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Harry & Helen Gray  
Humanities Program Series  
Volume 5

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WHO IS A GERMAN?  
HISTORICAL AND  
MODERN PERSPECTIVES  
ON AFRICANS IN  
GERMANY

■

Edited by  
Leroy T. Hopkins, Jr.  
Millersville University

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American Institute for Contemporary German Studies  
The Johns Hopkins University

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# FOREWORD

The attempt to define its cultural and national identity has been a *leitmotif* in German history. Its later appearance as a national state helped to preserve and maintain vestiges of a feudal society in which tradition and heredity were the cornerstones of political and social identity. The encounter with non-European peoples racialized German identity in that European physical attributes as well as culture became not only desirable characteristics but also the measure of humanity. Eighteenth century pioneers in anthropology, such as Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, developed a taxonomy of racial characteristics in which the European was the norm and all others were “degenerations” of that original racial grouping.

After 1945 traditional German identity was discredited by the shame and guilt associated with two lost world wars and the horrors of state-planned and implemented genocide. As a consequence, except for the most rabid right-wing or nationalistic groups, being a European was more desirable than loyalty to “the divided Germany.” The growth of non-German populations in the postwar era, especially in the Federal Republic, not only challenges the traditional perception of what is German, but also transformed Germany’s *nolens volens* into a multicultural society that finds itself confronted with the gargantuan task of integrating disparate racial and ethnic groups despite official and public resistance into a harmonious and prosperous society.

The need for a more inclusionary definition of what is German was particularly underscored by the emergence in the 1980s of a racial minority which refers to itself as Afro- or Black Germans. This by no means homogeneous biracial group has been attempting over the past decade to define itself as existing between two cultures. Its search for cultural identity has been somewhat hampered by official indifference to its situation and life experiences, a widening rift in the group over the place of gender issues in its activities, and its own heterogeneity.

Although they feel themselves part of the African Diaspora, the largely involuntary dispersal of indigenous African populations throughout the world, they identify culturally both with Germany and with a global Black culture which only now is being recognized. Even though they are a largely invisible German minority, their needs and aspirations must also be included in the emerging multicultural German society.

This volume is meant to provide access to some of these issues. It is based on the workshop, “Who is a German? Historical and Modern Perspectives on Africans in Germany,” which was organized by Leroy Hopkins at the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies on November 7, 1997, and led to spirited debates about the status of Africans not only in Germany but also in the United States and other countries. While the differences in legal provisions against discrimination drew particular attention (and remained open for more discussion), there was agreement about the fact that Germany, different from major colonial powers like France and Great Britain, provides fewer professional role models for Africans, thus making acculturation more difficult.

In his essay, Leroy Hopkins gives an historical overview of the German interaction with Africans in its different periods from colonial times to the Weimar Republic, Nazi Germany and the postwar era. His second focus is on the activities with which Afro-Germans have been able to raise their own consciousness about their different identities as Germans and Africans, as well as the attention of Germans toward their plight as a minority. From an autobiographical point of view, Helga Emde provides insights into the everyday trials and tribulations of an Afro-German woman who later chose to go to the United States but eventually had to return to Germany. Marilyn Séphocle places the political initiatives for a stronger public representation of Afro-Germans in the context of Germany’s treatment of other minorities. In his concluding essay, Andreas Mielke inquires into one of the most pervasive issues in the encounter of Europeans and Africans: the European projection of sexual prowess. Mielke sheds light on a special aspect of the rich tapestry of cultural interactions between Germans and Africans which first received broader attention among academics at the Wisconsin workshop, “Blacks and German Culture,” in 1986 and was analyzed by Peter Martin in his impressive study *Schwarze Teufel, edle Mohren* (1993).

With this volume, the Harry and Helen Gray Humanities Program continues the study of contemporary German culture as a culture of increasing multiethnic representations and interactions, as documented in Jeffrey Peck’s volume in the Humanities Series, *German Cultures, Foreign Cultures: The Politics of Belonging*. At the same time, the Humanities Program hopes to heighten the awareness of Americans, particularly African-Americans, concerning the existence and situation of Afro-Germans. The recent Congress of the African-American and Black German Communities, which took place under the title

“Showing Our Colors” in Chicago and Washington in April 1998, established the basis for a more permanent relationship between the two groups, as well as the larger public in both countries. For the first time, African-Americans met with a delegation of sixteen Black German professionals representing groups that promote diversity, self-help and greater participation of Germans of the African Diaspora.\*

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**RACE, NATIONALITY AND CULTURE:  
THE AFRICAN DIASPORA IN GERMANY**

Leroy T. Hopkins, Jr.

