

strategy that is both familiar and altogether new. ~~They are attempting to capitalize on the very global linkages that exploit them. These poor single mothers are not simply using sex work in a tourist town with European clients as a survival strategy; they are using it as an advancement strategy.~~

The key aims of this strategy are marriage and migration off the island. But even short of these goals, Sosúa holds out special promise to its sex workers, who can establish ongoing transnational relationships with the aid of technologies such as fax machines at the phone company in town (the foreign clients and the women communicate about the men's return visits in this manner) and international money wires from clients overseas. Sosúa's sex trade also stands apart from that of many other sex-tourist destinations in the developing world in that it does not operate through pimps, nor is it tied to the drug trade; young women are not trafficked to Sosúa, and as a result they maintain a good deal of control over their working conditions.

Certainly, these women still risk rape, beatings, and arrest; the sex trade is dangerous, and Sosúa's is no exception. Nonetheless, Dominican women are not coerced into Sosúa's trade but rather end up there through networks of female family members and friends who have worked there. Without pimps, sex workers keep all their earnings; they are essentially working freelance. They can choose the bars and nightclubs in which to hang out, the number of hours they work, the clients with whom they will work, and the amount of money to charge.

There has been considerable debate over whether sex work can be anything but exploitative. The stories of Dominican women in Sosúa help demonstrate that there is a wide range of experiences within the sex trade, some of them beneficial, others tragic.<sup>3</sup> As Anne McClintock writes, "Depicting all sex workers as slaves only travesties the myriad, different experiences of sex workers around the world. At the same time, it theoretically confuses social agency and identity with social context."<sup>4</sup> I have been particularly alarmed at the media's monolithic portrayal of sex workers in sex-tourist destinations, such as Cuba, as passive victims easily lured by the glitter of consumer goods. These overly simplistic and implicitly moralizing stories deny that poor women are capable of making their own labor choices.<sup>5</sup> The women I encountered in Sosúa had something else to say.

## Selling Sex for Visas: Sex Tourism as a Stepping-stone to International Migration

DENISE BRENNAN

On the eve of her departure for Germany to marry her German client-turned-boyfriend, Andrea, a Dominican sex worker, spent the night with her Dominican boyfriend.<sup>1</sup> When I dropped by the next morning to wish her well, her Dominican boyfriend was still asleep. She stepped outside, onto her porch. She could not lie about her feelings for her soon-to-be husband. "No," she said, "it's not love." But images of an easier life for herself and her two daughters compelled her to migrate off the island and out of poverty. She put love aside—at least temporarily.<sup>2</sup>

Andrea, like many Dominican sex workers in Sosúa, a small town on the north coast of the Dominican Republic, makes a distinction between marriage *por amor* (for love) and marriage *por residencia* (for visas). After all, why waste a marriage certificate on romantic love when it can be transformed into a visa to a new land and economic security?

Since the early 1990s, Sosúa has been a popular vacation spot for male European sex tourists, especially Germans. Poor women migrate from throughout the Dominican Republic to work in Sosúa's sex trade; there, they hope to meet and marry foreign men who will sponsor their migration to Europe. By migrating to Sosúa, these women are engaged in an economic

### Sex Workers and Sex Tourists

Sex workers in Sosúa are at once independent and dependent, resourceful and exploited. They are local agents caught in a web of global economic relations. To the extent that they can, they try to take advantage of the men who are in Sosúa to take advantage of them. The European men who frequent Sosúa's bars might see Dominican sex workers as exotic and erotic because of their dark skin color; they might pick one woman over another in the crowd, viewing them all as commodities for their pleasure and control. But Dominican sex workers often see the men, too, as readily exploitable—potential dupes, walking visas, means by which the women might leave the island, and poverty, behind.

