



Western

Centre for Research on
Migration and Ethnic Relations

Winter Colloquium
Series 2015

Dr. Joseph Mensah

Joseph Mensah is a Professor of Geography at York University in Toronto. He completed his MA and PhD at the Wilfrid Laurier University (WLU) and the University of Alberta, respectively; and joined York University in 2002. His current research interests are in critical development theory, socio-spatial dialectics, globalization, and quantitative methods.

*Professor Mensah has received several competitive grants from the likes of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), the Gates Foundation, the Global Development Network, ILO, and the Commonwealth Secretariat. Professor Mensah has written numerous journal articles and contributed chapters to a number of books. He is the author of *Black Canadians: History, Experiences, Social Conditions*, published by Fernwood in 2002/2010. Professor Mensah was a Visiting Scholar under the Carnegie Diaspora Linkage Project at the University of Ghana during the 2013-14 academic year.*



The African Presence and the Nation– immigration Dialectic in Canada Exploring the Intersections of Identity, Culture, and Belonging

As globalization continues to weaken the nation state with the unbridled cross-border movements of goods, services, capital, and information, many countries are using immigration as the last bastion of their sovereignty, assertively regulating the flow of people across their borders. Invariably, national identity plays an important role in determining who gets into which country; just as immigration shapes a nation's identity in what many analysts call the nation-immigration dialectic. That Black Africans have been in Canada since the 17th Century is gradually settling in the consciousness of Canadians through the pens of several scholars. Still, many Canadians see the Black presence merely in negative terms: as refugees in need of humanitarian settlement; as immigrants coming to take undue advantage of Canada's welfare system; or as culturally- and racially-incompatible people, unwilling to assimilate into Canadian society. This paper examines the nation-immigration dialectic in Canada, showing how Africans are implicated in the process. The paper sets various conceptions of African immigrants (e.g., regarding the economy, humanitarianism, crime, etc.) against notions of Canadian national identity, using the dialectical principle of negation, by which a phenomenon is defined by what it is not. Also, the paper uses Hegel's concept of sublation to explore how Canada uses the contradictions in its encounter with Africans to reach a better understanding of its own identity.

4:00pm

Thursday March 12,

SSC 5220

***Please join us beforehand for Refreshments at 3:30pm
in SSC 5230, All Welcome!***

For More Info email: Merssid@uwo.ca