

EVENTS CALENDAR

Diplomatic History Speaker Series

JASON PARKER



Hearts, Minds, Voices: Cold War Public Diplomacy and the Formation of the 'Third World'

Monday, February 29, 2016, 3:30PM - 5:00PM

Mershon Center for International Security Studies

1501 Neil Ave | Room 120 Columbus, Ohio 43201

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Jason Parker joined the A&M History Department in 2006, after teaching for four years at West Virginia University. He is the author of *Brother's Keeper: The United States, Race, and Empire in the British Caribbean, 1937-1962* (Oxford University Press, 2008) and of articles in *Diplomatic History*, *Journal of African American History*, and *International History Review*.

He has received research fellowships from the Mershon Center for International Security Studies at The Ohio State University and Smith Richardson Foundation in support of his current project on U.S. Cold War public diplomacy in the Third World. His broad research interests are U.S. foreign relations, decolonization and the Cold War, race and diplomacy, and Caribbean/inter-American affairs.



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ABSTRACT

During the first half of the Cold War, the superpowers endeavored mightily to “win hearts and minds” abroad through what came to be called public diplomacy. Many of the target audiences were on the Cold War frontlines in Europe. However, other, larger ones resided in areas outside Europe then in the throes of decolonization.

Among the latter, for all the blood and drama of war, intervention, crisis, and revolution, the vast majority experienced the Cold War as public diplomacy; as, essentially, a media war for their allegiance rather than as a violent war for their lives. In these areas, superpower public diplomacy encountered a set of challenges around the issues of race, empire, poverty, and decolonization— all of which were in volatile flux, as they intersected with the dynamics of the Cold War, and with anti-imperialist currents long coursing.

The challenge to U.S. public diplomacy was acute. At a time when the image of the United States abroad was inseparable from Jim Crow and from Washington’s European-imperial alliances, the cresting of these issues put U.S. outreach unavoidably on the defensive.

Yet the greater consequence of these Cold War campaigns was not for U.S. foreign policy, but rather for postwar international history—when the non-European world responded to this media war by joining it. Newly independent voices in India, Egypt, Ghana, and elsewhere launched public-diplomacy campaigns of their own, making for a crowded field by the 1960s. In addition to offering a roundabout validation of the strategic importance of public diplomacy, this proliferation of voices articulated a different vision of the postwar world.

Reappropriating the geopolitical and intellectual space left between the poles of the superpower conflict, this global conversation formulated what Vijay Prashad calls the Third World project, around a nucleus of nonalignment, post-imperial economic development, and anti-colonial racial solidarity. The global-South response to the injection of the Cold War into their environs thereby helped to coalesce the “Third World” as a transnational imagined community on the postwar global landscape.