Even though only a handful of women have actually married European men and migrated off the island, the possibility of doing so inspires women to move to Sosúa from throughout the island and to take up sex work. Once there, however, Dominican sex workers are beholden to their European clients to deliver visa sponsorships, marriage proposals, and airplane tickets. Because of the differential between sex workers and their clients in terms of mobility, citizenship, and socioeconomic status, these Dominican sex workers might seem to occupy situations parallel to those that prevail among sex workers throughout the developing world. Indeed, I will recount stories here of disappointment, lies, and unfulfilled dreams. Yet some women make modest financial gains through Sosúa's sex trade—gains that exceed what they could achieve working in export-processing zones or domestic service, two common occupations among poor Dominican women. These jobs, on average, yield fewer than 1,000 pesos (\$100) a month, whereas sex workers in Sosúa charge approximately 500 pesos for each encounter with a foreign client.

Sex tourism, it is commonly noted, is fueled by the fantasies of white, First-World men who exoticize dark-skinned "native" bodies in the developing world, where they can buy sex for cut-rate prices. **These two components—racial stereotypes and the economic disparity between the developed and the developing worlds—**characterize sex-tourist destinations everywhere. But male sex tourists are not the only ones who travel to places like Sosúa to fulfill their fantasies. Many Dominican sex workers look to their clients as

sources not only of money, marriage, and visas, but also of greater gender equity than they can hope for in the households they keep with Dominican men. Some might hope for romance and love, but most tend to fantasize about greater resources and easier lives.

Yet even for the women with the most pragmatic expectations, there are few happy endings. During the time I spent with sex workers in Sosúa, I, too, became invested in the fantasies that sustained them through their struggles. Although I learned to anticipate their return from Europe, disillusioned and divorced, I continued to hope that they would find financial security and loving relationships. Similarly, Sosúa's sex workers built their fantasies around the stories of their few peers who managed to migrate as the girlfriends or wives of European tourists—even though nearly all of these women returned, facing downward mobility when they did so. Though only a handful of women regularly receive money wires from clients in Europe, the stories of those who do circulate among sex workers like Dominicanized versions of Hollywood's *Pretty Woman*.

The women who pursue these fantasies in Sosúa tend to be pushed by poverty and single motherhood. Of the fifty women I interviewed and the scores of others I met, only two were not mothers. The practice of consensual unions (of not marrying but living together), common among the poor in the Dominican Republic, often leads to single motherhood, which then puts women under significant financial pressure. Typically, these women receive no financial assistance from their children's fathers. I met very few sex workers who had sold sex before migrating to Sosúa, and I believe that the most decisive factor propelling these women into the sex trade is their status as single mothers. Many women migrated to Sosúa within days of their partners' departure from the household and their abandonment of their financial obligations to their children.

Most women migrated from rural settings with meager job opportunities, among them sporadic agricultural work, low-wage hairstyling out of one's home, and waitressing. The women from Santo Domingo, the nation's capital, had also held low-paying jobs, working in domestic service or in *zonas francas* (export-processing zones). Women who sell sex in Sosúa earn more money, more quickly than they can in any other legal job available to poor women with limited educations (most have not finished school past their early teens) and skills. These women come from *los pobres*, the poorest

class in the Dominican Republic, and they simply do not have the social networks that would enable them to land work, such as office jobs, that offer security or mobility. Rather, their female-based social networks can help them find factory jobs, domestic work, restaurant jobs, or sex work.

Sex work offers women the possibility of making enough money to start a savings account while covering their own expenses in Sosúa and their children's expenses back home. These women tend to leave their children in the care of female family members, but they try to visit and to bring money at least once a month. If their home communities are far away and expensive to get to, they return less frequently. Those who manage to save money use it to buy or build homes back in their home communities. Alternatively, they might try to start small businesses, such as *colmados* (small grocery stores), out of their homes.

While saving money is not possible in factory or domestic work, sex workers, in theory at least, make enough money to build up modest savings. In practice, however, it is costly to live in Sosúa. Rooms in boardinghouses rent for 30 to 50 pesos a day, while apartments range from 1,500 to 3,000 pesos a month, and also incur start-up costs that most women cannot afford (such as money for a bed and cooking facilities). Since none of the boardinghouses have kitchens, women must spend more for take-out or restaurant meals. On top of these costs, they must budget for bribes to police officers (for release from jail), since sex workers usually are arrested two to five times a month. To make matters worse, the competition for clients is so fierce, particularly during the low-volume tourist seasons, that days can go by before a woman finds a client. Many sex workers earn just enough to cover their daily expenses in Sosúa while sending home modest remittances for their children. Realizing this, and missing their children, most women return to their home communities in less than a year, just as poor as when they first arrived.

