ABSTRACT This talk introduces Born Out of Place: Migrant Mothers and the Politics of International Labor (University of California Press and Hong Kong University Press, 2014). The book, based on over fifteen months of ethnographic research among Filipino and Indonesian migrant workers who become pregnant while working in Hong Kong, makes three main arguments: (1) that temporary workers must be considered people, not just workers; (2) that policies often create the situations they aim to avoid; and (3) that the stigma of single motherhood often causes migrant mothers to re-enter what is called the “migratory cycle of atonement.” Professor Constable will also discuss the current socio-political climate of Hong Kong today, in relation to the book’s recent reception, including attitudes towards outsiders, economic and class anxieties, and relations with mainland China. Questions will also be raised about the role of “public anthropology” and how this book relates to migratory contexts beyond Hong Kong.

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