

Post-Migration Experiences, Cultural Practices and Homemaking

An Ethnography of Dominican Migration to Europe



Sabrina Dinmohamed

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BY

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

This book is dedicated to my mother, Chitra Ramnath, who always gave me the freedom to follow my own path. Her wisdom is beyond all books or degrees. This book is also dedicated to my father, Eugène Dinmohamed, who carries his Caribbeanness with so much pride that, without knowing, he inspired me to do research on Caribbean migration and culture.

Finally, this book is dedicated to my great-grandparents and grandparents, who migrated from India to Suriname and from Suriname to the Netherlands, and created a home in unfamiliar territories.

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Acknowledgements

Since I was a little girl, I have been fascinated by the lives of immigrants. At home in Amsterdam, my father would watch *Migrantentelevisie* ('migrant television') on the local television channels where immigrant groups in the Netherlands broadcast their own programmes. We watched to see programmes about Suriname and Surinamese people in the Netherlands, and I was always captivated by the immigrants' stories of their experiences in the Netherlands. Later in life, I was drawn by the Caribbean and Caribbean cultures. I always wondered why, despite being born and raised in the Netherlands, I could not feel at home there. When one would apply the widely accepted indicators of integration to me, my scores would be good and I would be declared a successful immigrant (in my case, second generation). How, then, to explain my lack of feeling at home? Are we, in our labelling of integration as 'successful', forgetting to take into account other factors and realities? It is with these questions in mind that I embarked on this research project. My aim, in addition to advancing the scientific debate, was to provide answers to a very personal question.

I thank several persons for inspiring, guiding and motivating me to do research. During my first year as a social sciences student at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, courses in anthropology and about the Caribbean fascinated me. Anthropology lecturer Carel Roessingh was the first person to inspire me to become active in research. After getting my master's, during my years working as a researcher in Curaçao, the themes of migration and immigrants became really meaningful to me. Around then, I decided that I wanted to become an expert on the lives of immigrants. I am thankful to my then-boss at the Central Bureau of Statistics, Mike Jacobs, for when cleaning off his bookshelf, throwing a book at me saying, 'Look at this, it might interest you'. It was an anthropological study about the migration experiences of Dominican immigrants in Puerto Rico. That's when I knew: I wanted to study migrants from the Dominican Republic and their processes of finding a way in a new society.

A couple of years later, I crossed paths with Ruben Gowricharn. I thank him for introducing me to the concept of home as a perspective through which to examine immigrants' experiences. I thank Jan Rath for always reminding me that this is *my* research, thus instilling in me a sense of agency and strength. He also encouraged me to be myself in what, for me, was the uncomfortable world of academia, by being himself, including when 'the Afrikaanderwijk came out', as he expressed it.

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Through the stories presented in this book, I came closer to answering my own questions about home, and, as such, this research brought me home. Readers, I hope through this book you can smell the Dominican flavours and feel the Dominican *ambiente*.

Sabrina Dinmohamed