**THE AFRICAN DIASPORA**

In recent years two theoretical constructs have been used to examine the displacement of African peoples and their dispersal throughout the world. For the global context of this dispersal “African diaspora” is the term generally used. Paul Gilroy’s term “Black Atlantic”<sup>1</sup> contextualizes the voluntary and involuntary migration of Africans to Europe, Latin America and North America since the Age of Discovery. Transcultural exchange between Africa and Europe predates, of course, the fifteenth century and it is well known that Africans lived in what is now Germany as early as the first half of the sixteenth century at a time when the trading houses of Welser and Ehinger became involved in the Atlantic slave trade.

A significant body of research already exists on the reception of Africa and Africans in German literature and letters since the Middle Ages. The best survey is undoubtedly Peter Martin’s excellent *Schwarze Teufel, Edle Mohren*<sup>2</sup> that not only chronicles the presence of Africans in Germany from the Middle Ages to the mid-nineteenth century but also examines the relationship between the Enlightenment and the rise of racism. In a second book Dr. Martin is examining the interactions of Germans, Africans and African-Americans since 1860 in the context of the labor movement, the Comintern and anti-colonialism. Once that book is completed, a neglected chapter in the history of the Black Atlantic will finally be told.

**THE AFRICAN DIASPORA IN GERMANY:  
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Our context is somewhat more limited. In the following—although the focus is on the African diaspora in Germany since 1945—it is necessary to view that history in the broader context of German interaction with Africans since the middle of the last century. Generally,

German interaction with Africa and Africans is divided into two periods: the colonial phase from the Berlin Conference of 1884/5 to the Treaty of Versailles that sanctioned the expropriation of the German colonies to the dismay of **all** the German political parties, and the post-World War II period when the German economic miracle attracted workers and students from southern Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and the developing countries. The OPEC boycott following the Munich Olympics and a concomitant downturn in the world economy helped unleash latent xenophobic and racist tendencies that, especially after reunification, precipitated violent outbursts against Africans and other people of color residing in the Federal Republic and the former GDR. These apparently discontinuous phases in German-African interaction exhibit upon closer examination a strong continuity.

One unifying element is the physical presence of Africans. Public records and local history narratives amply document an African presence—if not in large numbers—in many German states almost continuously since at least the eighteenth century. European expansion created several situations that brought Africans to Germany. Anton Wilhelm Amo, the African professor at Halle and Wittenberg, exemplifies the continuation of the practice of adorning the Renaissance courts with exotic plants, animals and people. In addition to *Hofmohren*, Africans also arrived as Moravian converts<sup>3</sup> and as trainees for the colonial economy in the Danish West Indies.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the African presence in eighteenth century Germany was the African-American loyalists who traveled with the “Hessian” troops returning from America in 1783/4 and their impact on the emerging scientific discourse on race.<sup>5</sup>

In the nineteenth century contact between Germans and Africans increased in frequency. The colonial politics of the 1880s and subsequent partitioning of Africa into spheres of influences for European exploitation were preceded by decades-long agitation for overseas colonies as settlement areas, sources of raw materials, and markets for the manufactured goods. Missionary work also took Germans and especially the Swiss to Africa but trade was the main impulse. Hamburg trading houses such as C. Woermann, Jantzen & Thormälen, Gaiser, and Godeffroy & Sohn pressured officials of the *Reich* to begin a vigorous

program of colonial expansion and protect the interests of their overseas enterprises. The Berlin Conference of 1884/85 was the vehicle for German colonial aspirations and, as was the case in the Cameroons, commercial interest was just a prelude to an albeit reluctant decision by Bismarck and the monarchy to protect German interests by securing colonies in Togo, Southwest, Duala (Cameroon), and East Africa. From 1884 almost to the beginning of World War I Germany needed its military might to retain control over these African territories and the bloody Herero War and the war against the Nama in Southwest between 1904-7 demonstrated that Imperial Germany was ready to annihilate native populations to protect its acquired rights.

Much has been written about German atrocities and successes in Africa but what about Africans in Germany? From the outset a familiar scenario unfolded in the German colonies. The sons of influential tribal leaders were sent to Germany ostensibly to be educated and later assume some position in the colonial apparatus. Certainly, these young men may also have been a guarantee for the cooperation of the father but there are certainly cases in which the trip to Germany was motivated by the wish to benefit from a modern education. The tradition of bringing young Africans to Europe is a century old practice probably grounded in attempts to determine whether or not the African was indeed human; that is, capable of becoming literate in the European sense. Many European intellectuals felt, as did Hegel, that Africa was a land without history, that is devoid of culture, and Europeanizing the Africans might just spark some latent humanity in their otherwise primitive souls.

