

# NOT EVEN PAST



## African-Soviet Encounters: New Histories of Russian Racism and Anti-Racism




Questions of race have complicated histories in Russia and the Soviet Union, where a commitment to anti-racist and internationalist ideology often disguised racialization and racial conflict. The strong negative reactions to Black Lives Matter in Russia in 2020 have given these questions new attention and urgency. One factor in this history that is routinely overlooked is the role played by representations and representatives of Africa and Africans in politics and culture. This symposium will bring together new voices and perspectives on the history of race and racialization in the Soviet Union by focusing on Soviet interactions with African governments and people, and the presence of Africans in the Soviet Union.

## AFRICAN-SOVIET ENCOUNTERS:

### New Histories of Russian Racism & Anti-Racism

Wednesday, February 3rd • 12 pm CT

Questions of race have complicated histories in Russia and the Soviet Union, where anti-racist and internationalist ideology often disguised racialization and racial conflict. Strong negative reactions to Black Lives Matter in Russia in 2020 have given these questions new attention and urgency. This symposium will bring together new perspectives on the history of race by focusing on Soviet interactions with African governments and peoples.



**Black Ghanians' Experiences in the Streets of the Soviet Union & Russia, 1960s & 2010s**  
 Nana Osei-Opore Assistant Professor of History, Fordham University

**Dupes and Defectors: African Students as Cold War Propagandists**  
 Thom Loyd PhD Candidate, Dept of History, Georgetown University

**In the Ruins of Soviet Internationalism: Africa in the Russian Imaginary, 1988-1998**  
 Hilary Lynd PhD Candidate, Dept of History, UC Berkeley

**Discussants:**

**Chelsi West-Ohueri**  
 Assistant Professor, UT Austin

**Morgan Henson**  
 MGPS, MA, UT Austin / Graduate Student, UW Madison

Register for the symposium here:  
<https://bit.ly/AfricanSoviet>

Hosted by The University of Texas at Austin's Department of History, Center for Russian, East European & Eurasian Studies, African & African Diaspora Studies Department, and John L. Warfield Center for African & African American Studies

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February 3, 2021. 12noonCT.

### Speakers:

Nana Osei-Opore, Asst Professor, Department of History, Fordham University

"Black Ghanaians' Experiences in the Streets of the Soviet Union and Russia, 1960s and 2010s."

Black Ghanaians in the Soviet Union often found themselves mediating between the Soviet ideological commitment to anti-racism and the racism they encountered every day. How did Ghanaians who lived in Russia in two distinct periods build a Ghanaian national identity and racial solidarity in the conditions of legal, immigration, and economic marginality?

Thom Loyd, PhD candidate, Department of History, Georgetown University

"Dupes and Defectors: African Students as Cold War Propagandists"

In the 1960s, a flurry of travel accounts by Black African students in the Soviet Union appeared in both capitalist and communist publications. Their chronicles of racial discrimination, segregation, and poor conditions were often taken at face value but recently declassified documents require us to rethink the ways these documents have been used to understand the Black African students' experiences.

Hilary Lynd, PhD candidate, Department of History, UC Berkeley

The collapse of the Soviet Union exacerbated anxieties about where Russia fit into global hierarchies. No longer a superpower, no longer animated by the upward Marxist sweep of progress, Russia in the 1990s found itself in a newly insecure position. Africans suffered the consequences of these new global anxieties. How did Russians invoke images of Black Africa in making sense of Russia's new condition during and after the Soviet collapse?

### Discussants:

Chelsi West Ohueri, Asst Professor, DSES/CREEES, UT Austin

Morgan Henson, MGPS/MA UT Austin, Graduate Student, Department of Sociology, UW Madison

### Organizers

Rebecca Johnston, PhD candidate, Department of History, UT Austin

Joan Neuberger, Professor of History, UT Austin

Sponsored by: UT Austin's Department of History, Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies, African and African Diaspora Studies Department, and John L. Warfield Center for African and African American Studies

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