

Haitian Migration, Job Segregation and Racism in Santiago, Chile (2016-2023)

Migración haitiana, segregación laboral y racismo en Santiago de Chile (2016-2023)

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Abstract: The objective of the article is to analyze the segregated workspaces and racism experienced by Haitian people in Santiago, Chile. The research employs a qualitative method, based on ethnographic observation and in-depth interviews. The results indicate that in the wholesale markets, commonly known as "Vegas", the Haitian community is employed as sales assistants, cleaners, and loaders, while in construction companies, they work as day laborers. They face excessive working hours and racial discrimination due to issues of "color", class, and nationality. The study concludes that upon arriving in Santiago, Haitian migrants are placed in segregated workspaces, where their professional qualifications and work experience from their countries of origin are delegitimized, while Chileans are racially positioned as superior and enjoy better working conditions, despite often lacking higher qualifications.

Keywords: Haitian migration, Greater Santiago, informal employment, workspaces, racism.

Resumen: El objetivo del artículo es analizar los espacios laborales segregados y el racismo que suelen vivenciar las personas haitianas en Santiago de Chile. El método de investigación es cualitativo, con base en observación etnográfica y entrevistas en profundidad. Los resultados apuntan que en los mercados mayoristas, reconocidos popularmente como Vegas, el colectivo haitiano se encuentra empleado como asistente de venta, de limpieza y cargadores, y en las empresas de la construcción como jornales, donde cuentan con horarios laborales excesivos y han vivido discriminaciones raciales debido al "problema del color", de clase y nacionalidad. Se concluye que una vez llegadas las personas haitianas a la capital son ubicadas en espacios laborales segregados, donde se deslegitima la cualificación profesional y la capacidad laboral que portan desde el lugar de origen, mientras

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que las personas chilenas son posicionadas racialmente de modo superior, obteniendo mejores condiciones laborales, pese a no contar con mayor cualificación.

Palabras clave: migración haitiana, Gran Santiago, empleo informal, espacio laboral, racismo.

Introduction¹

The Haitian diaspora is not a recent phenomenon in Chile, as there is evidence that religious figures, students, and diplomats arrived as early as 1990, albeit in very small numbers (Audebert & Joseph, 2022). However, the presence of this group in South America increased significantly following the major earthquake that struck Haiti in 2010, which resulted in loss of life and forced thousands to flee in search of better socio-occupational opportunities and security. In Chile, most arrivals occurred between 2010 and 2018, after which immigration declined due to the social unrest, the COVID-19 pandemic, and discriminatory state policies against Haitians, particularly the introduction of the consular tourist visa requirement in 2018.

The objective of this article is to identify and analyze the segregated workplaces and racism experienced by Haitian people in Santiago, Chile. The methodology employed is qualitative, using techniques such as interviews and observation, with data analyzed through qualitative content analysis. The findings indicate that once this group settled in the country, they encountered language barriers and the non-recognition of secondary, technical, and university degrees. As a result, they were forced to take on low-skilled, informal, and sometimes irregular jobs, which led them to enter workplaces without social protection, where they experienced racism daily, as they were marked and differentiated by their skin colour and national origin. The main limitation of the study is the lack of knowledge of Creole, which made it difficult to translate some expressions used by the interviewees.

1 Some of the findings in this article are drawn from the doctoral dissertation titled *The Dream of Traveling and the Reality of Living in Santiago de Chile: Haitian Migration in Segregated Workspaces and Racism as a Social Relationship* by Lissette Madriaga-Parra (2020), funded by the Chilean Government's Doctoral Scholarships Program. These findings are complemented by results from the ANID project titled *Emerging Citizenships and Migrant Social Organization from Central-Southern Chile: Imaginaries and Demands in the New Institutional Framework*, Fondecyt Regular No. 1220993 (2022–2026), led by Nicolás Gissi.

The article is composed of the following sections. The introduction presents the study's objective, methodology, and main findings. The chapter "Background of the Haitian Community in Chile" provides a brief socio-political and economic framework, along with data to contextualize Haitian migration processes. "Methodological Notes" describes the qualitative methodology employed, which includes interviews, observations, qualitative content analysis, and ethical considerations. The chapter "Migration and Racism in Labour Market Logics" discusses theoretical perspectives and previous research on contemporary capitalism, migrant employment, workplace segregation, and racism. In "Labour Markets and Racism in the Haitian Community in Santiago, Chile", the findings are analyzed through the previously outlined theoretical and conceptual lenses, examining how racism structures everyday social relations, which are shaped by hierarchies and privileges based on skin color, class, and nationality.

The "Discussion" chapter analyzes the research findings in relation to the concepts introduced in the theoretical framework, aiming to contribute to studies on migration, labour, and racism. The final chapter, "Conclusions", reflects on how the original characteristics of the interviewees are transformed upon settling in Chile, as they are forced into segregated, informal, and low-skilled labour markets. This, in turn, exposes them to daily experiences of racism, shaped by the markers of skin color, class, and origin, which largely define Chilean society's perception of this community.

