Sabemos Aguantar: Living With and Leaving Behind the Violence of Everyday Life

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Join Amelia Frank-Vitale as she explores the Honduran usage of the term aguantar (roughly, endure), and examines how people understand their own mechanisms for survival in a city considered to be among the world’s most violent. While scholars have developed multiple ways to discuss how people survive – and often thrive – in situations of great hardship, Frank-Vitale suggests aguantar specifically in contrast to the idea of “resilience” that is frequently deployed in Honduras and elsewhere by international humanitarian and development organizations. Drawing from ethnographic fieldwork conducted in San Pedro Sula and among Honduran migrants in transit through Mexico, she uses aguantar to argue that migration must be understood as driven by both aspiration and desperation. Attempting to migrate out of Honduras is at once a way to exercise agency – to break out of a delimited life – and a relinquishing of agency, a kind of giving up, when one simply can no longer aguantar.

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