Of course, not all Europeans were in total agreement with this image of the African, but it is interesting to note that Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840) and Henri Grégoire (1750-1831), two advocates of the essential humanity of the African, supported their contention by naming exceptional individuals such as Angelo Soleiman, Anton Wilhelm Amo or Ignacio Sanchez who had mastered European learning. Literacy, even to the “friends of the Blacks” as Grégoire termed them, was an essential measure of humanity. The story of Mpundo Akwa, son of King Akwa of the Duala, is well known to Africanists as an example of the difficulties encountered by Africans who came to Europe and, in the case of Mpundo Akwa, resided in Northern Germany for two lengthy periods of time between 1884-1911.<sup>6</sup>

## **AFRICANS IN IMPERIAL GERMANY: MPUNDO AKWA AND ERNST ANUMU**

Mpundo Akwa had been sent to Germany to be educated for a role in the German colonial administration. As interpreter for the German governor of Duala, Jesko von Puttkamer, he witnessed firsthand the inequities and corruption of German rule. He assumed the role of an intermediary for his people in directing their requests for reforms to the political opponents of colonization in the *Reichstag*. Because of this—in the eyes of the German government—subversive activity, an orchestrated campaign to destroy Akwa was put into effect. He was unable to pay creditors because his income, money sent by his father, was stopped by the Germans in Duala; consequently, Akwa was prosecuted for fraud.

The likely outcome of that trial, if he had been found guilty, would have been deportation to Duala where the colonial government eagerly awaited an opportunity to exact revenge for the damage which Mpundo Akwa had caused them in Germany. Thanks to the skillful defense of Akwa's distinguished Jewish lawyer, Dr. Moses Levi, he was acquitted but the barrage continued and he finally returned home in 1911 with all hopes of securing an economic foothold in Germany or representing the cause of his countrymen whom he termed "Black Germans" completely dashed. In the years before the outbreak of the First World War he disappeared into a German jail in Duala and apparently was never heard of again. It is likely that he might have been executed as was the fate of the Duala king, Rudolf Manga Bell, in 1914.

Mpundo Akwa's case was no isolated example. Katharina Oguntoye<sup>7</sup> has compiled a list of Africans who lived in Germany between 1884-1950 and were constantly harassed and castigated because of their race. She mentions the case of Ernst Anumu only in passing, but in the Hamburg *Staatsarchiv* a wealth of information on this interesting man can be found in the *Einbürgerungsakte, Heinrich Ernst Wilhelm Anumu, 1917*.<sup>8</sup> Anumu was from Togo, educated in Germany, and tried to survive as an entrepreneur in Hamburg from 1913-37. Even though he ran afoul of the governmental bureaucracy when he applied for citizenship in 1917, which was denied on purely racist grounds, Anumu belonged to a small but

determined group of displaced Africans who lived in Weimar Germany without the possibility or even the desire to return to their homelands which were under French or English rule. The framers of the Versailles Treaty had pointedly denied self-determination to the colonized peoples, and individuals such as Anumu or Peter Makemba, both residents of Hamburg, were left without a recognized nationality.

To ameliorate their situation a group of similarly displaced Africans created the *Afrikanischer Hilfsverein* in Hamburg in May 1918.<sup>9</sup> Even though they resided in all corners of the *Reich*, the incorporators of the *Hilfsverein* chose Hamburg as the headquarters for the corporation and Anumu and Makemba as the first president and secretary, respectively. Although isolated in Germany from their homelands, these Africans were not isolated from each other. The choice of Hamburg was not accidental given that port city's important role in German colonization. Not only were the great trading houses located here but one of the important institutions intended for the training of the rank and file of the colonial apparatus, the *Kolonialinstitut*, was also at home in Hamburg.

The University of Berlin had been a pioneer in the preparation of German colonial officials who were sent to Africa and the Pacific, but Hamburg may have overshadowed the capital in the decade before the outbreak of the world war because of its strategic location and the strong links via the Woermann Line to Africa. As Germany's most important port and the home of very vocal supporters of the colonial mission, Hamburg was well positioned to benefit from German imperialism. The boom of the *Gründerjahre* created unprecedented wealth in the Hanseatic city where captains of industry, such as the banker Max Warburg and shipping magnates Albert Ballin and Eduard Woermann, exploited the potential for enormous profits in Germany's overseas expansion.

These captains of industry formed the control mechanism (*Kaufmännischer Beirat*) at the *Kolonialinstitut* and guided, with the assistance of a specially selected cadre of professors, the training of administrators, health professionals and other personnel intended for colonial service. A significant element in that training was in the indigenous languages and native informants, such as the aforementioned Peter Makemba, who were brought to Hamburg to act as language resource persons (*Sprachgehilfe*) in Duala, Swahili, Ibo, etc. The dissolution of the German colonial empire only temporarily interrupted German



commercial ties to Africa but it stranded an unspecified number of Africans—Katharina Oguntoye has found documentation on 128 of these *Staatenlose*.