Background on the Haitian Community in Chile

Historically, Haiti has faced persistent sociopolitical, economic, and environmental crises that have fractured the country's social structure, leading to extreme poverty and uncertainty, fostering patterns of external mobility, and perpetuating a continuous humanitarian crisis (Audebert & Joseph, 2022; López & Wessel, 2017). Socio-environmental disasters, such as the 2010 earthquake and subsequent hurricanes, have intensified Haitian migration to South America since 2010 (Audebert & Joseph, 2022; Cejas & Ramírez, 2022; López & Wessel, 2017; Maroni da Silva, 2022; Nieto, 2022). During this period, Chile was perceived as a country with strong economic growth, political stability, and security, attracting Haitian migrants at a time when other

Latin American and Caribbean migrant communities had already established themselves in its major cities.

Between 2000 and 2009, after the Haitian community had begun to settle in Chile, very few visas (656) were issued to Haitian nationals, according to the National Centre for Migration Studies (CENEM, 2018). However, from 2012 to 2018, there was a steady increase in Haitian migration to Chile, with Haitian nationals accounting for just over 20% of all visas issued to migrants in 2018, a significant figure relative to the total migrant population residing in the country. This number subsequently dropped by more than half between 2019 and 2020 and continued to decline due to border closures and the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021 (Orrego, 2022).

It is also observed that 74.0% of individuals in this group have an income of less than \$400,000, making it the lowest salary compared to their peers of other nationalities. Additionally, 30.7% have held unskilled jobs, according to data from the National Center for Migration Studies (CENEM, 2018). They primarily reside in the Metropolitan Region, as well as in southern and northern municipalities of the country. These figures confirm that the labor participation of Haitians progressively increased from the early 2010s until 2018, as their workforce participation grew despite unfavorable social and labor conditions.

Regarding Chile's national migration policy, it is known that until mid-April 2018, the entry of Haitian nationals was subject to greater restrictions, as the migration policies of President S. Piñera's administration made entry more difficult, requiring them to apply for a visa at the Chilean consulate in Haiti. This visa allowed a 30-day stay for tourism purposes, without the right to work in Chile, whereas nationals of other countries were granted a regular 90-day tourist permit, highlighting a nationality-based disparity. Trabalón (2018) notes that during this period, the administrative process was highly selective, with clear discriminatory characteristics against the Haitian community. Over time, Chile's migration governance, shaped by broader South American policies and increasingly securitized year after year, reinforced prejudices and discrimination against Haitian migration through restrictive and exclusionary measures (Stang *et al.*, 2020).

Throughout their time in Chile, the Haitian community has faced various forms of exclusion. A significant example was the 2019 "Orderly

Humanitarian Return Plan”, implemented as part of Chile’s migration policy. The Haitian community denounced this measure, arguing that the state was effectively enforcing forced deportation, associating their presence with crime, poverty, and public insecurity. Indeed, the migration governance model established in Chile has legitimized “the rhetoric of human and humanitarian rights, articulated alongside the discourse of efficient management and administration, as well as the functional role played by migration control in contemporary capitalism” (Stang *et al.*, 2020: 21).

In addition, individuals born in Haiti have encountered distinguishing factors that marginalize them in everyday interactions. As Berriós-Riquelme *et al.* (2023) point out, migrants are excluded based on sociodemographic factors such as country of origin, gender, and connections with other migrants. This is why, when Haitian individuals find themselves in the metropolis, they perceive rejection, as the image of “Black” migration is associated with social stigma. As Tijoux (2014) notes, the Black body is perceived as the “other”, carrying the social stigma on its skin. The reality faced by Haitian residents in Greater Santiago invites reflection on the relationships that are observed and materialized in the labor markets in which they work, and on identifying the expressions of racism.

Methodological Notes

The study presented is descriptive, analyzing the labor spaces where the Haitian community works. The methodology is qualitative, employing ethnographic observations and in-depth interviews. Fieldwork was conducted between 2016 and 2023, and the interview transcriptions were made exactly as each narrative was expressed, in order to validate the knowledge of the daily language used, acquired, and learned by the interviewees. Informed consent was obtained and signed by the participants, but the names used in the document are fictitious to protect confidentiality.

Initially, Haitian individuals were contacted through key informants, and the snowball sampling technique was used for fieldwork. Observations allowed for the recording and characterization of the workplaces and activities performed by this community. In this article, we focus more closely on the jobs held in wholesale markets, commonly referred to as “Vegas”, and in real estate construction

companies located in Santiago. The interviews and field observations provided empirical data to categorize and perform qualitative content analysis. For this purpose, an Excel spreadsheet was designed, incorporating the narratives related to each category of the proposed objective: types of employment, labor spaces, and experiences of racism in these workplaces.

