
Lived experiences, relationships and expressions of womanhood of Cape Verdean female migrants in Greater Lisbon

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Résumé

This paper intends to explore the ways in which Cape Verdean female migrants express and assert their womanhood. It is based on fieldwork mainly in Greater Lisbon and proposes four cases for comparison. All include a woman who left Cape Verde while single and is now a working mother. The first case bears some resemblance to a typical European conception of marriage but is at the same time full of challenges that a Cape Verdean couple, especially the female, has to face. The second situation concerns a woman who defends her independence from men so fiercely that she almost seems to despise fellow Cape Verdeans who cry over a failed relationship. The third case relates the story of yet another woman who, for love, eventually married a Cape Verdean working in France that had initially proposed to pay her for marriage in order to obtain the Portuguese nationality. The last case is a divorce with a white Angolan. From it, a young Cape Verdean learned to live a life of relative liberty travelling to various countries. It is hoped that a contrastive study of the above experiences of Cape Verdean women demonstrates how they navigate through a sea of multiple and overlapping identities and belongings. They reassess and appropriate interpersonal and spatial relationships with reference to distinct ideas and criteria drawn from their migratory experiences. Taken together, their lived experiences reflect on their self-image as a woman, mother, migrant and member of society.

Mots-Clés: Afrique de l'Ouest, îles, migration, mariage, maternité

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