## AFRICANS IN WEIMAR AND NAZI GERMANY

Elisa Forgey<sup>10</sup> has described how a group of Africans organized and appeared in traveling shows similar to those popularized in Europe by P.T. Barnum, Buffalo Bill and Hamburg's Carl Hagenbeck. But perhaps the most complete record of what Africans had to confront in the Weimar Republic and under the National Socialists is the story of the Diek family which Katharina Oguntoye supplemented with archival materials. The family was first introduced in the oral histories of Doris Reiprich and Erika Ngambi that introduce *Farbe bekennen* (1986), the first attempt of Afro-Germans to introduce themselves to the German reading public.

Madenga Diek (1871-1943), the father of Doris and Erika, came to Hamburg from Duala in 1891 to be educated. He eventually married and fathered a daughter named Erika. This first marriage failed and he moved on to Danzig where he met and married Emilie Wiedelinski. Erika and Doris were born in 1919 and 1920, respectively. The experiences of this bi-cultural, bi-racial family exemplifies what is currently known about the everyday life of the Africans living in Germany between 1920 and 1950.

Racism and discrimination were almost daily occurrences relieved only by occasional friendships with white Germans and contacts to African enclaves such as that in Berlin and Hamburg. The situation worsened exponentially after 1933 but with an ironic twist. Katharina Oguntoye has found extensive documentation on governmental efforts after 1933 to ameliorate the Africans' situation by providing financial support and procuring employment. Although Germany denied the Africans citizenship, some segments of the National Socialist bureaucracy assumed the role of an ombudsman in the hope that fair treatment of Africans in Germany might translate into favorable treatment of German commercial interests in Africa.

The incongruity of this situation is compounded when one considers the sort of employment that Doris Reiprich found thanks to her brother-in-law. Erika had married the African actor Louis Mbebe Mpressa (stage name: Louis Brody Alcolson) and he found her small parts in films that

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were produced in Berlin.<sup>11</sup> Brody himself had significant roles in German colonial films and appeared opposite Hans Albers in “Carl Peters,” Heinz Rühmann in “Quax in Afrika” and Emil Jannings in “Ohm Krüger.”<sup>12</sup> African participation in German films was not restricted to the 1930s and 1940s. Oguntoye suggests that research in this area might be a fruitful undertaking and an entry in the Altona address book supports that hypothesis. Paul Malapa, a member of the *Afrikanischer Hilfsverein* and for a short time a partner in Peter Makemba’s import/export business, is listed for the period 1923-27 as being a *Filmdarsteller*. At present it is not possible to say in which films he may have appeared but perhaps he was an extra in a Lubitsch film or one of the fantasy films that were popular in and around the First World War.<sup>13</sup> Obviously the film could be a productive area for research and especially in light of the fascinating remark made by Doris Reiprich that among the extras who worked on the German propaganda films were also Black prisoners-of-war, Americans.<sup>14</sup>

A darker side of everyday life for Africans in Nazi Germany appears in the account of Doris’ attempt to visit her cousin in the Bromberg concentration camp and her narrow escape from sterilization in 1937/38 when German health officials sterilized most of the bi-racial children born during the occupation of the Rhineland. The question whether Africans or other people of color were victims of the Holocaust surfaced recently in a query posed on the Internet. On May 6, 1997 my institution’s list service on the Holocaust received both an inquiry from University of California historian Christopher R. Jackson and a response from Aaron T. Kornblum, reference archivist at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Dr. Kornblum’s response included a preliminary bibliography of manuscripts, books, photographs, caricatures, illustrations, and articles on the whole complex of Germany and race but with special emphasis on the period of National Socialism. Several notable items are the Herta Grove Papers (Mrs. Grove is the daughter of Dr. Moses Levi, Mpundo Akwa’s lawyer), the Renee Schich memoir that contains a reference to a German-Cameroonian woman who was a *kapo* in a subcamp of Auschwitz, and the Josef Nassy Collection of art work on the internment of this Afro-Dutch artist. Obviously the Holocaust Museum is an important site for future research; Dr. Robert Kesting, the late senior archivist in the museum, has already published on the subject.

## AFTER 1945

After World War II the situation of Africans in Germany changed radically. Not only did the number of people of color living there increase dramatically, but the concept of race collided with evolving new perceptions of self and nationality. The political and economic upheavals of the 1940s and 1950s had a profound impact on Germans' sense of their national identity especially after the physical and spiritual devastation of the lost war. Perceptions of race continued unchanged by the experience of war and the confrontation with the question of collective guilt for the Holocaust.