Some of the selection criteria for the 29 interviewees included being Haitian, over 18 years old, residing in municipalities within the province of Santiago, understanding Chilean Spanish, and having work experience in the country. The interviews were conducted in private homes, public squares, wholesale markets, evangelical churches, high schools, and public health clinics in municipalities within the city of Santiago.

Regarding work environments, we identified that wholesale markets sell agricultural products such as fruits and vegetables. The Central Market is located in the northern zone, in the municipality of Recoleta, while the Lo Valledor Market is in the southern zone, in the municipality of Pedro Aguirre Cerda. In these markets, we predominantly observed Chilean suppliers employing migrants as waiters, sales assistants, cleaning and kitchen staff, and box or sack loaders handling fruits and vegetables. Weekly observations were conducted until the study's objectives were met.

In the Republica neighborhood in downtown Santiago, one of the city's oldest areas, well-maintained houses that were once occupied by the upper classes in past centuries now coexist with real estate construction companies. Some of these houses are used by higher education institutions that provide educational services, while others, in poorer condition, are rented out to migrants. Due to the "real estate bubble", there has been a significant increase in the construction and sale of apartments in modern buildings, driving up prices and affecting many migrant tenants.

Observations were conducted in the mornings and afternoons at two construction real estate companies, where we noted the participation of Haitian-origin individuals interacting daily with Chilean workers, as well as Latin American and Caribbean migrants such as Peruvians, Bolivians, Colombians, Venezuelans, and Dominicans. We focused on the asymmetric and differentiated relationships of Chilean identity, and even of other migrant groups, in contrast to Haitians.

Migration and Racism in Labor Market Logics

The capitalist model has transformed over the years, generating a social division of labor, the result of which is accumulation, creating surplus value in the world-capitalist economy at the expense of the working class, which plays a significant role in the labor market under capitalist employers whose interest is to pay for the work produced and not for the time worked that does not generate profit (Harvey, 2013; Wallerstein, 1991). Capitalist employers view the labor space as variable and limitless, meaning the labor force created by workers can be distributed across continents, cities, and rural areas, as the values generated by this force are minimized, shared, and stratified by ethnicity, nationality, and sex. The incorporation of migrant labor can be observed starting in the 18th century (Wallerstein, 1991).

In modern capitalism, we begin to see how labor transforms spaces, accompanied by the borderization of the contemporary world in which labor is situated. In this regard, migration and borders are key elements to understand how migration occupies an important place in labor markets and how borders are seen as a method and a place of struggle for migrants who are vulnerable in these spaces (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2017).

In relation to these backgrounds, migration theories were developed to explain the existence of lower-skilled migrant labor in the manufacturing and construction industries during the 1960s and 1970s, generating a model for the analysis of political economy (Castles and Miller, 2004). It is observed that with contemporary capitalism, the multiplication of labor produces a process of division and intensification of work because life is increasingly colonized, the division of labor becomes more diversified, and other forms of labor emerge in line with production, heterogenizing their legal and social regimes. This process is more fragmented, leading to the transformation of the socio-labor conditions of the working class (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2017). Migrant workers who are inserted into lower-skilled jobs play a crucial role, as they are positioned in border spaces colonized by nationals, with a diversification of informal, irregular employment types carried out under miserable conditions, which exposes labor market segmentation for and with migrants.

The concept of labor market segmentation has been reflected upon in relation to migrant employment logic. Migrant workers, of both

sexes, are classified and employed in poorly paid jobs with low status, discriminated against, and exploited, leading to a segmentation of the labor market and mechanisms of labor differentiation with discriminators based on gender, race, immigration status, and other factors (Castles, 2013; Castles and Miller, 2004). It is observed that both institutional and attitudinal racism operate within migrant laborers through labor market segmentation because administrative and legal regulations are restrictive in terms of labor rights, constituting a discriminatory fact. They are also racialized by sociocultural aspects and differentiated by social layers, leading to precarious employment, lack of social security, and deregulation of the labor market (Castles and Miller, 2004).

Canales (2018) highlights that the labor market insertion and migration origin of Latin American and Caribbean people residing in Chile is characterized by their placement in lower-level, precarious jobs with wages lower than the country's average monthly income. They are socioeconomically segregated and linked to the national working class, forming part of a migration structure based on social inequality and differentiation, as they are discriminated against and stigmatized in this country.

In Chile, labor market segmentation is evident in the construction sector, as migrants are often employed on a contract-by-project basis to carry out the heaviest, least qualified, and most precarious tasks. They face various vulnerabilities because they cannot claim their labor rights due to their irregular migration status. Employers often select them because they are "cheaper", as social security and severance pay are not covered, and they are frequently exposed to violations of national and international labor regulations (Stefoni *et al.*, 2017).

In this regard, migration processes are part of the reproduction of the global capitalist system. According to Canales (2015), migration contributes to the *reproduction of social* inequality and class structures in both origin and destination countries, as it generates a labor force in medium- and high-income sectors in receiving countries. Furthermore, migration increases birth rates in receiving countries and fosters *demographic reproduction*. In terms of *capital reproduction*, it involves moving a labor force from origin countries to wealthier destination countries, which in turn generates remittance flows back to the countries of origin.

