Nancy Emilce Carvajal Medina

Will defend the dissertation

Date: November 17, 2017
Time: 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm
Location: Pullman – Cleveland 121

Faculty, students and the general public are encouraged to attend.

TESTIMONIOS OF THE U.S. RURAL “HOMELESS”: A CRITICAL AND DECOLONIZING-DECOLONIZED ETHNOGRAPHY

Chair: Pamela Bettis

Homelessness is a structural and political problem that is commonly pathologized in research and media, and criminalized through policies in the U.S. Societally and discursively rural homelessness has been rendered invisible compared to urban homelessness. This critical ethnographic study center stages the testimonios of thirteen people who have experienced housing instability in Springfield, a U.S. rural town. Houseless people use their testimonios as a political tool to unframe their identities and challenge the discursive construction of their identities. They also deconstruct the meaning of the American Dream and re-envision it by redefining success, parenthood, and the meaning of home. I use a decolonizing research methodology grounded in Chicana/Latina feminism and indigenous epistemologies, to analyze the processes of identity construction of unhoused people. Critical researchers like O’Flaherty (Lee et al., 2010) and politicians like Ellison (NLICH, 2017) argue that the U.S. government lacks the “political will” to do what is right and re-evaluate housing policies, the job market, and medical services. I argue there is not one way of being homeless. Unfortunately, the label “homeless” demarcates the houseless’ body within a limited set of behaviors and characteristics, thus negating the possibility of acknowledging that these individuals possess spiritual, cognitive, ontological, and emotional dimensions.