worker salaries that are stratified based on nationality rather than skills or experience, with Filipino workers securing the highest wages, and Ethiopian and Bangladeshi workers with the lowest.

Thus, this commodification of workers occurs in a highly racialized manner, as the market is segmented according to nationality. This advertisement from the Sri Lankan labor placement agency demonstrates how the labor agencies in the home countries contribute discursively to the racialization of their workers and the construction of a distinct racial category, by highlighting country-specific characteristics that make their nationals more desirable workers. The assertion that “Sri Lankan people are *by nature* intelligent, industrious and hardworking” validates the false notion that racialized national categories are natural or biological forms of distinction (rather than socially constructed categories), which serves as a common justification for racist practices and attitudes. The language they employ also validates and reifies the power imbalances between employers and workers by advertising their workers as disciplined and servile, and by emphasizing the satisfaction of the employer as a priority i.e. “will keep foreign clients (recruiters and employers) satisfied and happy.” This rhetoric echoes older colonial discourses and racial typologies surmised in order to configure the role and status of different populations within the Empire.

Regardless of the substance of the descriptions, just the mere exercise of speaking of an entire nationality as a singular ‘they’ contributes discursively to the construction of a (unitary, monolithic) racial category. It is the same language used to produce (often negative) stereotypes of different categories of people— ‘they smell bad,’ ‘they are uncivilized,’ ‘they have bad attitudes,’ etc. So, by attributing specific individual and personal characteristics to an entire national category of people, the advertising efforts of sending country governments and agencies are complicit in the racialization of their workers. Thus, we see how the decentralized nature of the sponsorship system which empowers intermediaries in the recruitment of workers,

incentivizes this discursive racialization of workers at both ends of the recruitment and migration process.

On the other hand, as the consumers, the countries of destination can draw on the competition incited by the existence of various sources of labor to drive down costs and conditions of the products (workers) offered. Countries of origin which rely heavily on remittances to sustain economic growth must compete against one another to secure employment opportunities for their nationals. This competition for remittances thus incentivizes poor labor standards and neglect of rights and protections and incites a 'race to the bottom' in global labor standards (Migrant Forum in Asia 2012). Therefore, just as the power disparities inherent in the employer-worker relation under the Kafala system invites exploitation and abuse, the power disparities between sending countries and host country governments have thus structured a global system of labor migration that invites exploitation of the more underdeveloped countries. The free market dynamics of the system incite a search for the poorest and least protected, most vulnerable population from which to recruit. This is why over the last decade or so in Lebanon, we observe a decrease in the population of Filipino workers, for whom there are extensive regulations and protections in place, and increase in Ethiopian and other African women, for whom there is little regulation, oversight, or protection. These adverse incentives are an inherent feature of the kafala system as a global capitalist enterprise, which structure relations of power and decision making according to concentrations and accumulations of capital.

Though, as attention to mounting human rights abuses increased, countries of origin began implementing travel bans on their workers as a means to protect their citizens and increase their leverage in negotiations with the Lebanese government. The

Philippine government was the first to issue such a ban in Lebanon in 2006 after the onset of the July war with Israel, in light of the country's inability to provide adequate protection for its nationals (The Daily Star 2010). In November 2018, the Ethiopian government (re)instated a ban on the travel of its citizens to Lebanon following the refusal of the Lebanese labor minister to sign a memorandum of understanding to improve the conditions and rights of domestic workers (Women Economic Empowerment Portal, 2018). After further negotiations with the Ministry of Labor, the two parties reached a renewed agreement and the Ethiopian government lifted the ban, once again releasing the flow of its citizens northwards (Khalaf, 2018). However, while the travel ban can be an effective bargaining tactic to secure better conditions for foreign workers, in effect it actually exacerbates the vulnerability and exploitation of women as it empowers smugglers, traffickers and other informal intermediaries and networks of exchange to fill the void left by formalized recruitment (Amnesty International 2019).

Less prohibitive forms of intervention country of origin governments can take include increased oversight and regulation of domestic private employment agencies, investment in education and vocational training and pre-departure orientation programs, provision of consular assistance, and implementation of explicit conditions and standards for overseas employment. The Philippines government for example has a robust monitoring and protection scheme for its overseas workers run by the Philippine overseas Employment Administration (POEA). As a result, Filipino workers who travel abroad are more often prepared, informed and protected when arriving in the country of destination. The agency has a list of specific countries to which their nationals are prohibited to travel for work given the countries' failure to meet their standards of

welfare and protection. Lebanon has been on this list since its release in 2011, and thus Filipinos have been legally unable to travel to Lebanon to work since then. This, however, does not invalidate the status of 17,000 or so Filipino workers already active in the country, who still benefit from the agency's and consular services made available by the Philippines government (Amnesty International, 2019).

When I asked Micko, one of my Ethiopian interlocutors, if the way she was treated was different from the treatment experienced by other groups of domestic workers, she explained:

Micko: Yes. They respect Filipinos more in this country, especially in schools. They are paid more, as they know English, they "clean better" and they are not slaves (Aabid), they are white compared to us. The Kafala system works better with them, as if you do not pay them for two or three months, the Embassy would intervene. It is rare to hear about Filipinos suffering compared to how black people suffer here. For us, the embassy does not intervene, we have no community to support us. For Filipinos, if the embassy does not reply to them, they have an online hotline based in the Philippines. If a woman suffered anything here, her aggressor would pay the price. They have protection, but Africans here have no protection whatsoever

M: How is the Ethiopian embassy?

R: It is just by name. If you call them, they would tell you we cannot help you out

M: So, they do not do anything

R: Nothing whatsoever. If someone goes to the hospital, they inform the embassy, but they do not reply only until two months later. As for the Filipino embassy, they would be there within an hour and half or two hours. The passport in our country is \$20, while here it costs \$100 to do it. The Filipino embassy cares about their workers and they have a community that supports each other.

Micko's account demonstrates how the institutional structures that regulate migration between countries of origin and Lebanon are implicated in the construction of racial hierarchies, and consequently the differential treatment of racialized categories of workers. The Ethiopian embassy is notorious for its policy of nonintervention to protect their nationals and its complicity in Lebanon's exploitative state practices (Al-Saadi

2019). By comparison, the extensive institutional network of support offered to Filipina nationals by their embassy and associated government agencies has elevated the status and working conditions of Filipina workers and helped to attenuate some (though of course not all) of the forms of oppression configured by the Kafala system's architecture.

This dynamic suggests a significant correlation between access to political rights (via institutional protection offered by embassies) and perceptions of racial difference. Thus, we see how the construction of race and the attitudes and hierarchies that attend it manifest through the configurations and exercises of power within the prevailing institutional structures, configured by global hierarchies of development.

In light of the network of institutional support offered to Filipina nationals in Lebanon, Filipina workers have greater power to advocate for their rights and interests and defend themselves against the exploitative imbalances of power set up by the kafala system. Yet, the availability of institutional protection offered by country of origin embassies is a function of larger global economic hierarchies which configure interests and negotiation power among country of origin governments. Thus we see how localized racial hierarchies in Lebanon's social system call on larger geographies of power and global hierarchies of development.

The efforts of country of origin governments to protect the welfare of their overseas citizens through such means as travel bans or the implementation of explicit migration and labor standards, place a burden on labor recruiters looking to import high volumes of workers at low cost margins. Consequently, agencies and intermediaries are constantly looking to expand and diversify their supply networks of domestic workers so as not to be reliant on single countries for their profits and thus beholden to political

disputes or developments within the country. Today, Lebanese agencies have been endeavoring to expand their recruitment networks further into African countries, particular Uganda, as they offer the potential for cheaper (more vulnerable) pools of labor that come attached with few conditions and regulations from their governments (Khalaf 2018).

Thus we see how this free market system, which empowers the recruitment agencies as intermediaries, turns increasingly exploitative as they look further to underdeveloped areas with more vulnerable populations as potential pools of labor. This ‘race to the bottom’ dynamic is an inherent feature of the global capitalist dynamics around which the Kafala system is structured. Furthermore, we see how the behavior and practices of labor recruiters incentivized by the free market dynamics of the international labor trade facilitate the racialized commodification of workers. These practices are instrumental in the construction of racialized categories that emerge within the social imaginaries of destination countries.

E. Racializing Dynamics of Labor Recruitment Practices

The ILO conducted a study of recruitment agencies in Jordan and Lebanon that analyzes the particular business strategies employed by the agencies in order to maximize profits within the prevailing institutional arrangement. The analysis demonstrates how those strategies and practices incentivized by the free market conditions of the industry have facilitated the commodification of workers and their assortment into a racialized categories and hierarchies. These practices include: diversifying supply source, priming employer perceptions through advertising and

preparation, and prioritizing employer satisfaction at the expense of worker preferences and protection.

As the report explains, “In the case of international recruitment, in order to profit, recruiters must devise competitive strategies to generate income greater than the costs of finding, selecting, processing and mobilizing people into jobs” (Jones, 2015). A diversified selection of sending-countries networks therefore allows agencies to better cater to the preferences and prejudices of their clients and shield themselves from flow disruptions caused by political developments (such as travel bans). As recruiters open up new channels of recruitment within sending countries, the labor flows are formalized by bilateral agreements between the host and sending country governments. These bilateral agreements negotiated between sending and receiving country governments determine the conditions of entry and exit and associated fees. As a result, rather than having a uniform, standardized system of regulation, the costs and conditions of the workers’ arrival into the country vary according to nationality.

Bangladesh	1,300-1,500
Ethiopia	1,900-2,300
Kenya	2,500
Sri Lanka	3,000
Phillippines	2,500-4,500

Figure 2.3. Fees Charged to Employers by Country of Origin (USD) (Jones 2015).

In Lebanon, high demand for Filipino workers, coupled with the interventions made on their behalf by their government, allows them to command a higher wage rate than their Sri Lankan, Bangladeshi, or African counterparts. The advocacy and higher bargaining power of their home country government protects their right to a minimum wage: in 2006, the Philippines government mandated a minimum wage for their workers of \$400 a month (ILO, 2016). This stands in stark contrast to the \$200 or less per month that women from Bangladesh or Ethiopia earn. The POEA offers training and skills development for their overseas workers, and thus Filipino workers are more likely to speak English and have higher educational status and work experience.

Further, since the Philippines government reissued a ban in 2011 on its nationals coming to work in Lebanon (among other countries), due to the country's failure to comply with established conditions and standards of protection set out by the POEA, the 'supply' is limited to those already in the country, further driving up the price. These material improvements in the living and working condition of overseas Filipino workers result from an active and longstanding effort of the Filipino government to promote and protect overseas workers, given that remittances provide a stable and heavily relied upon stream of cash, comprising 10.5% of the country's GDP in 2017, compared to 8.2% for Sri Lanka, 5.4% for Bangladesh, and .5% for Ethiopia (Migration Policy Institute).

Because the cost of acquiring and the demand for the worker is determined by the conditions and regulations in place for each country of origin, the prices of the salaries of the workers are then also stratified according to nationality. This results in a racial hierarchy that is ordered around the differential pay rate afforded to each

nationality. The racialized wage differentials are then discursively passed on to the employers as they 'shop' for workers at recruitment agencies.

Khaled is a Lebanese employer who used a recruitment agency to employ a domestic worker in his home. When asked about his experience navigating the procurement process at the agencies, he demonstrates the role that nationality plays in configuring consumer preferences for migrant labor:

Me: okay, so besides her being new to Lebanon, what other qualifications or characteristics were you looking for?

Khaled: nothing. Nothing, we don't care

Me: So no preferences in terms of age or nationality or...

Khaled: Oh nationality yeah, she was Ethiopian, just because they're cheaper than the Filipinas, that's the main reason.

From his response, we see how the worker's value is specifically attached to their nationality rather than skills, qualifications, or experience. Khaled comes from a lower-middle class family and thus knows he cannot afford the highly priced Filipina worker, opting instead for the discounted Ethiopian worker. Thus we see how in the absence of a centralized system of standards and regulation produced by the state, race becomes the price signal which determines the value and quality of the worker: if they are cheaper, it leads one to assume that they are lower in the racial hierarchy.

Because there is no reference wage or standardized practice for determining a wage scale, workers' wages are a function of agreements negotiated by home country governments and conditions, which reflect larger global hierarchies of capitalist advancement. By monetizing national categories, the free market dynamics of the migrant labor industry thus construct a racial hierarchy framed by pay scale whereby the worker's race serves as the price signal which indicates their value as workers. These

dynamics demonstrate the manner in which race emerges as a socially salient category, constituted along the lines of national origin.

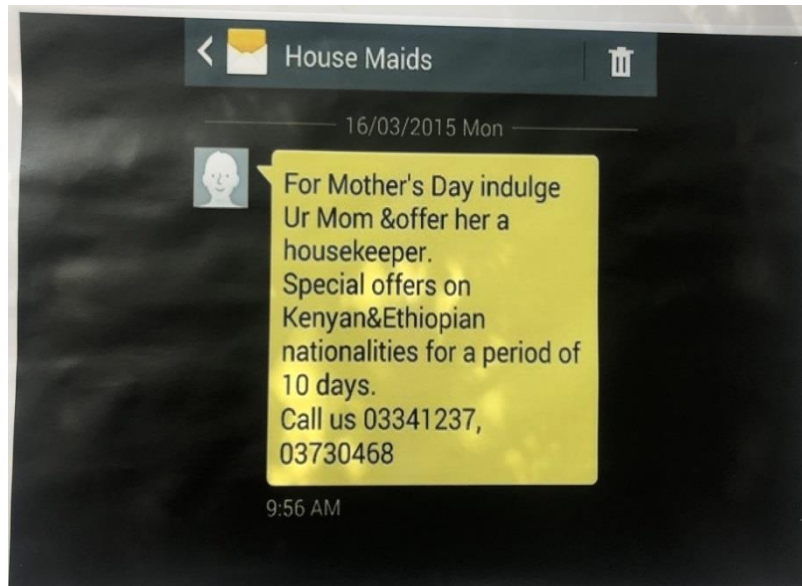
As a result, having a Filipino maid has become a status symbol for Lebanese households, as their race acts as a signal of their elevated wage rate, and with it, the household's affluence and ability to pay. Also, Filipino workers are sometimes referred to as a 'nanny' rather than domestic workers or maids, reflecting their social classification in a higher occupational category. From this example, we see how the agencies business practice of classifying and categorizing workers based on nationality, leads to pay differentials around which attitudes beliefs are attached to different racial categories.

Charbel, another Lebanese interlocutor employed two domestic workers in his family's large mountainside estate in Northern Lebanon. The bottom floor of the house was fitted with a medium sized, segmented room with tile floors and bare walls, bearing twin size cots in each partition of the room and an adjoining bathroom in the middle—the 'maid's quarters.' One of the women was from the Philippines and the other was from Ethiopia. The Filipina worker took care of the dogs and helped with the cooking. The Ethiopian worker cleaned the house.

1. Recruiter Incentives: Product Differentiation

As migrant bodies become a commodity exchanged on the free market, producers and suppliers (country of origin government, recruiters, intermediaries) seek to differentiate their range and quality of 'products' offered to consumers. Thus we see how in this free market system, agency efforts for diversification as a logical strategy for a competitive business model, feeds into the racial differentiation and

hierarchization that manifests within the receiving society and configures certain attitudes, beliefs and prejudices around different racial categories.



2.4. Mobile Marketing Content Disseminated By Domestic Worker Recruitment Agencies.

Source: Anti-Racism Movement, 2018

Maher is a Lebanese labor recruiter with an agency based in Beirut. As business slows and the market becomes increasingly saturated, he looks for opportunities to open new markets and expand his profit margins, leveraging his contacts and connections in Ghana to supply agencies in neighboring Jordan with ‘Ghanaian girls.’ His conversation with a Jordanian labor recruiter reveals the extent to which the practices, habits and forms of speech deployed by recruiters in the conduct of daily operations position the workers as products differentiated by country of origin:

Maher: the Ethiopian girls are everywhere in Beirut now

*Jordanian agent: Oh nice, they aren't available here, **they don't cost anything***

Jordanian agent: I think the Ghanaian line is one of the best. Ghanaians are class 2 type after the Filipino. Filipino are class 1. The Ghanaians are class 2, Sri Lankans

*class 3, class 4 are Bangladeshis. In Jordan **the market demand** is for Ghanaian girls, they're better than Kenyans.*

Maher: Better than Kenyans [surprised]? I think Kenyans are better.

*Jordanian recruiter: Look, Kenyans are better **educated**, but in Ghana the girls are **harder workers**. I can show you one by one [takes out files and hands them to Maher].*

Maher: this one, she's mine and she's mine, all these applicants are ready for employment. she's also mine. [pointing at picture]

(“Maid in Hell” 2018)

This dialogue clearly demonstrates how workers are discursively rendered as racialized objects of trade in the course of industry practices and interactions. Because the supply lines of workers are country-specific and the conditions and procedures of ‘importing’ them vary markedly according to nationality, the national category becomes the referent employed to discuss the dynamics of the trade and encapsulates the assumptions, stereotypes and characteristics of the worker. The Jordanian agent verbally constructs a classification system for appraising the value of each type of worker that is stratified by nationality, thereby imposing an explicit racial hierarchy on the population of workers—Filipinos are at the top of the hierarchy in class 1, while Bangladeshi workers round out the bottom in class 4.

For the recruiters, the workers’ value is determined by the market demand for and associated costs of recruiting that nationality. Market demand (i.e. what the employers want) is a function of both cost constraints and as well as the worker’s particular specifications and qualifications. While cost is a more fixed and stable determinant, the range of characteristics and qualities desired provides room for contestation. Maher thinks Kenyans are better since they are more educated, but his Jordanian counterpart prefers Ghanaians since they are “harder workers.” Their

valuation of the workers thus reflects the different, aggregate preferences of employers within their respective markets.

Different employers have different preferences and requirements based on their specific needs for the role that they want their worker to fill, since there are no enumerated or standardized expectations or referents for the specific tasks or competencies required. Therefore, having a wider selection of workers allows recruiters to advertise a wider range of specifications to their prospective employers.

In the above dialogue between Maher and his Jordanian counterpart, from the descriptions that emerge from the processes of selecting which workers to acquire and which worker to match with which employer, we see how specific attributes and characteristics are attached to the nationality of the worker. Some are concrete and measurable (nationality, age, religion, appearance), some are merit based (education level, language abilities, years of experience), while others are subjective and stereotypical (work ethic, obedience, behavioral tendencies, cleanliness). These dynamics illustrate how market demand for workers and their associated costs and conditions of recruitment configure the workers and their associated nationalities into a racialized hierarchy, from which other meanings and associations are then produced.

2. Eva

Eva is a Lebanese mother of 3 who employs a Bangladeshi woman named Yasmin and her brother as domestic workers in her Beirut apartment and the family's village residence in the Mountains. From her narration of her various experiences employing domestic workers, we see how the technical aspects of national difference

(cost and conditions of entry) give way to value-based judgements of the different nationalities and their assumed behavioral characteristics:

Me: Did you have any specific preference in terms of nationality?

Eva: In the beginning we did not have any problems with any nationality, but then we saw that some nationalities, Bangladesh for example, may be better than others. We hear, for example, that people of certain nationalities as Ethiopians tend to be more aggressive in behavior than others. We have heard of a lot of homicide cases. Not only in Lebanon, but in Kuwait too. Especially with Ethiopian maids.

Me: So you heard they committed homicides?

*Eva: Yes, we have heard about a lot of cases. My brother called me when we first got an Ethiopian maid and he told me **to return her** because they committed crimes especially this nationality.*

Here we see how the grouping of worker types by nationality produces stereotypes and assumptions based on national, and therefore racial, affiliation. The wide availability of different nationalities of workers offered to employers as customers, allows for valuations and comparisons of the different nationalities based on the customer's individual experience with a given nationality.

The language Eva uses further reflects the positionality of employers within the system as customers consuming a commodity rather than an employer entering into a reciprocal work contract— “*he told me to return her*” — as though she were returning a dysfunctional vacuum cleaner.

Eva's stereotypical rendering of different nationalities of ‘maids’ did not stop at her description of Ethiopian workers’ criminal tendencies. After she mentioned having a difficult relationship with Yasmin, I asked her what she thought the source of the problems might be:

Eva: You see The problem is... first thing, They [Bangladeshi people], they have... I mean their temperament is different from ours— don't forget that educated people, are

not like the people that don't know anything. You know for example, if you're educated, you're well read, you know how to deal with and interact with people.

I noticed that they [Bangladeshi people] don't have social manners, you know for example... um... and her personality too, she doesn't get along with people. You know the problem is the thinking (tafkeer), it's the way she thinks and acts.

If you have traveled and seen diversity and you have engaged with different cultures, you will have a better well-behaved attitude. You know, I did this. But them, no. them no. you know? Yeah there is a lot of differences.

Again, we see her ascribe behavioral traits and personal attributes to an entire racial category. The discursive rendering of her understanding of Bangladeshi temperament demonstrates the manner in which racial distinctions created by structural forces become proxies from which value-based assumptions and prejudiced beliefs emerge and proliferate. These ideological understandings of race then substitute as explanations for the observed inequalities and racial stratifications borne out by the oppressive system: It is not the difficult conditions of her work and life in Lebanon that lead to personal conflicts in their relationship— not the meagre salary, the grueling work schedule, the difficulties of living away from family in an unfamiliar foreign country and culture where you don't speak the language, the lack of freedom, lack of power and autonomy that they are denied by virtue of their sponsorship; no, rather, “their temperament is different than ours.” “They don't have social manners.” Thus, we see how racial differentiation generates negative stereotypes and attitudes toward racialized individuals (ideology), and subsequently works to obscure the difficult conditions and structural injustices faced by racialized migrant workers within the imaginary of Lebanese employers that participate in the system. Eva's narration demonstrates the dynamics by which structural conditions become crystallized within social imaginaries as generalized, *ideological* beliefs which elide any consideration of the prevailing structural forces implicated in forging material realities.

Further, it is notable that she positions her description of the Bangladeshi people in opposition to her understanding and conception of Lebanese society: “Their temperament is different than ours.” We are educated, diverse and well-travelled, “but them, no.” Her conception of ‘them’ is forged through an understanding of ‘us.’ We are educated and well-mannered— they are not. This juxtaposition speaks to the reciprocal nature of racialization, whereby the conception of the ‘other’ is inherently tied to an understanding of the self.

3. Lebanese Racial Identity

As the ‘Paris of the East,’ Lebanese society has often understood itself as adjacent to the West. The popularly asserted moniker “Paris of the Middle East” clearly points to an imaginary which attempts to locate itself in the West and speaks to the processes of self-Europeanization and valorization of whiteness that are pervasive within Lebanese society. European imperialism in the region brought with it notions of racial superiority and white supremacy which primed local imaginaries of racial difference in the modern era. The sense of civilizational superiority exercised over local populations by European powers has no doubt contributed to civilizational anxieties and racial complexes exhibited by many segments of Lebanese society (Hage 2005). Thus, Lebanese conception of its own racial identity is situated within a larger framework of white supremacy configured by European/Western colonial power.

This disposition is further reflected in the popular assertion that the Lebanese population is Phoenician rather than Arab. The national project to construct a Phoenician ethnic lineage and racial identity in opposition to the backward Arab, Muslim other speaks to the civilizational anxieties prominent in Lebanese society,

which are often weaponized in the service of fanning nationalism and facilitating xenophobia and racism against ethnic and national minorities present in the country. As Middle Eastern, Muslim, Arab identities continue to be inferiorized subject categories within Western, Orientalist discourses, the African and Asian migrant provides another reliable 'other' from which to elevate the status of Lebanese identity within a racialized global hierarchy.

Thus, the Lebanese racialization of Asian and African individuals occurs within a larger framework of global racial hierarchies, which emerge from the historical dynamics of Western colonial empires and histories of imperialism. The construction of racial hierarchies was an essential feature to the functioning and maintenance of colonialist projects around the world, helping to prevent and dissuade rebellion and hence sustain the power of imperial benefactors: "Europeans constructed colonized peoples as 'uncivilized' and 'heathen,' which acted as an ideological weapon to justify their conquest, genocide, colonization, exploitation, and other forms of oppression" (Alimahomed and Bonachich 2008). The consolidation of global capitalism has brought with it the accompanying racial hierarchies and ideologies that work to justify and maintain the exploitation of a global racialized labor force.

So just as the specific configuration of the kafala system in Lebanon constructs racial hierarchies amongst the different national groups of migrant workers, the global system of labor migration is implicated in the construction of global racial hierarchies and modes of differentiation among countries of the global south which are rooted in capitalist notions of advancement and development. Racialization is an inherently relational, context specific process. Lebanese attitudes toward African and Asian

migrants as a whole can thus be situated within a larger globalized racial hierarchy, the apex of which lies in the West.

F. Historical Interlude: A Genealogy of Race

Historian Ibram X. Kendi (2019) analyzes the practices and policies of Portuguese and later slave traders (and their cultural allies) to construct a genealogy of race as a discursive concept and thereby illuminate the historical forms of power and economic interest which underwrite its existence. As he explains, Portuguese slave traders revolutionized the practice of slave trading by the modes of differentiation employed to consolidate and construct economies of scale:

“Until his death in 1460, Prince Henry sponsored Atlantic voyages to West Africa by the Portuguese, to circumvent Islamic slave traders, and in doing so created a different sort of slavery than had existed before. Premodern Islamic slave traders, like their Christian counterparts in premodern Italy, were not pursuing racist policies—they were enslaving what we now consider to be Africans, Arabs, and Europeans alike. At the dawn of the modern world, the Portuguese began to exclusively trade African bodies. Prince Henry’s sailors made history when they navigated past the feared “black” hole of Cape Bojador, off Western Sahara, and brought enslaved Africans back to Portugal.”

Thus, while the slave trade has been a pervasive practice among various powers and civilizations throughout human history, it was the specific practices of Portuguese slave traders that ultimately rendered the slave as a particularly pigmented product.

*“Prince Henry’s first biographer—and apologist—became the first race maker and crafter of racist ideas. King Afonso V commissioned Gomes de Zurara, a royal chronicler and a loyal commander in Prince Henry’s Military Order of Christ, to compose a glowing biography of the African adventures of his “beloved uncle.” Zurara finished *The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea* in 1453, the first European book on Africa... One of Zurara’s stories chronicled Prince Henry’s first major slave auction in Lagos, Portugal, in 1444. Some captives were “white enough, fair to look upon, and well proportioned,” while others were “like mulattoes” or “as black as Ethiops, and so ugly.” Despite their different skin colors and languages and*

ethnic groups, Zurara blended them into one single group of people, worthy of enslavement.”

However, it wasn't until later that the prevailing features of differentiation were discursively reproduced to surmise the concept of 'race' as the biological author of those observed physical differences. As Kendi explains,

*“Unlike babies, phenomena are typically born long before humans give them names. Zurara did not call Black people a race. French poet Jacques de Brézé first used the term “race” in a 1481 hunting poem. In 1606, the same diplomat who brought the addictive tobacco plant to France formally defined race for the first time in a major European dictionary. “Race . . . means descent,” Jean Nicot wrote in the Trésor de la langue française. “Therefore, it is said that a man, a horse, a dog, or another animal is from a good or bad race.” **From the beginning, to make races was to make racial hierarchy.**” [emphasis added]*

Thus we see how *ideas* about race emerge in the *aftermath* of policies and practices of differentiation which make race a speakable category in the first place. In the same manner, it wasn't until after Sri Lankan women, like Padma, began migrating to Lebanon at the behest of lawless labor recruiters that the referent 'Sri Lankye' was surmised and deployed as a term to denote all racially distinct women who travel to Lebanon to work in private houses.

And as the demarcations of racial categories emerge from the interests and exercises of power, their attendant values and modes of differentiation are configured in relation to one another. Thus, not only does race serve to *differentiate* but also to *rank*. Those with the power to delineate rank could hence command power and dominance over those consigned to the bottom of the hierarchy.