Rosemarie Lester, a pioneer researcher of the reception of race in Germany, has examined nuances in the image of the Black found in serialized stories published in mass weeklies such as *Bunte*, *Stern* and *Quick* between 1950-81.<sup>15</sup> In those narratives she identifies shifts from the image of the Black man as a friend and helper—an image influenced by the generally positive early relationship between African-American G.I.s and the German population—to that of the “ugly African,”<sup>16</sup> reflecting the negative press received after 1960 by Africa because of revolutions and local tyrants such as Idi Amin or Bokassa. Concomitant with this shift Lester also found persisting negative stereotypes that fed on earlier perceptions of Blacks.

The representation of the Black G.I. as an importune child incapable of controlling his emotions recalls earlier portrayals of the colonized Africans; indeed, in his study of German colonial literature for the period 1884-1945 Amadou Booker Sadjı found similar results as Lester, namely, a multitude of images ranging from the negative to the positive.<sup>17</sup> Depending on theme or influenced by current events the image of the African changed. But what about the Africans whom a German might meet on a daily basis?

Rosemarie Lester devotes a section of her dissertation to the issue of the *Besatzungskinder* (occupation children) who attracted the attention of the German government in the 1950s and 1960s. The presence of these children—according to official estimates by 1951 there were 3,035<sup>18</sup>—triggered what for Rosemarie Lester was the typical German response to race in the postwar years: ignorance; racism and good intentions tinged

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with pity.<sup>19</sup> Confronted with bi-racial children, the German government's reaction contrasted markedly with that of its predecessor in 1937/38.

The children born because of liaisons between German women and the French troops stationed in the Rhineland during the early 1920s were sterilized by the Nazi government. In 1951 the Federal government studied the problem posed by such children and recommended measures to reunite them with their fathers because of the "unsuitability" of Germany's climate.<sup>20</sup> The absurdity of the notion that a proclivity for a certain type of climate is imprinted on the genes of a child was exceeded only by the shallowness of the cinematic treatment of the *Besatzungskind* problematic.

The film "*Toxi*" (1952) exemplifies the wedding of pity, melodrama and a total ignorance of the social implications of race. The narrative is a melodramatic treatment devoid of even a trace of realism. *Toxi* is an orphan who is shown symbolically trying to gain entrance into a patrician home. After many trials and tribulations she wins acceptance and love from the family until her father arrives from America and takes her with him. To lend a thin veneer of reality to this cliché-ridden story, a bi-racial child actress, Elfie Fiegert, daughter of an African-American soldier and a German woman, played the role of *Toxi*.

The shallowness of the plot—affluent Germans rescue racial outsider and love her despite her handicap—is compounded by the use of a full repertoire of racial stereotypes which Rosemarie Lester perceptively links to German children's literature.<sup>21</sup> The darker skin color of the African was, of course, a theme in the most popular children's book of all ages, *Struwwelpeter*, and the public relations material for the film exploits this "oddity." We see a representation of the three wisemen (one of whom is traditionally Black). *Toxi* is referred to as a *goldiger brauner Kobold* and a *Mulattenkind*. Also there is a scene where *Toxi* disrobes and two children and two adults inspect her darker skin. *Toxi*'s exotic appearance elicits an almost child-like curiosity in the members of the German family and even the uncle who at first rejected her on racist ground soon accepts her. The problem of dealing with *Toxi*'s otherness on a level other than that of an emotional response to a non-threatening child is removed by the arrival of her father, *deus ex machina*, to take her with him. The problem of dealing with an adult *Toxi* who might marry into the family is thus avoided. Needless to say, *Toxi* was very popular with movie

audiences, to the extent that *Toxi* became a generic term in the vernacular for occupation baby.

In the early years of the Federal Republic, the problem of race was defused by relegating it to the realm of *Kitsch*, the banal, and the melodramatic. The representation of Blacks as caricatures—simple-minded, jovial and mischievously devious—certainly links the colonial films of the Nazi Germany with popular films such as “*Tante Wanda aus Uganda*” or “*Zehn kleine Negerlein*” of the 1950s. The sisters Diek appeared in the latter two films and it is interesting to note that their half-sister in Hamburg is reported to have appeared opposite Liselotte Pulver in “*Heidelberger Romanze*” in the role of a *Negermami*.<sup>22</sup>

Were these Afro-Germans guilty of helping to denigrate their own race? Probably no more than America’s *Stepinfetchit* or the many African-American actors and actresses who had to portray mammies, buffoons and cowards in Hollywood films. Those were the roles that were available to Black actors. Pride meant unemployment. Few had the courage or the fortitude to refuse the demeaning roles that reflected how Hollywood and America saw the African-American.

