MIGRATION AND ALIENATION: JAPANESE BRAZILIAN ETHNIC RETURN MIGRANTS AND THE SEARCH FOR HOMELAND ABROAD

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This presentation explores the relationship between migration and homeland by examining the ethnic “return migration” of second and third generation Japanese Brazilians from Brazil to Japan. Although the Japanese Brazilians in Brazil had positively imagined Japan as their country of ethnic origin, when they migrate to Japan, it does not feel like an ethnic homeland for them because they are socially alienated as culturally foreign, unskilled immigrant workers despite their Japanese descent. Such negative experiences as well as their homesickness for Brazil causes them to nostalgically reconceptualize their country of birth in positive terms as the true homeland where they really belong. In this manner, homelands are often discovered through the migration process since a country of origin is experienced as an emotionally charged place of longing only when it is left behind. The experiences of the Japanese Brazilians will be briefly compared to the Japanese Americans, who are the other major group in the “Japanese diaspora.”

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4:00 p.m., Anthropology 340
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