



Homegrown Foreigners: The African Diaspora in Ukraine

Terrell Jermaine Starr

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12:00-1:00 pm, Georgetown University, ICC Conference room 450

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Dr. Marcia Morris, the Interim Director of CERES and Karrye Baxton, a former Foreign Service Officer in Kyiv, Ukraine, and current president of Global Business Solutions, Inc., welcomed the audience to the presentation by Terrell Jermaine Starr. Mr. Starr is a Peace Corps Georgia alumnus who earned his MA in Russian, Eastern European, and Eurasian Studies and Journalism from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and a BA in English from Philander Smith College, Little Rock, Arkansas. He recently completed a year and a half of research on the African Diaspora in Ukraine as a Fulbright Scholar.



Starr's research focused on the "small but significant minority of black Ukrainians," many of whom are children of mixed marriages between Ukrainian citizens and African students who studied in Ukraine during the Soviet era. Starr conducted four interviews with each participant in his study: the first dealt with their experiences in school; the second focused on relations with their parents; third, spirituality and faith; and fourth, relations with extended family members. The interviews revealed each individual's process of reconciling his or her identity as a Ukrainian citizen with a mixed racial heritage.

Mr. Starr described the life of Angelina Diazh, one of the interviewees, and a child of an African-Ukrainian marriage. Her mother and her aunt are Ukrainian, and both married Angolan men. Angelina related various episodes from her years in school that reflect the unique situation of children of Ukrainian-African relationships and the challenges facing people of color in Ukrainian society.

Starr related his own experiences as an African-American in Ukraine, where he said he had to be more cautious than the white Fulbright students and was stopped multiple times by police officers. Overall, however, he found the majority of people in Ukraine kind and helpful and expressed his appreciation of the fact that racism in Ukraine and the former Soviet Union was "more transparent" than in the United States. Starr noted that in Ukraine, people were

willing to talk about their feelings and experiences, both negative and positive, with individuals of other races.

Starr maintains a blog about his experiences as a Fulbright scholar in Ukraine and his research there, which can be viewed at <http://blackukrainian.tumblr.com/>.

*Jill Tetirick, CERES MA Candidate*