

# ‘The filthy people’: 1 Racism in digital spaces during Covid-19 in the context of South–South migration

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## **Abstract**

Notions of ‘race’ and disease are deeply imbricated across the globe. This article explores the historical, complex entanglements between ‘race’, disease, and dirtiness in the multicultural Chilean context of Covid-19. We conducted a quantitative content analysis and a discourse analysis of online readers’ comments (n = 1233) in a digital news platform surrounding a controversial news event to examine Chileans’ cultural representations of Haitian migrants and explore online racism and anti-immigrant discourse. Drawing on a decolonial approach, we argue that Covid-19 as a crisis has been fabricated at the expense of a constructed ‘other’. We show how colonial racist logics not only endure in digital spaces, but are made viral in new ways by representing Haitian migrants as ‘filthy’ and ‘disease carriers’. We identified two contemporary forms of racism – online cultural racism and online aggressive racism – through which people construct imaginaries of racial superiority in digital spaces. © The Author(s) 2022.

## **Author keywords**

anti-black racism; Chile; Covid-19; cultural representations; digital spaces; Haitian migration; hate-speech; migration; race and ethnicity; racism