“The other races, save Latinx and Middle Easterners, had been completely made and distinguished by the Age of Enlightenment in the 18th century. Beginning in 1735, Carl Linnaeus locked in the racial hierarchy of humankind in Systema Naturae. He color-coded the races as White, Yellow, Red, and Black. He attached each race to one of the four regions of the world and described their characteristics. The Linnaeus taxonomy

*became the blueprint that nearly every enlightened race maker followed and that race makers still follow today. And, of course, these were not simply neutral categories, because races were never meant to be neutral categories. **Racist power created them for a purpose.**” [emphasis added]*

Thus, rather than being a naturally occurring fact or inherent mode of differentiation, race as a concept and category was the product of an express purpose to define and dominate.

“Prince Henry’s racist policy of slave trading came first—a cunning invention for the practical purpose of bypassing Muslim traders. After nearly two decades of slave trading, King Afonso asked Gomes de Zurara to defend the lucrative commerce in human lives, which he did through the construction of a Black race, an invented group upon which he hung racist ideas. This cause and effect—a racist power creates racist policies out of raw self-interest; the racist policies necessitate racist ideas to justify them—lingers over the life of racism.”

So while racialization is a process which moves with a multidirectional trajectory, in that it relies on the mutual recognition of both social and systemic factors, its birthplace can be found in the performances of power deployed to dominate and delineate rank. That power is then affirmed by the attachment of racial ideologies that are reproduced through processes and practices of social interaction and cultural production.

G. Hierarchization: Racialized Hierarchies and the Performative Power of Race

Through the discourses of racial difference deployed by the employers, we see how the variance in conditions and regulations attached to each nationality as they migrate to Lebanon, produces country-specific stereotypes and assumptions that are then attached to their race as a visible and identifiable marker of their status and value. Though such stereotypes are forged through the structural dynamics of global labor

markets and local legal institutions, they emerge discursively as ideological beliefs about the inherent differences between different national categories of race. Thus, the categorizations of different races and accompanying racial ideologies are essential in maintaining the form and function of the system, as they work to justify and thus conceal the racial inequalities and forms of oppression that emerge in the exercise of power configured by the prevailing institutional structure.

These categories do not merely exist discursively or ideologically, but actually affect the material conditions of those workers subjected to the prevailing racial categories and attendant hierarchies:

*Bashir: If ... and you want to sweep something and mop something ya3ni I feel ... ya3ni if for me there was someone else ... with us like an Egyptian, he says leave the Egyptian to sweep the lounge, Sudanese refugees wipe the dishes. This is really present in work, all the Sudanese here maybe experienced this kind of talk, and I personally ya3ni 70 times experienced this talk.
...There was one talking to me telling me, leave from here and I said why, he told me they saw me. I told him it's not me that will cook, you cook, but he is saying If they saw a black person in the kitchen ya3ni they won't eat.*

From Bashir's experiences at work, we see how employers deploy the power of racial hierarchies in the course of daily management practices: Egyptians sweep the lounge, Sudanese refugees wipe the dishes. Further, this arrangement of work responsibilities demonstrates the materiality of race and its function as a physical marker of identity. Egyptians are allowed in the spaces occupied by and visible to customers, but the black, Sudanese refugees must remain out of sight. While Egyptians and Sudanese both speak Arabic, Egyptians have lighter skin and traditionally 'Arab' features thus share a more proximal association to Lebanese racial identity. Their physical attributes thus do not immediately give away their national identity. Yet, for

Bashir, his unmistakable ebony glow unquestionably places his national origins and racial identity further south down the Nile:

Me: and how is the environment working with these different types of people?

Bashir: Of course the Egyptians are dealt with differently than me. The Egyptians are treated differently than the Bangladeshis and the Sudanese. The Bangladeshis are considered a bit better, better than me and us [Sudanese].

There are degrees [darajat]: The Egyptians are first degree, Bangladeshis are second degree, and us Sudanese are third degree.

Me: Oh wow really

Bashir: You know what I mean? According to their own explanation that is.

Me: and is there racism from Bangladeshis and Egyptians too or more just the Lebanese? Obviously, I imagine they face racism from the Lebanese too, but is there racism between the different non-Lebanese nationalities?

Bashir: yeah of course, the Egyptians are racist too. The Egyptians live with us too in Sudan, yeah the Egyptians have racism against us. The Egyptians make me laugh because they say they are Lebanese. Lebanese how? I mean, us and them are all spread across one river, one Nile ya3ni. But they have racism towards us.

Bashir's reference to the geographic proximity of Egypt to Sudan— 'one Nile ya3ni'— calls forth a geographic conceptualization of racial identity and difference. Yet, as he explains, *despite* the fact that Egyptians and Sudanese share a closer geographic proximity in Africa, Egyptians enjoy— and actively assert— a greater racial proximity to the Levantine Lebanese.

Me: I want to go back to the different nationalities at work. You mentioned Egyptians and Bangladeshi workers are treated differently. Why do you think that Egyptians have more benefits?

Bashir: The racism is due to your skin

Me: Skin?

Bashir: Your color. This is what matters the most. Your character and personality do not matter. Egyptians are Arab and work in the food industry. I am Sudanese and not any different from them, but I still get treated differently

These semiotic nuances of pigmentation suggest that, while conceptually conceived from divisions along national lines, race begins to take on a form and function of its own as ethnic ambiguities mire direct correlations between physical racial attributes and geographic location of origin. Thus, just as national, geographic borders construct ‘imagined communities’ that are given substance through the exercises of sovereign power, distinct physical attributes construct imagined categories of ‘race’ that are given substance through the exercises of racist power. And just as the ideological construction of a coherent national identity is a central component to the maintenance of sovereign authority, the ideological construction of coherent racial identities is essential to the preservation of racist institutional power.

Lebanon is in the Levant (Western Asia), Egypt and Sudan are in Africa. Egyptians are Lebanese/Arabs, Sudanese are Africans.

These dissonances, ambiguities, and overlaps across conceptions of geography, nationality, and identity reveal the illusory nature of global organizations of power.

“The Egyptians make me laugh because they say they are Lebanese. Lebanese how? Ya3ni us and them are all spread across one river, one Nile ya3ni. But they have racism towards us.” Bashir responds to the Egyptians’ assertions that they are Lebanese with laughter, making evident the irrationality of the logic behind the claim. Thus, in calling our attention to the illusory performance of race, Bashir’s narration of his experiences being subjected to the power of racial hierarchies at work, disrupts prevailing epistemologies of racial difference and the ontological realities they purportedly represent.

In dismantling the prevailing vocabularies of racial differentiation, he renders visible the disciplining function of race: while Egyptians occupy an inferior position to

Lebanese on the socially inscribed racial hierarchy, their differentiation from lower racialized ranks elevates their status and position and affords them greater privilege. Therefore, by participating in racism targeted at Sudanese individuals, they can elevate their own rank and value in return. Accordingly, the ability to attain higher rank redirects energies and incentives to resist and disrupt the prevailing hierarchical system, and repurposes them toward moving up in individual rank through the exercises of power deployed at those below.

In their investigation of migrant labor and class structure in Lebanon, Longuenesse and Tabar (2014) demonstrate the extent to which the segmentation of the labor force along the lines of nationality, as well as gender, effectively hinders labor mobilization on behalf of workers' rights and common interests. From Bashir's description of the workplace dynamics among different nationalities of workers, we see how race—and the performance of racism—work to inhibit relations of solidarity between different nationalities of workers and thus acts as a significant barrier to cross-nationality labor mobilization. These ideological racial hierarchies and the performances of racism which maintain them, thus have material consequences that affect capitalist configurations of power on the ground. Thus, we see how race and ideological notions of racial difference work in the service of power under capitalist economic structures that rely on cheap and exploitable pools of labor for the generation of profit.

Bashir's attention to the illusory nature of race discredits the ontological existence of race thus would seem to validate post-racial claims against employing racial terminology which discursively recognize and thus reify the existence of racial categories. As Nayak (2006) contends, "race is a fiction only ever given substance through the illusion of performance, action, and utterance, where repetition makes it

appear *as-if-real*.” (emphasis added) Yet does the recognition that racial categories are constructed in the imagination, mean that it is not *real*?

While race might not be ‘real’ in the sense of having an *ontological* basis in truth, as demonstrated by the experiences of Bashir, it certainly is ‘real’ in that it produces *material* consequences in the course of everyday life. The existence of race then cannot be explained through ontological notions of *truth*, but rather the material outcomes realized in the service of *power*.

National borders are not ‘real,’ but passports, visas, barbed wire, detention centers, border and customs agents certainly are real.

Race is not real— but Egyptians sweep the lounge, and Sudanese wipe the dishes.

H. Conclusion

Under the Kafala system’s decentralized, institutional structure, the Ministry of Labor delegates authority to oversee and organize labor arrangements to private recruitment agencies. This delegation of state authority is in effect a form of deregulation, which empowers private agencies to compete unhindered on the free market for global labor migration. After setting a strict organizational hierarchy for the type and purpose of each unit of labor imported, the rest is left to the competitive free market and ensures that prices, conditions and standards are pushed to the bottom under the competitive forces of the free market for global labor.

Thus, under the method of governance which relies on separate agreements negotiated between the Lebanese and country of origin governments and the implementation of a salary scale hierarchy configured according to the dollar amount

employers pay for the workers, the Ministry of Labor can give up its regulatory responsibilities to the free market without endangering the profitability and status of Lebanon's domestic production i.e. Lebanese workers.

Thus we see how the relegation of the foreign labor market to the forces of the free market facilitates a process of *commodification*, whereby migrant bodies are transformed into objects of trade. Under the financial incentives and corresponding adverse practices inspired by free market competition, this process of commodification occurs in a highly racialized (and dehumanizing) manner, as agencies pursue the rent-seeking strategies of product *differentiation* and cost reduction, that lead them in search of the poorest and most vulnerable workers.

CHAPTER THREE

INFERIORIZATION

"The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line, the question of how far differences of race—which show themselves chiefly in the color of skin and the texture of the hair—will hereafter be made the basis of denying to over half the world the right of sharing to their utmost ability the opportunities and privileges of modern civilization."

W.E.B. DuBois, address to the nations of the world, London 1990

The primacy of self-regulating markets is one of the central tenets of neoliberal orthodoxy. Proponents of neoliberalism extol the virtues of the self-regulating markets in their calls for limiting the influence of government and its regulatory agencies, insisting that free markets can better, more efficiently facilitate and apportion the wants and needs of consumers and suppliers. As we saw in the previous chapter, the decentralized and deregulated nature of the system follows this logic and facilitates the free flow of flexible and cheap labor according to the demands of the employers and supply of recruitment agencies and countries of origin.

Yet, as the state labor agency, it is the responsibility of the Ministry of Labor to ensure that the free market dynamics of the foreign labor force do not impede on the and depreciate the value of Lebanese labor and infringe on the rights and status of Lebanese workers. Thus, in this chapter, I investigate the policies and practices employed by the Ministry of Labor to differentiate racialized labor from other groups of workers. In light of the state's delegation of authority to recruitment agencies, how can the state abdicate

its regulatory responsibilities to agencies while maintaining control over the flow and function of migrant labor?

I answer this question with another question— why do you have a maid working as your secretary?

A. Betty

Betty had fought with her life to escape the confines of her domestic entrapment. She spent 3 years working for a few different Lebanese households while withstanding a wide range of verbal and physical abuse and being denied her salary for months at a time. She narrowly escaped extreme illness and death after her last employer left her trapped in a remote village house for 3 days, surviving on corroded tap water until she managed her escape.

After escaping the confines of forced domestic labor under the sponsorship of private Lebanese employers, her tireless study and mastery of English eventually allowed her to secure an (informal) job working as a secretary for a foreign organization. The employer's status as a multinational company is what allowed her to circumvent the Ministry of Labor's categorical constraints imposed by her work permit authorized exclusively for the performance of domestic work. As she made clear, "a Lebanese company would never hire an African woman as a secretary."

Given the barriers domestic workers face (legal and social) in finding employment outside of the category of domestic work, her securement of a position as a secretary was a testament to her strength, resilience and resourcefulness in navigating an oppressive and violent social system in which her simultaneously gendered and

racialized position renders her vulnerable to constant abuse, exploitation, and discrimination.

She sat at a large desk located at the entrance of the office space and greeted clients and visitors as they entered the office. However, she soon realized that, although she had managed to escape the confines of her employer's home, she could not escape the confines of her racialized designation as domestic worker: some of the Lebanese clients that came in were taken aback upon encountering a black woman positioned at the front of the office to receive them. Some dismissed her, asking to speak instead with someone else in the office. Some simply walked past in search of another (presumably whiter) face with which to place their inquiry. And then there was one man in particular whose dismissals figured prominently in her memory of the job.

He had regular appointments with the manager, and thus frequented the office often. Each time he arrived and entered the space, he repeated the same ceremonious denials of her presence— positioned front and center at the reception desk— and entreated the assistance of another office employee.

There was one particular day he visited that she remembers quite clearly. After meeting with the manager in his office, they walked together back through the office lobby, past where Betty sat at her desk. As he walked past, he cocked his head to the side, offering a glance in her direction out of the periphery of his discerning eyes. As he turned his back around and continued moving toward the exit, he turned to the manager and asked, "*Why do you have a maid working as your secretary?*"

Betty's experience suggests that the construction of strict occupational categories provides an effective institutional structure through which the state can

delegate its regulatory authority to recruitment agencies while still maintaining control over the occupation and thus function of the migrant worker.

In this chapter I explore the manner in which the institutional structure of the labor market relies on race to maintain state authority over migrant workers within the Kafala's decentralized system of control. I begin with an overview of the Ministry of Labor's system of classification for foreign labor in order to illuminate the manner in which the segmentation of the foreign labor force according to nationality is solidified in the institutional structure of the state.

I then consider the ways in which the institutionalized categories of racialized labor manifest in social practices and corresponding configurations of space. I aim to uncover the manner in which bounded associations of race and class affect the power and agency of racialized individuals in the course of everyday life. These investigations provide a guide for thinking through the manner in which notions of racial difference are attached to divisions of class that lead to inferiorized understandings of race and subsequently enable racist practices and ideologies that in turn work to justify and uphold exploitative dynamics of the system.

B. Categorization

In order for a foreigner to receive authorization to work in Lebanon they must submit a prior approval application in which all of the details of their identity (nationality and gender) and intended employment are enumerated, established by a work contract, and underwritten by a Lebanese guarantor (the employer). Accordingly, through the process of categorization, the Ministry of Labor exercises supervisory authority over all foreign workers and superintends the identity and occupation of

workers for all permits issued. It reserves the right to cancel permits if one of the involved parties violates the terms of the prior approval agreement or if the worker commits a crime.

The Lebanese foreign labor market is characterized by a tiered classification system enumerated through a Ministry of Labor issued decision which categorizes workers based primarily on salary as well as other stipulations related to occupation. The issuance of a work permit is a requirement to be granted permission to enter the country from General Security. Since the work permit expressly states the type of work the worker is authorized to perform, once the worker has entered the country, they cannot change their job category without resubmitting a request to the Ministry of Labor and raising the required funds for the new visa category. The high costs and administrative burden of changing one's visa category renders career advancement virtually impossible for low wage migrant workers.

The categorization system contains four distinct tiers in descending order of skills and remuneration. The first category encompasses professional and managerial positions, what are commonly referred to as 'white-collar' jobs, namely, those that require a certain threshold of education and skills and command higher salaries. A foreign worker falls under this category if their salary exceeds 3 times the monthly minimum wage (\$450), or "If the foreigner is an expert, consultant, general manager, manager, head of accounting or the equivalent, whatever his monthly salary" (Ministry of Labor, 1995). The majority of workers in this category come from countries in Western Europe (in addition to smaller number of Arabs and other foreigners) and enjoy privileged status and protected working conditions (Young 2001).

The second category of workers represent middle management positions in which the employer must be Lebanese. Technically these roles fall under a list of professions and positions in which all foreigners are barred from working, in fields such as banking, architecture, engineering, shoemaking, furniture manufacturing, printing, and accounting. However, in Ministry of Labor practice, those prohibitions are loosely enforced, and thus many companies are able to employ foreign staff in these management positions as long as they can attest to the unavailability of a suitable Lebanese alternative candidate for the specified role. The positions in this category include those which command a salary greater than double the minimum wage and not exceeding three times the minimum wage (\$900-\$1,350/month). The second category also includes media correspondents/journalists and all technical employees regardless of their salaries (Ministry of Labor, 1995).

The third category consists of skilled, unskilled and agricultural labor, undertaken primarily by male workers. Workers in this category earn a salary between minimum wage and double the minimum wage (\$450-\$900/month). Jobs in this category primarily include janitorial roles in commercial, private and municipal establishments as well as manual labor positions in construction, farming, car-repair and maintenance. The janitorial roles generally consist of gas station attendants, janitors, concierges (natoor), cleaners, porters or sanitary workers and are typically filled by Egyptian, Syrian, Sudanese and Bangladeshi males. The more seasonal and temporary/day laborer positions in agriculture and construction are primarily filled by Syrian workers, as they have historically filled these roles since the inception of the Lebanese state.

Finally, the fourth category encompasses “workers in individual houses” making less than minimum wage. Female domestic workers comprise the overwhelming majority of these roles (roughly 85%), although there is a small minority of male domestic workers that typically cater to households requiring care assistance for elderly Lebanese males.

Thus, the established occupational categories inscribe a sliding scale of wages, skills and working conditions, producing a disciplined hierarchy of foreign labor. From a macro perspective we can identify a clear dichotomy in the classification system between the first two categories, consisting primarily of Western or Arab foreigners, and the third and fourth categories comprising workers from Asian and African countries, as well as Syrians and Egyptians.

The chart below provides a sample (from 2011) of Ministry of Labor administrative regulation of these occupational categories, and the descending price of the worker as you move down the hierarchy. The third and fourth categories comprise the population of labor subsumed under the discursive category of ‘migrant worker’ while the first and second categories contain a much smaller population of primarily Western (white) workers denoted by the referent ‘expat.’ As we see from the residency fee table (under the purview of General Security), these category one and two workers are permitted to bring their family members along with them, while the latter categories are not.

Table 3.1. Yearly Work Permit Fees.

Category of Occupation	Fee
First category: Professional and managerial staff	LL1,800,000
Second category: Middle management	LL960,000
Third category: Skilled, unskilled or agricultural labor (male)	LL480,000
Fourth category: Domestic servants (male or female)	LL240,000

Source: Ministry of Labor 2011

Table 3.2. Yearly Residence Permit Fees.

Category of Occupation	Fee
Holders of a first category work permit and their family members	LL1,800,000
Holders of a second category work permit and their family members	LL1,200,000
Holders of a third category work permit	LL400,000
Holders of a fourth category work permit:	
- First domestic servant ²	LL300,000
- Second domestic servant	LL600,000
- Third domestic servant or more	LL1,200,000
Other categories	LL300,000

Source: www.general-security.gov.lb 2011

² This is a snapshot of Ministry and General Security regulations in 2011, before civil society advocacy efforts began challenging the power of the system in earnest. This is why we see the use of the word ‘servant’ which general security has now advocated against, and opted in favor of domestic helpers.’

C. Institutionalized Segregation

Further market segmentation proceeds from this initial dichotomization within the identified sub-categories, according to particular national origin and gendered divisions of labor. As we saw in the previous chapter, this process of segmentation emerges from the conditions of the international labor markets whereby country of origin governments compete with one another to negotiate lucrative arrangements and favorable conditions for the importation of their nationals with the Lebanese government. As a result, working conditions are determined by country-specific agreements negotiated by country of origin governments, rather than a unified standard for all foreign workers. These are in effect the ‘free trade agreements’ which allow the free exchange of goods (workers and remittances).

This is why we observe a clear segmentation of the labor market according to nationality and gender. For example, we see Egyptian workers in positions as gas station attendants, agricultural workers, or waiters while Sudanese and Bangladeshi workers generally work as janitors, cleaners and porters. The market for domestic labor is further segmented by gender in addition to nationality, where women primarily from Ethiopia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh as well as other African and Southeast Asian countries, are employed and paid a salary that is determined by their national origin rather than skills, experience or qualifications. Thus, while all foreign workers are technically subject to the same labor laws and sponsorship requirement regardless of particular country of origin, in reality the structure of the foreign labor classification system facilitates a clear system of *segregation* of racialized foreign labor according to nationality and gender.

The institutionalization of these processes of segmentation which result from the free market dynamics of the global labor market and allows the state to issue differential regulation specifically targeting racialized migrant workers without making explicit reference to race. It is in these covert demarcations of race in which a clear system of social segregation emerges to exclude and discriminate against racialized bodies and confine their mobility and restrict their social integration. The Ministry of Labor's system of categorization is thus the architecture which produces the 'myth of inferiority' used to justify the unequal and exploitative treatment of migrant workers under the Kafala system.

The vast disparity in labor conditions between the opposing poles of the classification spectrum has configured the foreign workforce according to the logic of a dual labor market consisting of a 'primary' sector characterized by good pay, clean and safe working conditions, the right to unionize, job security and benefits and a 'secondary' sector which contains temporary, low-paid positions in poor working conditions with little to no opportunity for social mobility or career advancement. The administrative assortment of foreign workers into occupational tiers effectively allows the state to condition entry into the country based on the confluence of occupation, residency and identity (nationality, gender) of the worker, and stratify working conditions and enforcement of labor protections based on those administrative distinctions (rather than the racial or gender-based criteria they represent). This broad dichotomy is the 'color line' of the Lebanese foreign labor market that circumscribes the bounds of opportunity around racialized and gendered criteria, thereby exacerbating oppressive forms of inequality and leading to understandings of race/gender coterminous with an inferiorized condition.

D. Racialized Care: the Devaluation of Domestic Work

The role of the Lebanese labor code is to regulate the relationship between individual employers and employees and make provisions for employers' associations, labor unions and arbitration. Yet, Article 7 of the 1946 Lebanese labor code enumerates four specific categories that are excluded from the provisions of the law. Those excluded from application of its provisions thus lack the specified standard of rights and entitlements that are legally enforced and protected by the government (unless otherwise specified through a separate agreement or law). These universalized rights include daily and weekly rest periods, a minimum wage (\$450 per month), annual paid leave, family leave and paid holidays, right to form unions or access social security or health insurance (Code of Labor 1946) (OCHA 2016).

The first excluded category listed is “al-khadam fii buyut al’afrad,” namely, “servants in individual houses,” or “domestic servants employed in private houses” as it is translated in many standard English versions (Argus 2010). At the time the Labor code was written, domestic work was an occupation undertaken by poor Lebanese (or Palestinian/Syrian) women from rural villages, and arranged under the auspices of kin/village networks (Jureidini 2009). Yet, the transnationalization and commodification of reproductive labor/domestic work since the 1970’s have dramatically altered the social and legal practices and modes of sociality governing the occupation.

From the late 1970’s onward, amid a period of global and regional change which saw the ascendancy of neoliberal ideology and economic liberalization programs throughout the developing world, a nascent labor recruitment industry and network of intermediaries began facilitating the migration of (primarily Sri Lankan and Southeast

Asian) migrant women to Lebanon to work in individual houses. These initial migrations occurred during the civil war in the late 1970's and then expanded rapidly at the beginning of the 1990's at the close of the civil war and onset of large-scale reconstruction efforts (and neoliberalization of the economy). The insertion of the Lebanese class structure into the global economy thus reformulated the nature of domestic work and the social attitudes and practices around the industry.

Arlie Hochschild introduced the notion of a 'Global Care Chain' to denote the reformulation of domestic roles and transnationalization of gendered divisions of labor amid increasing globalization and the social and economic transformations that have attended the consolidation of global capitalism. The primary impetus of the phenomenon comes from the increased participation of women in the labor force in developed countries, who are increasingly unable to manage both domestic and professional workloads. The chain thus begins in rich developed countries where women entering the labor force at increasing rates outsource their domestic duties to women from poor households or migrant/immigrant women from poorer countries. Those women who take up employment as domestic workers and have families and children of their own must then outsource their domestic duties to another poorer woman from an even poorer country. A significant majority of domestic workers around the world are thus migrant or immigrant women (Hochschild 2000) (Jureidini, 2001) (Yeates 2005).

The chain then continues downward from the richest, most developed (i.e. Western) countries down to the poorest, most underdeveloped countries. As the chain descends, the conditions and value attached to the labor deteriorate, leaving those at the very end of the chain performing the work without remuneration. This bottoming out at

the end of the chain thus constrains the mobility of women in underdeveloped countries and their access to education or employment outside the home. (Often times the eldest daughter would be left to care for the younger children and household)

In this global reformulation of reproductive labor, increased opportunities for women in rich countries occur at the expense of those for racialized women in poor, underdeveloped countries. These dynamics highlight the extent to which modes of development under the conditions of capitalism depend on global, regional and racial divisions in capital in order to justify and conceal the exploitative nature of the system. Modernizing neoliberal discourses, which promote a teleological conception of development modeled off of the course of progress of developed western nations, obscure the exploitative and unethical nature of the global capitalist system by telling those in poor countries that if they follow the same processes of development (i.e. economic liberalization and neoliberal restructuring), they can eventually achieve the same levels of progress and development that western countries have been able to realize—by exploiting poor countries and marginalized populations. This modernization discourse often belies the exploitative and often violent manner in which Western capitalist societies came to fruition.

As a UN report noted, “The care deficit in the developed world provides an outlet for the catastrophic failure of development policies worldwide, which results in growing unemployment, reduced social services, and increased poverty” (UNINSTRAW 2007) (Kouzbari 2017). For states structured according to neoliberal logic, the reliance on cheap imported migrant domestic labor thus acts as a substitute for providing adequate public care and state funded social services for Lebanese families. As Eva, the Lebanese mother of 3 we met in Chapter 1, explains:

Eva: The Lebanese people no matter what, will keep on getting maids. Even if the procedure and the paperwork are hard, we would still hire maids. It is kind of prestigious.

Because the majority of the married ladies work and even if they don't, sometimes there is elderly people that need a lot of help. In addition, we in the mountains need a lot of help when preparing Mouneh³

In countries like Lebanon that lack robust social security and care services in the form of child or elderly care (termed 'the care deficit'), social structures rely more heavily on commodified reproductive labor in the form of migrant domestic work. The society's increasing reliance on migrant domestic labor has progressed in alongside socio-economic transformations of the Lebanese state into a globalized, consumer-rentier society.

So while the transnational commodification of reproductive labor (i.e. the global care chain) has helped to draw attention to unpaid reproductive labor as a form of exploitation within developed capitalist societies (and thus advanced the rights and status of women in those countries), in Lebanon migrant domestic workers' continued exclusion from protections under the labor code demonstrate the lack of recognition of domestic work as legitimate work. The fact that this labor is undertaken by poor, racialized women has further stigmatized and inferiorized the work performed. Given the now internationalized and racialized aspects of these categories of work, legal exclusions and differential stipulations around the category of domestic work has enabled severe racial inequalities and oppression.

E. Lulu

Lulu loves to cook. For her, cooking is not just a domestic chore but an enjoyable past-time that engages her intellectual curiosity. Having studied dietary

³ Traditional pre-cooked food that is usually stored for the winter, such as Kishisk that is prepared in the summer and stored for the winter

nutrition at her university and spent time researching the toxic and chemical properties of food, she enjoys experimenting in the kitchen with different recipes, applying the knowledge and research she had procured from her studies to her cooking. It was her curiosity and interest in the chemical properties of food and the way environmental and food resources affect health that prompted her to leave her native Kenya and seek a graduate degree in environmental health from the American University of Beirut. Her time spent in the kitchen offers a mode of discovery and often inspiring new avenues of interest to explore in her research at the intersection of food, environment and health.

