



Tübingen Korean Studies Lecture Series

Wednesday May 24th, 2023, 18:00 c.t., Wilhelmstraße 133, Room 30

'My life would have been happier in Germany': Korean guestworker nurses' journeys to Germany and to the US

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Helen Kim is an Associate Professor of Media and Communication at the University of Leeds. Her research focuses on diaspora, urban migration, and 'race' in the UK, US, and Germany. Her current research project is on the Korean 'guestworker' diaspora who have settled in Germany, US, and Canada. The project explores diasporic and postcolonial memory, 'race-making', and twice migration.



Abstract

This presentation highlights the little-known experiences and memories of Korean 'guestworker' nurses who 'twice migrated'; first moving to Germany and then migrating to the US in the 1960s and 1970s. Based on extended, repeat interviews with four former nurses, their stories underscore how little is known about this wave of Korean migrant women, specifically, and why they decided to migrate, where, and how. The findings highlight how these women were agents of their own mobility, seeing the opportunity to migrate to Germany as the means by which to acquire independence and autonomy as young women. Further, their stories showed how twice migration to the US was not always experienced as a positive and more advantageous destination, particularly for the women.