In order to grasp why Dominican women would use the sex trade in Sosúa as a way to migrate overseas, it helps to consider how the past three decades of Dominican migration to New York have led many Dominicans to look outside (*fuera*) for solutions to economic problems inside Dominican

So adept are Dominicans at migrating off the island that Ninna Sørensen even calls them "natives" to transnational space.<sup>6</sup> The quest for a visa to Canada, the United States, and now to Europe is virtually a national pastime. The Dominican musician Juan Luis Guerra captures this pre-

occupation with *fuera* and the visas to get there in his hit song *Visa para un sueño* (Visa for a Dream). One of Eugenia Georges's<sup>7</sup> interviewees summed up how class and opportunity are tied to migration networks to New York: "In the Dominican Republic there are three kinds of people: the rich, the poor, and those who travel to New York." Some would-be migrants are so desperate to get off the island that they take dangerous *yolas* (small boats or rafts) to Puerto Rico. Feigning love appears, at the very least, to be less risky.

The sex workers I interviewed, who generally have no immediate family members abroad, have never had reliable transnational resources available to them. Not only do they not receive remittances but they cannot migrate legally through family sponsorship. They act as surrogate family-migration networks. Consequently, migration to Sosúa from other parts of the Dominican Republic can be seen as both internal and international, since Sosúa is a stepping-stone to migration to other countries. For some poor young women, hanging out in the tourist bars of Sosúa is a better use of their time than waiting in line at the United States embassy in Santo Domingo. Carla, a first-time sex worker, explained why Sosúa draws women from throughout the country: "We come here because we dream of a ticket," she said, referring to an airline ticket. But without a visa—which they can obtain through marriage—that airline ticket is of little use.

Just as sex workers build their fantasies around their communities' experiences of migration, the fantasies sex tourists hope to enact in Sosúa are often first suggested through informal networks of other sex tourists. Sosúa first became known among European tourists by word of mouth. Most of the sex tourists I met in Sosúa had been to other sex-tourist destinations as well. These seasoned sex tourists, many of whom told me that they were "bored" with other destinations, decided to try Sosúa and Dominican women based on the recommendations of friends. This was the case for a group of German sex tourists who were drinking at a bar on the beach. They nodded when the German bar owner explained, "Dominican girls like to fuck." One customer chimed in, "With German women it's over quickly. But Dominican women have fiery blood. . . . When the sun is shining it gives you more hormones."

The Internet is likely to increase the traffic of both veteran and first-time

sex tourists to previously little-known destinations like Sosúa. On-line travel services provide names of "tour guides" and local bars in sex-tourism hot spots. On the World Sex Guide, a Web site on which sex tourists share information about their trips, one sex tourist wrote that he was impressed by the availability of "dirt cheap colored girls" in Sosúa, while another gloated, "When you enter the discos, you feel like you're in heaven! A tremendous number of cute girls and something for everyone's taste (if you like colored girls like me)!"

As discussions and pictures of Dominican women proliferate on the Internet sites—for "travel services" for sex tourists, pen-pal services, and even cyber classified advertisements in which foreign men "advertise" for Dominican girlfriends or brides—Dominican women are increasingly often associated with sexual availability. A number of articles in European magazines and newspapers portray Dominican women as sexually voracious. The German newspaper *Express* even published a seven-day series on the sex trade in Sosúa, called "Sex, Boozing, and Sunburn," which included this passage: "Just going from the street to the disco—there isn't any way men can take one step alone. Prostitutes bend over, stroke your back and stomach, and blow you kisses in your ear. If you are not quick enough, you get a hand right into the fly of your pants. Every customer is fought for, by using every trick in the book."<sup>8</sup> A photo accompanying one of the articles in this series shows Dieter, a sex tourist who has returned to Sosúa nine times, sitting at a German-owned bar wearing a T-shirt he bought in Thailand; the shirt is emblazoned with the words SEX TOURIST.