*Lulu: I used to live in the dorms, and I moved out [emphatically]. **Because of racism.***

Me: Oh really did you have bad roommates?

*Lulu: it's not even about, because my housemate was African, that wasn't even the problem we both actually moved out, but like, can't I just cook in peace? Because we share the kitchen with the other students, can't I just cook in peace, without people asking me questions and making comments you know? Like **I literally feel bad because I'm cooking**, maybe if I cooked things, like look at this domestic work type of things, she can't even get this out of her mind, she shouldn't cook or do these things, you know. Cooking in itself was a problem because they look at you, and the way they even ask you questions like, seriously you're wasting time cooking you should be reading and studying and then start laughing or saying things in Arabic and you're like, I'm not wasting time, I love cooking. Personally, I love cooking, does that make me a domestic worker? **Its work like any other work just because I love cooking they make me feel like, you know, this one should be a house cleaner, cooking, doing these things, I think it's that attachment around these things**, when they just see someone that should be cleaning, it has been, I don't know if it's the word needs to be demystified or... you know this is normal work, let's call it as it is, if we didn't have janitors in the hospitals, then how would the floors and toilets be... so house help or how I like calling them – house managers—or house keepers, that's the way they should be called, they try and manage your house space and your... the duty that you could be doing but you can't because of other work, so they give you that service and in return you should be thankful and pay them.*

The reaction of Lebanese AUB students to the spectacle of a black woman cooking inside the AUB dorms, reveals a society in which domestic labor has come to represent an act of inferiority. While the phenomena of black women performing domestic labor

is quite pervasive in private households throughout the country, in the privileged walls of AUB dormitories where Lebanese students leave their families behind to live independently, it is out of place.

The fact that her interlocutors regarded cooking as a ‘waste of time’ demonstrates the extent to which domestic work has been stigmatized and devalued. They are students at the country’s most prestigious university— their job is to study not to cook, as though those two undertakings were at odds with one another. In her narration of their behavior, to engage in the act of cooking is to lower one’s self, to take up the trappings of a class that is beneath them.

As the reliance on migrant domestic workers continues to increase, the younger generations of Lebanese children grow up with domestic workers in their households and many have thus become accustomed to the sight of an Ethiopian or Sri Lankan or Filipina woman performing that labor, thereby melding together the associations of inferiority, domestic labor and racial otherness in their social imaginary from an early age. Thus, when they see Lulu (who is a student just like they are) engaged in domestic labor, they cannot understand why she would waste her time performing such an inferior task.

‘This one is educated and studying at AUB, and yet she’s still wasting her time with housework.’

For Lulu, the Lebanese context has thus reformulated her relation to cooking, turning an enjoyable activity into an oppressive demonstration of inferiority that invites the judgement of her peers. It is interesting that she prefaces the anecdote with the label of ‘racism’ — ‘I used to live in the dorms and I moved out *because of racism*’ — and yet, in the entire narration of the issue, she makes no further reference to race. To Lulu,

who has lived and experienced the daily reality of being a racial other and seen through the lens of differentiation, the racial implications of the students' judgement are obvious: They are treating me this way because I am black. When you are frequently subjected to racist discrimination, you come to expect it and can easily identify it, even when it hides behind denials or implicit assumptions and judgements about class.

Thus, her subsumption of this experience under the label of racism calls into the view the concealed racism embedded in covert racializing discourses which hide behind a facade of plausible deniability by making latent reference to a racialized group without explicitly mentioning race. Given the racialized nature of the work in the prevailing social context, one cannot discuss domestic work without covertly calling into imagination the aspect of race.

In this case, the racial dynamics, undertones, meanings occur below the surface of the interaction. No one makes explicit reference to race. And yet, race is the trigger for the interactions that took place, and thus the unspoken, implicit assumptions about race loom over each utterance and interaction.

So if no explicit reference to race is made, can the students behavior be considered racism? Lulu's characterization of Lebanese racism (and the way she experiences it) is inherently tied to notions of labor, and the devaluation of the labor performed by racialized bodies. The way that she translates their thought process reveals the way labor lies at the center of racial construction in Lebanese imaginaries: "She can't get this out of her mind," as though as a black woman she was naturally programmed with an inherent inclination toward domestic labor and no amount of education or privilege can strip her of that conditioning. Thus we see how the

occupational hierarchy constructed by the state enters into the social imagination through its bounded association with race.

Part of the power of racial distinctions that are physically marked, is that they make socially constructed differences seem natural, or biologically driven, even though the existence of biological race has been effectively disproven by science. For Lulu the act of cooking cannot be separated from her embodied difference. She cannot cook freely in the AUB dorms without inviting the judgement and derision of her Lebanese peers. From her perspective, the Lebanese students have ascribed to her a natural propensity for menial household work. Her experience of racial differentiation is thus marked by connotations of labor and servility. It leaves one to wonder: if it had been a Lebanese student, or perhaps an international student from say Denmark, would the act of cooking have invited such scorn?

And here lies the power of covert racializing discourses: in their deniability, their ability to sow doubt and discredit those who experience it, and excuse those who perpetrate it. We cannot know what exactly her Lebanese dormmates were thinking and why, when they imparted judgement at the sight of her— a black woman— cooking. We cannot know how their reaction would have been different if a white or Lebanese person stood in her place. But for Lulu, in her experience living as a racial other in Lebanon and having been subjected to various degrees of racism and discrimination, she knows it is her race that triggered that behavior. As an individual subject to the processes of racialization on a daily basis, she knows that race is a factor.

And how would those students who ridiculed Lulu for cooking react at being called ‘a racist’? How incredulous would the denials and defensiveness be? How vehement the disavowals of racism?

Anti-racism as a moral imperative has been effectively internationalized and normalized within mainstream Lebanese society. Thus, those particularly in educated circles would express contempt for racism as identified by historical and traditional understandings of racism as an overt expression of hate or overt discrimination on the basis of skin color or national origin.

But what about interrogations and intrusions brought on by the sight of her skin, but which make no explicit reference to it. What about judgements formed in reference to her position as a racial other, or the invocation of stereotypes that emerge from a racist and oppressive system? Or what about judgements formed in relation to the stigmatization of an occupation based on its association with racialized labor?

Are these not also acts of racism?

E. From Legal Categorization to Social Segregation: The Racialization of Space

Me: How is your current work situation?

Micko: I have been working in the same place for two years. There are not many people who can pressure me, except the store owner. I work in a hairdresser shop. Maybe after a while I wanted to shampoo hair, wash it myself, but I am not allowed to do so because I am black! All other 17 employees can do so, but they would not let me because I am black! They can wash their hair, apply makeup and do whatever they want. I asked him what is the difference between myself and these employees. I work 15 hours there and they have a day off, while I do not! He told me that he is afraid that I would get pregnant and I asked him if he would forbid me from loving/flirting with anyone. This is the situation that I face. I am not allowed to make phone calls as well. It has been two years like that!

The Ministry of Labor's administrative classification system for foreign work permits neatly circumscribes the employment of foreign workers from racialized nationalities exclusively within the secondary labor market. The confinement of

racialized workers to low wage and stigmatized work subsequently produces and maintains neat divisions of class stratified along the lines of race. Hence, *race* emerges as the medium through which their *inferiorized* condition is ascertained and reinforced.

Once the racialized workers have been categorized and inferiorized, they can then be segregated and excluded through the embodiment of race, while their status as non-citizens and low-wage workers are deployed as justifications for their exclusion. It is through the bounded association of race with the juridically bestowed categories of citizenship, occupation (and class), from which a clear system of social segregation emerges to deny racialized workers social recognition and restrict their access to spaces of sociality.

These acts of denial and exclusion are at once classist and racist— classist because the stigma comes from the devalued position of migrant workers in society (via fixed occupational category) and an unwillingness to be associated with such a position; and racist because race is the signal that indicates their presupposed socio-economic position and thus triggers the performances of exclusion and discrimination.

The racialized separation of physical space thus operates through the visible and embodied aspect of race, whereby transgressions of juridically configured and socially enforced subject positions are rendered immediately apparent. Thus, the structure of the system which imposes strict, disciplined demarcations of occupational categories but also operates within a decentralized and deregulated system of control, *relies on* race as a visible marker of citizenship and class/occupation to function effectively. As we saw through the experience of Betty, racism is not merely an incidental correlation in the system's configuration of class, but rather *the medium through which the entire system operates*.

1. Overt Exclusion

Bashir: in general my experience if I'm walking on the road, the people don't see me as a human walking. Sometimes if I'm going to stores or if there's food around, people don't want to be near me as a Sudanese.

Bashir is the Sudanese refugee from Darfur that we met in Chapter 1. He arrived Lebanon in 2008 by way of Khartoum and Syria. He had originally hoped to remain in Syria as he enjoyed his short time there, finding much cheaper costs of living and a society much more agreeable to his presence. Unfortunately, finding a job proved difficult in country where citizens often travel to neighboring countries in order to find work.

Bashir: "yeah I traveled to Syria, there are a lot of Sudanese people there, but I didn't stay there for long because there was no work in Syria. I'm telling you if you want to stay in Syria you can't work. If you want to work you have to go from Syria and go to Turkey or enter Greece by the sea, or go to Lebanon. And it's all smugglers here, you can't go by plane. Syria is good, it's cheap, but you can't find work."

Unable to find sufficient work in Damascus, he paid \$200 to traffickers to get him across the border into Lebanon in order to find sustainable work.

Bashir: In Syria there is racism, but there is less of it, much less of it. Because there is a big difference between Syria and between Lebanon in terms of racism, I learned this after I came to Lebanon. When I came to Lebanon it was a big surprise.

Bashir has now resided in Lebanon for 11 years, working various jobs in the cleaning industry throughout Beirut, Jounieh and Jbeil. In each space he has worked over the course of his time in Lebanon, examples of racial discrimination and harassment abound.

Bashir: One time I remember, one guy, said something shocking. This is the guy responsible for me at work, he came, and he said I didn't find you work, and I said why? How could that be? He said, it's too bad you're Sudanese, haram you're black and I can't find work. You know? This I will not forget.

Bashir: Also, in the kitchen, in the kitchens, If you are working in cleaning, there's not a lot of space. If I got close to the food in the kitchen, they would say no don't get close to

the food. He's telling you don't get close to it, if they see you they won't eat, and why won't they eat, because you are black. There was one talking to me telling me, leave from here and I said why, he told me, they [the customers] saw me, I told him it's not me that will cook, he is saying If they saw a black person in the kitchen ya3ni they won't eat.

From Bashir's experience we see how his presence is clearly demarcated around the bounds of his labor in order to maintain clear separation between his body and the surrounding environment. Like many other migrant workers, he works in the service industry, specifically a restaurant, and the demands of his work thus brings him into close proximity with Lebanese society. Yet, in addition to the vibrant, electric blue uniform he must wear at work which loudly signals the purpose of his presence, the watchful supervision of his employer ensures that he maintains his distance in the course of performing his work.

As Bashir explained, such moments of exclusion and discrimination occur not only at work, but also in every day spaces like services (taxis), elevators, fitness clubs and phone calls.

Bashir: I was talking with a friend about racism, and he said he was riding to the bank in a service. He's Sudanese and there was also an Iraqi guy [going to the bank also], and one guy came and wanted to get in, and he said this guy has to get out, I'm not going to ride if you take him. He said 'why are you taking a black one.' ('wahad Aswad') This guy is a chauffeur ya3ni, he can earn money and take them both to the bank, or just take one of them and take this other guy somewhere else. And he decided to make him get out and take this other guy.

Thus, for male migrant workers employed outside the bounds of domestic work, their mobility and easier access to the spaces of the city brings them into immediate proximity with Lebanese society. Yet, their visible racial difference maintains the associations of their identity and their labor, and thus triggers the same forms of segregation they experience at work.

2. Racialized Leisure, Part 1

As the juridical conditions of their sponsorshipped employment restricts their legal existence to the performance of labor, the sociality and life chances of migrant workers are strictly delimited around the purpose of labor.

On any given day, walking down the long stretch of sidewalk bordering the Mediterranean coastline, toward the waterfront area known as Biel, one can observe flocks of yellow-signed bikes whizzing up and down the seaside walkway. ‘Beirut By Bike’ is a popular attraction for tourists and residents alike, offering bikes to rent by the hour from the waterfront area, for the reasonable rate of 6,000LL (\$4) per hour.

In addition to snow and beach trips outside of Beirut, the Migrant Community Center (MCC) also organizes smaller trips and activities inside the city limits. Every few weeks, the members spend Saturday or Sunday afternoon riding bikes down by the waterfront and Corniche, the most popularly frequented portions of Beirut’s sparse public spaces.

We all met on Saturday at the community center in the Mar Mitr area of Achrifiyeh and walked the 20 or so minutes it takes to reach the waterfront together as a group of around 20 people. It was a warm and sunny spring afternoon, the balmy breeze offering a refreshing change from the rainy months of winter that had passed. We walked along the large stretch of highway, joking, laughing, skipping jovially as we proceeded toward the downtown area. As our large group moved down the sidewalk of the busy, main road, our presence drew the stares of motorists parked in traffic along the roads. It occurred to me that a large group of mostly black, brown as well as Asian and Syrian individuals moving loudly and proudly through the streets of Beirut was an unusual and perplexing sight for Lebanese city-dwellers accustomed to the sights of

black and brown men donning cleaning uniforms and black and Asian women cordoned behind balcony windows and back seats of cars.

We waited in the ‘Beirut By Bike’ lot while the MCC coordinator went to procure the bikes the center had reserved ahead of time. While an ID card is usually required to rent a bike, the center reserved the group of bikes under its name, thus allowing us to forgo the requirement of presenting individual IDs.

We hopped on the bikes excitedly and sped off down the waterfront lot toward the corniche and spent the next hour or so riding up and down the crowded walkway. On an early spring Saturday afternoon, the corniche offered large crowds of families and groups of friends sitting, strolling and enjoying the day’s balmy weather. I rode my bike behind Ahmed, a middle-aged Sudanese man and long-time resident of Beirut. As I chased after him on the bike, I noticed the pointed stares of the surrounding crowd aimed in our direction. As we passed one group of young men enjoying an arguileh on one of the many benches positioned on the outer limits of the walkway facing the crowds and the sea, I heard the words uttered amid chuckles of laughter:

“Shouf fi wahad aswad bil bisiklet” — “look there’s a black one on a bike.”

In spaces where racialized bodies are juridically confined to the performance of labor, the sight of a black man on a bike becomes a spectacle which inevitably draws the perplexing stares of strangers. What does it mean to be a racialized body performing leisure rather than labor? What processes of cognitive dissonance are ignited in the minds of Lebanese onlookers upon seeing a black man on a bike? A black man enjoying a brief moment of fun, for himself, outside the bounds of labor demanded by another

“Shouf fi wahad aswad bil bisiklet”

Their stares and commentary convey their inability to reconcile the image of a racialized body engaged in leisure rather than labor. The image of a black man on a bike betrays their understanding of the purpose and constitution of the black/racialized body in Lebanese society.

Even if their stares are innocent, the role that *race* plays in their pointed attention is laid bare by the simple phrase “*wahad aswad*” —a black one. For Ahmad, the innocent act of riding a bike thus constitutes a transgression of the disciplining power of race—and becomes an invitation for racist commentary.

3. The ‘Foreigner’

When Bashir is not working, he spends much of his free time playing sports. A dedicated and talented athlete, he finds that running and working out help to maintain his health and alleviate the stress that accumulates over the course of the tedious workday. After discovering a fitness center near his work, he decided to sign up for a membership so he could work out as soon as he finishes from work. As he entered the establishment and approached the reception desk, his presence alerted the suspicious gaze of the reception desk attendant from across the corridor. When he arrived at the desk, he greeted the worker and (in Arabic) inquired about the different membership offerings and the associated prices.

The worker looked at him, paused, hesitated and then dismissed the request: ‘I’m sorry but we can’t offer memberships to foreigners, you need the ID in order to sign up.’”

Bashir's access to the fitness club is summarily denied by the reception desk worker—not because he is black, not because he's a cleaner or migrant worker, not because he's from Sudan—but because he is a 'foreigner.'

And yet, I wonder: if a blonde haired, blue-eyed 'expat' from Germany went and tried to sign up, would he too be denied entry to the club?

4. 'Whiteness as Property': Racial Segregation in Privatized Spaces

"The reason people think it's important to be white is that they think it's important not to be black."

-James Baldwin

a. 'Whiteness' in the Lebanese Context

In his socio-historical analysis of white self-racialization among Maronite Christians, Hage (2005) illustrates the manner in which the intrusion of European colonial powers into Mount Lebanon in the mid-nineteenth century contributed to the valorization of European whiteness as an aspirational identity. He applies Marx's analysis of commodity fetishism to notions of identity to show how structural transformations in the local economy of Mount Lebanon facilitated the construction of a whitened identity among Lebanese Christians. As he explains, "in its emergence in the midst of the colonial transformation of the economy of Mount Lebanon, Christian Lebanese identity was experienced by those identifying with it as European and white, and as intrinsically endowed with a causal power to generate the very capitalist social practices that produced it" (Hage 2005:186).

Thus we see how the proximity to European colonial powers produced an idealized imagination and valorization of whiteness coterminous with European notions of superiority and capitalist economic advancement.

Just as racialization of the other entails a concomitant racialization of the self, inferiorization of the other implies a superiorization of the self. Thus, Lebanese imaginative and understandings of their own racial identity — and attempts to superiorize the self— cannot be divorced from European/Western constructions of whiteness and civilizational superiority. Understandings of racism and Whiteness in the Lebanese context must therefore be understood in relation to the influence of European/Western racial ideologies and Lebanese corresponding racial anxieties of not being considered white enough with the racial global hierarchy.

b. Whiteness as Property

In her theoretical formulation of “whiteness as property,” author Cheryl Harris (1993) argues that “in ways so embedded that it is rarely apparent the set of assumptions, privileges and benefits that accompany the status of being white have become a valuable asset that whites sought to protect.” Thus, when economic and social privileges are stratified by race, access to those privileges and the spaces where they accrue thus becomes a valuable asset that must be protected.

Therefore, in a society that is structured around racial hierarchies (a racialized social system), being able to associate with the dominant racial category affords one higher social capital. That association has real, material value that must be protected and insured against depreciations in value. This conception of “whiteness as property” stems from “the valorization of whiteness as treasured property in a society structured on

racial caste” (Harris 1993). Association with whiteness (and the dissociation with blackness it implies) thus constitutes a valuable asset that must be protected against depreciations in value.

In bestowing possession of a racialized body, the state is simultaneously bestowing possession of a white (and thus dominant) identity on non-racialized Lebanese citizens. In this formulation, race becomes an important determinant and purveyor of social capital. It is in the materiality and fungibility of that value accumulated in white spaces of privilege where whiteness transforms from an abstract category of racial identification to a material form of property.

Property conveys an interest, a benefit, a right, a privilege. Property *belongs* to someone, or something, it is something that is owned or possessed—the exclusive right to possess and enjoy the thing which is designated as one’s property. Thus, the designation of something as property enables exclusivity. And as whiteness becomes a form of property, it creates the possibility and conditions of exclusion.

c. Segregation in Privatized Spaces

In 2018, a nursery in Zouk Mikael turned away a Sudanese toddler when enrolling in the nursery after parents complained to the administration about a black child attending school with their children. The father of the child, Fawzi Louis Kijjo, is a registered Sudanese refugee and longtime Lebanon resident who works in the cleaning services sector. He and his wife both work during the day and thus need to procure an affordable form of childcare for their almost 2-year-old son—not an easy endeavor given the privatized nature of Lebanon’s education system and high tuition costs of many Lebanese schools.

To their relief, they managed to reach an agreement with the nearby Nursery, where they reside in Zouk Mikael, to enroll their son Rizk for a manageable price. Yet, the presence of Rizk and his parents immediately alerted the attention of the other parents as soon as they entered the premises to enroll their son on the first day of school. As Fawzi approached the registration desk, his presence draws the exacting stares of the fellow parents. According to his description, upon noting their presence, one woman entreated to the nursery staff— “if you enroll him at the Garderie [nursery], I will pull my son out and let all the other mothers here take their kids out with mine.” After leveling the initial threat, the parents then collectively addressed their complaints with the school administration.

Ultimately, the nursery, fearing the loss of profits from a collective parent boycott, decided to renege on their agreement with Fawzi to admit Rizk, and rejected his admission to the school. After media reports publicized the incident and generated significant public backlash by human rights advocates, the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) issued a public statement condemning the nursery’s actions and detailing their actions to address it.

While the backlash prompted the nursery to reverse its decision to reject Rizk, Fawzi ultimately turned down the offer to readmit him as they had already enrolled him in another school. This incident provides one of the more explicit and glaring examples of Lebanese racism. Unlike covert racializing discourses and practices that conceal racist practices with coded language, it makes explicit reference to race in the act of exclusion. It is not cloaked in denials or classist justifications, but an outright condemnation of blackness, of proximity with a racialized ‘other.’

In a society that prides itself on the high educational attainment and achievement of its citizens, schools and universities are important purveyors of social capital. Lebanon's highly privatized education system relies heavily on private schools to accommodate the educational demands of the society, particularly for the preschool phase of instruction (Education Encyclopedia, 2019). Private school tuition fees are notoriously burdensome in the country, where many citizens struggle to cope with high costs of living. After a 2017 tuition hike, school fees were estimated to constitute roughly 2/3 of Lebanese middle class, annual income (Jamaledine 2017).

Still, disparities in the performance and quality of public versus private schools often incline parents to accept the burdensome costs and enroll their children in expensive private schools. Lebanese schools fall into one of three categories: state-funded public schools, semi-public schools operated by NGO's with funding support from The Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), and private schools. A 2005 CRC report estimated child enrollment at 39% in public schools, 12.6% in semi-public and 28.5% in private schools. Further, a 2006 report found that 60.2% of students at the elementary level attend private schools while 38.9% attended public. At the secondary level 56% attended public schools and 42% private schools (Save the Children, 2008).

Thus, Lebanese private schools become an important purveyor of class and social status, as added cost confers higher quality and tuition fees guard entry to those privatized spaces and determine who is— and who isn't— allowed into them. Thus, it is in these privatized spaces where social capital appreciates, as high priced schools offer not only quality education but proximity and socialization among Lebanon's elite, and the connections and power those associations offer. Thus, Lebanese schools are highly classed institutional spaces which configure hierarchies of status, class and

power. As a private institution to which one must pay entry to access, the Lebanese private school constitutes a form of property.

Following the logic of ‘whiteness as property,’ the presence of a black child incites a depreciation of the asset, diminishing the social status of the school and those enrolled in it. The penetration of a racialized ‘other’ into the privatized and privileged territory of the Zouk Mikael nursery thus compromises the social status of the school through the visible assumptions of class conveyed by the blackness of his skin.

The racialization of space, which occurs through the underlying structural and socio-economic stratifications in race, necessarily entails modes of exclusion in order to protect the privileged access to spaces of whiteness, and the social capital they manifest. As Harris explains, “In particular, whiteness and property share a common premise—a conceptual nucleus—of a right to exclude. This conceptual nucleus has proven to be a powerful center around which whiteness as property has taken shape” (Harris 1993).

Those parents have paid for a certain level of quality and status that enrollment in that private school confers—and are thusly empowered to act to ensure that the value of that asset for which they have paid does not depreciate. The ‘whiteness’ of the space is a feature of the property they have paid for—and must intervene to protect.

These dynamics mirror the phenomenon of ‘white flight’ that occurred in the United States in the aftermath of the government’s attempts to racially integrate public schools across the country: As public schools were forced to racially integrate their student body or else have their federal funding revoked, the number and popularity of private schools increased markedly. By relying instead on privatized schools, those interested in preserving whiteness were thus able to reclaim their right to exclude those outside the bounds of the dominant race.

This notion of “whiteness of property” thus constitutes one of the myriad forms through which space becomes racialized through the processes of privatization inherent in neoliberal systems of governance. And as space becomes racialized, racism constitutes the primary exercise of power through which those racialized demarcations are maintained and enforced. Thus, proximity is the point, the premise, the transgression whereby those acts of racist exclusion and discrimination emerge and are experienced by those categorized as ‘racial others.’

As Bonilla-Silva describes in his theoretical formulation of racialized social systems, “racial phenomena are viewed as systemic; therefore, all actors in the system participate in racial affairs. Some members of the dominant racial group tend to exhibit less virulence toward members of the subordinated races because they have greater control over the form and the outcome of their racial interactions. When they cannot control that interaction—as in the case of revolts, general threats to whites— blacks moving into ‘their’ neighborhood—they behave much like other members of the dominant race” (Bonilla-Silva, 1997).

Thus, when racial others ‘contaminate’ white spaces of privilege, those owning the property rights to that space can act to intervene and protect the value of their property by excluding entry. But, as we see in the case of domestic workers, outright exclusion is not always possible given that the conduct of their work occurs in the intimate sphere of the family and the household. And yet, even as they share habitation with Lebanese, domestic workers’ presence is clearly demarcated and separated from spaces of Lebanese sociality.

5. Segregated Proximity: a Racialized Room

Inside the employer's home, domestic worker spaces of habitation are clearly demarcated and confined in order to take up minimal space and remain separated from the space the family occupies. While the Lebanese construction law stipulates certain standards for rooms designated for human habitation, "maid's" rooms are excluded from those standards and included instead in a separate category along with storage areas, laundry rooms and outhouses. 8 meters squared is the *maximum* area allotted for the "maid's" habitation in this category of space under the construction law's stipulations, while 5 meters squared is the average size for existing rooms. The text of the law uses the feminine form of the Arabic word for 'servant' in the several articles concerning demarcations of space reserved for domestic workers (Saad 2016).

The inclusion of the maid's room under the category of spaces designated for 'things' is another example of the institutionalized commodification and dehumanization of migrant domestic workers under the Lebanese legal system. The formulation of the construction code discursively posits workers as commodities to be stored away, out of sight— but nearby and readily available when they (their labor) are needed. Thus we see how the institutional framework governing migrant workers extends beyond juridical contracts and conditions of entry and exit, and into matters of architecture, urban design, and the spatial arrangements of private habitation.

This tiny allotment of space for domestic workers is usually adjacent to the kitchen and cordoned off from the rest of the family rooms. This spatial configuration allows them to remain in the house (as stipulated by General Security's requirements) and perform their domestic duties without disrupting or intruding on the family's space. Thus, even in the close proximity of Beirut's cramped apartments, the presence and

movement of domestic workers is clearly circumscribed and segregated from Lebanese spaces as a matter of law.⁴

The racist and inhumane forms of segregation and exclusion that domestic workers encounter inside the home can therefore be seen as a manifestation of legally sanctioned modes of spatiality. The construction law explicitly imposes a hierarchy of space within the private homes of Lebanese, in which domestic workers are positioned at the bottom, consigned to the same spatial categories as storage and outhouses. Consequently, new social practices, beliefs and attitudes emerge within and around those spatial separations. Those multiply, proliferate, evolve and work to uphold those hierarchies of space and create new racist attitudes and justifications for separation.

One Ethiopian domestic worker recounted to Stepfeed, a popular Lebanese news outlet, her experiences of racist segregation inside her employer's home. *"Madam told me to use a separate sink for my dishes from day one, my plate and utensils aren't allowed to mix with the ones they use. They find me disgusting, they think I am filthy even though I am just like them," she said*" (Nabbout 2018).

As I learned from the experiences of my interlocutors, such notions of domestic workers and black individuals in general being unclean are common perceptions among Lebanese society. Many domestic workers have reported being forcibly bathed upon arriving to their employer's house for the first time. One of my Ethiopian interlocutors who worked as a domestic worker in a private Lebanese home recounted to me how her 'madam' encountered her eating in the kitchen and yelled at her to go eat in the bathroom.