Like African-Americans, bi-racial individuals growing up in the Federal Republic had to cope with a culture whose language was rife with expressions and terms that portrayed them as something or someone of lesser value. One need only consult Heinz Küpper’s lexicon of colloquial German to gain some insight into this verbal racialism. After 1945 the term *Negerschweiß* was applied to coca-cola instead of coffee or tea; expressions such as *Das haut den dicksten Neger aus dem Jeep* or *Negersteuer* for the tax on childless couples for the benefit of larger families or applying the traditional *Mohrenwäsche* to the denazification process are indicators of a racist mind set. Other choice examples are *Negerpimmel* for *Blutwurst* or the ubiquitous *Negerkuß* or *Mohrenkopf* which in recent years has been neutralized into *Schokokuß*.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps most distressing is the currency of “Nigger” in German: Thomas Mann uses it, for example, in his novella *Tristan*. It exceeds the limits of this essay to try to assess the damage such linguistic battery must have had on bi-racial children entering puberty between 1960-80.

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## SPEAKING OUT

We can only begin to understand the psychological damage of racism and discrimination when the victims began to speak in the 1980s when two publications allowed a marginalized group to attempt to create their own identity and not just the stereotypes impressed upon them by society.<sup>24</sup> These two volumes present two perspectives on the problem of race relations in postwar Germany. Gisela Fremgen's "*. . . und wenn du dazu noch schwarz bist*" uses oral histories, essays, caricatures, and quotes to document everyday encounters with racism and discrimination. Ten women (five from Africa, two from Germany, two from the Caribbean, and one from the U.S.) relate their experiences in trying to coexist with Germans. The perspective that predominates is that of the woman of African descent who has come to Germany. The three noteworthy exceptions are an African-American woman married to a German, a German formerly married to an African, and a woman whose mother was German and her father an African-American. The majority of the women expressed their disgust over daily racist acts and attitudes and their conviction that nothing would change.

### *FARBE BEKENNEN*

*Farbe bekennen* utilizes the same documentary approach to expose discrimination but at its heart are the oral histories of fourteen bi-racial women of African or African-American and German parentage. Their narratives create an almost complete history of race relations in Germany from the late nineteenth century up to the immediate present. Unlike the women in Fremgen's book, the women in *Farbe bekennen* describe not only confrontations with discrimination but also their determination to overcome it. The forewords by the editors and the late Audre Lorde indicate that *Farbe bekennen* is indeed part of a group initiative to establish and validate a new cultural identity: Afro- or Black German.

The project to invent a racialized German identity lay at the heart of a broad-based strategy implemented around the time of the publication of *Farbe bekennen*. One segment of that strategy was two television documentaries: Südwest 3's "*Ein bißchen schwarz - bißchen weiß*" broadcast on February

12, 1986 and the Saarländischer Rundfunk's "*Deutsche sind weiß. Neger können keine Deutschen sein*" broadcast on May 29, 1986. The second film documents a meeting of bi-racial Germans and permits some of them to tell their story. In the process the viewer is introduced to a homogenous yet diverse group. Although each had an African or African-American parent (usually the father) and had experienced discrimination because of their physical appearance, there was no uniformity in background because of class differences and a variety of individual experiences: some were placed into institutions as children, others were not. Also, some came from a working class background as opposed to others who were raised in the middle class.

The film presents a survivor of the Nazi sterilization campaign of 1937/38 as well as the offspring of German women and African students or African-American soldiers. The individuals presented range from a student, a *Bundeswehr* non-commissioned officer, a pastor, and two members of the West German entertainment industry—the popular soccer player Jimmy Hartwig and the actress Karin Boyd who appeared opposite Klaus Maria Brandauer in the film version of *Mephisto*. Despite the diversity of their backgrounds, each related similar stories of isolation, discrimination and rejection.

### ***INITIATIVE SCHWARZE DEUTSCHE***

This group experience led to the creation of the I.S.D. (*Initiative Schwarze Deutsche*) which was introduced in the group's first publication "*Onkel Toms Faust*" in 1988. A map on the last page of the magazine indicated affiliated I.S.D.s in Berlin, Kiel, Bremen, Duisburg, Düsseldorf, Cologne, Bielefeld, Frankfurt, Wiesbaden, Mainz, Stuttgart, Freiburg, and Munich. Contemporaneous with "*Onkel Toms Faust*" was "*Afrekete. Zeitung für afro-deutsche und schwarze Frauen.*" The first editions of these two magazines, as well as two brochures distributed by the I.S.D. Rhein-Main (Wiesbaden, Mainz and Frankfurt) in 1989, present the group's program.