With all the attention in the European press and on the Internet associating Dominican women with the sex industry, fear of a stigma has prompted many Dominican women who never have been sex workers to worry that the families and friends of their European boyfriends or spouses might wonder if they once were. And since Dominican women's participation in the overseas sex trade has received so much press coverage in the Dominican Republic,<sup>9</sup> women who have lived or worked in Europe have become suspect at home. "I know when I tell people I was really with a folk-dance group in Europe, they don't believe me," a former dancer admitted. When Sostáns who were not sex workers spoke casually among themselves of a woman working overseas as a domestic, waitress, or dancer, they inevitably would raise the possibility of sex work, if only to rule it out explicitly. One Domini-

can café owner cynically explained why everyone assumes that Dominican women working overseas must be sex workers: "Dominican women have become known throughout the world as prostitutes. They are one of our biggest exports."

### "Love" in a Global World: Transnational Courtship

Sex workers the world over pretend that they desire their clients and enjoy the sex; it is one of the defining charades of the industry.<sup>10</sup> In Sosúa, sex workers also pretend to be in love. They have staked much on this performance. Maintaining transnational ties becomes a daily task for some sex workers. Many correspond by fax with four or five foreign clients at the same time (it costs under a dollar to send or receive a fax at Codetel, the national phone company). Dropping by the Codetel office to see if they have received any faxes is a daily ritual for these women. The lucky ones receive faxes instructing them to pick up money at the Western Union office in downtown Sosúa. Others receive word that their European sweethearts are planning a return visit. The most envied women receive "letters of invitation," the first step to obtaining a tourist visa.

In the faxes the women send, they typically express how much they miss the men, and they urge them to return to Sosúa on their next vacation. They might also mention that they need money for their children and remind the men that there is a Western Union in town. Some sex workers have become so adept at capitalizing on the resources available to them that novices come to them for advice. At the top of this hierarchy are sex workers who can read and write and who have a proven track record of receiving money wires or faxes from clients. One such sex worker, Elena, has given a lot of advice and even helped compose letters and faxes for sex workers who were uncertain what to do with the addresses, fax numbers, and telephone numbers clients gave them. She helped Carmen, for example, write a letter to a Belgian client who had sent her a money wire and then abruptly stopped corresponding with her. Carmen came to Elena because, at the time, Elena was living with Jürgen, a German man and former client. She was experienced, indeed successful, at transnational courting. Elena's advice was simple: "You have to write that you love him and that you miss him. Write that you cannot wait to

see him again. Tell him you think about him every day." Following Elena's guidelines, Carmen composed the following letter, which I helped her translate into English, since her client's English was better than his Spanish:

Dear—

I have been thinking of you every day and have been waiting for a fax to hear how you are. I got your money wire, thanks. But I still want to see you. Please send me a fax at the following number . . . and, if possible, a fax number where I can reach you.

I miss you very much and think of you all the time. I love you very much.

I wait to hear from you. I hope you come to visit again very soon.

Many kisses,  
Carmen

Carmen never heard from this client again.

Since women can enlist the help of friends who are more literate than they are, being able to read and write is not a critical skill in transnational courting. Sensing which men are unmarried, likely to continue courting, and likely to return for future vacations proves a more valuable—and elusive—skill. While sorting through all the pictures and letters of her European clients, Nanci, for example, commented on which ones seemed the most serious about keeping in touch. She pronounced several too young, and thus unlikely to follow through on the relationship. Of course, even those sex workers who are veterans of transnational dating cannot easily predict their European clients' actions (or inactions). Yet some seem better at assessing their prospects than others. Nora, who had never received an international fax or letter, kept a German client's business card among her valuables. He had not responded to the numerous faxes she'd sent him, but she clung to his card as if it were a winning lottery ticket. Many of her coworkers, by contrast, quickly begin cultivating new relationships when faced with a client's silence.