These realities are closely tied to inequalities, which are inherently linked to labor segregation and racism. This creates a labor

differentiation between “peer” workers, increasing inequity for the migrant community involved in national and transnational neoliberal labor markets. According to Magliano and Mallimaci (2018), labor segregation manifests in labor markets where people with similar economic, cultural, political, and social characteristics are grouped together, often with access to exclusive jobs. As Massey (1999) asserts, young migrant workers are particularly vulnerable in the labor market, as they are recruited and inserted into the lower strata occupied by the working class. The concept of class plays a key role in migration processes and the unequal labor market they navigate.

Labor segregation determines the social and labor spaces that a migrant person navigates. According to Bourdieu (1998), social space is defined by the everyday experiences that occur in social relations between individuals, and can manifest in spaces such as work, school, society, or other social areas where daily interactions unfold. In social space, labor segregation is evident, highlighting the differences and social divisions that migrants face, with a noticeable spatial differentiation between nationals and non-nationals, where the former are positioned as superior, while the latter, as migrants, are segregated into lower-skilled jobs in inferior and informal labor spaces.

Racism is understood as a social phenomenon based on practices, discourses, and representations that reflect ideas of racial superiority and inferiority, expressed through humiliations, contempt, and forms of violence, which are articulated through stigmas of otherness such as religious practices, skin color, and surnames, associating migration with race (Balibar, 1991). For Memmi (2010), racism legitimizes its domination through violence and injustice established by the dominator, with privileges and the nullification of the dominated, who is seen as impure and detestable. The racist person claims superiority, purity, and social privilege and establishes biological differences with others based on skin color, body odor, physical characteristics, and modes of interaction. In effect, and following the author’s argument, a racist person acts unequally, with privilege and superiority, against someone who will be sacrificed by the racist; therefore, giving importance to racism means emphasizing biological differences that are real or imagined as a result of inequality, and of globalization processes that reinforce social discourses about racism practiced by one group of people against another group with lesser value (Memmi, 2010).

Grosfoguel (2016) points out the existence of the “oppressor self” of the racialized working class, which, through its privileges, positions itself at the superior end of what is considered human. Below this line lies the inferior group, the dominated, whose racial and class characteristics are a consequence of the processes of oppression and the denial of identities during colonization in the Americas, which employed racial, biological, cultural, and religious markers. In this context, racism is placed above the human line, in the realm of being, with superiority and hierarchy over those positioned in the inferior zone of non-being. These ideas are drawn from Fanon, who emphasizes that those considered human, with all privileges and access to the socio-labor structure and citizenship, will be distinguished from those positioned in the inferior zone of non-being, who will be regarded as subhuman or non-human, with their humanity denied and questioned (Grosfoguel, 2012 and 2016).

Rodríguez y Gissi (2020) mention that the Haitian community is living with classification schemes to access various forms of employment, which are defined by two opposing regimes such as “desirable-undesirable; good-bad; better-worse; legitimate-illegitimate” (Rodríguez and Gissi, 2020: 157). This reflects a racialization of the production relations of a social segment that often occupies irregular jobs. Additionally, the country of origin and the level of education attained in the country of origin are discriminatory characteristics that manifest in the labor markets frequented by the migrant community. It is believed that these particularities result in lower productivity due to language deficiencies, the lack of recognition of qualifications, and lack of work experience, leading to institutional discrimination and negative interactions with those they connect with in these spaces (Cachón and Aysa-Lastra, 2021).

It is essential to reflect on and analyze the ideas presented regarding the Haitian migration phenomenon and identify how the racism experienced by the interviewed individuals influences their job search and coexistence in the differentiated labor markets navigated by this community in the urban areas of Santiago's metropolitan area.

Labor Markets and Racism with the Haitian Community in Santiago, Chile

Through fieldwork, we observe that the Haitian community occupies the lowest rung of migrant employment in the national economy, performing low-skilled jobs with meager wages and experiencing various forms of violence. Some of the interviewees work long hours in wholesale markets that belong to the national economy and are located in communes of Greater Santiago. Leandre's (28 years old) experience is as follows:

In La Vega, I work from 3:00 a.m. and finish at either 12:00 p.m. or 1:00 p.m. in the afternoon. I had to carry a pallet with forty boxes of yellow bananas, plus green bananas (...). I like it because there's no other option, but I want a job with a contract (Leandre, personal communication, September 19, 2017).

In the accounts of the interviewed Haitian community members, they detail that they are employed irregularly in these markets, performing jobs such as porters, sales assistants, cleaning aides, and even improvising tiny shops to sell local and/or foreign products. Despite these markets not being desirable places to work, they remain in them with the hope of obtaining a work contract and regularizing their immigration status, as Jean Paul (29 years old) mentions:

You know that for any job now, the first thing they ask for is the paperwork. If I don't have the paperwork, I can't get it... Yes, I've looked for work because the job I have in La Vega no longer appeals to me, but I can't get the paperwork. The first boss introduced me to "the job properly" and said: "help my brother", and I have to lift boxes of apples and work at night and during the day (Jean Paul, personal communication, August 20, 2017).