⁴ Many domestic workers don't even get the 'privilege' of an 8 meters squared room, and instead forced to sleep on cots/mattresses/cushions relegated to the balcony or share a room with the children. In a Kafa study on domestic workers, 62% of respondents reported that they did not have a private room

Here we see how racial ideologies emerge alongside structural configurations of space. Perceptions and assumptions of uncleanness are attached to the racialized body and limits their movement and access to space. Stereotypes and assumptions of black individuals being dirty or unclean, while in part reminiscent of historical notions of Africans being backwards and uncivilized, are then reproduced and drawn upon in order to justify social and juridical modes of separation.

This example also highlights the materiality and durability of legal structures in determining social and cultural practices, and the manner in which institutional discrimination embeds itself within culture so that the inequality remains even after the structural stratifications have been abolished or reformed (just as blacks in the US continue to be oppressed long after the elimination of slavery and legally sanctioned segregation).

Laws can be repealed, institutions can be reformed but buildings are permanent, durable fixtures which continually animate the spaces of human social interaction and habitation. The permanence and materiality of these racialized spatial structures and configurations thus help facilitate an enduring and ongoing social construction of racial distinctions and the racial ideologies that accommodate them. Even if the juridical structures of the Kafala system were abolished tomorrow, the brick and mortar structures across the country sheltering the 8 meters squared rooms, preserve the memory of the small closet sized room tucked neatly across the partition of the kitchen— and the racialized woman who inhabited it.

Furthermore, it is notable that the dimensions specified for the ‘maid’s’ room are set as a *maximum* allotment. As Lebanese architect Bassem Saad (2016) explains, the spatial configuration of domestic worker habitation is a symptom of neoliberal modes of

governance in the Lebanese construction sector. In Lebanon, a geographically small country whose land per capita ranks among the lowest in the world, available space for development runs scarce and thus maximizing rents extracted from each unit of space is an important imperative for developers looking to maximize profits.

As a result, the state has arranged its construction sector to accommodate profit maximizing spatial arrangements over those more conducive to safety, aesthetics, public good, equitable and sufficient housing standards, and human rights (Saad 2016). The framing of the building law ultimately transferred decision-making authority over building matters to licensed architects and engineers (Ghandour 2001). As a result, this delegation of power over spatial practices to private stakeholders has privileged the profits of those in power over the ‘quality of the built environment’ i.e. the general public interest.

Thus the building code, with its attendant spatial typologies that dehumanize racialized domestic workers, is the logical outcome of a neoliberal governance structure which has enabled the commodification of space and offered it for sale on the free market in the service of those with capital.

The picture below depicts a billboard displayed in the residential streets of the Beirut suburb of Sin El Fil, advertising new apartment units in the area with the display of the apartment floorplan. As we can see, it is a 3-bedroom apartment, each bedroom affixed with its own personal bathroom attached in the upper left corner of the apartment plan.



Figure 3.1. Billboard Advertisement in Sin El Fil, taken June 1st 2018.

The room labelled '*maid*' is strategically placed between the kitchen, laundry room and dining area with a small corridor giving the imagined '*maid*' easy access and mobility between the various areas in which she conducts her labor, neatly circumscribing her body within the bounds of her domestic duties. Though of course, there is a separate corridor to and from the kitchen which connects to the entrance hall and other side of the apartment, allowing the family to access the kitchen without encountering the maid's quarters. Across the tiny corridor from the maid's room there is a rectangular block divided into two small squares. The square on the left is labelled '*invited Wc,*' while the one on the right reads just '*Wc.*' The entrance to the '*Wc*' faces the room labelled *maid*, and thus is presumably the bathroom apportioned for the

domestic worker. The entrance to the ‘invited’ Wc faces the entrance corridor that connects the kitchen and living spaces. This division of the already small rectangular space thus ensures that family and guests are not using the same bathroom as the ‘maid.’

While the dimensions of the individual rooms are not enumerated on the floor plan, we know from the Lebanese construction code that the area labelled ‘maid’ does not exceed 8 meters squared. The small rectangular cot appears roughly the same size as the dining room table, while the dimensions of the room itself appear slightly smaller than the rug that surrounds it.

6. Segregation in Private Social Spaces



Figure 3.2. Sign Posted at Entrance of Private Swimming Pool in Lebanon. The bottom left corner reads: “Entrance of maids prohibited” (yamnae ‘iidkhal alkhadimat).

While the nature of their work often confines domestic workers to the home and thereby limits their movement outside the house, the subsumption of childcare under the list of domestic duties attaches the presence of domestic workers to the movement and activities of the children outside the home. Thus, if caring for young children is one of the domestic duties assigned to domestic workers, family outings to restaurants, beaches, ski resorts require them to venture out of the private space of the employer's home and into Lebanese spaces of sociality. In such cases, classist and sexist forms of discrimination work to cast boundaries around the racial other's presence so as not to contaminate the whiteness of the space they must share.

Observing the dynamics of these family outings make clear the domestic worker's physical separation. In such spaces, it is common to observe an Ethiopian, Bangladeshi or Filipina woman seated at a separate table, either alone or with the children, tending to them as they eat. In the case of upper and middle class families that patronize nice restaurants and expensive beach or ski resorts, domestic workers are required to enter these highly classed spaces, thus compromising the "whiteness of the space."

The popular seaside pool and beach club 'Sporting' in Ras Beirut recently began circulating a form to patrons detailing their new "Helper dress policy" (Nabbout 2019). The small leaflet shows a cropped image of a black, headless woman's body wearing a pair of black sport shorts and a baggy red t-shirt with the sleeves rolled up to the shoulders. Beside the image read the following text:

I _____ the undersigned agree to dress my helper(s)⁵ # _____,
according to sporting club's regulations, as per attached picture.

In case of regulation breach, you will be asked to leave Sporting Club without a refund.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

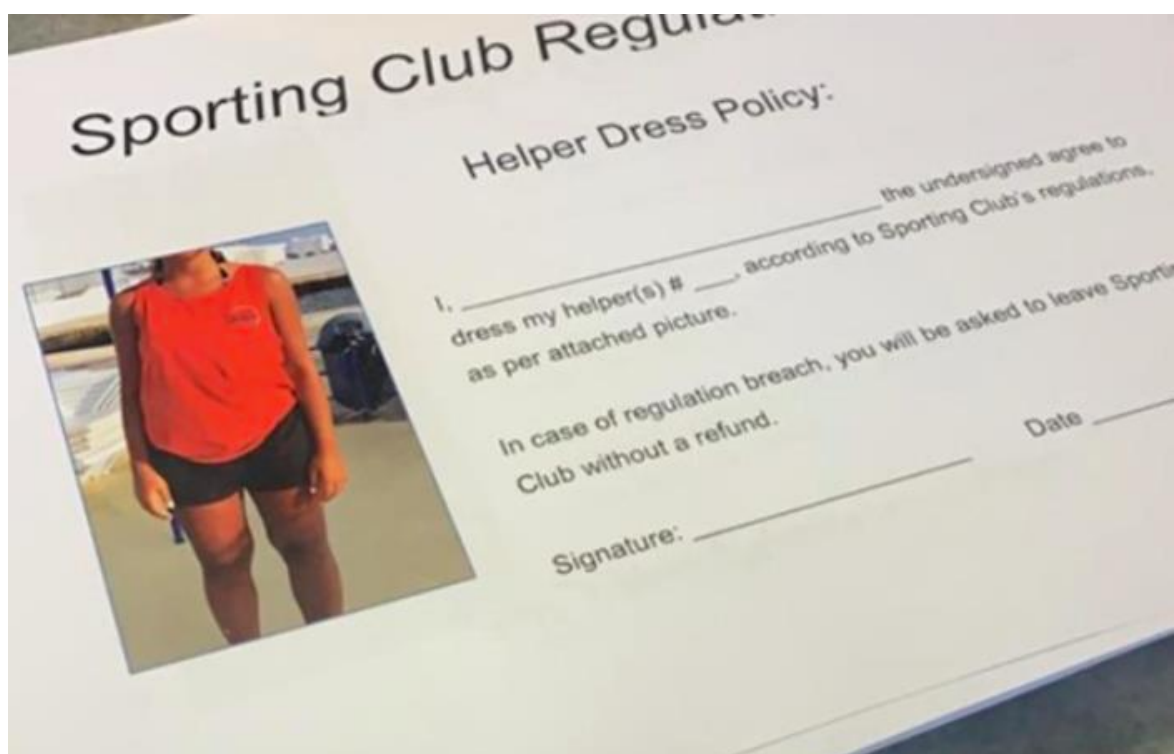


Figure 3.3. Form Circulated By Sporting beach Club to Patrons Detailing Their 'Helper Dress Policy'.

Source: Stepfeed 2019

The language of the flier makes clear the configurations of power: the sponsor must agree 'to dress' their helper. The use of the active verb 'dress' extricates the

⁵ The modification to accommodate families which employ multiple domestic workers makes reference to the common practice among wealthier, upper class Lebanese families which employ multiple domestic workers, often from multiple nationalities with varying roles and responsibilities in their capacities as domestic workers.

autonomy and agency of the worker from the action—their employer must dress them, as if they were dressing a child or a doll. In another exercise of power, the club enumerates clear and swift consequences for those in breach of their policy—they will be denied access to the club and sent on their way without a refund of the steep per person beach fees characteristic of most popular beach clubs around Lebanon.

Thus, while it is the employer/sponsor who has direct and immediate authority over the worker, the management of the club can access that authority by placing conditions and restrictions on the employer in how they are expected to control the actions and presence of their workers (their property) when patronizing their private establishment.

Strong and enforceable property rights are a cornerstone of a corporate capitalist economic system. In the highly privatized geography of Beirut, much of the social spaces throughout the city are under the purview of private owners and business managers. Accordingly, such spaces are governed by the logic of financial incentives and the goal to maximize profits and retain value of the space.

The racialization of space, which occurs through the underlying structures and socio-economic stratifications in race, necessarily entails modes of exclusion and discrimination, in order to protect the privileged access to spaces of whiteness, and the social capital made available by those spaces. The private ownership of the space and the simultaneous conception of workers as commodities over which the employer has legal ‘property rights’ provide the mechanism by which racialized bodies are discriminated in those private spaces of upper-class society. They are able to use their ownership and control of their space to exert their authority and control over the workers’ bodies, albeit indirectly—through the authority of the sponsor.

While property rights bestow the right to use and earn an income from the owned ‘good,’ they also confer obligations and accountability in how that property is used. As the state designated ‘guarantors’ of their employee(s), the ‘property rights’ of the employer— i.e. the state delegated power of the employer/sponsor over their workers—are the primary vehicle through which employers are held accountable for the actions and behavior of their workers in privatized social spaces. As we saw in the first chapter, the logic of the deregulated system positions migrant workers as commodities, owned and consumed by their employers. Here, we see how this imaginative construction of migrant workers as commodified property is utilized to summon and authorize such directives framed in the jussive third-person imperative form— I, the undersigned, agree to dress my helper(s).”

In light of this conception of workers as the property of the employer/sponsor, we see how state (and corporate) practices and policies governing the behavior and movement of migrant domestic workers are directed not toward the workers themselves but rather the employers— the employer must agree “to dress *my* helper(s)”... “according to the sporting club’s regulations...” Why is it that the club didn’t issue a form detailing the standards of dress to which the *helper* must adhere; or clothing guidelines *helpers* must follow? Under the Kafala’s sponsorship formulation the ‘helpers’ are not autonomous, socially recognized *subjects*, but dependents under the care and custody of their employers/sponsors. Thus, they cannot constitute the *subject* of the verb ‘to wear,’ consigned instead as *objects* to the verb ‘to dress.’

The flyer provides an example of how the structure of the legal regime manifests in the social practices governing the racialized migrant body. The discursive positioning of migrant workers as objects or dependents echoes the legally sanctioned power

dynamics between worker and employer and demonstrates the extent to which the restriction of the worker's autonomy and rights has been normalized within the society. Furthermore, the flyer demonstrates the important role that race in its embodied form plays in the policing of migrant bodies in public and private social spaces.

After all, in enforcing compliance with their stated policy, how can the club know who is a helper?

After civil society activists brought the flyers to the attention of local media outlets, the management of the beach resort responded to the outrage generated by the reports of racist discrimination, denying that the policy constituted racism and claiming that the flyers and policy had been taken out of context. The representative of the club explained that the policy was a response to 'maids' entering the premises without proper swim attire, and the reason the policy included shorts and t-shirt rather than a bathing suit was that the 'maids' could potentially feel uncomfortable wearing a bathing suit in front of their employers (Popoviciu 2019). This justification offered by Sporting's management thus draws on the paternalistic, infantilizing and sexualizing tropes which discursively reproduce domestic workers as subjugated dependents requiring supervisory care and discipline.

Let's say that their explanation is true (despite Sporting's demonstrated history of discriminating against domestic workers and other racialized individuals). Why is the policy targeted directly and exclusively at domestic helpers? If they needed to address the issue of patrons not wearing proper swim attire in the pool, why not have the policy

state that all guests entering the pool must wear proper swim wear? (simple and effective).

The fact that the divisions occur along the parallel lines of occupation and race allow the policy as it is written to function. If maids were not physically distinguishable from non-maids, it would prove quite difficult to monitor and enforce compliance with the policy. The fact that the policy functions and deploys power toward distinctions in race— through the corresponding category of occupation— is what makes the policy racist, regardless of whether or not that was their intent. Again, we see how state configured categories of racialized labor emerge within everyday spaces and practices of sociality, and work to conceal the role that race plays in the exclusion of migrant bodies from social spaces.

And yet, Sporting Club’s demonstrated pattern of discriminating against black women suggest the flyer’s racist motivation was not merely taken out of context. A 2010 video released by the founders of the NGO Anti-Racism Movement (ARM) shows an interaction between the sporting club staff and a Malagasy woman accompanied by two Lebanese individuals from the activist organization. As they approach the desk to pay for their entrance fees, the cashier promptly denies entry to the Malagasy woman. When the Lebanese individuals level accusations of racism, the cashier deflects with a classist and sexist justification to extricate the role that race plays in her exclusion:

“They’re not welcome because they are maids, even on their day off”

The inclusion of the qualification “even on their day off” further demonstrates the manner in which the associations of labor are perennially inscribed on the racialized body, so they cannot escape their association with stigmatized labor, even in the

absence of their employer and freedom from work obligations. The pool employee's justification for his refusal to allow entry to a black woman is not because she is black but rather that they don't welcome 'maids' at their establishment.

"They're not welcome because they are maids."

But, again, how did they know she was a maid?

F. Racialized Leisure, Part 2

Racial profiling is the mechanism of surveillance by which racially segregated spaces are policed and enforced. The dynamics of the system thus constrain the autonomy of the migrant worker even in the absence of the employer. Each space they walk into—restaurants, beach clubs, bars, hotels— reserves the right to surveil and control the workers bodies, taking the reins of the Kafil and asserting control over the worker's body in the various spaces they enter. It is that extrapolation of power from the employer to the society through which the racialization of social space occurs, as the assumptions of power and autonomy attending the racialized frame are activated to restrict, exclude and discriminate. The embodiment of their racially marked position thus serves as the disciplining function of the state's stratified labor categories.

The Migrant Community Center organizes periodic excursions for their members to enjoy a day of fun activities outside the city. The summertime beach trip is one of the most highly anticipated days of the year for members, many of whom, despite living along the Mediterranean coastline, don't often find the opportunity to swim and enjoy the beach. This year, as every year, members eagerly await the text message which announces the location and date of the upcoming trip.

While they wait, the center's organizers call 9 different beach clubs before finding one that would accept a reservation to accommodate a group from the "Migrant Community Center." Each rejection deployed with an incredulous scorn at the request to accommodate a group of 'migrant workers.'

During one of the winter trips to a mountain ski resort, the organizer at the center did not specify the name or purpose of the organization or the identity of the clients when booking the reservation for the trip. On the phone with the resort staff, she explained that they would be a large group of people and specified type of accommodation they would need. The reservation had thus been approved and confirmed by the management and the details of payment settled.

Yet, the resort staff were surprised when the large group of brown and black men and women dawning beanies, knitted scarves and excited smiles, appeared at the entrance of their establishment, waiting to be shown to the space they had reserved. While the reservation had been confirmed prior to their arrival, the resort staff refused to allow entry to the group. They explained to the trip organizers that they had not been aware that the group included migrant workers and remarked specifically that they had a problem with Sri Lankan and Ethiopian individuals (mostly women) patronizing their establishment. After some time spent arguing and negotiating with the staff, the trip organizers decided to leave and procure alternate last-minute arrangements for trip.

As they resigned themselves to leaving the establishment, the manager offered a word of advice:

“Next time send the names so we know *who* is coming”

The exclusion in this instance demonstrates how race becomes detached from the conditions of labor that produce it and subsequently operates by its own volition. The African and Asian individuals are at the resort, not in the capacity as domestic workers or cleaners, but as paying customers who are free to spend their time and their money on their day off as they wish. And yet, even on their day off they cannot escape the imposed categories of their work. Even on their day off, with the time and money to spend, they are workers, not customers. Their race thus continually inflicts the conditions and impositions of their labor on their bodies, carrying the descriptors of their occupation and background in the pigment of their skin. And yet, such instances of exclusion and discrimination occur even when the racialized body in question is structurally untethered from the associations of stigmatized work.

G. Racial Ideology

W.E.B. Dubois identified the concept of the ‘myth of inferiority’ as the ideological component to the structural subjugation of blacks. As MLK explains, “*One idea he insistently taught was that black people have been kept in oppression and deprivation by a poisonous fog of lies that depicted them as inferior, born deficient and deservedly doomed to servitude to the grave. So assiduously has this poison been injected into the mind of America that its disease has infected not only whites but many Negroes. So long as the lie was believed the brutality and criminality of conduct toward the Negro was easy for the conscience to bear. The twisted logic ran if the black man was inferior he was not oppressed—his place in society was appropriate to his meager talent and intellect (King 1968).*

Thus, this ‘myth of inferiority’ describes the processes by which notions of inferiority ascribed to racial difference work to justify and uphold the oppression of racial minorities and maintain the power of those categorized as the dominant race. While classism is an underlying motivation for racist exclusion, race is not purely a proxy for class. The stability of political structures is underpinned by the system of ideas which justify and facilitate their function. Given that the regulation of migrant workers occurs within a decentralized framework where obligations and authority are delegated to non-state actors outside the formal structures of the state, the system relies on ideological apparatuses to maintain discipline and reinforce the control of the state over migrant bodies. Racial ideologies thus promote normative beliefs that validate epistemologies of race which work to justify and conceal material racial inequalities and forms of oppression.

Accordingly, through the complementary processes of racial categorization and inferiorization set up by the Kafala system and the Ministry of Labor’s categorical infrastructure, inferiorized understandings of race emerge to explain the observed racial inequalities and thus maintain the disciplined function of the system. As Bonilla-Silva (1997) describes in his theoretical formulation of racialized social systems, “the placement of groups of people in racial categories stemmed initially from the interests of powerful actors in the social system (e.g. the capitalist class, the planter class, colonizers). After racial categories were used to organize social relations in a society, however, race became an independent element of the operation of the social system (Stone 1985).”

Thus he describes racial ideology as the “segment of the ideological structure of a social system that crystallizes racial notions and stereotypes. Racism provides the

rationalizations for social, political and economic interactions between the races.”

Further, as he explains, “This ideology is not simply a ‘superstructural’ phenomenon (a mere reflection of a racialized system) but becomes the organization map that guides actions of racial actors in society. It becomes as real as the racial relations it organizes” (Bonilla-Silva 1997).

Accordingly, while categories of race emerge from the institutional structure of the Kafala system, they continue to evolve and proliferate so that the same racist assumptions and stereotypes persist and evolve even when the structural dynamics are absent. As Nayak (2006) contends, “race is a fiction only ever given substance through the illusion of performance, action, and utterance, where repetition makes it appear as-if-real.” Thus, racial ideology represents the sounding board that projects those performances of race until they are solidified in memory— and made to appear real.

This is the methodological logic under which I sought to explore the life worlds of Asian and African residents of Beirut who are not migrant workers under the Kafala system. Their perspectives and experiences help to shed light on the ways in which forms of institutional racism evolve and transcend the juridical structures from which they were forged. From the pervasive experiences of exclusion and discrimination that abound, we see how racial meanings transcend the locus of their construction and develop concomitant meanings and forms of oppression.

1. Racialized Life Outside the Kafala System

Through the processes which erect racial boundaries in the access to and enjoyment of space, discrimination and exclusion become an everyday, lived reality of the racialized experience. The experiences of racialized individuals who are not migrant

workers thus reveal the manner in which race works to jettison economic privilege from social capital: while they may enjoy substantial economic privilege, their social capital remains circumscribed by the realities of their embodied difference and the predictive power of pigment.

Even in a highly classist society which pays deference to the power of wealth, racial difference encounters measures of cultural and social value that nullify the material value of wealth. It is in this dissonance between the signal and the noise—when racial difference confounds correlations of class— where race as an ideology (rather than mere socio-political structure) emerges to maintain a neat, disciplined racial segregation of space; where race becomes more than just a semiotic index for class, citizenship or occupational status, (or national background, or legal status, or language), and begins to take on a life of its own.

As proximity becomes the site where acts of racism in the form of exclusion and discrimination emerge, avoidance becomes the mechanism through which racial consciousness and identity begin to form. Alvin, the affable and easy-going graduate student from Kenya who came to Lebanon to study at the prestigious American University of Beirut, narrates this practice of avoidance:

Me: So would you say that race, or considerations of race, or the racism that you've experienced in the past, kind of affects your daily life here?

*Alvin: Definitely it does. Definitely, on a personal level it does. Because then, **there are places I don't go**. I'm not a... my sense of adventure, as much as it stems from having done what I wanted to do, but it's also because of the racism aspect, because you know like, **there's no point in going and putting myself in experiences that are going to traumatize me, you know**, so I'm like uh, I would rather remain within AUB. If it's clubbing, I'd rather go to, spots where AUB students go, or where young people go who are more... more liberal. For example, um, I don't go to Mar Mikhail nowadays, because one time I went there with one of the ladies here, AUB students, an African and another AUB student, and uh, I was walking down, and this big group of guys start calling us you know like yelling at us and everything, and they're young people.*

From the experiences of Alvin, we see how race serves to attenuate privilege, opportunity, and mobility *even when structural barriers are absent*. In his reflection on the consequence of race in his everyday life, a pattern of avoidance or self-segregation emerges that serves to restrict the spaces of the city and society that he ‘chooses’ to inhabit in order to avoid subjecting himself to further acts of racism or discrimination. Such constraints on his freedom of movement demonstrate the manner in which race functions to limit and restrict the opportunities and life chances of racialized individuals residing in racialized social systems, regardless of their occupational, juridical or socio-economic status.

Alvin comes from a considerably wealthy family in Kenya and can afford to participate in the expensive privatized spheres of sociality that characterize Beirut social life. He is a graduate student at the country’s highest ranked university, a coveted purveyor of privilege that commands status and recognition. Yet, his constant experiences of racism— of being denied entry to a club in Jounieh, refused service at a bar in Mar Mikhail, harassed on the streets of Achrafieh, forced to show his AUB ID to the taxi driver transporting him home, forced to provide proof of his residency status and ability to pay before being served at a upscale restaurant in Byblos, narrowly escaping the violent assault of himself and his Kenyan, female companions in the streets of downtown Byblos, suffering a violent assault when attempting to intervene to stop the rape of an Ethiopian woman in the middle of Beirut’s public streets.

Alvin’s emphatic response to the proposed question illustrates the ways in which experiences of racism promote an awareness of and attentiveness to one’s racial difference in the course of everyday life. That attentiveness is not simply a form of observation but an act of vigilance, cultivated to detect and avert racist events and

interactions that could emerge at any given moment. His act of witnessing and experiencing severe forms of racism have inculcated a fear of encountering further acts of racism that effectively restricts his access to those ‘privileged’ spaces to which he nominally is entitled. The fact that racialized individuals of higher socio-economic status like Alvin are subjected to the same forms of racism and mistreatment as migrant workers, demonstrates the extent to which *race* constitutes the primary vehicle through which the kafala system eventually operates, and the critical role it plays in the policing of racialized migrant worker bodies in the course of everyday life.

Again, since “race is a fiction only ever given substance through the illusion of performance, action, and utterance, where *repetition* makes it appear as-if-real,” the processes of racialization must replicate and recur in order for race to formally crystallize in the social imaginary. As this racial consciousness becomes a recurrent feature and necessity of everyday life (i.e. repetition), it begins to forge a conception of racialized identity, brought on by the recognition and understanding that one’s race is an inevitable shaper and determinant of their particular lived experience— an experience shared by those who are similarly raced. This shared experience thus provides the foundation on which race as a category of social and political identification emerges and can be activated as a vehicle for mobilizing solidarity and resistance to racially oppressive structures.

2. *Double Consciousness*

“I was ashamed of my identity when people assumed that all Ethiopians had been raised in famine and made remarks like ‘Are there potatoes in your country?’ Others told me, ‘All you Ethiopians are poor beggars.’ . . . In Dubai, people assumed that all Ethiopian women were prostitutes, because a few were. Blacks were considered inferior, including Ethiopians, because they were poor. I developed a feeling of self-

hatred, with thoughts like 'Why did God create us poor? When will I start to live my own life?'" (Getnet et al 2016)

The concept of 'interpellation' describes the process by which cultural values are perceived and internalized by those in the society. Louis Althusser formulated this notion of interpellation to describe the ways in which ideologies embedded in political and social institutions construct individual identities through the process of 'hailing' them in social practices and interactions. This process of 'hailing' describes the transformation of the individual into subjects through social forces, whereby the individual comes to accept and willingly perform their socially ascribed identity and role. Interpellation thus represents the process by which cultural values are inculcated and internalized by those in the society. The success of interpellation thus depends on the extent to which one accepts and assimilates to their ascribed social role designated by culturally inculcated modes of identification (Althusser 2006).

W.E.B. DuBois introduced the notion of a 'double-consciousness' in order to describe the process of reckoning with and dissociating from society's interpellated subject positions:

"It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness— an American, a Negro— two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder." (DuBois 1897)

This reflexive formation of a 'double consciousness' thus describes the recognition of and resistance to interpellative structures which, in the context of racializing repressive

state apparatuses, endeavor to inculcate an acceptance of the condition of inferiorization, and with it, a conformity to authority.

This retaliatory act of recognition represents the emergence of the “double consciousness,” the inner turmoil experienced in the moments when inferiorized groups in an oppressive society are forced to look at themselves through the eyes of the racist Lebanese society and reckon with the inferiorized condition imposed on their bodies by the incontrovertible ‘white’ gaze. This double consciousness represents the affliction of racialized existence—in its interminable distraction from self-realization, whereby the confluence of two irreconcilable conceptions of self, present in the same racialized frame, sustain a constant state of inner turmoil and dissociation.

Thus, while racialized individuals are the targets of state processes of racialization, they are not merely passive objects of state racializing practices, but active agents which actively respond to and resist oppressive structures, practices and ideologies while navigating the unequal terrain of the racialized social system. Just as the juridical structures of power inflict the processes of racialization from above, they simultaneously ignite a reflexive process of racialization that emerges from below, whereby the acknowledgement of that racialization and its source of power leads to the emergence of a coterminous self-racialization in direct opposition to the one deployed in the service of power. This reflexivity in the process of racialization contributes to its dynamic and ever-evolving trajectory and construction, whereby successful challenges to racializing authority necessitate new forms and methods of racialization to maintain disciplined categories of race.

