

Jennifer Wilson is a Ph.D. student in Russian Literature at Princeton University. She is currently a Visiting Scholar at the Center for Modern Russian Culture at the University of Southern California. Her research focuses on gender and sexuality in 19th-century Russian culture. Her research has been supported by fellowships from the Mellon Foundation and the Social Science Research Council. Her dissertation, "Radical Chastity: Abstaining from Sex and Society in Nineteenth-Century Russia," explores the place of chastity in the history of Russian radical thought.

Film: "Black Russians"

"Black Russians" (2001, www.mediarights.org/film/black_russians) is a feature-length documentary by Kara Lynch (see bio above) that investigates the lives of contemporary Afro-Russians aged 10 to 65, born and raised in Soviet Russia. Their experiences chronicle two ideological currents that have shaped major international events in the twentieth century: race and communism. Intimate interviews with a poet, a film producer, a reggae artist, a businessman and others, all Black and all Russian, guide us through this story of promise and non-discrimination. Archive images reveal rarely seen footage of Black political leaders in the Soviet Union, like Paul Robeson, Kwame Nkruma and Angela Davis. More than a decade after the "fall of communism," a new Russia struggles to steady itself in the wave of nationalism from within and the pressures of global capitalism from without. "Black Russians" constructs a deeply personal account of the effects of political issues such as migration, identity and loss on a minority community in the vast remains of the Soviet Union.

Symposium Organizers:

Center for Russian and East European Studies, University of Pittsburgh

Brandon Boylan, Graduate Student Assistant

Eileen O'Malley, Associate Director

Gina Peirce, Assistant Director/Outreach Coordinator

International Baccalaureate Program, Pittsburgh Schenley High School

Devin Browne, Language Teacher/IB Coordinator


Symposium Sponsors:

University of Pittsburgh

Center for Russian and East European Studies (with grant funding from U.S. Department of Education), Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, African Studies Program, Cultural Studies Program, Film Studies Program, Global Studies Center, Institute for International Studies in Education, School of Arts and Sciences, University Center for International Studies

Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies

International Baccalaureate Program, Pittsburgh Schenley High School



African-American Perspectives on Russian and Slavic Studies

Friday, February 11, 2011
4130 Posvar Hall
University of Pittsburgh

Symposium Agenda

8:30 a.m.

Participant sign-in and continental breakfast

9:00 a.m.

Welcoming remarks: Jennifer Creamer, Associate Director, University Center for International Studies; Andrew Konitzer, Associate Director, Center for Russian and East European Studies, University of Pittsburgh

9:15 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Panel: "Current Directions in Literary Research"

Raquel Greene, "Blackness in Russian and Soviet Children's Literature"

Jennifer Wilson, "Femininity and Feminism in 18th-Century Russia"

Moderator: Gina Peirce, Assistant Director, Center for Russian and East European Studies, University of Pittsburgh

10:40 a.m. - 12:25 p.m.

Panel: "Experiences of Studying and Working in the Former USSR"

Nicole Cuellar, "The Urban vs. Provincial Experience"

Terrell Starr, "Afro-Ukrainians: Born Ukrainian, Treated Like Outsiders"

Lisa Cook, "Distinctiveness, New Capitalism, and Implications for Research in the Former Soviet Union"

Moderator: Lynda Park, Executive Director, Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies

12:30 p.m.

Lunch: Lunch for current high school Russian language students with presenters in room 4217 Posvar Hall. Lunch for all other symposium participants in room 4130.

1:15 p.m. - 2:10 p.m.

Roundtable discussion: "Perspectives of High School Russian Teachers and Students"

Devin Browne, Language Teacher, Pittsburgh Public Schools

James Sweigert, Language Teacher, Baltimore Public Schools

Jonathan Bigelow, Seana Brown, Kalyn Fournoy, and **Tausha Saunders**, Alumni of International Baccalaureate Russian Program in Pittsburgh Public Schools

2:15 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Documentary film introduction and screening: "Black Russians" (2001)

Introduction by **Kara Lynch**, Filmmaker

4:40 p.m. - 5:10 p.m.

Post-film discussion with Kara Lynch; symposium wrap-up/closing remarks

Presenter Bios

Devin Browne is currently a Russian and French teacher in the International Baccalaureate Program at Schenley High School, Pittsburgh Public Schools. He worked with the University of Pittsburgh's Slavic Department and Center for Russian and East European Studies to develop Schenley's two-year IB Russian foundations course. The goal of this course was twofold: to bring another critical language into Schenley's IB program, as well as to help expand opportunities to more students who are interested in attaining the IB Diploma but are missing the required background in a second language.

Lisa D. Cook is an Assistant Professor of Economics at Michigan State University. Her research interests include financial institutions and crises, economic growth and development, the economics of innovation, and economic history. She received her Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley and did dissertation research in Moscow and St. Petersburg in 1995 and 1996.

Nicole Cuellar is a Program Assistant for Secondary Schools Inbound Programs at American Councils for International Education: ACTR/ACCELS. She joined American Councils' Washington, D.C. office in 2009. Previously, Nicole spent 2007-08 teaching English in Omsk, Russia through the Fulbright Program. As a university student, she also participated in study abroad programs in Spain and Russia. Nicole holds a B.A. from Howard University, where she studied Spanish and Russian.

Raquel Greene is an Associate Professor of Russian at Grinnell College. Her research focuses on the interplay of race, ethnicity, and culture; language pedagogy; Russian literature and culture; and children's literature. She teaches all levels of the Russian language, as well as a course titled "The Theme of the African in Russian Literature and Culture." She received her Ph.D. from Ohio State University.

Kara Lynch is an Associate Professor of Video and Critical Studies at Hampshire College and is a video, sound, and performance artist. In 1994, she received an Arts International six-month Artist Residency in Moscow, Russia. She is the creator of several films, including the 2001 documentary "Black Russians" (see film description below). Her work has been published in XCP Streetnotes, Ulbandus Review, and Black Filmmakers Magazine. She received her M.F.A. from the University of California, San Diego in visual arts.

Terrell J. Starr, a journalist by training, just completed his Fulbright-sponsored research in Ukraine on Afro-Ukrainians' self-perceptions in a Slavic society. His travel experiences in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union include stints as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Georgia and as a foreign correspondent in Romania, where he co-produced a radio documentary on Romanian politics. He earned his master's degree in Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies and a second master's in journalism from the University of Illinois in 2009.

James Sweigert is a Russian language teacher at Western High School, Baltimore Public Schools. Before teaching at Western, he worked as the Program Manager for Secondary School Programs at American Councils for International Education in Washington, D.C. (2003-2005). He also taught Russian at Price Laboratory School (1991-2003), the University of Northern Iowa (1991-1995), and the University of Southern California (1987-1990). He has organized and led school-to-school, university-level, and faculty-level exchange programs for sponsors including ACTR and Fulbright-Hays, and has also been involved in teacher education and training, materials development and publication, and Russian language contests. He is currently serving on the Editorial Board of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