Despite recognising the inadequate working conditions and the futility of persisting in the search for an employment contract, they continue to wander through other informal labour markets, driven by the hope of securing a formal contract. As Emeline (31 years old) explains: "I didn't like the job [in La Vega], but I had to stay because of the document [...] I worked there for about seven months, then I left that job and went to a Peruvian restaurant" (Madriaga-Parra, 2020: 263; Emeline, personal communication, February 16, 2017). When they refer to a "document" or "paper", they mean an employment contract, which would allow them to obtain a national identity card, something they optimistically believe will open doors to formal labour markets

with better conditions. Furthermore, as Madriaga-Parra (2020) points out, employment networks within wholesale markets are based on “occupational inheritance” within the community itself. In other words, these irregular and precarious jobs are passed down to relatives and acquaintances to support newly arrived family members in the country.

We observe that a segment of Chilean society, through discourses of non-acceptance and violent practices, makes it clear that Haitian migration, due to its association with Blackness and with a country marked by poverty and color, is not welcome in the country. We also note that the interviewees are subjected to lower-skilled jobs compared to other migrant communities and endure degrading treatment from supervisors, colleagues working in the same places, and customers frequenting these markets. They are humiliated with slurs referencing their “miserable” origins, skin color, and class, reinforcing the distinction between “us”, Chileans, and the “other”, laden with markers of difference and stigma. The reality faced by Haitian migrants is one of suffering, as reports over the years have documented their exposure to violence and socio-labor abuse (Carrère & Carrère, 2021; Chilevisión Noticias, 2017; Labbé, 2018).

The work of porters, carried out by Haitian migrants, consists of physically loading fruits and vegetables into sacks or boxes. Employers violate the law, which stipulates that a human load must not exceed 25 kilograms. In the afternoons, workers are informed whether they are required to report for loading duties the following morning. However, some porters do not receive this information and attend regardless, in order to secure a spot for work and a meager daily wage. We recognize Emile (35 years old), a primary and secondary school teacher in Haiti who was forced to work as a porter upon arriving in Santiago, Chile, as his university qualifications are not recognized in the country. Emile states the following:

What nationality is your boss?

Chileans, three...

Do you have three Chilean bosses?

Yes... three Chilean bosses.

How do they treat you?

One is good, and the other, *plus ou moins*, more or less... Why? He touches my butt [ass], the man. Yes, he does! It's a problem, I need to work, that's what I need, another job...

Does your boss treat you badly?

Plus ou moins, more or less... He sticks out his tongue and says hueón...

Does it bother you? Does it sadden you? Do you feel upset?

Yes, because I'm from a foreign country, I need to work, and if I had another job, I wouldn't work there... I work at La Vega to pay for my house and for food; if I don't work, I don't eat. I work with banana loads, forty boxes to stack on a pallet to load a truck. I work Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, I work from three in the morning until twelve or one in the afternoon, they pay 15,000 pesos a day (Madriaga-Parra, 2020: 301; Emile, personal communication, August 13, 2017).

The “Black-Caribbean-Haitian” body (Madriaga-Parra, 2020) becomes a desired yet simultaneously violated body, marked by its animalization and association with barbarism. It is subjected to humiliation and both racial and sexual violence, as it is assumed that it can be touched without consent. We observe asymmetrical relationships between employers and Haitian employees, where the national employer holds the power to define the rules of the labour system, while the “other” Haitian migrant must comply with them. When job offers are made and guidelines are established, they are sometimes unclear, as Chilean language and expressions are not fully integrated into the daily lives of the Haitian community, hindering their understanding of whether the socio-labour conditions are favourable. The occupation involves exhausting workdays, low wages, and a lack of affiliation with the healthcare system, an essential demand that emerges in the narratives.

Another interviewee, Jean Paul (29 years old), mentions that he worked as a supervisor on an agricultural estate in Haiti, overseeing compatriots employed as day laborers. However, in Chile, he has had to take on a different type of job as a porter at La Vega, and he shares his experience: “I don't like working at La Vega, the job is too heavy. And if you don't have your ID card and one day you get sick and need to go to the hospital, it's not good for us” (Jean Paul, personal communication, August 20, 2017). Porter work is undesirable for Haitian men because it requires significant physical effort, leading to injuries over time. This type of job partially replaces the low-skilled labor of some Chilean men who avoid entering this sector, as it is poorly paid and inhumane.

We identify that this type of work is carried out by groups of Haitian migrants living in marginal, vulnerable conditions and daily survival, which leads to a segmentation of the labour market within the workplace. Lacking formal employment, these individuals are rendered invisible, with no access to social security and even less to the socio-educational networks that emerge from interactions in formal employment, networks that the Haitian migrant population is unable to access due to their socio-labor instability.