H. Reflexive Racialization: “The Nod”

The day was Sunday and it was Diana’s eagerly anticipated day off—the one day of ‘rest’ to which she is entitled each week after completing an exacting week of work in service of her employer and his three adolescent children. Though the day off is characterized in the Standard Unifying Contract as a day of ‘rest,’ as it is the only day she has free time to leave the house on her own direction, she fills her day with classes, church, shopping, errands, and socializing. There is no time to rest.

The day off has become a visible manifestation characterizing certain segmentations of Beirut’s cityscape. On any given Sunday morning walking through the quiet, sleepy streets of Beirut, one can observe crowds of Ethiopian churchgoers dawning their immaculate all-white ensembles, groups of Filipina women pursuing store fronts and mall aisles, and cafes in Dora packed with a diverse mix of shisha-smokers and tea drinkers from Ethiopia, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Syria, Egypt, Sudan, and Bangladesh.

The weekly day off— juridically bestowed through the stipulations enumerated in the domestic worker Standard Unified Contract— has become a visible feature of Beirut’s spatial landscape. It is an occasion made apparent by their embodied racial difference, the semiotic modality that indexes the practice in which they are engaged— “rest.”

Though their disposable income is limited, Diana and her friend Mary like to spend their days off after their early morning English class wandering the corridors of the ABC mall in Achrafieh. On one Sunday, I accompanied them to the mall to partake in the window shopping and join them for lunch at one of the food court eateries on the top floor of the mall.

We entered the mall through the ground floor entrance of the upscale department store GS. As we proceeded slowly through the maze of tables displaying the luxurious designer-brand shoes and purses, we ran into two of Diana's and Mary's friends, who were also enjoying their free time window shopping at the mall. We stopped to say hello and talk. Diana and Mary introduced me to their friends and after we exchanged pleasantries, they proceeded to speak amongst themselves in a mix of English and Tagalog. As we remained congregated among the various displays of highly priced merchandise, I noticed our presence had alerted the attention of a tall, millennial-aged Lebanese man dressed in business professional attire, who was standing across the row of tables from us. The GS name tag pinned to his sport jacket marked his function as an employee, though whether he was employed in a security or retail service function was unclear. But nonetheless, as soon as he recognized our presence, he started toward us, his unwavering stare fixed on our presence as he circled slowly around us. I watched as he moved around us, offering an exacting glare to match his surveilling gaze. As he continued to move around us, I wondered if he might approach us and say something. I drew my attention back to the conversation as Diana's and Mary's friends said their goodbyes. I wished them well as they departed and as we proceeded on toward the main mall entrance I glanced back at our attentive monitor. His eyes remained fixed on our presence until we faded out of sight.

As we continued through the mall up to the food court, we passed two other Filipina women. As they drew near us and noted our presence, their expressions softened and smiles widened, offering a gesture of recognition. I glanced over at Mary and Diana who had similarly made note of their presence, and, in unison, reciprocated

the amiable smile and said hello. The women waved and said hello back as they continued on past us.

I immediately recognized the genre of gesture in which they were engaging: “The nod” is the name of a common cultural practice among black Americans, employed to offer acknowledgement and recognition to other black individuals when navigating predominantly white spaces. It has been popularized in black cultural discourse as a way to make visible their shared exclusion—a secret handshake of solidarity, a subtle act of resistance in a sea of whiteness.

A simple act of recognition, as if to say: “I see you, and you are not alone.”

Mary and Diana confirmed my suspicion:

“Do you know those women?” I asked.

“No,” Diana replied, “we don’t know who they are.”

“Yeah, we’ve never seen them before,” Mary added. “But we always say hi to other Filipina women when we’re out walking around.”

“Yeah we always say hi,” Diana affirmed.

I. Makena

Makena is a Ugandan graduate student in the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences at the American University of Beirut. One Saturday afternoon, she set out for the ABC mall in Achrafieh, on the hunt for a new outfit to wear for a big party that some of her friends were hosting later that night. After surveying the various storefronts for stylish, new items to procure, she finally descended upon Zara, the popular international fashion retailer serving the latest trends in fashion, popularly frequented by Beirut’s fashion-minded shoppers. After browsing the store’s selection of styles, she

picked up a few items and headed to the fitting rooms to try them on. As she approached the fitting room entrance, she noticed a short line of customers waiting to secure a stall. She had gone for a long run earlier that morning, and as she reached the back of the line, she felt the weight of her morning workout on her legs and resolved to find a place to sit and rest her legs while she waited. Scanning the large fitting area in search of a chair-shaped reprieve, she noticed a short row of chairs alongside the far wall of the fitting area, where a Lebanese mother and her three children had parked themselves and their stuff along the row, taking up all but one remaining chair. Makena approached the row of chairs, smiling amiably at the three kids, and asked if she could sit down next to them. As she took her seat, the three children directed their gaze toward their mother, who, upon noticing Makena's presence, contorted her face in an unmistakable scowl. She immediately collected her kids from their seats and lead them out of the fitting area to a different part of the store.

Makena sat across from me with her head tilted back and elbow perched casually atop the seatback behind her, exuding her typical poise of cool confidence. she recounted this story to me with laughter and pride, boasting that she had been able to secure the entire row of chairs for herself— and they were the fools for getting up.

CHAPTER FOUR

CRIMINALIZATION

“From target sighted to attack, to criminalization, to lynching, and now, in some quarters, to crucifixion. The always and already guilty “perp” is being hunted down not by a prosecutor’s obsessive application of law but by a different kind of pursuer, one who makes new laws out of the shards of those he breaks.” - Toni Morrison, 1998

The notion of a state delegating a fundamental pillar of state sovereignty—namely, control over immigration—to private entities (individual citizens and corporations) is counter-intuitive to the conventional wisdom of state administrative practices. The notion of sovereignty implies a singularity and exclusivity in the power to govern. Political Science heralds sovereignty as the most essential aspect of the state authority that must be guarded jealously from external agents. Yet, the institutional dynamic of the state’s delegation of sovereign authority in the form of sponsorship in effect reconstructs a relation of power between the employer and foreign worker that is modeled after the relation of state sovereignty with respect to non-citizens. The configuration of this system thus invites the private Lebanese citizen to take the law into their own hands and carry out the surveilling function of state security.

Thus, in this chapter I explore the rationale and function underlying this significant delegation of state authority to private citizens. Accordingly, I ask, what purpose does this delegation of authority serve? How does it function, and whose interests does it serve? Then, I consider how this delegation of authority affects the configuration of power between workers and recruiters, employers, and the general

Lebanese society. In the previous chapter, we saw in part how the dynamics of the system affect the subjectivities of those who are racialized. Given that racialization is an inherently relational process, this begs the question of how the dynamics of the system in turn affect the subjectivities of those subsumed under the category of the dominant race, as they assume this responsibility and authority of state sovereignty within the intimacy of the home and/or workplace. Finally, I explore the manner in which racial categories emerge in the exercises of power which summon the sovereign authority of the employer-cum sponsor.

Given the primary importance of maintaining the safety and integrity of national borders, how can General Security's objective to tightly monitor and control and the movement and actions of foreigners/migrant workers, coincide with such a decentralized and deregulated system of control? Wouldn't the features of limited government and free, unregulated markets effectively impede the government's ability to adequately monitor, regulate and enforce restrictions the workers' (autonomous and self-actualizing) actions and presence? How can the Lebanese government maintain strict control over migrant workers and at the same time, delegate away the responsibility of supervising the foreign worker to private entities? How can private entities be entrusted with such a sacred aspect of state sovereign authority? I answer the above question with another question— where's your madam?

A. Where's Your Madam?

Given her love for cooking, Lulu's ritual trip to the grocery store provided the chance to peruse the aisles, to wander freely in search of new ingredients and sources of inspiration to devise new concoctions with which to experiment. Recently arrived, with

novel ingredients and tastes waiting to be explored, she set out to the nearby grocery store to furnish her new residence with all the essential cooking supplies. Entering the sliding automatic door of the store, she grabs one of the large baskets placed at the entrance to carry the large load of items she would need to adequately stock her kitchen for the culinary adventures that lay ahead. New to the neighborhood and not yet acquainted with the layout and selection of the store, she moved through the aisles slowly and carefully, taking the time to peruse the selection of items aisle by aisle and shelf by shelf. As she made her way through each row, she began collecting new items, piling more and more into the basket until its contents reached the brim. Lugging the crammed basket behind her small and slender frame, she started to make her way back to the front of the store to checkout and pay for her carefully curated selection of items. As she advanced toward the front of the store, suddenly an exasperated store clerk appeared before her, shouting incredulously as she blocked her path down the aisle. “Shou?! Shou 3m ta3mol?!” [what are you doing?!]

“Sorry?” she replied in confusion.

“Shou 3m ta3mol ma3 kul hal gharad?! [what are you doing with all this stuff?!]

“I’m sorry, I don’t understand Arabic, could you please speak in English.”

The exasperated store clerk lunged forward, reaching down and grabbing the handles of the basket carrying the items she had spent the last half hour or so collecting.

As her hands tugged at the basket, she yelled (in English):

“*Where is your madam?!*”

B. Racial Discipline

“Throughout the eighteenth century, inside and outside the legal apparatus, in both everyday penal practice and the criticism of institutions, one sees the emergence of a

*new strategy for the exercise of the power to punish. And 'reform', in the strict sense as it was formulated in the theories of law or as it was outlined in the various projects, was the political or philosophical resumption of this strategy, with its primary objectives: to make of the punishment and repression of illegalities a **regular function, coextensive with society**; not to punish less, but to punish better; to punish with an attenuated severity perhaps, but in order to punish with more **universality and necessity**; to **insert the power to punish more deeply into the social body.**" (Foucault, 1995:82)*

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault examines the manner in which reformations to western penal practices transformed the swift and all-encompassing exercise of sovereign authority into diffusely apportioned modes of disciplined, institutional control. As he states: "in short, the power to judge should no longer depend on the innumerable, discontinuous, sometimes contradictory privileges of sovereignty, but on the continuously distributed effects of public power" (81).

Through Lulu's experience at the grocery store, we see how race serves as the disciplining function of the Kafala's decentralized power structure.

C. Constructing Migrant 'Illegality'

When workers come to find themselves in abusive and exploitative working conditions, they naturally desire to remove themselves from those conditions. Yet, the institutional dynamics of the sponsorship system effectively prevent workers from leaving their employment. Under Kafala labor laws, work permits for foreigners (all foreigners) must be tied to a specific work request and sponsored by the employer of that position (whether individual or corporation). Because the issuance of a visa is conditional on the existence of a work request, the elimination of that job position means the elimination of the visa and the legal right to be in the country. Thus, if a

worker reneges on the terms of the work contract and/or leaves the position, they consequently become ‘illegal’ in the eyes of the state.

Employers of migrant workers (note: not of all foreign workers, like those with rights/access to complaint mechanisms) can easily fire workers with cause (real or fabricated). Yet, if a foreign worker wants to leave their current position and remain legal in the country, they would need to first find another sponsor/employer to take over the sponsorship of their visa and work permit, and then secure a ‘tanazul’ (work release) i.e. permission from their current employer. Further, workers cannot change their sponsor more than two times. Thus, the process to secure their release defers to the *power* of their existing Lebanese sponsor, as well as that of a new Lebanese sponsor. For those attempting to escape exploitative and abusive conditions, the law requires they seek permission from the very source of power that is inflicting the abuse from which they are attempting to escape.

Given the inherent contradictions embedded in this institutional landscape of power, many workers resort to fleeing, thereby abandoning the terms of their sponsorship and accepting an ‘illegal’ existence in the country. Per the Lebanese law on Codes and Obligations of Contracts, a domestic worker becomes ‘illegal’ as soon as she leaves her sponsor (Jureidini 2001). If a domestic worker ‘runs away’ from the employer’s house, the employer/sponsor is obligated to report it to the state. This institutional requirement immediately primes the manner in which ‘runaway’ or ‘escaped’ workers are perceived by the authorities as well as the surrounding society— as criminals— rather than victims fleeing abuse.

D. Racial Profiling

Under neoliberal forms of governmentality, the ‘omniopicon’ replaces the panopticon in the exercise of disciplinary power (Joyce 2003), where the ‘one viewing the many’ becomes ‘the many surveilling the many.’ In the Kafala’s neoliberal, decentralized formulation, race thus emerges as the *technology of power* which stands in for the panopticon’s surveilling function. As its visibility renders those marked by it to constant and wide-spread surveillance, race provides the information and thus capability to surveil to private citizens.

Accordingly, race constitutes *a form of social control* that manifests in the exercises of power enacted on the racialized body. Hence, racial profiling becomes a crucial instrument of surveillance within the kafala’s architecture of decentralized control. What results is a system that relies on the private citizen to take on the disciplinary function of the state, operationalized by the signal of race.

E. Farar al-‘ummal: Workers Escape

Perusing the pages of Lebanese newspapers (al-Joumhouria and al-Akhbar), amid various ads for real estate and job listings in the classifieds section, one will come across a recurring section under the heading “farar al-‘ummal.” In English “farar al-‘ummal” translates to “workers escape.” To accompany the text emblazoned across the top in large font, there is an illustration of a black, male stick figure running away from a dark rectangular space resembling a door frame. Each edition of the daily newspaper hosts this section displaying a list of workers that have been reported missing or runaway by their employers/sponsors. Each ad typically lists the name of the worker, along with their nationality and the contact information to notify if the worker is

“found.” Many of the ads indicate that worker escaped “from the place of work” or “the house that employs her” or specify the name of the company sponsor. Some list the passport number of the worker and/or the name of the individual sponsor. The ads for female workers typically just contain the name and nationality of one worker. However, for male workers it is common to see a list of several names, up to as many as 29, all grouped under the same company or contact information.

The language of the ads in the al-Joumhouria newspaper recall a vernacular endemic to the chattel slavery system, where owners and authorities sought after runaway slaves which were their entitled legal property. The text and format of each add varies depending on the information the sponsor chooses to provide. However, every ad begins with the same line - “ḥarab/ḥarabit ‘ammal/‘ammaleh/‘ummal” [worker escaped] followed by the adjective form of the worker’s nationality – Bangladeshi, Ethiopian, Sri Lankan, Filipina, etc.

The language in the classified section of al-Akhbar newspaper employs a slightly less oppressive vocabulary to advertise the workers. The section header reads “kharaj walam yu‘ad” meaning “left and did not return.” This alternative phrasing does not inscribe the same assumptions of bondage and confinement as does the ‘runaway workers’ trope employed by al-Joumhouria. Yet the text of the individual ads in al-Akhbar still uses the verb ‘ḥarab” with the nationality descriptor attached.

The closest English translation of the verb ‘ḥarab” is ‘to escape’ or to ‘to flee’ thus indicating flight from some sort of confinement or danger. In this case, their confinement is legally sanctioned through the system’s sponsorship arrangement, and thus morally justified, rendering their ‘escape’ a criminal act, rather than a justifiable response to danger or abuse.

As we saw in chapter 1, Article 18 of the Ministry of Labor’s decision number 1/168, which regards the regulation of employment agencies, lays out the various occurrences and conditions under which the agency must absorb legal and financial responsibility for the worker from the employer/sponsor, and compensate the employer for the value lost in terms of labor potential remaining on the defaulted contract. The third stipulation reads: “in case of leaving the employer’s house (escape)” - (fī ḥal tarak manzil sāhib ‘ammal (al farar))” Thus, in the inclusion of the final parenthesis which conveys the criminal manner in which the worker’s body traverses the confinement of the employer’s house, we uncover the juridical antecedent of the newspaper’s discursive imagination.

The paper’s use of the word ‘farar’ demonstrates the manner in which institutional authority enters the discursive imaginary of the public (through social and cultural media) and frame the criminalized manner in which such ‘escaped’ workers are subjectivized in popular perceptions of migrant workers. By discursively positioning migrant workers as ‘escaped,’ the law— and the social and cultural media which reflect and reify it— in effect criminalizes the unconfined existence of racialized workers.

The mere existence of the ads discursively positions workers as bonded individuals by using the phrasing “runaway” or escaped workers.” This language calls into imagination the legal bonds of servitude imposed on the worker’s body. Foucault’s analysis of the extension of the right to punish to the social body mirrors the dynamic enacted when the worker attempts to escape/transgress the state authorized demarcations of the migrant body. As he explains,

“Throughout the eighteenth century, inside and outside the legal apparatus, in both everyday penal practice and the criticism of institutions, one sees the emergence of a new strategy for the exercise of the power to punish. And ‘reform,’ in the strict sense as it was formulated in the theories of law or as it was outlined in the various projects,

was the political or philosophical resumption of this strategy, with its primary objectives: to make of the punishment and repression of illegalities a regular function, coextensive with society; not to punish less, but to punish better; to punish with an attenuated severity perhaps, but in order to punish with more universality and necessity; to insert the power to punish more deeply into the social body” (Foucault, 1978: 82).

In the instances wherein racialized individuals like Lulu are subjected to the performances of citizen power during a routine trip to the grocery store, we see how race functions as the primary mode of discipline which configures the everyday penal practices of the Kafala system.

Out of the custody of the juridical sponsor configured within “the place of work” or “house that employs her,” the worker’s racialized body is thus ‘escaped’ and thus illegal, criminalized, each movement made outside the purview of the employer constitutes a transgression of that legal guardianship, an illegal act that warrants apprehension and arrest. Thus, the extension of state disciplinary power to private citizens, extends with it the right to punish, thereby subjecting the worker to the punishment of ordinary Lebanese citizens. Thus, we see the logic by which each ad for runaway workers specifies the nationality of the escaped worker in question: their embodied racial difference provides the visible manifestation of their non-citizen status (and specific nationality), and thus constitutes the signal by which punishment is enacted.

Zakaria, a former domestic worker from Sri Lanka, recounted to me an incident she witnessed in her building, whereby a domestic worker from an upstairs apartment was subjected to a violent public spectacle of punishment when her attempt to escape her abusive confinement failed:

Zakaria: You know, in Basta Al-Taht, one day there was a girl that came, she was new, she came recently, and you know in the winter its cold water, you have to help her with the hot water and to wash in the hot water or preparing to food or whatever. Maybe

*since one or two months she came, and then after a little time, she is crying, she can't do the laundry, her madam is hitting her with a spoon on her hand, she broke it and it was bleeding a lot. So she ran away from the house. She escaped and came to me. I was even more scared because I have kids, if she's hitting her then of course she's going to put me in jail. So then I had to put her out and I said I can't, and I was crying from my heart, you don't even know, psychologically, and I came to talk to the Lebanese, and explain what happened and not one Lebanese helped, or asked what is happening. She comes, this madam and grabbed her by the hair and took her back to the house.
Z: this is why, she beat her with an iron spoon, until it broke. And then after she was crying, crying and a lot of people came. But nobody stopped and asked why is she crying. I was also crying*

Me: So no one stopped to intervene?

Z: no! [emphatically] the madam came and had her by the hair and took her!

Me: and people were seeing what was happening?

Z: yes, a lot! maybe 30. Nobody did anything. No one talked, no one told her to calm down, haram, nobody. She was saying did you talk to her did you call her? And I said no I didn't talk to her. I wanted to say something, but I am a foreigner also.

In the inaction of the 30 or so Lebanese onlookers, we see how state extension of the sovereign authority to punish tacitly legitimates the brutal beating of a racialized woman in public space as a socially acceptable act. While the objective of disciplinary power is to replace the function of corporal punishment and thus prevent gruesome public spectacle of state punishment, the fact that the victim is a racialized body subjugated and dehumanized through the trappings of the legal system renders her corporal body as an object over which the employer has unquestioned authority and the right to dominate. Thus, coupled with the dynamics of commodification and dehumanization inflicted on the racialized body, the transfer of disciplinary power from the state to the private citizen allows such public spectacles of violence to (re)emerge with impunity.

F. Data: Racialized Escape

The likelihood a worker would resort to escape is likely determined by a range of factors, including the feasibility of escape, the availability of alternative employment options, infrastructures of support for ‘illegalized’ workers, status of work contract, and the tolerability of the current situation compared with anticipated prospects for further abuse on the other side.

To better understand the structural dynamics driving the ‘runaway’ worker phenomenon, I collected the enumerated data from the classified’s sections of the al-Joumhouria and al-Akhbar newspapers for 200 days in a row (between October 15th and July 1st), and logged the data according to gender and nationality, as specified in the ads.

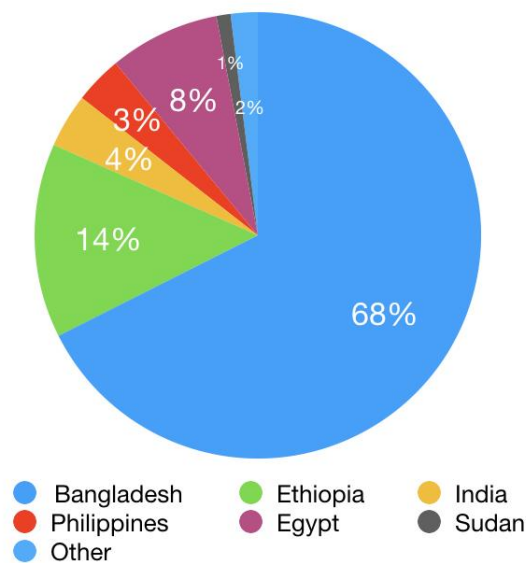


Figure 4.1. Total Workers by Nationality.

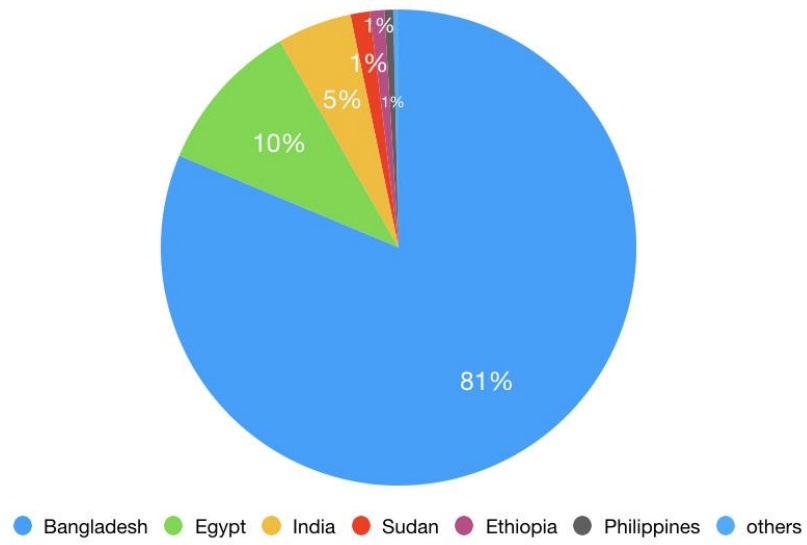


Figure 4.2. Total Male Workers by Nationality.

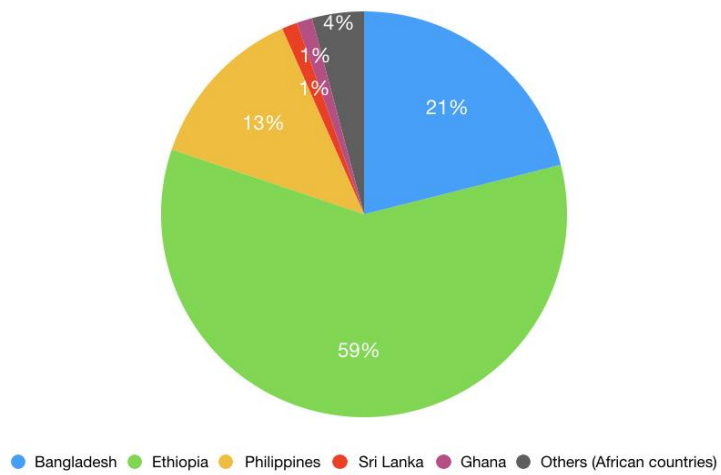


Figure 4.3. Total Female Workers by Nationality.

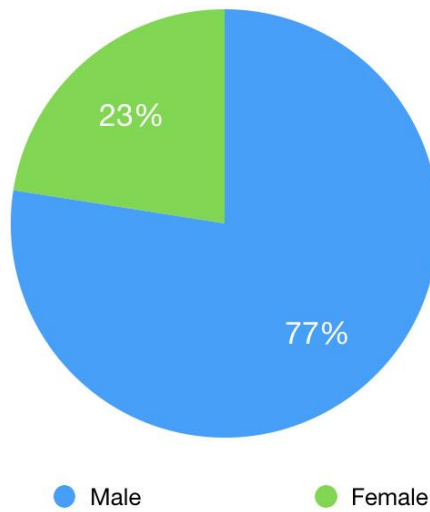


Figure 4.4. Total Workers.

Table 4: Workers by gender and nationality

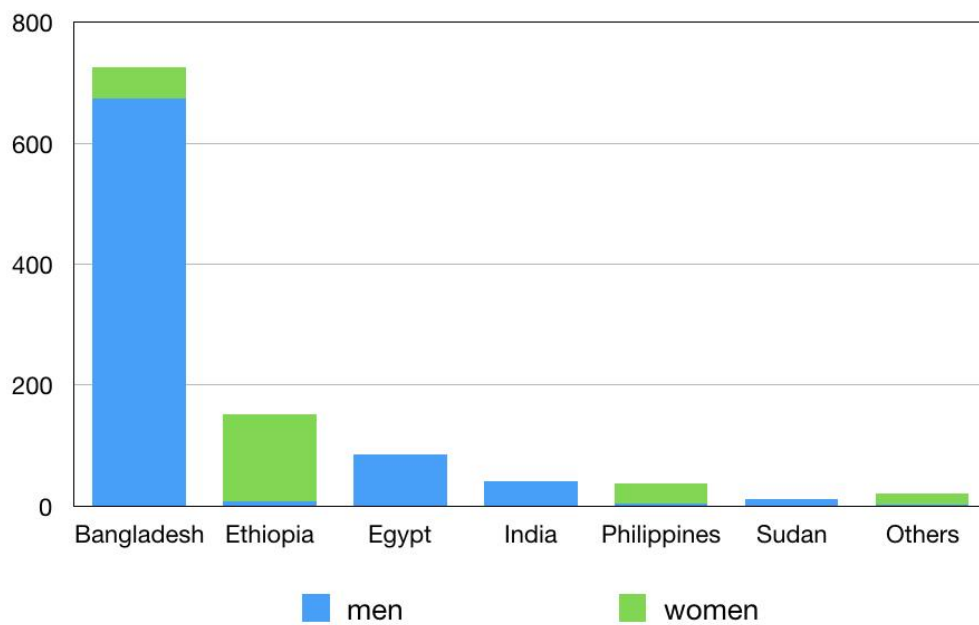


Figure 4.5. Workers by Gender and Nationality.

As the data reveal, male workers constituted the overwhelming majority of workers reported, comprising 77% of the total 1,247 workers reported in the sample. This is likely the result of practical considerations, as male migrant workers are not confined to their employers' home and thus their increased mobility renders escape a more feasible endeavor. Further, as corporations trading in the recruitment and contracting of migrant labor, recruitment agencies and sponsorship corporations (versus individual employers) likely have greater administrative and financial capacity to run such ads in the aim of retrieving their assets (i.e. workers).

The vast majority of those male workers were Bangladeshi males, representing 81% of reported male workers, followed by Egyptians (10%), Indians (5%), and Sudanese, Ethiopian and Filipino (and others) at 1%.