Of course, not all sex workers in Sosúa are solely motivated by the prospect of migrating off the island. Some women go to great lengths to establish relationships with European men because they seek an alternative

to Dominican machismo. They hope that foreign husbands will be more reliable financial providers and more sexually faithful. As we will see in Elena's story below, Dominican sex workers often dismiss foreign men's imperfections, describing these men in idealized terms. It was only toward the end of Elena's relationship with Jürgen, when his drinking was obviously out of control, that her friends finally admitted that, like the Dominican men they constantly criticized, Jürgen was trouble.

### Sex Workers' Stories

Elena, twenty-two when I met her, had initially migrated from the countryside to Sosúa's sex trade after the father of her baby girl left her. She followed her older sister, who was also working in the sex trade at the time. Elena became the main breadwinner for her extended family. She brought remittances back home to pay her parents' monthly *colmado* bill, and she eventually became the surrogate mother for two younger sisters, a stepsister, and a younger sex worker who came to rely on her. All these girls, plus Elena and her daughter, lived in a one-room shack, where they rotated between sharing the bed and sleeping on the floor.

In addition to being generous, Elena was a leader to whom other women in the community turned for advice. It was little surprise to her friends that she, literate and savvy, turned a fax relationship with a middle-aged German man into what many of them called a "marriage." After returning several times to spend time with Elena, Jürgen decided to move to Sosúa. He would return to Germany only a few months out of the year to supervise his construction company, which would support him for the rest of the year in his new Caribbean lifestyle.

To Elena and her friends, she appeared to be living out a fantasy: she had quit sex work and set up house with a German man. Elena's friends and her older sisters envied the two-bedroom apartment with running water, electricity, and a full kitchen that she, Jürgen, and all of her dependents (her daughter and three younger sisters) now inhabited. But her actual relationship with Jürgen was far from ideal. Soon after Jürgen moved to town, Elena found out that she was pregnant. At first, he was helpful around the house and doted on Elena. But the novelty eventually wore off, and he returned to his routine of spending most days drinking in the German-owned bar

beneath their apartment. He also went out drinking every night with German friends.

Most of the time he was drunk, and Elena saw him less and less frequently. What's more, he did not treat her any better than the previous Dominican men in her life had. The couple constantly fought over money, which Jürgen controlled tightly. Since they were living together and Jürgen was paying the bills (including private-school tuition for her daughter), Elena considered them to be married. As her "husband" (in a consensual union), Jürgen was financially responsible for the household, in Elena's view; but she felt that he was not fulfilling this role. "Why isn't he giving me any money? He is my *esposo* (husband) and is supposed to give me money," she complained to me. "I need to know if he is with me or someone else. He pays for this house and paid for everything here. I need to know what is going on."

They fought so regularly that Elena started sleeping on the couch. One day, without warning, Jürgen packed his bags and left for Germany on business. Elena had no cash flow into the household. In Jürgen's absence, Elena took her daughter out of private school, since the tuition was overdue. She started working at a small Dominican-owned restaurant. When Jürgen returned a couple of months later, they split up for good. Elena and her family returned to living in a shack without running water or electricity. She had not accumulated any savings or items she could pawn during her time with Jürgen. When they vacated their apartment, he took most of the furniture, and the television, with him.

In many ways, Elena had been better off, financially and emotionally, before she'd met Jürgen. Even though she appeared to have all the coveted trappings that come with "marrying" a foreign tourist, she ended up returning to the same conditions of poverty as before. What's more, her relationship with a foreign man replicated many of the failings sex workers so often criticize in their relationships with Dominican men. Jürgen turned out to be a volatile alcoholic who slept with other women, thus putting Elena, and possibly her baby, at risk for acquiring AIDS. Moreover, soon after he returned to Sosúa, Jürgen set up house with another sex worker. He now lives, Elena hears, somewhere in Asia.

Elena's experience with Jürgen raises an important question: to what degree are the sex workers' fantasies about foreign men shaped by the expe-

rience of migrating to Sosúa? Studies reveal that the experience of migration, combined with wage labor, often increases women's social and economic independence and status.<sup>11</sup> Dominican women who migrate internally for the sex trade, however, find their gender roles both reaffirmed and reconfigured. Although the sex trade allows women to outearn male Dominican migrants in Sosúa, they lack any similar source of authority or independence in their relationships with foreign men. In fact, they become completely dependent on these men, not only for money but often for much else.