We acknowledge that the socio-labor and educational characteristics of the Haitian interviewees are heterogeneous and are designated as their origin profile, which relates to their previous professional experience in their country of origin and/or residence before arriving in Chile (Madriaga-Parra, 2020). The majority had lived in the capital, Port-au-Prince, while others resided in rural areas of Haiti. In urban settings, they held professional or technical positions or worked as small-scale vendors in formal employment with a fixed monthly salary, whereas in rural areas, they were employed in lower-skilled jobs. Some also pursued their studies in the capital (Madriaga-Parra, 2020). It has been identified and analyzed that those who had professional or skilled occupations in their place of origin have seen their main job activities cruelly transformed upon arriving in Santiago. In their search for employment, they are forced into informal labor environments, where they endure inhumane treatment and exploitative conditions in wholesale markets and the construction sector. They face extreme labor exploitation (Marini, 2015) and are confined to precarious and socially unprotected workspaces due to their irregular migration status. As a result, they are inserted into informal labor markets where migrant labour is undervalued by employers operating in peripheral capitalist labor markets. For the professionals interviewed, settling in Chile has meant finding themselves at the lowest levels of a segmented and stratified labor market, as they are compelled to take on irregular, low-skilled jobs, leading to socio-labor exclusion because their qualifications are not recognized in the country. Moreover, hierarchies of dominance have been observed in wholesale markets, established not only by Chileans but also by migrants of different nationalities, who compete for informal jobs but under “better conditions” than those experienced by the Haitian interviewees. This observation points to the existence of racist alliances

between Chileans and other migrants aimed at exerting violence against Haitians. Renaud (30 years old) describes his experience:

When a Haitian goes to look for a job, they say: the Black guy is looking for work, and they don't give it to him because they only hire Peruvians. There's a Chilean and a Peruvian, and they also use bad language [swearing], and I don't like that. Some people say offensive words like "*negro culiao*".

I have a Haitian friend who works, and they said he was bad at his job, what a lie! His race is simply not accepted because he is Haitian, because he is Black, and they don't want him. The supervisor is Peruvian; he interviews a Haitian, rejects him, and hires his own friend instead (Madriaga-Parra, 2020: 306–307; Renaud, personal communication, September 24, 2017).

The phrase *negro culiao* frequently appears in the narratives of the interviewees and is an expression used by Chileans to denigrate, offend, humiliate, and perpetrate violence against the Haitian "Black" body. It conveys hypersexualization based on skin color and racial identity, reinforcing racism as a mechanism for establishing hierarchy, domination, and racial superiority by Chileans over the racialized Haitian "other".

Furthermore, we observe that due to the real estate boom, there is a high demand for construction jobs, where most professional and technical roles are held by Chilean men who organize and carry out technical tasks. We will describe and analyze how labor segregation and racism fuel the social distinctions experienced by the Haitian community in the workplace, particularly in real estate construction, where they are primarily employed as laborers carrying construction materials or as cleaning staff. Jean (35 years old) shares his experience working as a cleaner in the construction sector:

Many people take advantage of us because we don't know the [labor] law and don't understand how the country works. And when we do find a job, they pay us far below the normal salary. I don't know if they discriminate against Argentinians or Brazilians, or Peruvians, or Bolivians, I really don't know. But against us Haitians? Yes! Yes! And a lot! The worst abuse happens within labor companies; this is the first sector where Haitians suffer the most exploitation because it's easier. First, Haitians don't know the language well, they don't fully understand the country's culture. And second, maybe it has to do with Chile's history, I don't know if they realize there are other races of color on this planet or in this world, because it seems like this skin color bothers them a lot. I worked for two construction companies, and they know they mistreat people, especially foreigners (Madriaga-Parra, 2020: 306; Jean, personal communication, October 13, 2017).

We observe that the interviewees occupy a segregated labor space, being assigned the worst jobs in comparison to their migrant “peers”. Outside a construction site, we witnessed an interaction between Chilean workers and a Haitian worker. We inferred that all were laborers except for the Chilean supervisor, who wore a white helmet. The Chilean workers invited the Haitian worker to join a circle formed by their bodies, enclosing him within it, where he was physically assaulted and touched without his consent. The game or prank devised by the Chilean workers continued with exclamations such as “Black monkey, dance!” “Black monkey, dance!” The Haitian worker, not fully understanding why he was being subjected to such physical and verbal violence, participated in the event as a means of integrating himself. Once the inhumane game ended, the young man, who had a thin and small frame, received a heavy blow to his shoulder from one of the Chilean workers. He then resumed his work shift, struggling to carry five long steel pipes (Madriaga-Parra, 2020). The Haitian worker, in an attempt to be included in this so-called “game”, was ridiculed and subjected to a cruel dynamic that was ultimately an expression of pure racism, as he was singled out and marked by the Chilean workers.