On the other hand, the majority of female workers, constituting 23% of the total sample, were Ethiopian (59%), followed by Bangladeshi (21%), Filipino (13%), Sri Lankan and Ghanaian each at 1%, and 4% from various African countries (including Madagascar, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Nigeria, Benin, Togo). Comparing these rates of female runaway workers to the total population of each national category (for which there are available statistics)⁶, reveals that Ethiopians constituted the largest female runaway population per capita, followed by Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan, Ghanaian, and finally Filipina workers. These rates detailing the escape rate per capita of each national category generally reflect the quality of working conditions and degree of protections afforded to each national category, with Ethiopian and Bangladeshi workers generally

⁶ Numbers were compared to statistics of migrant domestic worker populations by national category as of November 2018 detailed by Amnesty International (2019) in a recent report. The population data was tabulated based on the number of new and renewed work permits for that year. Yet, such statics are likely to be understated given the extent to which the sector is characterized by heightened informality and illegality. The unavailability of adequate data on migrant workers thus make it difficult to adequately analyze trends and patterns involving those populations.

facing tougher migration standards and working conditions than their Filipina and Sri Lankan counterparts. Thus we see how propensity toward abscondence is driven by the underlying structural dynamics to which different nationalities of workers are subjected.

Given the dearth of reliable statistics on non-Arab male migrant workers, it is difficult to compare runaway rates to overall population numbers. Thus, I look to my interlocutors in order to better understand the structural dynamics surrounding the pronounced representation of Bangladeshi men in the overall population of runaway workers.

G. Bangladeshi Workers

Abdul left his family and his country behind for the prospect of increased wages that could help lift himself and his family out of poverty.

Abdul: But I, many times I didn't understand anything about Lebanese, if I knew, I [would] not come here you know. I had a country, I had a family.

Me: Can you tell me a bit about your background and your life before you came to Lebanon... and why you came to Lebanon?

Abdul: when I was in Bangladesh, there was family, everyone has his family with him. It's good, and there is work, it's very nice, ya3ni I go I work I take money I come back to my house, it's nice.

Me: So you were working in Bangladesh?

Abdul: Yes in Bangladesh, it was very nice. And this work I discover I come here Lebanon and the life ends for me. I pay 5,000 dollars, this is all for the company. With this company, you don't come for free, ya3ni I pay 5,000 dollars. Then I come here.

Bangladeshi workers are the cheapest workers to acquire and employ, as they finance part of their journey and the upfront costs incurred in the migration process (Despite the fact that this is prohibited by international labor standards) (ILO 2016). As Abdul

explains, he had to pay \$5,000 to the company sponsoring him in order to obtain his work and residency permits and travel arrangements.

Abdul's description of his life as a tuk-tuk driver back in Bangladesh hints at his longing for restored sociality and familial bonds that remain unattainable in Lebanon due to Kafala's strict imposition of temporality and restrictions on migrant sociality. The harsh realities he encountered upon arriving in Lebanon provided a swift rebuke of the optimism with which he initially departed his country and his family in search of a chance for economic advancement. In his idyllic remembrance of his former life back in Bangladesh, there emerges a sense of regret, a remorseful expression of longing at the hindsight recognition of the deception which prompted him to leave his former life behind.

Me: So why did you decide to come to Lebanon?

Abdul: I swear Lebanon, somebody in my company said it's very good. There's a good salary, maybe 600 dollars, the company gives you money, everything— it pays, house, and food, and iqama.

But when I came here, no. problems. Ya3ni, bs everything my money I pay 5,000 dollars. I not come back to my country. Because I work and work. But little by little I get some money, ya3ni its okay.

Me: Ah okay so you thought that the life here would be nice

Abdul: the life it's like, really, seriously, it's garbage. Really.

...

Me: and when you arrived at the airport, was there someone waiting for you or...

Abdul: yes of course, I mean, I need this company, company like restaurant comes to the airport and puts the signature and then they go out.

Me: Ah okay and did they take you to an apartment, or...

Abdul: yeah, yeah of course, in the apartment. I room is 20 people, 15 people is together, there's no place to rest

In addition to that upfront cost of \$5,000 that Abdul had to pay just to enter the country, all contracted migrant workers must pay \$1,000 each year to the sponsor for the cost of renewing their residency permit. On top of that, the housing and meals he was originally told would be included in the upfront costs and recurring payments for residency, eats a significant remainder of his meagre salary. Thus, while many Bangladeshi men like Abdul come here to earn and save money to return back home, the high costs of migration and living expenses make saving money a more difficult feat than originally imagined.

The fact that Bangladeshi workers must pay in order to secure travel arrangements back to Bangladesh should they wish to return home, further restricts the amount of savings they can return home with, leaving them to persistently put off that long awaited return home. The realities of life in Lebanon— and the powerlessness that attends it— thus forever place the aspirations that brought them here (by false promises and lies) perennially out of reach.

Thus, misled about the jobs they will be performing and benefits they will receive, Bangladeshi workers come here only to find meagre salaries and high costs of living; and further, as Abdul explained, they cannot return home to Bangladesh without paying a large sum of money to their sponsor to get the tanazul (contract waiver) and get their passports back. Given the precarious structural conditions Bangladeshi workers face in migrating to Lebanon, it doesn't come as a surprise that they constitute a significant portion of the runaway worker population. Through Abdul's description of his migration experience, we see how the racialized perceptions ascribed to Bangladeshi workers derive from the structural realities to which they are subjected under the Kafala system.

The heightened presence of Bangladeshi workers in the runaway worker phenomenon has not escaped the attention of the institutional gatekeepers of migrant bodies. Through my conversations with Lebanese employers, we see how the institutional interventions to discipline Bangladeshi runaway workers have attached the phenomenon of ‘escape’ to the perceptions of Bangladeshi individuals in the practices of those under the system’s purview.

Eva, the Lebanese mother of 3 we met in chapter one, employs a Bangladeshi woman named Yasmin and her brother as domestic helpers in her Beirut apartment and the family’s village residence in the Mountains. She described to me the various processes involved in employing Yasmin and her brother:

Me: And you have to pay annual fees for the permit?

Eva: Definitely. Every year, for the renewal of the permit, the insurance, and we have to fully test her and submit the results along with other documents and the fees.

Me: And you pay the insurance every year?

Eva: Yes. There is a new optional insurance, like Bangladesh for example, not the one you’re obliged to have but an extra one because they run away. So there’s another type of insurance in case she runs away, they are responsible for her and they will pay you back. This is an extra service you pay for.

Me: How much does it cost?

Eva: An extra 200\$.

Me: If she decides to run away, who is responsible for her?

Eva: The kafeel and the agency.

Me: Why do you think the system is set up the way it is?

Eva: Look, for the residence permit the procedure is tiring. If the government can provide the permit it would be a lot easier and cheaper. And for the responsibilities, that lies on us. I am going to tell you about our grandmother. We got her a maid for a month and then she ran. We went to the government officials and stated that she ran

and we stated that we are no longer responsible for her. The maid was hit by a car and died after 3 months in the north, pretty far from where we live.

From Eva's description of this new insurance feature, we see how racialized perceptions enter the Lebanese social imaginary as employers navigate the administrative requirements of employing a Bangladeshi worker. Yet, these perceptions are detached from their structural determinants, as the exploitative and deceptive manner in which Bangladeshi workers are led to come and work in Lebanon do not figure in her discursive understanding of the phenomenon. Her generalized declaration that 'they run away,' suggests an inherent tendency toward abscondence rather than a context-specific phenomenon driven by material structural conditions. In her subsumption of an entire racialized group under the monolithic pronoun 'they,' the action of running away thus becomes a behavioral trait associated with all Bangladeshi workers. Eva's discursive rendering of Bangladeshi workers— 'they' — demonstrates the dynamic whereby structural phenomena (racialized labor segmentation) transform into generalized perceptions and ideological beliefs about racial difference.

H. Migrant Informality

"The existence of a legal prohibition creates around it a field of illegal practices"
(Foucault 1979:280)

Deviation from the discipline structure of the kafala is tolerated when those in power stand to benefit, but not when performed by those subjected to power. So the workers' illegal act of absconding from work contracts is criminalized while those who benefit from the informal economy of labor are largely absolved from serious punishment for the illegal act of hiring a 'runaway' or 'illegal' worker.

As Eva explained, the ‘runaway’ insurance policy attached to the employment of Bangladeshi workers covers the employers’ investment and legal responsibility if their worker(s) run away. But what happens to these large groups of Bangladeshi workers who ‘run away’?

Lebanon’s extensive informal economy offers opportunities to those workers that leave their formal sponsorship arrangements. My conversation with Mohamed, a Lebanese cafe owner, reveals the infrastructure of informality assembled to facilitate the illegal employment of migrant workers with irregular status.

Me: okay, and so you have both Lebanese and non-Lebanese workers, right?

M: yeah, yeah

Me: okay, and what are the non-Lebanese workers, where are they from and what is their role?

M: mainly they’re from Syria, the non-Lebanese, uh, and uhhh... we are talking about the employees, the Lebanese employees had more turnover than the non-Lebanese, sooo...

Me: and so you said you have Syrian workers, but do you have any Bangladeshi, or...

M: yeah, yeah, yeah, the cleaners definitely, I was just talking about the guys behind the bar, but yeah, we have uh, the Bangladesh, the cleaners

Me: okay, and did you use a recruitment agency to hire them or...

M: no, no, no, like... they approached us, like someone came here and they asked if we need someone to work, since we were building the place, so we said yeah why not. They had like a community that they live like 20 people in one house, not far from here, they know each other, like they help each other to find jobs. And also we had a rotation with them, and the good thing like I mean they can easily replace each other. But the issue is that they are not legal, so there is a risk here, like okay I have the papers, a couple of the passport but that’s it, they don’t have residency papers.

Me: and how is your relationship with those employees, like it terms of management?

*M: um, it’s a bit hard because of the language, you know, they don’t understand a lot of Arabic, but I mean they’re good, **they’re hard workers, they can work for long hours,***

um, they, I mean they need work so, they're happy to work, they ask to work more than 12 hours per day, this is what they ask for, and uh, I'm sure, I'm 100% sure all of them have other jobs, but they're working here only for like 9 hours, and usually they have another job outside, I mean they're here, they're here in Lebanon just to work, full time, sleep and work. That's it, nothing else.

Me: so you said they approached you right, someone from the Bangladeshi community?

M: yeah, yeah someone he's like the boss, he knows everyone [laughs], so that was the case

Me: and so you don't need to do anything in terms of the passports or anything?

M: they just give me a copy of the passport and that's it. I just have a copy of the passport just to know who they are

Me: okay and before the person approached you and you were thinking about like, okay what employees do I need, in terms of cleaning, what were you originally intending to do?

M: well I had two options, either to go to an agency, either like to ask, because I know a lot of people, like cleaners in other places, like in other coffee shops and other places. I decided to ask them you know if they had friends who wanted to work here. So this is how you can find the cleaners, maybe ask someone, because they all know each other, or approach an agency. Like there's an agency here, who's handling most of the places in this area

Me: okay, and so is that a relatively common thing, where people try and cut out the agency and try instead to...

M: yeah, yeah, yeah definitely. But once you go big, you cannot risk it anymore, I mean you don't want this kind of issues happening, but at the beginning, because you have to cut the cost, you can do it, and if you're covered here in Lebanon, it's fine, you can keep doing this, if you're covered like politically you know, wasta.

Mohamed's employment practices further help us adequately contextualize the high rate of 'runaway' Bangladeshi workers. As I learned through my conversations with migrant community organizers and activists, the Bangladeshi migrant community in Lebanon is more tightly-knit and introverted group compared to other national communities. Here we see how they have managed to build a network and economy of support that allows irregular workers to find alternative employment under informal

arrangements. This informal infrastructure cuts out the function of a recruitment agency, as the Bangladeshi ‘boss’ actively seeks out nascent businesses to offer the services of irregular Bangladeshi workers. As hiring irregular workers has become a standard industry practice (for startup businesses), those entering the industry can rely on word of mouth contacts to recruit irregular workers. And as those positions are filled through the informal Bangladeshi networks, this type of irregular work becomes racialized, through its visible association with Bangladeshi workers.

This racialized association of Bangladeshi workers with irregular work emerged in the inquiry made to me by Pablo, a Lebanese acquaintance who coordinates various fundraising events for environmental causes with a small group of friends. Together he and his friends put up the capital to organize the events, and thus cutting labor costs is crucial to the financial success of the event. Knowing that I had been working as a volunteer at the Migrant Community Center, he thought it appropriate to entreat my help in recruiting informal workers for his event. When he contacted me, the first thing he asked was “are there any Bangladeshi guys at the community center you work at?” When I asked him why he wanted to know, he explained that the event he was organizing required significant manual labor, and he was looking to hire a large volume of male workers under the table. The fact that he prefaces his search for irregular workers with a specific inquiry about my contacts with Bangladeshi individuals, demonstrates how the racialized aspects of the informal labor market have become embedded in Lebanese imaginaries of migrant workers.

The dynamics of Mohamed’s irregular Bangladeshi workers demonstrates how working ‘illegally,’ detached from a singular sponsor, affords illegalized workers greater flexibility and freedom in managing their own labor. As informal workers they

have the freedom to quit or change their employment and work multiple jobs at a time, thus allowing them to earn higher income than the minimum wage offered by a sponsor employer. Yet, irregular status also has its costs:

Mohamed: also an experience that I can share with you, the guy that works here, like he agreed with someone, he paid them money to do the papers for the residency and stuff and he didn't do it. He just took his money. He took his money and didn't do the residency for him. So this shit happens also for them, um, so they have to be covered by... but I mean they're here illegally so they can't be covered.

Me: right so it makes them vulnerable to people saying like oh we'll help you

*Mohamed: yeah **they can't do anything because they are illegal***

Thus, while working 'illegally' affords irregular workers more flexibility and freedom in managing their own labor, it also renders them more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

When I asked Abdul about Bangladeshi workers that leave their sponsors, he reiterated the precarity that awaits those who abscond from contract obligations.

Me: so what happens when these people run away?

Abdul: this in the company, for example if someone leave his company, maybe I want to leave my company because I am too much worrying because this police, maybe I go outside because I catch police, I put in jail, this is a problem. There's too much people that just don't think ya3ni there's no salary, not good work, I want to leave work ya3ni of course. W ana keman the same I want, because what I work I don't like. [sic]

Me: okay and is the iqama with you? Like when you go out you bring it with you?

Abdul: yes, yes right the iqama right, if the company doesn't give the iqama, they catch police, after this company want to fight, because give the iqama, iqama is nothing just go this work.

Me: right, so do you carry the iqama with you at all times when you go out?

A: yes, yes always with me.

Me: has there ever been a time where you had to show someone your iqama? Like to the police, or someone on the street or a restaurant or something?

Abdul: just the police sometimes, sometimes they...

Me: have you had interactions with the police before?

Abdul: yeah, many times

Me: ah okay so someone will stop you and say show me your papers?

Abdul: yeah show me your papers

Me: right so, usually, do they know that you're from Bangladesh or do they sometimes think you're from a different country or...

Abdul: no, no its no way, they say I know, this one here is Sri Lanki, this one from Sudan this one Bangladesh

Me: okay so right away they know where you're from?

Abdul: yeah immediately, this one Bangladesh, this one Sudan...

The racialization of informal labor market thus renders racialized workers vulnerable to the interrogations of the police, as their embodied racial difference invites surveillance and suspicion of their potentially irregular status.

I. Gendered 'Illegality': Why are Male Workers the Majority of Reported Runaway Workers?

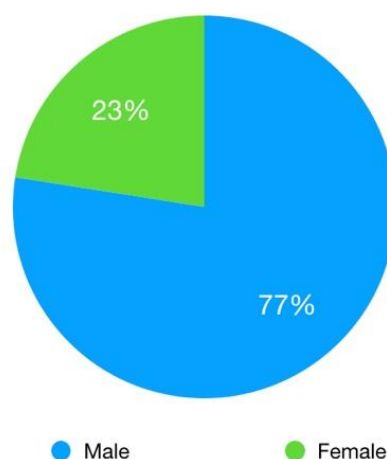


Figure 4.6. Total Workers.

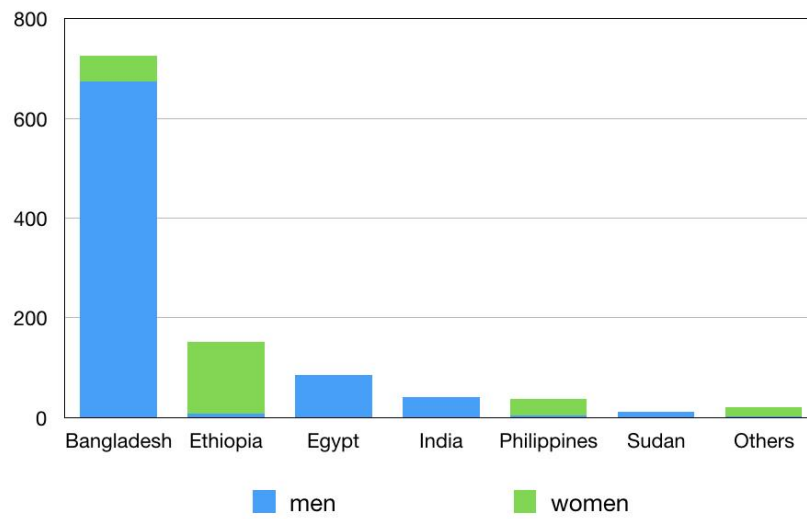


Figure 4.7. Workers by Gender and Nationality.

Nationality	Female 'runaway' workers	Total
Bangladesh	51	10,734
Ethiopia	143	144,986
Philippines	32	17,882
Sri Lanka	2	4,982
Ghana	3	1,384

Figure 4.8. Female 'Runaway' Workers Compared to Total Population.

The disproportionate number of reported male migrant workers in relation to females likely stems from both institutional and social factors and demonstrates the extent to which state discipline of migrant legality operates through gendered, in addition to racial, difference. The contractual and mobile nature of male migrant labor renders ‘escape’ a more feasible endeavor, as they are not employed in their sponsor’s homes and thus enjoy greater freedom of movement, making escape and the renegeing of work contracts an easier endeavor. For domestic workers who are trapped inside the homes of their employers, escape becomes a challenging and at times dangerous endeavor. Many domestic workers have reportedly resorted to jumping from balconies to escape their confinement— or if not to end their suffering. Human rights groups have estimated that on average two migrant domestic workers die every week (Human Rights Watch 2018).

Thus, one wanting to escape would likely have to have a significant network of support outside the house in order to secure housing and protection and survive as an ‘escaped’ worker. General Security stipulations require that domestic workers reside in the homes of their employers in order to be able to renew their residency permits. In light of this juridical imperative, racialized women living independently are simultaneously criminalized and sexualized. Their residence outside the home of a Lebanese employer triggers the automatic assumption that they ran away and are thus ‘illegal.’ This irregular status also inscribes a sexual connotation on the woman’s body, given that prostitution remains one of the few available work opportunities in the informal job market outside domestic services.⁷

⁷ Working as sex workers women have more autonomy and freedom of mobility, the earnings potential of sex work typically far exceed salaries of domestic workers, making it an attractive option even for those in manageable work environments.

The experiences of Micko, an Ethiopian woman who escaped her abusive and violent employer, in navigating her escape and life as a ‘runaway’ worker demonstrates the layers of precarity assembled by the Kafala’s architecture of surveillance and punishment and violently imposed through her embodied racial difference.

Micko: Six months and twenty days. There was one solution in my mind. She took me to a clothes store. She told me that if I flee, she would cut my hair. She said that she would bribe General Security, so that they imprison you for five years. I told her “I will run away”! I was completely honest with her. I had information that she and her friend on the fourth floor paid off the janitor to catch any of the domestic workers that try to run away and torture them. His name was Bachir and I knew that he used to hurt them through using electricity. I know that in 2006 there was a woman who ran away from her, as she was imprisoned there. If I go down there to flee, I would be beaten up badly. It was a Tuesday and we went to her clothing store. She was reading the newspaper, so I just ran away through the front door. I stopped a taxi and left.

If a domestic worker is able to manage the risks entailed in escape, the precarious conditions of ‘illegal’ existence present further risks of violence and abuse:

Me: How is the situation with workers who have no legal documents?

Micko: Well, you could be threatened with jail at all times. If you are raped, no file will be opened. If you suffer from a car accident, nothing will be done about it. For whoever have papers, their “kafil” takes money from them. Every year, you have to pay up to \$1,000 even if you do not find any work here.

Zakaria reiterates the difficulties involved with contemplating escape from an abusive employer:

Zakaria: For example, when I was in the house, there’s nothing to drink, the madam is hitting me. Of course you want to escape, but where to? Who knows? you know?

Reports show that workers who arrive at police stations to seek protection are more often detained and treated as criminals rather than victims (Esim and Kerbage

2011). There are no legal provisions or recognized guidelines for dealing with ‘escaped’ workers, leaving it to the discretion of the prevailing state institutions (police, GS, Judiciary, etc.) to determine their own policies and procedures in dealing with escaped workers (al-Akhbar 2018).

Furthermore, female workers can face more challenges as ‘escaped’ or ‘runaway’ workers, given that their gender signals their occupational origins and more forcefully suggests their irregular status, given that their juridical existence is confined to the private home of their employer.

Micko: Our papers relate to “home work”, so if we encounter any problems, they will ask us “what were you doing at this time outside the house?” He will ask if you were whoring around, selling yourself amongst other questions. If you do not have any papers, they might force you to work with them for free, as they can threaten you with deportation.

Here we see how a black woman residing outside of an employer’s home presents a legal impossibility, rendering racialized women vulnerable to abuse and exploitation under the constant threat of arrest and deportation. Micko’s narration reveals the manner in which migrant gendered illegality is summarily inscribed with a sexual connotation. Thus racialized female bodies that transgress the bounds of labor are simultaneously criminalized and sexualized and subjected to various forms of sexual harassment and abuse.

The system draws clear boundaries around the spaces that black/racialized women are allowed to inhabit, so when a black woman traverses those boundaries, she automatically becomes subject to the state-authorized power to punish bestowed on the Lebanese citizen. As Lulu’s experience at the grocery store demonstrates, a black woman cannot legally exist autonomously in public spaces.

J. Condemnation of Public Spectacle of Racialized Punishment

In spring of 2019, The news channel LBC broadcasted a segment revealing a video taken of a Lebanese woman aggressively beating a domestic worker — a black woman— on the open, publicly visible entrance space of a large apartment building.

The Madam captured in the video, Laila Saliba of Bteghine, is shown pushing the domestic worker into a corner of the lobby stair railing while repeatedly slapping her across the face, holding her in place by the neck of her shirt, as the woman screams out for help. After receiving the video, the reporter contacted the ‘madam’ and proceeded to question her about the violent behavior displayed in the video.

Reporter 1: This week the program received a video to our phone. A woman beating a domestic worker in the entrance of a building in Al-Naqash area. See how she talked to us and how she justified herself.

*Laila: I'm Laila Saliba from Bitghreen. Who is the [expletive] that sent that video? She was pushed to a corner. She wanted to run away and go to al-Doura. She does not want to go to the office or the police. She wants to go to al-Doura.
[translated subtitles]*

“Laila Saliba from Bitghreen.” Ms. Saliba casts off the attempt to inflict shame by openly and proudly asserting her identity for the public record. Her self-recognition in opposition to the attempt to shame reveals not only the sense of entitlement with which ownership and domination of the migrant body is exercised, but also the unlikelihood (or her perceived unlikelihood) of being subjected to any meaningful form of state punishment for her violent behavior.

In repeatedly invoking the space of al-Doura, the segment of the city apportioned for migrant informality and illegality in the Lebanese imagination, her words conjure the association of criminality and illicit behavior in order to justify her violent act. Here the racialization of space works in conjunction with the process of

criminalization to justify the inhumane treatment inflicted on the worker's racialized body.

Reporter: what does she want to do in al-Doura?

Laila: they go and have sex for \$1,000 per month. She is getting \$150. Instead of protecting the rights of prostitutes and [expletive], protect our rights.

Further, her accusations of prostitution demonstrate the manner in which the criminality of female workers is constructed through sexualizing discourses that call on racialized tropes of promiscuity and deviant sexual behavior. Such discourses which produce a hypersexualized imaginary of racialized female bodies provide the pretext through which racialized women— domestic worker or not— are constantly subjected to various forms of sexual harassment when navigating public spaces.

By divulging the supposed criminal intent of the worker's intended actions, her words seek to absolve herself of wrongdoing and instead frame 'we' — the aggrieved and blameless Lebanese employers— as the victim deserving rights and protection. These discursive linkages assembled between the concepts of criminality/illegality and rights/entitlement thus produce the dynamic whereby racialized workers are dehumanized and the deprivation of their rights morally justified.

Laila: I was after her. She wanted to run away.

Reporter: you are beating her in a totally unacceptable way

*Laila: piss off. I did not beat her. Eat s**t and shut your mouth. She is living the most wonderful life with me. She is still at my home and she does not want to leave.*

Reporter: Oh she is happy living with you and you always beat her up?

*Laila: eat s**t and put it in your mouth. I beat her? Do you live with me you b***h, you immoral person? Do you live with me to know if I beat her or pamper her? If you continue to say I beat her I will break your jaw.*

Despite the irony in threatening violence in retribution for defaming her character with allegations of violent behavior, she asserts plausible deniability in the conduct of the working relationship by calling forth the imaginary space of the private home. For domestic workers the location of the employment relationship inside the private family home thus serves as a shield for the surveillance of both 'the one' (state) and 'the many' (society) on the employer's behavior. Thus we see how the process of privatization and the location of the employment relationship inside the private space of the home serves to augment the power of the employer at the expense of the worker by shielding them from meaningful regulation or accountability for their actions.

Reporter 2: Madam, what does the scene that we have seen express?

Laila: it shows a maid that wanted to run away. I caught her. She started to beat me. She is at our home. I took her to the office, talked to people there, and she said "the madam is wonderful and it is my fault."

Reporter 2: Madam, if the madam is wonderful...

Laila: she started crying and saying she wanted to come back with me and apologized

*Reporter 2: Mrs. Saliba even if the madam is wonderful and it is the worker's fault
[Laila interjects]*

Reporter 2: please listen to me. Even if you are wonderful, this does not give you the right to beat her like this. And we have watched the video

Laila: she has the right to kill me, because I am not allowed to defend myself.

Reporter 2: send her to the office. Send her to the office.

Reporter 2: When we called you, you were the one who told us your name. We sought an explanation of why you felt you had the right to do that. No one has the right to beat any one, no matter who they are. Even if she is a foreigner (ajnabiyeh) and has done

something wrong we change her. We take her to the office, there are many ways to hold her accountable. I am sorry to say that you, madam, are one of the Lebanese women who are ruining our reputation in the whole world. Because the whole world is circulating this video on social media. Above this, Madam, I don't know whether you have heard of something called public road or public property, you on the public road, in the public property, not inside your home. So we are going to send this video.

And it would seem the reporter's primary concern with the abhorrent behavior displayed in the video is the extent to which it damages the reputation of Lebanese to the 'whole world,' rather than the injustice visited upon the domestic worker in her employ.

Concern for the racialized body subjected to her abuse figures nowhere in his righteous condemnation of her act of violence.

The pervasive concerns about the Lebanese reputation in the global community can be seen as a symptom of Lebanese civilizational anxieties over being similarly racialized as 'non-white' in a very white, liberal civilizational imaginary. Such is the reason activists fighting the oppressive labor regime rely heavily on the tactic of shaming in order to hasten state action on behalf of workers' rights. Lebanese obsessive concern for its global reputation stem in part from orientalist dichotomies which construct a morally enlightened and superior west in opposition to the backwards, barbaric Eastern 'other.' Such discourses belie the manner in which racial typologies and understandings of race in Lebanon derive from Western colonial discourses and capitalist organizations of power.

Further in employing the collective subject pronoun "we," the reporter demonstrates the pervasive and normative extent of the associated practices. "Even if she as a foreigner and has done something wrong, we change her." His castigation thus discursively affirms and justifies the dynamics and functioning of the system that

renders migrant bodies as interchangeable forms of property that the employer/sponsor rightfully commands.

