AFRI-A 731 Contemporary Africa Speaker Series Spring 2017:

African Mobilities and Expressive Culture

Wednesday, February 22 | 5:30-7:00pm | SGIS 1122

Professor Tristan Ivory: A Black by Any Other Name?: Strategic Ethnic Performance and the Commodification of Ethnic Identity

Bio: Tristan Ivory is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Center for Research on Race and Ethnicity in Society and a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at Indiana University. He received his PhD in 2015 from the Department of Sociology at Stanford University. Tristan's areas of specialization include international migration, race and ethnicity, inequality, and transnationalism. His dissertation uses ethnographic observation, interviews, contemporary news accounts, and archival data to examine the resources and strategies Sub-Saharan African migrants use to try to maximize social and economic outcomes in the Tokyo Metropolitan Region. Tristan is currently revising articles from his dissertation research as well as writing the first chapters of his dissertation book project, tentatively titled "Greener Pastures: Sub-Saharan Africans and the Pursuit of Social Mobility in Japan."

Abstract: This presentation introduces the concept of strategic ethnic performance (SEP), when members of one ethnic group present themselves as members of a phenotypically similar ethnic group for economic gain. I use ethnographic and interview data focused on Sub-Saharan African merchants involved in the Hip-Hop fashion boutique and Reggae bar business in urban Japan to show how SEP develops from four interconnected areas: the opportunity structure for ethnic entrepreneurs, the physical presentation of sellers, the arrangement of the selling venue, and feedback loops between the seller and the consumer. By utilizing SEP, ethnic entrepreneurs enhance the perceived authenticity of their goods and themselves. A thorough analysis of this process illuminates the interactional nature of ethnic authenticity as it is understood by consumers within urban areas.