The case of Nanci, a sex worker who moved to Germany, illustrates this phenomenon. Unlike most sex workers, who explain their transnational relationships in terms of economic strategy, Nanci recounted a love story. "This is completely for love," she gushed. Frank was a German man close to her age (she was twenty-three, and he, twenty-eight); he spoke Spanish and got along well with her three-year-old son; he bought her a plane ticket and helped her get a tourist visa so she could visit him in Germany for a month. When she returned, she showed me pictures of her visit, including pictures of Frank's parents and their middle-class home.

Frank and Nanci agreed never to tell his family or friends that she had been a sex worker. But since they decided to marry and made plans for Nanci to move to Germany with her son, she feared that they would find out. A former coworker of Nanci's, Rosa, lived thirty miles away from Frank's family with a German man she had also met in Sosúa's sex trade. "Rosa's mother-in-law knows what Rosa did in Sosúa," Nanci worried. "And she knows I'm a friend of Rosa's. What if she ever said anything to Frank's parents?" Nanci's ties to Sosúa put a new twist on the importance of social networks in the migration process: the nascent networks linking Sosúan sex workers to towns in Germany can be sources of both support and concern for sex workers-turned-migrants. In many instances, women prefer struggling in isolation in their new European settings to being found out.

After marrying and living in Germany for a year, Frank and Nanci moved to Sosúa, where they had a little girl together. But soon afterward, Frank ran off with another Dominican sex worker and stopped all financial support to Nanci and her children. Nanci went to a lawyer and got Frank to pay child support, which lasted for one month; there is little that Nanci can do now, since Frank and this other woman have moved to Germany. Like Elena,

Nanci has experienced a reversal of fortune. She and her two children now live in a two-room shack in Sosúa, under much worse conditions than when I first met her, before she married Frank. I was quite shaken to see that the one relationship I knew of that seemed to grow out of love, respect, and romance had crumbled.

Despite this turn of events, Nanci returned to sex work and continued to depend exclusively on foreign men for her income. Another sex worker, Carmen, adopted a different strategy, diversifying her risk in the sex trade by working with both foreign and Dominican men. She supplemented unpredictable income from foreign tourists by establishing long-term relationships with Dominican *amigos* (friends), or *clientes fijos* (regular clients), who supplied her with a small but steady income. Ani, another sex worker, explains the function of *amigos*: "You don't always have a client. You need *amigos* and *clientes fijos*. If you have a problem, like something breaks in your house, or your child is sick and you need money for the doctor or medicine, they can help."

After four years of sex work, Carmen has saved enough money to build a small house for her mother and children in Santo Domingo. I asked her why she thinks she was able to save money while so many of her friends in Sosúa did not have an extra *centavo*. She replied, "Because they give it to their men. Their husbands wait at home and drink while their women work. Not me. If I'm in the street with all the risks of disease and the police, I'm keeping the money or giving it to my kids. I'm not giving it to a man, no way."

She was careful not to let the men in her life know how much money she had saved or where it came from. While she was involved with the Belgian client who later declined to answer her letter, she says, "I did not tell him I am building the house. I don't have money and it would seem like I do." She also kept the possibility of her moving to Belgium (and the information-gathering trip she and the client took to the Belgian embassy in Santo Domingo) from Jorge, her young Dominican *amigo*. The nephew of the owner of the boardinghouse where Carmen lived, Jorge visited her periodically from Santiago, about two hours from Sosúa. "He is very young," she told me, scrunching up her nose disapprovingly. "He lives with his mother in Santiago and works in a *zona franca*. He gives me money, even though he does not make a lot."

Jorge was her economic safety net, especially in times of crises. At times, the money Jorge gave Carmen was the only money she had. Though these

sums were smaller than the transnational money wires other sex workers received, it was money she could count on regularly.

