

## **Stressful Crossing: How Black Immigrants' Health is Immobilized in Houston**

Immigrants face disproportionate levels of structural and interpersonal stress and discrimination, though the impact of discrimination is not the same across immigrant groups. In the United States, foreign-born individuals from a non-Anglophone country and/or non-white racial identity face significantly higher levels of discrimination than white individuals from European nations<sup>1</sup>. Recognizing that Texas has the third largest concentration of Black immigrants<sup>2</sup>, and a quarter of the Houston metropolitan area population was born in another country<sup>3</sup>, this research is part of a multi-year project that seeks to ask two questions: (1) how does the stress of immigration to the United States through Texas contribute to health disparities amongst Black immigrants?; and (2) how can community engagement with Black immigrants help enhance their well-being as they seek to build a new life in Houston while facing different forms of bureaucratic dispossession?

[Dr. Amarily Estrella](#), assistant professor in anthropology, and [Dr. Victoria Massie](#), assistant professor in anthropology, are leading this research as part of [BRIDGE](#). They are focusing on a definition of statelessness to describe how the racialization of foreignness shapes Black immigrants' health. Their aim is to connect Black immigrants' health to the arduous processes of migration that contribute to their holistic wellbeing, which includes (but is not exclusive to): learning a new language; managing the bureaucratic entanglements of city, state, and federal policies; having appropriate institutional support like access to health services, legal assistance, and housing – all of which are compounded by factors such as race, class, gender, disability, nationality, and documentation status<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Boswell, R.A. (2003), Racism and U.S. Immigration Law: Prospects for Reform After "9/11?". *Journal of Gender*, 315(7). Available at: [https://repository.uchastings.edu/faculty\\_scholarship/58](https://repository.uchastings.edu/faculty_scholarship/58)

Douglas, K. M., Sáenz, R., & Murga, A. L. (2015). Immigration in the era of color-blind racism. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 59(11), 1429-1451.

<sup>2</sup> Morgan-Trostle, J, Zheng, K, & Lipscombe, C. (2020). The State of Black Immigrants.

<sup>3</sup> Capps, R., & Soto, A. G. R. (2018). A Profile of Houston's Diverse Immigrant Population in a Rapidly Changing Policy Landscape. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/profile-houston-immigrant-population-changing-policy-landscape>

<sup>4</sup> Douglas, K. M., Sáenz, R., & Murga, A. L. (2015). Immigration in the era of color-blind racism. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 59(11), 1429-1451.

Garcini, L. M., Chen, M. A., Brown, R. L., Galvan, T., Saucedo, L., Cardoso, J. A. B., & Fagundes, C. P. (2018). Kicks Hurt Less: Discrimination predicts distress beyond trauma among undocumented Mexican immigrants. *Psychology of Violence*, 8(6), 692–701. <https://doi.org/10.1037/vio0000205>

Garcini, L. M., Galvan, T., Brown, R., Chen, M., Klonoff, E. A., Ziauddin, K., & Fagundes, C. P. (2020). Miles over mind: Transnational death and its association with psychological distress among undocumented Mexican immigrants. *Death Studies*, 44(6), 357–365. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2019.1573862>

Garcini, L. M., Galvan, T., Peña, J. M., Klonoff, E. A., Parra-Medina, D., Ziauddin, K., & Fagundes, C. P. (2019). "A high price paid": Migration-related loss and distress among undocumented Mexican immigrants. *Journal of Latinx Psychology*, 7(3), 245–255. <https://doi.org/10.1037/lat0000127>

To support their work and expand on the community engagement element of the project, the participating students will develop a literature review focusing on statelessness and health while also developing a stakeholder map of the Houston area. The aim is to develop partnerships with community organizations to enhance the development of community-level knowledge and research training on health disparities that can be leveraged to meet the material needs of Black immigrants in the Houston area. Overall, this project is about bridging academic and community conversations through interdisciplinary collaboration (across the psychological sciences and anthropology, in particular) to foster creative ideas and actions that center the well-being of Black immigrant communities in Houston, a necessary step to equity and justice.

**During the Fall semester of 2023, this Houston Action Research Team will:**

- Develop a literature review around the ideas of statelessness, health, immigration, and equity
- Develop an understanding of current organizations, spaces, and locations that are supporting/focused on Black immigrants in Houston
- Develop a stakeholder mapping, including a digital map/visuals, of relevant stakeholders in the Houston area
- Conduct informational interviews with organizations in the Houston community supporting Black immigrant experiences to refine future resources and training
- Regularly share and discuss information collected during weekly team meetings
- Create an oral presentation with a slide deck for a large audience of relevant stakeholders on and off campus. Students will also submit a reflection that synthesizes their experience during the semester.

**This engaged research opportunity is available to Rice undergraduate students for Fall of 2023.** An interdisciplinary team of four students, each of whom will bring different, but equally important, skills, knowledge, and experiences, will undertake this project. Team members will each work approximately 10 hours per week on this project between **August 28** and **December 12** under the guidance of **Dr. Amarilys Estrella** and **Dr. Victoria Massie**, the CCL and a graduate student team advisor, and will receive \$10/hour for their project work. Work time will be flexible, although team members must attend weekly meetings and must coordinate time to work with other team members on the project as needed. Undergraduate students from **all fields of study** with interests and/or skills in at least some of the following areas are encouraged to apply:

Black studies; immigration studies; public health studies; ArcGIS/digital mapping; digital humanities; science & technology studies; professional writing; public presentations; teamwork; community engagement

*In addition to the above areas, students with language proficiency in French, Spanish, and/or Haitian Creole are particularly encouraged to apply*

**APPLICATIONS ARE DUE Friday, August 18<sup>th</sup> at 9am**

Include InfoReady link

To inquire or apply contact Dr. Verónica Reyna [vr33@rice.edu](mailto:vr33@rice.edu)  
For more about Rice's HART Program, visit: <http://ccl.rice.edu/hart>