In the wholesale markets, popularly known as “Vegas”, and in the real estate sector of the Metropolitan Area, we identify racism as being perpetuated through the socializing presence of domination, hierarchy, and racial, national, and class privilege. Chileanness holds the power and control to classify itself as superior. Chilean individuals predominantly secure jobs under better conditions, with greater economic and social recognition, in contrast to the Haitian community, which is identified as a lower-class migrant group. As a result, they are confined to informal, precarious, and inhumane jobs in segregated workspaces, where their “race”, origin, and class determine their position.

Racism functions as a socializing structure that the interviewees experience daily in their workplaces. They are exposed to domination and devaluation, as they are placed in informal labor spaces that subject them to mistreatment, humiliation, and aggression. Indeed, migration is linked to the category of “race”, where discourses of superiority emerge and become entrenched in racial markers that are embodied in both racialized practices and representations (Balibar, 1991).

Discussion

Data from the National Institute of Statistics and the National Migration Service (INE and SERMIG, 2023) indicate that the Haitian population constitutes the third-largest migrant group in the Metropolitan Region, accounting for 12.3%. This figure provides insight into the composition of the labor force and the employment distribution of this community across various sectors in the metropolis. In this regard, our findings reveal that some of the Haitian individuals interviewed are in an irregular migratory situation and are engaged in labor markets where they experience mistreatment. Their participation in these sectors is driven by the necessity to secure employment for daily survival in a country with a high cost of living, such as Chile. Furthermore, in these informal capitalist markets, the labor force is structured around attributes such as nationality, ethnicity, and gender, which serve to produce and reproduce an exploited migrant workforce (Wallerstein, 1991). Mezzadra and Neilson (2017) argue that internal borders emerge within informal and contemporary labor markets that employ migrant workers. In line with this, the informal labor performed by the interviewees exhibits multiple deficiencies, as it is carried out without formal employment contracts, lacks social security protections, offers meager wages, and entails long working hours. The demand for this type of labor follows a hierarchical order, with Haitian migrants and other migrant groups occupying the most precarious positions.

The work performed by Haitians as loaders is situated within a deregulated, fragmented, and polarized labor market. As Castles and Miller (2004) argue, this is an insecure labor market where conditions of exploitation for migrant workers are materialized. As Orrego (2022) asserts, and in line with the findings of this study, Haitian migration, when in an irregular status, is predominantly subjected to violence because employers take advantage of the informality and exploit their labor by depriving them of social rights. It has been confirmed that there are complaints from this group to regulatory bodies, associated with excessive working hours, where employers threaten to revoke their migratory status and subject them to super-exploitation in the workplace (Orrego, 2022).

Haitian migrants have been victims of both individual and collective abuses by the state and Chilean society, which has failed to respect their rights. Their journey is marked by a constant struggle with their vulnerable experience and the need to obtain greater social rights (Rodríguez and Gissi, 2020). This is reflected in the individuals interviewed, who, in their accounts, refer to the need to request higher wages and better working conditions from their employers, as well as a labor contract to initiate the migration regularization process, with the hope of securing jobs regulated by national labor laws.

We emphasize that the labor markets frequented by Haitian migrants are segmented, where racist practices by nationals toward migrants, who carry a distinct sociocultural condition, manifesting in the workplace. Based on the results of this study, we agree with Amode (2022) and Madriaga-Parra (2019), who argue that Haitian migrants, in their labor trajectories in Chile, face a denial of the professional experience they bring from their home country because their work experiences and qualifications are not recognized in the host country. The consequence is that they are placed in low-skilled and segmented labor markets.

The Haitian community in the labor spaces they occupy is segregated, as they are differentiated and marked by categories such as race, class, gender, national origin, among others (Castles, 2013; Castles & Miller, 2004; Magliano & Mallimaci, 2018). Haitian employment is located in fragmented areas where their exclusion, inequality, and differentiation are accentuated by employers and Chilean individuals who generate rejection based on sociocultural identity and the negative markers associated with this migration, stemming from belonging to a poor and Black country, leading to class-based exclusion. In this sense, racism against Haitians becomes crystallized because they only have access to low-skilled jobs that few other nationals are willing to take in the labor markets of wholesale or construction industries; despite holding a profession or skilled trade, they are used for informal labor in these markets.

We identified that the individuals interviewed are sociolaborally segregated by mechanisms of exclusion and are conditioned to lower labor markets due to cultural, economic, and social characteristics (Magliano & Mallimaci, 2018). They are placed below the line of humanity in the zone of non-being because the externalization of their racial markers, origins, and social class places them in this

zone by those who position themselves above this line (Grosfoguel, 2016).