The English-language brochure from the I.S.D. Rhein-Main contains information on both the local and national organizations. That information is divided into responses to five questions: "Who we are," "Why we have come together," "What we do," "What we want, what we

demand,” and “How to reach us.” The response to the identity question is informative.<sup>25</sup>

They call us “mixed,” “mulatto,” “negro,” “coloured,” “war baby,” “bimbo,” “bastard,” . . .

We are not going to let others identify and define us any more.

We are Afro-Germans/Black Germans, who have grown up in Germany (FRG, West Berlin, GDR), who have in most cases (lived, survived) a greater part of their lives here or have lived and continue to live in white German and/or black family setups.

The determination to establish their own identity despite differences in background led, of course, to the establishment of the I.S.D. in 1985 and ADEFRA (*Afro-deutsche Frauen*) in 1986. Although an I.S.D. or ADEFRA group is present in all the major cities, there is no centralized organization; each group is autonomous.

Despite their autonomy each I.S.D. or ADEFRA group apparently pursued similar activities designed to “strengthen and cement [. . .] within and without” so that the members could become “strong enough for the daily challenge racism poses.”<sup>26</sup> Through solidarity the I.S.D. hoped to overcome the isolation of the Afro-Germans and thus help them discover their own identity “as human beings who consider their blackness as being a concrete part of their identity.”<sup>27</sup> This acceptance of the racialized self is translated into a set of programmatic goals:<sup>28</sup>

We would like to contribute to a change in the general appreciation of German history—all aspects of it.

This includes dealing with Afro-German (Afro-European) history, which to a great extent, must be compiled and written down for the first time. This means that we should concern ourselves with our own biographies as basis for a special, black-defined identity.

We demand that the white society put an end to prejudice, discrimination, racism and sexism, perpetrated against us



Black German/Afro-Germans and against all other social groupings with a similar plight (e.g., seekers of political asylum, Sinti, and Roma).

We demand that racist stereotypes and discriminatory expressions, terms, illustrations and race-slanted reports disappear from the media; beginning with children's books, youth books, films, encyclopedias and ending with political journalism.

All groupings throughout Germany keep in contact. Ideas are also exchanged at coordination meetings, editorial meetings and at our General Meeting held annually. Other opportunities for contact are during Black Film Festivals, public readings, parties, etc.

An important aspect of our work is to cooperate with groups from Black world movements, with people doing anti-racism work and other solidarity groups.

The plan of action set forth here is afrocentric in concept and panafrican in scope. The German language brochure adds some specificity to the list of demands and is therefore directed at a possible audience in the Federal Republic.

This brochure listed demands that the German government recognize Black Germans as victims of Nazi racial persecution, that it take vigorous action against the growing xenophobia and fascist tendencies in society, that it end its support of racist regimes (especially the Apartheid regime in South Africa) and that it and German business cease the exploitation of the Third World. The global scope of the I.S.D.'s program is also reflected in ADEFRA's announcement in the first issue of "*Afrekete*" that the purpose of the magazine was to facilitate the process of self-identification as women, Afro-German women and Black internationalists.<sup>29</sup>

This identification with a global community of people of color is not unique to today's Afro-Germans. An afrocentric or diasporic consciousness is an integral part of the African-American experience from the masonic discourses

of Prince Hall in the eighteenth century to the plans for empire-building in Africa by Harry Dean and Marcus Garvey in the twentieth century.<sup>30</sup> The constitution of the above mentioned *Afrikanischer Hilfsverein*, a beneficial association for Africans stranded in Germany by the First World War, states that the organizers sought to help Africans and other people of color in Germany.<sup>31</sup> Clearly, the identification with a global community of people of color is not a new phenomenon. The manner in which Afro-Germans have sought to establish themselves within that African diaspora can be extrapolated from the small but impressive body of theoretical and literary works which have appeared in the decade since the publication of *Farbe bekennen*.

The two forewords to *Farbe bekennen* establish an important theoretical underpinning in the Afro-Germans' project to define the interplay of race, culture and nationality in modern Germany. A significant aspect of the Afro-German movement is the prominence of women not just in the early organizational efforts but also in the theoretical work that has appeared since 1986. The overwhelming majority of the texts attributed to Afro-Germans has been written by women which should not be misconstrued to imply that their male counterparts have been inactive. There have been some notable male contributions, but the lion's share of the creative work has been by women.