### Living with Foreign Men: Fantasies Versus Realities

Because migrating to Europe is a relatively new phenomenon, not many former sex workers—Nanci is an exception—have returned to Sosúa to dispel the myths and gossip of an easy and fantasy-filled life *allá* (over there). Instead, the women imagine that foreign men will provide them with material comfort and possibly better treatment. They dream of European men "rescuing" them from a lifetime of poverty and foreclosed opportunities. They expect to trade love and romance for financial security and mobility. After all, these relationships are for *residencia*, not for *amor*.

Even after relationships end and women return to Sosúa broke, sex workers in the Sosúa community often still idealize their failed migration stories. Jürgen's alcoholism, for example, and his fighting with Elena were never mentioned in the gossip mill. Elena's friends focused on the money he gave her to feed the household, not on the fact that she did all the food shopping and preparation, on top of all the other household chores. Similarly, Nanci's friends never mentioned the social and economic isolation she suffered when they spoke of her time in Germany. And while Carmen's careful hedging strategy earned her snickers from sex workers who disdained lower-paying Dominican clients, she became the talk of the sex-work community when she later married an Austrian man and moved to Austria.

Because actually going to Europe is a rare prize, sex workers often talk about what they would do to make the most of it if they won the opportunity to migrate. Sex workers fancy that they would do what Andrea did: after marrying her German boyfriend and moving with her two girls to Germany, Andrea left him for another German man. This second German man, her cousin in Sosúa explained to me, "had more money." It was common knowledge that Andrea did not love her first husband. "He is very fat," various sex workers made a point of repeating. Nor did her friends pretend that she loved her current boyfriend. But Andrea was lucky enough to get off the island. Now she is expected—and willingly acquiesces—to help the other single mothers in her family, her parents, and her good friends, such as

Elena, with remittances. She has even sent new sneakers, jeans, and belts to a circle of her closest friends (all sex workers).

With so many financial expectations and demands on Andrea, there is pressure on her to keep her relationship afloat, no matter what. Women such as Andrea become symbols of all that is possible in Europe, while Nanci's friends blame her for the breakup of her marriage. After her own experience with Jürgen, Elena says "Nanci never should have moved to Sosúa with her husband with all these sex workers here. No man would stick around."<sup>112</sup> Considering the benefits for family, and even friends, it is easy to see why sex workers, sporting new fashions from Europe, perpetuate the fiction that marriage in Europe is without significant conflict. Language barriers, cultural differences, and racism are all waved aside. Life *allá* (over there) in Europe is, for now at least, better than *aquí* (here).

Marginalized women in a marginalized economy can and do fashion creative strategies to control their economic lives. Globalization and the accompanying transnational phenomena, including sex tourism, do not simply shape everything in their paths. Individuals react and resist. Dominican sex workers use sex, romance, and marriage as means of turning Sosúa's sex trade into a site of opportunity and possibility, not just exploitation and domination. But exits from poverty are rarely as permanent as the sex workers hope; relationships sour, and subsequently, an extended family's only lifeline from poverty disintegrates. For every promise of marriage a tourist keeps, there are many more stories of disappointment. Dominican women's attempts to take advantage of these "walking visas" call attention, however, to the savviness and resourcefulness of the so-called powerless.

## Among Women: Migrant Domesticity and Their Taiwanese Employers Across Generations

PEI-CHIA LAN

The relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law has long been a fertile subject for soap operas. It is also a real-life family drama in most societies—not least in Taiwan, where increasing numbers of women hire Southeast Asian migrant workers to fulfill their duties to their mothers-in-law.<sup>1</sup> In her now-classic book *Between Women*, Judith Rollins exposed the contentious dyad between maid and madam.<sup>2</sup> Triangular links bind maid, madam, and mother-in-law in Taiwanese domestic employment arrangements that span generations.

In Taiwan, the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is structured by Chinese traditions of filial piety and patriarchal authority. Child rearing is viewed as a process of social investment with an expectation of delayed repayment, or, in Chinese, *bau-da* (payback). Parents undergo economic and emotional costs in bearing and raising children, this tradition stipulates, so children, especially sons, are obligated to return the debts through the provision of care for their aging parents. *San-dai-tone-tang* (three-generation cohabitation) is viewed as the ideal arrangement for elders and the realization of filial piety.<sup>3</sup>

According to the Han Chinese tradition, family membership, inheritance