

**Interpretative Methodologies and Methods Group @ APSA
2018 Hayward R. Alker Student Paper Award**

Citation

The 2018 Hayward R. Alker Student Paper Award committee is pleased to present this year's award to

Martha Balaguera (Assistant Professor, University of Toronto)

for her paper "Intersecting transit(ions): Confinement, migration and gender at the limits of sovereignty." The paper, which was self-nominated, was presented in November 2016 at the annual meeting of the American Studies Association in Denver, Colorado while Dr. Balaguera was a Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst's Department of Political Science.

Dr. Balaguera's paper draws attention to the crucial intersections between mass incarceration and the current refugee crisis, but it takes the conversation beyond the issues of migrant detention that currently dominate the conversation. Detention studies explorations are almost always concerned exclusively with strictly carceral facilities administered by the state (or its subcontractors), like jails, prisons and detention centers. The paper moves the conversation beyond this domain, toward trans women's lived experiences of transit and confinement, which have multiplied at myriad sites. Balaguera undertakes participant-observation and collects ethnographic data from three migrant shelters in Mexico, in order to trace the proliferation of experiences of confinement. Through the intersecting lenses of gender, migration and confinement, the paper explores the workings of sovereignty in the zone of "transmigration" beyond state prerogative, allowing us to understand carceral regimes more broadly beyond state sovereignty. In so doing, her work intervenes in and contributes to contemporary political debates about migration and borders, and to political and feminist theories, much of which see system of coercion over human mobility as signs of the "waning" or enhanced sovereignty of the state. The original data and immersed insights of this paper are extremely impressive. The personal accounts themselves are fascinating and illuminating, and the utility of the methodology and method are clear. Dr. Balaguera does an admirable job of relating the stories of her research participants to broader issues of power and transit. Moreover, she does so in a narrative-driven way that makes room for complexity and nuance in her analysis. This insightful, reflexive, and well written paper stands out for its originality, methodological sophistication, and stylistic and argumentative strength.

Selection Committee

Farah Godrej, University of California, Riverside, Chair
David Forrest, Oberlin College
Aarie Glas, Northern Illinois University