In the wholesale markets and real estate construction sectors where Haitians circulate, differentiated representations are constructed that are socially related and divided (Bourdieu, 1998). In this sense, the everyday experiences of this group are marked by exclusion mechanisms that determine racialized relationships between us and the “other”, where these social differences and divisions lead to sociolaboral segregation, exclusion, and everyday racism, all fueled by the markers of “race”, class, and nationality set by a segment of Chilean society that positions itself as superior. We agree with the study by Mercado-Órdenes and Figueiredo (2023), which shows that manifestations of racism are linked to being a Haitian migrant and skin color. However, the findings of this study also indicate that class, intersected with markers of nationality and blackness, shape the experiences of oppression, domination, and racism for the individuals interviewed.

For Quijano (2014), the category “black” is the product of the social classification exercised by the pattern of colonial domination, which turns into racist violence and is reproduced to this day in the capitalist world system in the bodies of “Black-Caribbean-Haitian” people (Madriaga-Parra, 2020), in opposition to the Chilean body, and to other migrants who self-perceive as “lighter” and “less poor”, positioning themselves hierarchically superior by skin color, better status, and belonging to a country with greater recognition. We identify that the domination, privilege, and racial superiority (Balibar, 1991; Grosfoguel, 2012; Grosfoguel, 2016; Memmi, 2010) of national workers in the labor space, in relation to the Haitian workers interviewed, is sustained by feelings of being excluded, discriminated against, violated, and exposed to mockery by some coworkers. In this sense, Chilean workers position themselves in a racial hierarchy and superiority, subjecting the Haitian worker to the zone of “non-being”; as Grosfoguel (2012 and 2016) details, this is the zone where the oppressed, humiliated, and violated people are found.

The Haitian individuals interviewed are in the zone of non-being, inferior to the human line where oppressed people based on “race”, class, and nationality are located, due to the “I” of the oppressor, which positions itself in the zone of being where those in positions of leadership with racial and class superiority, as well as Chilean workers,

are situated. The interviewees are daily exposed to inequality and labor segregation because Chilean identity holds a feeling of racial and class superiority toward the “Black” body. As Memmi (2010) points out, people are exposed to racism because they present biological markers and differences.

In this case, Chileans form prejudices based on the “race” and skin color of the Haitian body, both categories being products of the marks imposed by the Chilean dominator, who positions themselves hierarchically above the Haitian collective, which is subordinated. These asymmetries are evident in everyday interactions within the labor markets they navigate. The Chilean dominator allows Haitian workers to take part in the inhumane game of the workplace and, as Rojas *et al.* (2015) reveal, part of this group normalizes racial experiences. Consequently, they are placed at the margins of socio-labor exclusion because their professions or trades from their country of origin are not recognized and because they are differentiated and marked by their skin color, their bodies, and their origins.

Racism emerges by denying the “other”, and Chilean society projects its whiteness onto the “other”, whose identity remains ambiguous (Tijoux & Córdova, 2015). This is evident in the power relations that nationals exert over “Black-Caribbean-Haitian” individuals. In the Chilean sociocultural imaginary, the racist individual identifies with a white, Europeanized, and “civilized” body, embodying attributes of “progress”. The notion of “improving” the Chilean race to access modernity still prevails today, reinforcing an aspiration to belong to a European or North American paradigm (Larraín, 2001). In contrast, Haitians are perceived as coming from a Black, “uncivilized”, and impoverished Caribbean nation that is not favored by the nation.

Conclusions

The results suggest that the “origin profile” of the interviewed individuals has not been valued in the host country because their labor qualifications are rendered invisible and nullified. They are relegated to inhumane and exploited workspaces, living with racism in wholesale markets and the real estate construction sector. We recognize that the jobs held by Haitian migrants are “inherited” among them, and if one of them finds a “better” job, a fellow national is placed in the loader or construction laborer’s position,

reproducing inequality and exclusion towards certain types of work that are recognized as being at the lowest rung of inhumane and exploited migrant labor. In the workspaces they circulate in, they are mistreated and hypersexualized by managers and workers, who dominate, mark, and differentiate Haitian people because they are identified as descendants of the history of slavery, blackness, and poverty in Haiti, with racial markers intersected by “race”, class, and nationality. As Madriaga-Parra (2020) points out, it is differentiated as a “Black-Caribbean-Haitian” migration, understood as a racial category.

These racial differentiators are decisive in incorporating these individuals into segregated labor spaces because these jobs are carried out under poor working conditions, with low wages, long working hours, unhealthy conditions, and without protection under labor laws. The legitimacy of their labor capacity and professional, technical, and other knowledge is undermined. In effect, they are homogenized and placed in the inferior labor space, in contrast to Chilean identity, which positions itself as superior and above the line of humanity.

As a result, racism is a structural problem that operates as a socializing force in the segregated labor spaces where the interviewed individuals circulate because they are marked, hierarchized, differentiated, and biologically and culturally classified with stigmas associated with the “animal”, poverty, and blackness. These markers are inscribed in a dominant social practice by some people of Chilean origin who define themselves as “white” or “lighter”, with a higher sociocultural status, and belonging to a country with an image of economic progress like Chile.

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