Consequently, in his rendering of the moral problem at hand, it is the “Lebanese women who are ruining the reputation of Lebanese to the whole world” which constitute the root of the problem — not the exploitative system and society which configure the relations of power through which migrant bodies are dehumanized and abused. As he makes clear, her primary mistake was not the act of beating the domestic worker, but rather that she beat the domestic worker *outside* the house.

Reporter 2: Mrs. Laila Saliba is the one who introduced herself when we called her and admitted that she had beaten her up. So, I hope that you, General Security, move quickly. Because the solution for people who are like this Mrs. Saliba is to be prevented by the General Security from having any foreign worker in their homes.

Even as he calls for the state’s intervention in punishing an employer who abuses their power, he discursively positions the worker as a piece of property rather than a human employee deserving of legal recognition and protection. His suggested punishment is to take away Laila’s right to employ another domestic worker— as if taking candy away from a child. Thus we see how even when her wrongdoing is recognized and shamed accordingly, the surmised punishment does not call for prosecution of the violent and criminal act of physically abusing another person but rather the confiscation of her property rights.

K. Interlude: Disciplining Identities

“It too thought it was white country”

-James Baldwin

Sebastian is a 24-year-old Lebanese student at the Lebanese International University. His native language is Lebanese Arabic and is also proficient in English. He was born in Dahieh and lived there with his mother and father until they moved to Mar Elias when he was 5. Sebastian loves music and dancing and spends much of his free time frequenting various concerts and events in Beirut’s music scene. He helps to organize a special dance night every Wednesday night at one of Mar Mikhail’s small back alley pubs. He studies sociology and international relations, and dreams of one day working for the UN or Ministry of Social Affairs. Sebastian is Lebanese. Sebastian is black.

S: most of the [Lebanese] people they get shocked because I talk good language, of Lebanese language, so they were like surprised that there’s half people, they are African, they are black, black Lebanese? They were like you know, what do you call it? They were surprised. So most of them, they don’t know that we are in this... what do you call it? Like mawjudeen.

Me: right, right, like that you’re present, that you exist

Sebastian: yeah, so most of the people they don’t know half African, half African, it’s so different. I’ve been facing so many people—‘wow you talk Lebanese?! How is that?!’ you know I told them my mom she is Lebanese but my dad is African. ‘wow, oh good.’ So they get like, you know, when they told me, they get suddenly surprised you know, how I talk like the Lebanese.

Me: right the fact that you speak perfect Lebanese Arabic, because they’re not even aware that that’s an identity that exists

Sebastian: right but in Nabatieh, in my place in Nabatieh, there is, we are so family you know, there are good people. The people in Nabatieh that are half Lebanese half African, uhh in 2006, people they go to Africa and they marry from African women, so it’s like a, its normal

Me: So would you say that your race is something that you're aware of on a daily basis, like when you go out into public?

*Sebastian: yeah. People they get shocked when they look at you, you know like this black, he's black, **what is he doing here**. I heard like, too many times you know.*

While Lebanon is a country often cited for its 'diversity,' that diversity is imagined in the multiplicity of religious sect, rather than ethnic or racial difference. The racially distinct faces of migrant workers that populate Beirut's cityscape are non-citizens and thus excluded from popular understandings of Lebanese national identity and belonging, denied social recognition by virtue of their racial difference and its association with migrant work.

As Harris (1993) explained in her formulation of 'whiteness as property,' "The system of racial classification operated to protect entrenched power." In a society divided amongst competing sectarian and religious identities, the African and Asian migrant worker provides a reliable 'other' against which to measure and construct a conception of ethnically homogenous 'Lebanese' identity.

Yet, while Lebanese national identity is generally imagined as a whitened, racially homogenous subject category, as the example of Sebastian demonstrates, there exists under the surface various other modes of Lebanese racial identification that are rooted in Lebanon's long tradition of emigration and historical role as an intermediary in French colonial Africa, and which persists today in light of the increased inflows of migrants from African countries (in addition to outflows and exchanges of the Lebanese diaspora to and from African countries).

"Apart from being arguably the most populous non-African community in most West African states, they [the Lebanese] have distinguished themselves in the economic development process, becoming one of the most dominant groups of expatriate businessmen to settle in the region they were instrumental to the opening up of the trade and capital market in West Africa through their industriousness and business skills,

especially after the departure of European merchants, Their contributions to the 'industrialization' of Kano city in Nigeria..." (Olaniyi and Oluwasegun 2014)

The social relations that have assembled around the “opening up of the trade and capital market in West Africa” have thus produced emergent transnational— and transracial— identities that defy the modes of categorization deployed by sovereign power. This subject category of the half-African half-Lebanese is quite prevalent in terms of numbers (though there are no relevant statistics available, given the Lebanese state’s 87-year aversion to official census-taking), but completely denied any form of social recognition in the mainstream society. Sebastian’s existence as a black Lebanese thus disrupts prevailing understandings of Lebanese identity, as demonstrated by the shock and confusion prompted by his perfect command of the Lebanese dialect.

Me: and so how would describe the racism here, like where does it come from and why are people like that?

*Sebastian: I don't know because it's so difficult for them to communicate with other cultures or something or other colors so they think it's so strange, **they think, Lebanese people they are just white and there is no, the other you know.** But I met, you know in my years, I met many other people they are half Lebanese half African, they're half Indian half American, they make me so comfortable, that we have more people, they are open minded, not like those people you know.*

Sebastian’s mother is a Lebanese woman who moved to Nigeria after college to work for her father’s company that deals in the production and sale of cotton.

Sebastian’s father is from Nigeria and worked in the company owned by his mother’s family as an assistant to her father.

His parents met while both working for the company and had an immediate attraction to one another. Their relationship evolved and grew over time and eventually his mother resolved to marry his father. Expectedly, her family did not approve of their relationship. Yet, in spite of her family’s disapproval she maintained her resolve in their

relationship and intention to marry, withstanding the repeated attempts of her parents to offer alternative suitors. It wasn't until Sebastian's father intervened to protect her from a violent attack that likely would have ended her life that her parents softened in their disapproval of their relationship—His act of valor thus rendering him worthy of the marriage to their daughter that she had so persistently sought. When the company's financial hardship brought them back to Lebanon, they had their first of 3 children, Sebastian.

Sebastian: at first they rejected, when I came in the life, my grandma, she was, she just hated me, she didn't like me. Uhh, she was like saying bad words, like what's it called... sif al abed or things like that, you know, 'come here ras al abed' things like that the first time, but when I was living with her like 1 month, 2 months, she started to change.

Me: okay so eventually she...

Sebastian: yeah, she opened her heart for me

Me: okay so now your relations with her are good?

Sebastian: yeah its good. But before no.

Sif al abed is the brand name of small steel wool floor mats and other house products that were used prevalently in Lebanese households. The phrase means “slave’s luffa,” and its packaging depicted a large, muscular dark-skinned man resembling a tanned Frankenstein, bearing a large goofy grin, and flexing his impressively large bicep. These products were the imagination of a German company, which manufactured various household items prominently sold throughout Lebanon⁸ (Trad 2018).

‘Ras al-abed’ is the brand name of a chocolate-covered marshmallow candy sold by the Lebanese foods manufacturer Gandour. In English ‘ras al-abed’ translates to ‘the head of the slave,’ thus making metaphoric use of the chocolate’s dark color and conical

⁸ the company later changed the name of the product line to Abrazo

form. In recent years Gandour finally responded to complaints of racism against the candy's moniker and changed the name to 'Tarboosh' which is the name of a hat resembling a truncated cone that was popularly worn by men in the Eastern Mediterranean region— thus finding an alternative metaphoric descriptor to refer to the candy's conical form (Trad 2018).

The Arabic word 'abed' is a derogatory epithet used to refer to dark-skinned individuals in Arabic-speaking societies. The popular use of the epithet— in brand names, advertisements, movies, television shows, and grandmotherly appellations— thus calls into imagination the historical legacy of Arab involvement in the African slave trade and the pervasive association of dark skin with the condition of servitude. This association of blackness with servility provides one of the many frames through which racialized individuals are inferiorized, denied social recognition, and confined strictly to categories of work.

Sebastian's family's initial rejections and his grandmother's racist derision demonstrate the difficulties of negotiating modes of racial difference within the family unit. As transnational migration increases, the racial mixing and resulting racial inconsistencies it inevitably produces disrupt traditional, socially ascribed modes of kinship. For interracial families, this presents the challenge of how to reconcile socially ascribed racial hierarchies and boundaries with the familial bonds of kinship. Familial ties, socially configured through the sameness of genetic makeup, carry with it notions of homogeneity, similarity, consistency. These internal processes of negotiating sameness/kinship and otherness/racial difference within the family represent the force of discipline enacted on the family unit as a whole, where the privacy afforded to the family unit draws the boundary of state/social authority and thus counteracts discipline.

From her father's initial rejection of their marriage, we see how patriarchal authority is enacted to maintain neat racial divisions within the family unit. When exceptional circumstances counteract that authority, we see how family unity is disrupted as racial divisions and tensions manifest within the family unit and disrupt the traditional ties between a grandmother and her grandchild, mutating the bond between them from one of love and affection to one of derision and scorn.

Thus, to defy the disciplinary power of racialized categories of citizenship and hierarchies of social capital, is to invite discord and disharmony into the family. Sebastian's father still works for his father-in-law here in Lebanon, while his mother takes care of the family. Because Sebastian is the son of a Lebanese woman and African man, he is denied access to Lebanese citizenship by virtue of the Lebanese nationality law which recognizes citizenship exclusively through paternal lineage. Thus, in order to maintain legal recognition from the state those like Sebastian must obtain a permanent residence card authorized by General Security. In order to acquire a work permit and find employment, they must provide evidence of his maternal lineage to the state.

Me: oh okay, and so you were saying that you have the Nigerian passport, but you don't yet have the Lebanese...

Sebastian: yeah the Lebanese, because my mom, uh, the law here they didn't give the mom permission to give us the nationality, so it's so difficult, it's from like before, so we are waiting, we are waiting

Me: right, so what is that, how does that kind of affect your ability to access Lebanese society

*Sebastian: yeah definitely, it affected that I can't find work for my major, uh, I can't what do you call it, people when they saw me, that I'm black, so I should not uh, not like, what do you call it, stay, something like that, **so they didn't give you chance to work in like accounting or something like that, in supermarket, they think like you are black so you are so stupid**, so you can't do those things*

Me: ah okay so for more professional job opportunities. And so do people then make assumptions about you and what you do because you're black?

Sebastian: yeah [resolutely]

Me: what kinds of assumptions?

*Sebastian: they look at you like **your color**, that you're black so they think you are stupid so you can't do anything you know?*

Me: so they automatically just assume that

S: yeah, they give you the low places, not the high places, you know, like uh, I went to the bank to work, like to make accounting or something like that, they said no, because your color is black, so I was like what a shock, why...

Me: did they actually say it was because you're black you can't work here?

Sebastian: yeah they said that, so I was like... they took my friend, it was me and my friend, they took my friend, they said he's white but not you.

Through Sebastian's discursive rendering of the hierarchical power of race—*"the low places not the high places"*— we see how categories of race serve to discipline access to social and economic space. Thus, despite being born and raised in Lebanon and having full command of the Lebanese culture and dialect, and being a university student, Sebastian's embodied racial difference and juridical non-citizen status subjects him to the same forms of inferiorization and exclusion inflicted on racialized migrant workers.

While Sebastian was born in Lebanon to a Lebanese mother, speaks Lebanese Arabic and has grown up and spent his whole life in the country, he is not a Lebanese citizen. The children of Lebanese women who marry foreign spouses are thus often left in a state of juridical and social statelessness. Culturally, linguistically, geographically he is Lebanese. But according to the state—and his pigmented complexion— he is not.

*S: ...I heard from someone, he told me you have to go back to Africa so uh, **I told him Lebanon is my country so why are you saying go back to Africa.** And he said that, Africa, you should be there you know. So it was like hurt. Something hurt, so I'm dealing with it.*

He is from Lebanon. But he is not Lebanese.

He is African. But he's not from Africa.

Passports, national ID cards, residency permits, transit visas

Foreigner, citizen, illegal, alien, temporary resident, tourist

Such terms belong to a state authorized vernacular which attempts to maintain neat, disciplined divisions and boundaries between nation-states and national identities in a world increasingly prone to globalizing forces and characterized by human mobility.

What is the difference between saying 'he is from Africa/Lebanon' and 'he is African/Lebanese'? What assumptions, exceptions, exclusions emerge in the discursive jump from adjective to noun? From a geographic territory to an abstract concept, a descriptor denoting an ideational community; *From nation state to identity?*

CHAPTER FIVE

SEXUALIZATION

A. The Biopolitics of Race

As we saw in the previous chapter, the structure of the Kafala system which requires domestic workers to reside in the house of their employers, juridically confines the racialized female body within the boundaries of domestic work. Thus, as the migrant female body transgresses the boundaries of domestic work and ventures outside the home of her employer, she summarily triggers the process of criminalization whereby the notions of illegality inscribed on the racialized female body summon understandings of racial difference coterminous with an implied sexual deviance and propensity for promiscuity.

These concurrent processes of criminalization and sexualization, which work in tandem to inflict various forms of sexual harassment and violent abuse on racialized women, demonstrate the manner in which the segmentation of the migrant labor force along the lines of gender, subsequently produces intersectional experiences and understandings of racial difference.

Thus, in this chapter, I explore the manner in which notions of sexual difference are operationalized to construct sexualized understanding of racial difference. I explore how General Security directives incentivize and empower employers to police and restrict the social and sexual autonomy of their workers in a way that eventually hypersexualizes the female racialized ‘other.’

In Lebanon, the processes which demarcate and regulate categories citizenship are highly gendered as women constitute the site where state regulation of citizenship

occurs. As Maya Mikdashi (2014) demonstrates in her analysis of Lebanon's sovereign constructions of citizen belonging, "statecraft and sovereignty emerge from the management of sectarian difference and sexual difference: two mutually constitutive modes of political difference." She introduces the notion of "Sextarianism," as a referent for the various state processes which operationalize intersections of sect and sex as a "technology of biopolitical power," in order to construct clearly identifiable "categories of citizenship, family, sex and sect."

As she explains, "Postcolonial Lebanese law states that citizens are born into the jurisdiction of different personal status laws depending on their father. In this way sectarian belonging itself is defined through sexual difference and patriarchal kinship regulations. In fact, not only is sect a paternally inherited biopolitical category, citizenship itself is also exclusively inherited patrilineally." The experience of Sebastian demonstrates the manner in which the state's use of paternal lineage to construct categories of citizenship and belonging configures his experience of exclusion and inferiorization and banishes him from notions of Lebanese belonging. Though he was born and raised in Lebanon, Sebastian's inability to claim patrimonial belonging to the Lebanese state prevents him from claiming citizenships and the attendant rights and entitlements it confers.

Accordingly, just as state practices regulating sexuality, sexual difference and gender are implicated in the production of sectarian identities, I will explore how they are similarly operationalized in the production of racial identities. The exercises of state sovereignty which prevent Lebanese women from passing on their nationality and citizenship rights to their children, resemble those state exercises of authority over migrant women by General Security.

Women, in their ability to reproduce human life, are thus capable of reproducing Lebanese citizens. By restricting women's ability to pass on their Lebanese nationality to their children, the state can police and maintain control over the (re)production of citizens. As a result, this restriction actively discourages female citizens from marrying foreigners and sharing with non-Lebanese men (and their children) the privileges of citizenship. As a result, Lebanese men are the exclusive purveyors of the rights of citizenship. Thus, as in the case of Sebastian, a Lebanese woman and African man cannot produce a Lebanese child. A Lebanese man and African woman, however, can produce a fully endowed Lebanese citizen. Therefore, with the arrival of Asian and African women into the country, there arises the possibility of mixed-race individuals fully endowed with the rights and entitlements of Lebanese citizenship.

As we saw in the previous chapters, the underlying rationale of the system positions migrant bodies as simple commodities. The attendant structures of power serve to restrict their sociality and ensure their temporality in order to maintain their form and function as temporary laboring objects that can be easily mobilized and exchanged. Because Lebanese citizenship is constructed through paternal lineage, migrant female domestic workers thus present a demographic threat to the state's neat categories of citizenship and sect, in their ability to access citizenship rights for themselves and their offspring through marriage with Lebanese men.

Thus, just as state exercises of power operationalize intersections of sect and sex as a "technology of bio political power" in order to construct clearly identifiable categories of citizenship, family, sex, and sect— so too do state exercises of power operationalize intersections of *race* and sex as a biopolitical tool in order to construct clearly identifiable categories of citizenship, family, sex and *race*.

Accordingly, as the state authority designated to regulate and control non-citizens, General Security authority works to criminalize and police the sexual intimacy and reproduction of migrant women through the implementation of various administrative directives which serve to limit their movement, restrict their sociality and relations of intimacy, prohibit their procreation and deport their children. These state policies which place restrictions on the social, romantic and family lives of migrant women are the manner in which General Security can ensure the temporal limits and labor function of racialized migrant women. It is in these exercises of state authority through which sexualized understandings of race emerge and proliferate to invite the sexual harassment and abuse of racialized women. Under this institutional arrangement, these exercises of state authority, position racialized women (particularly those outside the confines of the employer home) as temporary, transient, sexual objects, which consequently lead to understandings of racial and sexual difference that are mutually constitutive—and demonstrations of racism that are highly sexualized.

B. State Regulation of Racialized Sexual Difference

As we saw in the previous chapters, a decentralized system marked by its informality run in collaboration by various Lebanese ministries and state agencies, chiefly, General Security and the Ministry of Labor, regulates the entry, exit and stay of migrant workers in Lebanon, and relies on the collaboration of recruitment agencies and employers in the enforcement of those restrictions.

The migrant worker is both a foreigner and a worker, thus creating an overlap in Ministry of Labor and General Security jurisdictions with respect to the law. Yet, the primacy of state security supersedes the objectives of regulating labor or administering

justice, thus endowing General Security as the sovereign authority with supreme jurisdiction over migrant bodies, thereby overriding the authority of other governmental bodies such as the Ministry of Labor or Ministry of Justice. General Security thus constitutes the primary site where migrant workers encounter state sovereign power.

General security places restrictions on domestic workers by attaching certain requirements and conditions to the issuance and renewal of their residency permits. Workers who violate those restrictions thus lose their legal right to reside in Lebanon and become subject to detention and deportation by General Security. Because the contours of the system are enumerated through General Security directives and decisions rather than actual legislation, the state has wide discretion to place restrictions on workers without adequate oversight or accountability to human rights standards or international conventions.⁹

Requests for copies of GS directives must be made directly with the general security office and are easily stymied by the General Security bureaucracy. Through these informal administrative decisions, General Security can effectively criminalize the freedom of movement and enjoyment of the right to a personal life and thus violate the basic human rights of domestic workers in violation of the Lebanese constitution and international conventions with impunity (Insan 2016).

General Security also reserves the right to interpret the Standard Unifying Contract (SUC) as they see fit. Many of the justifications deployed to contravene the rights of domestic workers resulted from a tenuous interpretation of the literal text. For example, the requirement that domestic workers reside in the home of their employers came from General Security's interpretation of the stipulation that workers are only

⁹ Lebanon has ratified 7 out of 8 of the ILO's fundamental conventions, 2 out of 4 of the governance conventions and 42 out of 178 technical conventions, totaling 51 conventions signed (out of 190 total), ratified and in force (ILO 2019).

allowed to work for one sponsor at a time. Agency officials argued that residing outside of the employer's residence automatically implied that the worker was engaged in secondary work and thus ran in violation of the restrictions on freelance work (Insan 2016).

Despite the fact that choosing one's place of residence is a legal right enshrined in both national and international laws, the exclusion of domestic workers from the labor law and unhindered discretion of general security to administer their own regulations and restrictions effectively deprives them of that right. Thus, General Security can easily create new restrictions in contravention of the already sparse protections and standards by threading together creative legal interpretations which rest on shaky assumptions.

C. The Love Ban

*Micko: I work 15 hours there and they have a day off, while I do not! He told me that he has another worker that does not request a vacation day and I then proceeded to tell him that she and I are different. He told me that **he is afraid that I would get pregnant** and I asked him if he would forbid me from loving or flirting with anyone.*

General Security's Circular No. 1778 issued October 4th, 2014 (since reversed) banned domestic workers from engaging in a marital or intimate relationship with any Arab or foreign person within Lebanon. The circular came to light because of a civil society organization called Legal Agenda, which investigated the issue upon receiving notice that the notaries had been requesting employers of migrant workers to sign an assurance that their workers were not engaged in any marital or intimate relationship with other migrants or Lebanese while residing in Lebanon. The signed pledge was a requirement for the renewal and completion of the workers' residence papers, as well as

a work release. Their ensuing investigation revealed that this had become the standard practice of almost all notaries in Lebanon in accordance with the General Security directive.

As they noted, neither the Ministry of Justice nor the notary publics raised any issue with the directive put forth by General Security, despite the fact that it directly violated both national and international legal conventions¹⁰ (Legal Agenda 2015). Thus we see how under the Kafala's decentralized structure characterized by overlapping jurisdictional authorities, General Security's supremacy as the sovereign security agency allows it to supersede considerations of law and justice and act with impunity (Legal Agenda 2015).

After Legal Agenda released a press statement rebuking the security agency's actions, General security sent a letter to the NGO explaining their decision, calling the circular "a precautionary measure that is not intended to prevent marriage or interfere in personal matters, but to realize *sustainability of the family as an institution with a role in society*, and to respect the residence requirements." [Emphasis added] (Legal Agenda 2015) Thus, by their own admission, General Security's policy operates according to the same logic of 'Sextarianism,' whereby intersections of race and sex are operationalized to maintain neat, disciplined categories of family and citizenship— from which the racialized domestic workers are summarily excluded.

Further, the letter explained that they were "studying each case separately in terms of making sure family and marriage relationship does not affect the applicable labor law and the residence system defined in the law which governs the work of

¹⁰ As a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Lebanon must respect the rights of men and women of the appropriate age to marry and start a family. In addition, as a signatory to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discriminations Lebanon cannot conduct "expulsions of non-citizens, especially of long-term residents, that would result in disproportionate interference with the right to family life." (Human Rights Watch 2017)

General Security” (Legal Agenda 2015). In this statement they explicitly identify the labor law and residence system as the main tools they employ to restrict migrant worker family and romantic life.

In requiring employers to sign a legally binding document which holds them responsible for the worker’s compliance with the directive, the state is essentially delegating the responsibility of surveilling and restricting the marital, romantic and/or sexual relationships of their workers. The directive thus not only gives the employer the *right* to monitor the personal lives of the workers, but makes it *imperative* that they do so, by holding them financially liable for deportations that result from their workers being in contravention of the law.

This policy monetizes the costs of non-compliance with General Security policies and thus provides clear financial incentives to the employer to restrict the autonomy and freedom of the workers they employ. Again, we see how the decentralized nature of the system follows a market-oriented logic, whereby state administrative practices configure the financial incentives of those collaborating in the enforcement of the system— in this case the employer—in order to exercise and maintain the disciplined control of the worker in the absence of direct state intervention and oversight.

After Legal Agenda uncovered General Security’s discreet directive through the practices employed by notaries, they embarked on a comprehensive legal advocacy campaign to force a reversal of the policy. After gaining the support of the notary publics, they were finally able to secure a reversal of the policy, detailed in a memo issued by the Ministry of Justice in July of 2015 (Legal Agenda 2015).

Again, we see how in General security's wide mandate of authority and the absence of any effective form of oversight or accountability built into the system, rights groups remain the only form of accountability that exists to protect the rights of migrant workers. And yet, it seems the dynamics of the directive still linger in the social imaginaries of Lebanese employers and their conduct in daily interactions with their workers. The perspectives of my interlocutors (both worker and employer) reveal the manner in which the imperative to restrict domestic workers' sociality and intimacy remains salient in the employer's understanding of their responsibility as the worker's legal guarantor.

The experience of Mary, a middle-aged Filipina woman who works as a domestic worker in a private Lebanese home, demonstrates the ways in which migrant domestic workers remain subjected to the supervisory power of their employers in the same manner authorized by the now defunct 'love ban':

*Mary: The root of our problem is she want to keep all my papers before I trust her to keep my papers but after a few months she started to control everything like for example she want to know all my friends, she want to know all my accounts and password, my mobile number, and every time I'm going out **who is my companion men or women**. She doesn't want me to do schooling. **Every time I took my day off she was checking my face and neck if I'm kissing someone outside**, so at the time I felt like I'm in the prison, that I don't have freedom, so I tried to explain what's my right but you know already there's only a few Lebanese that abide the law.*

Mary's narration of her experience being subjected to the intrusive authority of her employer clearly demonstrates the manner in which state institutional directives durably insert themselves in the course of everyday relations between employers and the workers. Though the 'love ban' had a relatively short life span (around 10 months) thanks to the work of dedicated activists, it seems the dynamic of power configured by the policy remains embedded within the prevailing socio-cultural landscape, as

employers continue to exercise control over the private lives of their workers. It is in this feedback between legal and social structures through which the juridical structure of the Kafala system produces a compounding and enduring web of racialized oppression that infiltrates all aspects of migrant life.

Khaled is a Lebanese banker who resides with his elderly parents in their small apartment in Dahieh, the southern suburbs of Beirut populated primarily by members of Lebanon's Shiite community. He and his two older siblings resolved to acquire a domestic worker for their house as a 'gift' for the mother on her birthday. Their mother worked since the age of 16 as a homemaker and performed the household tasks and raised them on her own. Yet, as she was reaching her 60's and becoming increasingly unable to perform the more physically demanding aspects of the housework, they sought to lighten her workload by employing a domestic worker to assist her, splitting the costs of recruitment fees and salary amongst themselves. During our interview, I asked Khaled what type of requirements or characteristics they were seeking in their domestic worker when they approached the recruitment agency.

Khaled: my mom asked them, asked them for someone that's like fresh. Someone that hasn't worked in houses or...

Me: why's that?

Khaled: because a lot of the maids that are, that have worked in houses, they have a lot of experience socially, like, I don't mean it in a bad way, but they uh, like they could, uh, like they go out a lot, they want to go out a lot, they start having boyfriends, they have a lot of, there was a lot of incidents. Like with my aunt, she started getting her boyfriend to the house, sleeping in their own bed. So that's the main reason why my mom wanted someone that doesn't know, that is new, new in town, she doesn't know anything, she doesn't know anyone, she doesn't know Arabic, you know what I mean? So yeah that's the main reason. Also she wanted to teach her, like fresh, she's fresh, she just wanted to teach her just what she wanted her to do.

For Khaled's family, the ideal worker is not one who is skilled and experienced and but rather a blank slate detached from any social or familial relations and lacking the potential to engage with the surrounding society due to language barriers. This logic is counterintuitive to the conventional wisdom in hiring practices, where employers look for a demonstrated ability to perform the required tasks. Having a worker who is new to Lebanon and with no prior experience in domestic work — who “doesn't know anything and— “doesn't know anyone” — sharpens the power disparity in favor of the employer, as the worker is now completely reliant on the employer for their integration into their work and life in the country.

Khaled justifies his request for a 'fresh' worker by drawing on a hypersexualized imaginary of migrant female domestic workers: “*they go out a lot, they want to go out a lot, they start having boyfriends.*” Thus, his discursive positioning of domestic workers as sexually threatening bodies with a tendency toward promiscuity reveals the manner in which anxieties over the sexual possibilities and proclivities of the domestic worker facilitate the dehumanizing and oppressive practices performed by employers.

The extensive and varied supply of available domestic workers offered by recruitment agencies allows him to 'shop for' and 'pick out' the particular characteristics he and his family desire to suit their needs. Thus we see how the processes of commodification and sexualization work in tandem to dehumanize the worker and impose the subjugated condition under which she works and lives.

I then asked Khaled if their domestic worker, named Tegest, ever ventured outside of the confines of their Dahieh apartment.

