



Chinese-African Encounters in Guangzhou, China

Speaker: Prof. Min ZHOU

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Prof. Min ZHOU is currently Tan Lark Sye Chair Professor of Sociology, Head of the Division of Sociology, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, and Director of the Chinese Heritage Centre, Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore. She was Professor of Sociology & Asian American Studies and Walter and Shirley Wang Endowed Chair in U.S.-China Relations & Communications at the University of California, Los Angeles, USA (1994-2013). She was the President of the North American Chinese Sociologist Association, Chair of Section on Asia and Asian America of the American Sociological Association (ASA), and Chair of Section on International Migration of ASA. Prof Zhou's main areas of research include international migration, immigrant integration/adaptation, the new second generation, ethnic/racial relations, ethnic entrepreneurship, Chinese Diaspora, and Asia and Asian America, and she has published widely in these areas, including 17 books and more than 170 journal articles and book chapters (with over 15,800 Google Scholar citations and a Google Scholar h-index of 46 as of 30 November 2015).

Abstract: African migration to China has emerged as a significant sociological phenomenon only very recently. Unlike the stereotypical immigrant, Africans in China are predominantly self-made entrepreneurs doing business face-to-face with local Chinese merchants and living amongst local Chinese residents. Their encounters with the Chinese in local markets, residential neighborhoods, and on the street offer a rare opportunity for exploring interracial dynamics and race-making processes beyond the Western black-white paradigm. In this lecture, I examine the interracial relations between natives and international migrants in an emerging global city that arguably lacks significant racialization. Based on analysis of data from surveys, in-depth interviews, and field observations, I explore particularly how Chinese perceive Africans vis-à-vis other foreigners and how the contexts and conditions of Chinese-African encounters affect attitudes and racial formation. My study finds that, on average, Chinese in Guangzhou hold negative attitudes toward black Africans, but that their attitudes are inconsistent and have not yet been racialized. The mechanisms of social exclusion and inclusion are shaped by the intersection between the types and levels of contacts and interactions and the social contexts in which intergroup encounters occur. The findings indicate the rising awareness of racial differences but not an ongoing process of racialization as evident in other immigrant gateway cities of the Global North. Theoretical implications are discussed.

All are welcome!