Me: and does she have a day off?

K: No. she doesn't have a day off actually, because she doesn't know what, she has nothing to, she has nowhere to go, you know what I mean? And we talked about that, but, if she takes a day off, she'll be lost.

Me: So she doesn't really go out of the house?

K: But she goes to Da3ya [the village], she goes to da3ya with my parents. So she walks outside you know [laughs].

Me: what about like running errands, like the grocery store or...

K: yeah, she goes sometimes.

Me: alone or with your mom?

K: alone, she goes alone. In the morning though, she doesn't let her go at night – it's not safe. But, yeah, sometimes, sometimes she goes... the thing about taking a day off, like she doesn't know anyone, like she doesn't speak their language. I know it's hard, like a lot of the time, I spoke to her, like I've spoken my mom about this issue, but like there's nothing we can do. Like if we let her go, she'd be gone. She doesn't know anything, and she doesn't know how to communicate with people.

Khaled's description illustrates the extent to which the life chances of migrant domestic workers are delimited by the vulnerable conditions of their migration and work. Tegest came to Beirut from a rural village in Ethiopia, where she had no access or exposure to the trappings of modern, urban life. Given that she speaks a lesser known local dialect restricts her ability to communicate even with fellow Ethiopian domestic workers in the surrounding area.

Despite the fact that giving the worker the day off is a legal obligation enumerated in the Standard Unifying contract that the employee and worker both sign upon initiating the working relationship, Khaled admits that Tegest does not have a day off. While his tone reveals a hint of regret at this fact, he reconciles the admission with the justification that "she has nothing to do, she has nowhere to go." His reliance on this justification to mitigate his guilt and elide moral culpability for her condition, betrays

the fact that a few minutes prior, he revealed that they specifically requested a domestic worker who was completely new in the country— someone that’s “fresh” — and without any social attachments— who “doesn’t know anything— “she doesn’t know anyone, she doesn’t know Arabic.” Given that he requested the exact conditions which he summarily draws upon to justify her confinement to the house, his remorse rings particularly hollow.

The structures of the Kafala system which deny the right to engage in personal romantic relationships or form familial attachments deny domestic workers social recognition as full, autonomous human beings and constitute part of a Lebanese imaginary which does not deem it necessary for their workers to have any sort of personal or social life outside of the work they perform inside the house. Further, from Khaled’s request for a “fresh” worker, we see how the hypersexualized typologies and stereotypes of migrant domestic workers’ supposed promiscuity work to justify their denial of social recognition, which in turn reinforces employers’ dehumanizing and infantilizing prohibitions on their rights, such as renegeing her legally entitled day off or periodically confining her to the house.

As we see in Tigest’s case, neither the ‘free’ employment contract nor considerations of individual employer ethics succeed in alleviating the oppressive conditions to which she is subjected. And yet Khaled is nothing like the scores of reported employers that inflict pernicious forms of violence and sexual abuse on their workers. He’s one of the ‘good’ employers.

As we see, Khaled has compassion for Tigest: “I know it’s hard.”

But, as he explains, “there’s nothing we can do.”

There’s nothing we can do.

The power of structural forms of violence lies in their ability to make social and economic injustice and inequality seem like unavoidable or inevitable conditions. While Khaled can recognize the moral problematic of Tegest's subjugated living condition, he fails to see the extent to which he is not just complicit, but actively participates in the structures of violence that inflict her oppressive and subjugated condition.

He goes to the recruitment agency and specifically requests a worker who *"doesn't know anything, she doesn't know anyone, she doesn't know Arabic."* He does not give Tegest her entitled day off or allow her to leave the house after dark. But it's not his fault— *"she has nothing to, she has nowhere to go."* *"if we let her go, she'd be gone."*

"I know it's hard... But there's nothing we can do."

D. Disciplining the Migrant Family

Me: How is the relationship with her? Are there any kind of problems?

Eva: It is hard to deal with the current maid because her family members live here. For example, last week, because she's not fluent enough in Arabic, I usually drop her by her mom's house in the mountains every week, on a stormy day I told her we can't go to the mountains because of the weather, you can't imagine how she reacted. She became rude and stopped responding. I couldn't yell at her because she is not my child. We were going to get her husband and hire him as an agricultural worker. I called my husband and told him how she's behaving. So he told her he will not get her husband. We wanted to fly her back to her country, but her brother insisted she will behave and that she stays.

Yea it is really hard dealing with her.

Yesterday for example, for a stupid reason she got mad. She didn't even say good morning back to me as if I am not there. I told her okay look, you want to act in this manner it's okay, but I will tell my husband not to hire your husband.

In 2014 General security issued a directive to begin deporting the children of low-wage migrant workers, accompanied by either one or both of the parents. After

implementing the decision, General security published a statement on their website stating that under the directive these deportations of *category 3 and 4 migrant workers* would be decided on a case-by-case basis. The statement provided no information regarding the basis on which those cases would be decided.

From the language of General Security's directive, we see how the Ministry of Labor's assortment of foreign workers into distinct legal categories based on racialized occupation allows the state to administer decisions and restrictions on migrant workers without making *explicit* reference to nationality. Rather than explicitly stating the specific nationalities subject to the state's action, the state can instead refer to category 3 and 4 workers thus making the differential treatment seem racially innocuous. This language constitutes part of the covert racializing discourse emanating from the state administrative categorizations of occupation, which justify the racially stratified enjoyment of rights by framing their exclusion in non-racial terms: Category 3 and 4 workers, in other words, racialized workers, are prohibited from bringing or having children on Lebanese soil. Category 1 and 2 workers, in other words, primarily Western/European or Arab workers (employed in professional/white collar positions), are not. Thus, we see how General Security directives make discursive use of the Ministry of Labor's classification system in order to conceal the racist policies and practices deployed to regulate migrant labor.

While preexisting residency regulations prevented domestic workers from sponsoring visas for spouses or dependents, children born in Lebanon to migrant parents were previously able to apply for one-year residency permits for their children up until age 4 and renew the residency thereafter provided the child was enrolled in school

(Human Rights Watch, 2014). General Security's decision to begin deporting the children of migrant workers thus constituted an apparent reversal of that policy in effect.

However, after facing mounting pressure from civil society and human rights organizations, General Security halted implementation of the decision. Yet, the following year general security decided to place stricter requirements for renewing the residency permits of domestic workers, including the denial of renewals for not residing in the residence of the employer named as sponsor on the work permit. General Security justified the decision by equating independent residence outside of the employer's home with working for a different sponsor. As we saw in the previous chapter, this juridical coupling of residence with employment status effectively restricts the freedom of movement and right to privacy and indirectly infringes on the right to have a family, and personal life outside the realm of work supervised by their employers.

Furthermore, it is notable that those subjected to legal action due to the new live-in requirement were primarily female workers who had children (around 10,000 or 4% of the MDW population at that time). Thus, it would appear that this implementation of this new restriction was a result of General security's renewed efforts to conceal their policy of deporting migrant worker children, along with their parents (Insan 2016).

Most of the women affected by the decision were long-term residents in Lebanon and had their children while in the country. Faced with these new stringent regulations, migrant worker parents were forced to either leave the country or send their children back to their home countries alone, despite the fact that they had been born in Lebanon, had never lived in the home country of their parents and thus did not speaking the language (Human Rights Watch, 2014). From these dynamics we can see how the

machinations of the kafala system work to prevent social integration and ensure the temporal limits of migrant workers' presence in Lebanon, by denying their right to form or maintain familial or personal social attachments while residing in the country.

According to the testimony of a Malagasy woman, a friend of hers went to general security to renew her child's residency and was told by a General Security officer that "residencies are for people *who come here to work*, not to have children."

E. Conclusion

The General Security policies and practices of denying the right to form familial or romantic attachments in the country by prohibiting marriages and deporting the children of migrant workers, constitute part of the discourse which positions migrant workers as simple commodities rather than human beings entitled to rights and fulfilling lives. By placing strict limitations on migrant worker modes of sociality, General Security practices frame migrant workers' existence in Lebanon purely in terms of their labor potential and denies them social recognition as human beings. Thus, we see how General Security's management of racialized sexual difference feeds into the processes of commodification and inferiorization identified in earlier chapters, which serve to dehumanize, subjugate, and thus more easily exploit racialized labor. Further, from the discourse employed by Khaled, we see how those institutional structures enter the imaginary of Lebanese employers and work to justify the exploitative and dehumanizing treatment they inflict on their workers.

After facing significant criticism from human rights organizations for their practice of deporting migrant workers' children, General Security officials issued a statement explaining the logic behind its administrative decisions. In a 2017 letter to

Human Rights Watch, General Security officials explained, “Fourth and third category workers are not entitled to bring their children with them during their work-period in Lebanon. As for marriage and procreation in Lebanon, these entail obstacles that are *difficult to achieve* without violating many laws and regulations, specifically the labor and residency laws.”

Here, General Security is essentially admitting that the institutional structure of the state serves to restrict the marital and social relations of migrant workers. Given the backlash triggered by their issued ‘love ban,’ the agency instead relies on an ambiguous web of laws and regulations that make the conduct of such relationships “difficult to achieve,” but not formally illegal or impossible, thereby shielding itself from any legal violation with respect to the written laws. Thus we see how the state agencies rely upon the ambiguous configuration of the kafala system’s structure in order to conceal their oppressive practices which often run in contravention to established international and human rights standards.

Further, the letter stated that:

“the existence of a child means the existence of a father, which brings us to the nationality of the father. If the father is Lebanese, the Lebanese state will not deport the mother of a Lebanese against her will. If the father is a foreigner, the issue of the child guardianship will be decided by religious courts, which, as mentioned above don’t give any consideration to the parents’ nationalities.”

Thus, a domestic worker and her child may gain social (and legal) recognition if the father is Lebanese. Yet, the Lebanese father must choose to publicly and legally recognize the child as his, in order to allow for a stay in deportation. Therefore, any birth that occurs as a result of prostitution, rape, affairs, illicit behavior in general would not gain recognition and the mother (and child) would be deported. Even if the Lebanese man and domestic worker were engaged in a consensual, romantic

relationship, he may still choose not to recognize the child. Thus, we see how the state relies on sexual difference as a biopolitical tool to exclude migrant workers and their children from accessing rights to citizenship or long-term residence through the establishment of personal relationships with Lebanese individuals.

Under this arrangement, Lebanese men are endowed as the arbiters of legitimacy in the sexual and romantic lives of domestic workers. Thus, they can freely engage in a sexual relationship with a migrant worker, without any fear of being held legally responsible for a child that results from the encounter.

As we saw from the experiences of Sebastian and his parents, family power dynamics work to maintain the homogeneity and discipline of the family. Lebanese familial anxieties over racial intermarriage were further reflected in the experience of Diana, who had discussed the topic of marriage with the Lebanese man she had been dating (unbeknownst to her employer). Though the idea of marriage was a nonstarter from the beginning, as her madam “would never allow it,” the family of her would be suitor also presented a significant barrier to juridically formalizing the romantic relation. As she explained, their relationship received the pointed castigation of his brother when he found out his brother had been secreting a Filipina girlfriend: “what are you doing wasting time with these Filipinas, man, you have to marry a Lebanese woman.”

[Diana’s paraphrasing]

From his brother’s expressed disapproval, we see how the juridical process of marriage as recognized by the state works to configure cultural notions of belonging and appropriateness in relation to racial and sexual difference. Diana as a racialized, non-citizen woman does not belong to a category of subject that is capable of participating in the state sanctioned rituals of marriage.

The state's recognition of personal relationships through the institution of marriage thus becomes a site of supervision from which the state can employ the confluence of racial and sexual difference to maintain the neat and rigid boundaries of racial segregation in the course of everyday personal and romantic relationships. These power dynamics thus position female migrant bodies as temporary and transient sexual objects to be consumed as they desire. As a result, racialized women are dehumanized and subjected to frequent and various forms of sexual harassment and sexual violence.

When I asked Diana how her boyfriend understood and negotiated the role of race in their relationship, in light of his family's racist disapproval, she responded by mentioning that he was quite poor, and that he was open minded— thus allowing him to be comfortable dating a Filipina woman. Her response thus indicates the role that *class* plays in negotiating divisions and hierarchies of race. Those who are poor already occupy the lower strata of the social hierarchy, and therefore experience a lower marginal deterioration in social capital when engaging in a formalized romantic relation with a racialized 'other.' Though, as his brother's castigation demonstrates, desire and potential for upward social mobility reemerge to exact the opportunity costs of choosing a racialized wife.

F. Zakaria

Zakaria fled Sri Lanka after enduring a life of abject poverty in an abusive household. She sought refuge with an associate of the family who worked as an intermediary facilitating the migration of Sri Lankan women to work in Lebanese households. The situation of irrevocable poverty that surrounded her enticed her to travel to Lebanon to work as a domestic worker in 2006. Yet, as she would find out the

conditions that awaited her in Lebanon rivaled those she attempted to escape back in Sri Lanka. In her new role as a domestic worker, Zakaria was subjected to frequent beatings and daily derision from her Lebanese ‘madam.’

The only reprieve from the abuse of her madam was the haphazard interventions of the ‘mister’ who, unlike his “vicious” wife, took pity on Zakaria upon observing the torture to which his wife subjected her, and he eventually assented to grant her release from their employment. As domestic workers are required to obtain the permission of their sponsors in order to terminate the work contract and formally quit their position, his signature was an imperative precondition to her release.

During that time, Zakaria had come to meet Ahmed, the Bangladeshi nator in charge of the building. He noticed the abusive conditions under which she was living and, upon helping her secure the ‘mister’s’ agreement for her release from the daily abuse of the authoritative madam, he helped her find a second kafil, as was required in order for her to maintain her residency in the country after securing freedom from her previous abusive employer. Thus, with the help of Ahmed, Zakaria left the trappings of an abusive and derisive employer and began work for a second madam in the same building, who luckily did not share her first employer’s abusive tendencies.

As she settled into her role with her new sponsor and newfound ‘freedom,’ Zakaria and Ahmed grew close, eventually striking up a romantic relationship and resolving to get married. Her madam, being one of the ‘good’ employers, agreed to arrange the paperwork necessary to formalize the marriage between Zakaria and Ahmed.

Thus, Zakaria left behind the trappings of domestic work and settled into married life with Ahmed. Despite the legal precarity that attended his informal

sponsorship arrangement, she and her husband were able to muster a decent standard of living, eventually opening a small (informal) business and extracting a laudable profit off which to live and grow their family.

However, after having her second child, Ahmed was detained by general security and held in Adlieh detention center for 3 months. Apparently, a member of the Bangladeshi community had informed General Security that Ahmed had been working for a different sponsor than the one listed on his work permit, a criminal act under the legal guidelines set forth by the Kafala system. During his detention, Zakaria did everything she could to secure his release, leveraging all of their assets for bribes and lawyers who said they could help, but to no avail. After three months of detention, Ahmed was deported back to Bangladesh, leaving Zakaria and her two children to fend for themselves. Because she had married and given birth to children while residing in Lebanon, Zakaria's work and residency status had become invalid. Her invalid residency status leaves her with the informal job market to procure short term employment on which to sustain a living.

Zakaria currently resides in a nator's room in an apartment building in Basta with her 3 children, now ages 6, 4, and 3. While Zakaria had only 2 children of her own, she now takes care of a third child, after finding the infant abandoned in a dumpster. The child was born to a Bangladeshi mother and Lebanese father. Given General Security's policy of denying residency renewals to migrant workers who have children, the mother could not claim the child and risk losing her ability to work and reside legally in the country. Though legally empowered to do so as a Lebanese citizen, the Lebanese father refused to claim his mixed-race child. Despite being without a job and having two other children to look after, Zakaria takes care of the child as if it were her

own. The three of them reside in small room in the basement of the Basta apartment building, with one old, rusting metal-framed bunk bed, a rotting kitchen sink and stove and makeshift toilet next to the dilapidated kitchenette area.

Zakaria: I have 2 kids, but there was one kid that was thrown away, so I took it and raised it. But nobody knows.

Padma: nobody knows I know. But she is the great mother. Look haram how the baby is there, in the trash, in the trash. There is so many Bangladesh like this...

Zakaria: yeah a lot, a lot, they have the baby and they throw it.

Padma: yeah, they cannot do anything, so they do prostitution, then they get pregnant, what they do? Just they throw it in the garbage and put and throw it. You know? So many people. Nobody knows.

On a nearly nightly basis, Zakaria withstands the aggressive advances of drunken men from the neighborhood, coming to her door offering 5,000 Lira for the implied sexual favors. She has also endured repeated attempts at sexual assault by the caretaker of the building, who finally halted his harassment after Zakaria entreated the intervention of one of the residents of the building, a Lebanese school teacher who, upon learning of Zakaria's precarious situation, deployed her power (as a Lebanese citizen and tenet of the building in which he works) over the nator to leave her alone, threatening to expose his behavior to the rest of the tenants and owner of the building. Her irregular status denies her access to any form of protection under the law:

Me: After this happened did you go to the police or anything?

Zakaria: no, I can't now, because I don't have an Iqama. If I had an iqama, then I could go to the police for help and tell him what happened, but I don't have anything.

Her oldest son Salim is also subjected to racist abuse by their neighbors and his classmates at school. Zakaria's youngest two children just started attending a school run by the NGO Caritas, after she was finally able to secure enough to make the monthly

payments which add up to \$275 per year per child. However, Salim, being particularly bright, attends a private school in a nearby area for the steep price of \$1,000 year. After fighting back against the racist torments of his classmates, Salim was thrown out of his first school, leaving Zakaria to search for another willing to accept him, despite not having a valid residency permit, which is requirement to enroll in Lebanon's public schools (Human Rights Watch, 2014).

Zakaria: I went to 100 schools. We went around and around and around, all of them were Lebanese, maybe I won't go to school, no one would take him

Me: oh okay so there was no explanation? Or what was the explanation?

Zakaria: because there's no father. There's no iqama. I don't have an iqama

Finally, Zakaria was able to find a school that would accept him, and he is now the school's top student with an A+ GPA average. Yet, his enrollment in the school is conditional on the continued monthly installments of tuition payments. If Zakaria fails to meet the next installment of the tuition in the coming month, he will be back out of school.

Me: okay so in the school now, he doesn't have problems with racism or anything?

Z: no, the school just wants money. As long as we pay, he can go to school, if there's no money, he can't study. If there's one month that I don't pay, they'll throw him out.

As Salim arrives home from school, he endures the taunts of his neighbors: 'oh hey donkey, how was school donkey?' One Lebanese man in their building comes down to their room to enlist Salim in various household tasks and manual labor around his apartment.

Soft spoken with a swift command of the Arabic language, Zakaria's calm demeanor belies the horrid abuses and torment she has withstood over the course of the 13 years she has lived in Lebanon. For Zakaria, despite her impressive resilience and unyielding perseverance, with no iqama, no job, no spousal support (her husband remarried after being deported back to Bangladesh), and upcoming school payments due, the future looks quite bleak.

She has applied for refugee status with the UNHCR so she can get valid residency documents and is currently waiting for a decision on her status. However, given that Lebanon hosts the highest refugee population per capita in the world and that the government ordered UNHCR to stop registering Syrian refugees back in 2015, it is highly unlikely she will receive any sort of designation or assistance from UNHCR, particularly given that she "*chose*" to come to Lebanon as a domestic worker, rather than fleeing violent conflict. Thus, few avenues remain for her to sustain the existence of herself and her three children.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

In Lebanese social discourse, notions of citizenship and temporality often emerge as justifications for the stringent impositions of class and the observed inequalities which manifest along the lines of racial difference. Such covert racializing discourses rely on divisions of class, citizenship and gender in order to justify discrimination and dispel accusations of racism or abuses of power. The status of migrant workers as non-citizens and association with distant and impoverished countries thus provide credible justification for the differential treatment and vastly unequal standards of living within Lebanese social imaginaries.

National origin, conveyed in the visibility of race, is the feature which underscores the exclusion of migrant workers from Lebanese labor protections and exemptions from internationally recognized standards of human rights. So as national origin provides the exemption from free market 'price controls' (i.e. minimum wage) implemented to protect Lebanese workers, race then emerges as a price mechanism which determines and expresses the value of the racialized labor performed. So by segmenting the foreign labor force by nationality, and issuing legal exemptions based on occupational stratum, the state can maintain the free market dynamics of the racialized labor market which push down labor costs for Lebanese employers, while still protecting and preventing competition with the jobs and benefits of Lebanese workers.

The Lebanese minimum wage is \$450 per month. Yet, domestic workers on average earn a salary of \$150-250 a month, far below the minimum established by law. The article 7 exclusion of domestic work from the provisions of the Lebanese labor

code not only allows employers to pay their employees well below the minimum wage, but then also allows **race** to function as the price mechanism which determines the wage, rather than skills and experience. The visibility of their national origin embodied by the aspect of race, visually calls into the imagination the workers place of origin. The worker's wage can thus be discursively justified through the adjustment of their received wage to the going market rate of wages offered in their home countries.

Nadim is an American-Lebanese property owner and manager who manages his family's various guest houses throughout the country. He grew up in the US and then moved to Lebanon after graduating college to work with his father in managing the family properties. He employs a domestic worker from Ethiopia in one of his guest houses which he advertises through the popular home rental networking site Airbnb.

"my American side obviously thinks the racism and what happens to migrant workers is really bad and something needs to be done about it, but my Lebanese side is thinking that, what, these people are making the equivalent of like \$50 a month in their home countries? and so they come here and can earn \$100/\$200 a month. So the situation is much better for them here because they can make more money and send it back home to their families."

From Nadim's discursive rendering of his thought process when trying to reconcile the moral problematic of domestic workers earning such a low salary, we see how qualifications of citizenship and national identity emerge to justify the pronounced wage differential. It's compelling that he offers two varying perceptions on the issue based on his dual positionality as both an American and Lebanese citizen. By making reference to the American context of racism as a comparison, he demonstrates the imaginative role that citizenship plays in justifying discrimination of workers in the Lebanese context. In the US, where the primary association or understanding of racism comes from the discrimination subjugation of black Americans (stemming from the

historical legacy of chattel slavery), the racialized group (blacks) are US citizens, and therefore citizenship cannot be operationalized as a tool for constructing race.¹¹

This is why from the vantage point of an American he sees the pronounced wage differential and labor conditions and calls it racism. Yet, his Lebanese perspective emerges to disrupt this understanding, by drawing attention to the fact that they are not Lebanese citizens, and come from distant, impoverished countries, in which their employment opportunities would probably be much worse. Thus, in his recognition of their status as non-citizens, we see how he draws on neoliberal discourses which frame migrant labor as a rational, individual economic choice, given that migrants choose voluntarily to emigrate and can find higher wages abroad.

Just as biological notions of primitiveness and inferiority ascribed to *physiological* differences between black and white people proliferated around Plantations in the Caribbean and American south, the oppression of racialized global labor is justified and maintained through notions of primitiveness and inferiority ascribed to *national* difference, and their positionality in global hierarchies of capitalist advancement and development. Such modernizing discourses which assume a linear and monolithic path toward modernization and development through Western models of economic liberalization belie the exploitative and oppressive manner in which modern Western societies were forged and work to justify the dehumanizing and oppressive treatment of racialized migrant labor.

Here we see how distinctions in citizenship— real and imagined, practical and discursive— are central to the manner in which racial difference is constructed and understood in Lebanese imaginaries.

¹¹ Though, historically it was and it is, increasingly so, a central concept in the construction of race for Latinx/Hispanic-Americans and migrant workers

A. Here and There

The racial distinctiveness of migrant workers immediately calls into imagination their origins from third world countries. Upon recognition of that racial distinctiveness, capitalist understandings of modernization and hierarchies of development emerge to categorize and justify their experience— they come here and labor under tough conditions, but these conditions are similar to or better than those they have in their own countries and coming to work here will allow them to make money and go back and improve their conditions at home.

So while discourses of sovereignty and citizenship and the strict demarcations and enforcement of national boundaries work to ensure the temporality of migrant workers and hence justify their exclusion from society and lack of political, social and economic rights, those borders then become porous, fluid, mobile, globalized when making justifications for their inferiorized condition— by positioning their existence within a transnational capitalist framework that allows for categorizations and hierarchization of rights and entitlements based on country of origin conditions and standards of living.

One of my domestic worker interlocutors, a young woman from Ethiopia, described to me how her ‘madam’ rationalized a prohibition on drinking a cup of coffee. When she asked to have some of the coffee leftover from the pot she had prepared for the family, her ‘madam’ refused, proclaiming, “no, why do you need to have coffee, they don’t have coffee in Ethiopia.” Despite the inaccuracy of her assertion (Ethiopia is a major producer and exporter of coffee, and can be found in many of Beirut’s upscale cafes), or perhaps because of it, we see how discursively and imaginatively placing her in her home country allows the Lebanese individual to justify to themselves the various

forms of abuse, discrimination, exploitation they inflict and/or observe as they participate in the exploitative sponsorship system.

Yes, they do come from impoverished countries where the standard of living is already low and opportunities to procure employment are fewer; but does this mean they should be attacked on the streets of Beirut? That they should be subjected to sexual, physical and verbal abuse to the point where they resort to jumping from balconies?

These discourses that call on the generalized living standards their country of origin — *there* — thus work to justify and conceal the rampant inequality and abuse under the institutional structure of the immigration system in Lebanon— *here*. As a result, the inequalities they face are understood as the justified outcome of the requisite neoliberal processes of advancement and development, rather than a form of structural violence inflicted by the local institutional structure of labor regulation, as well as the broader processes of globalization and racialized labor migration brought on by the consolidation of global capitalism.

So recalling the counterfactual conditions in their country of origin not only conceals *blame* but also removes *responsibility* for improving the exploitative conditions to which they are subjected here in Lebanon — because the suffering and injustice caused by widespread global poverty is seen as something inevitable, unavoidable— and the only way to fix it is to apply the same solutions undertaken by developed countries, namely, economic liberalization and neoliberal restructuring.

Thus, we see how the space between here and there— between country of destination and country of origin— becomes ground for capitalist denials of their

humanity and right to a decent life reserved for middle class and affluent Lebanese and Western or Arab foreigners.

These hierarchies of birthplace rely on nationalist discourses which advocate strict exercises of sovereignty in the separation of citizen and non-citizen. Our disciplined and dutiful recognition of borders, of citizenship, passports, visas, and the sovereign exercises of power bestowed on them, are the instruments used to justify, differentiate, exclude, exploit, oppress, abuse and kill racialized migrant workers. Yet, the responsibility for what happens within those borders is excavated from that oppressive, sovereign terrain and transferred to the province of globalization: let them create and enjoy political rights, economic opportunity, social mobility in their own countries— but not here.

These countervailing nationalist and globalist discourses thus work in tandem, operating as a pendulum—to oscillate, maneuver, define, demarcate, restrict, and justify—in order to uphold and maintain racist and oppressive systems of labor migration. It is this tension between *here* and *there*, between nationalism and globalization, between exclusion and cosmopolitanism, between sovereignty and decentralization, that enables, justifies, conceals, and maintains the emergence and exploitation of a racialized global labor force. And subsequently, *race* becomes the paradigm and the instrument of control through which those disparate pieces are ruptured refracted, and reassembled to create exclusionary democratic societies—that flaunt their cosmopolitanism—the ‘Paris of the Middle East’— but won’t let a Sri Lankan woman open a restaurant offering Sri Lankan cuisine; that boast about openness and diversity, but don’t let black women enter swimming pools; that champion their progressive education system, but won’t allow black child to enroll in their schools.

The words of Lebanon’s foreign minister Gebran Bassil, disseminated to the public in a 2017 tweet, summarize it best:

“We are racist in our Lebanese identity, enlightened in our composition, international in our spread” (Bassil 2017).



Figure 6.1. A Tweet Posted By Lebanon’s Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil.

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