## GENDER AND RACE

The proximity of these women to the Black feminist movement in the United States is also significant. Elsewhere I have speculated on parallels between the organizational development of African-Americans during the Antebellum Period and Afro-Germans since the 1980s,<sup>32</sup> but in keeping with Paul Gilroy's concept of the Black Atlantic as a construct for creative and adaptive interaction between people of color, the relationship of Afro-Germans to Black America should not be relegated merely to the level of slavish imitation. The institution of a "Black History Month" celebration in Berlin or the publication of a list of Black authors from Africa and the New World whose works have appeared in German translation are indicative not of a desire to imitate but rather the need to identify culturally with Blackness.

Dagmar Schultz, one of the editors of *Farbe bekennen* and publisher of *Orlanda Frauenverlag*, provides some background information on the link to the Black feminist movement. Recalling her stay in the U.S. during the 1960s

and early 1970s, Schultz indicates that her exposure to African-American history and her awareness of racism in Germany led her to have a collection of essays by Audre Lorde (1934-1992) and Adrienne Rich (1929-) translated and published in Berlin's *Orlanda Frauenverlag* in 1983.<sup>33</sup> During the spring of 1984, Audre Lorde was in Berlin to conduct a seminar on African-American women writers and a workshop on poetry. Among the reasons for her visit Lorde mentions curiosity about the women of color in Germany.<sup>34</sup> Once in Europe, however, she met women of color of other countries as well.

A group of bi-racial lesbians invited her to visit Amsterdam. They had been inspired by Lorde's work to the point that they used the title of one of her recent publications (1983) as the name for their group: "Sister Outsider." Four women from that group introduced themselves and gave brief autobiographical sketches as their contribution to *Farbe bekennen*. Audre Lorde's influence is visible not just in the naming of this Dutch feminist group but also in her relationship to the Afro-Germans. *afro look* published a memorial to Lorde in which the members of ADEFRA stressed her role as a mentor and a source of inspiration for the publication of *Farbe bekennen* and the subsequent organizational activities.<sup>35</sup> Public recognition of Audre Lorde's role in their movement establishes a link to the Black feminist movement in America. But what is Black feminism?

Patricia Hill Collins defines Black feminism in terms of core terms first articulated by early feminist and social activist Maria W. Stewart (1803-79)<sup>36</sup> as

"the interlocking nature of race, gender, and class oppression, [a] call for replacing denigrated images of Black womanhood with self-defined images, [a] belief in Black women's activism as mothers, teachers, and Black community leaders, and [a] sensitivity to sexual politics [. . .]"

Collins notes that these core themes have also been treated by a variety of Black feminist intellectuals—including Audre Lorde. Collins is careful to stress that the interplay of these themes is not the same for all women of color, and thus, there is not a Black woman's perspective but rather a Black women's perspective.<sup>37</sup> Key, however, to this perspective is what Collins terms the interdependence of experience and

consciousness. By this she means a predisposition to action conditioned by a legacy of struggle against discrimination. The ultimate aim of this struggle is a self-defined standpoint characterized by the interdependence of theory and practice.<sup>38</sup>

Defining Black feminism and identifying Black feminists are two distinct tasks, however. After defining what she considers to be Black feminism, Collins rejects the restriction of the term “Black feminist” to “Black women critics of Black women artists depicting Black women.”<sup>39</sup> Instead, she asserts that<sup>40</sup>

“[b]ecause self-definition is the key to individual and group empowerment, using an epistemology that cedes the power of self-definition to other groups, no matter how well-meaning, in essence perpetuates Black women’s subordination.”

However, since Collins posits the centrality of the Black woman intellectual to Black feminist thought she emphasizes that such thought cannot flourish in isolation. Consequently, she recommends the necessity of coalitions with others—white women, Black men and other marginalized groups. Such coalitions are not easily implemented and Collins offers a possible solution by discussing the humanist tradition in Black feminist thought.

She situates Anna Julia Cooper (1858-1964), Alice Walker, feminist lawyer Pauli Murray, bell hooks, and civil rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer (1917-77) in this humanist tradition for which human solidarity, rather than group or individual advancement is the goal. Clearly, Alice Walker’s preference for the term “womanist” over the, in some quarters of this country, ideologically divisive “feminist,” is indicative of the desire for bridge-building.<sup>41</sup> Coincidental with the presence of this humanist vision, Collins also identifies the growing importance of international issues and global concerns.<sup>42</sup> Thus African-American feminists have begun to discuss commonalities with women in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

A nascent Black feminist perspective is apparent in *Farbe bekennen*. The desire for self-definition is projected against a tradition of racism and gender discrimination that has dehumanized people of color. The linking of experience to consciousness while an important strategy for individual emancipation

requires organization and dissemination of information to effect group action. The immediate response of the Afro-Germans to this need was the creation of the I.S.D.s and ADEFRA groups, as well as, an attempt to devise a plan for group emancipation. The move from individual to group action has not been without difficulties; indeed, a recurring theme in Afro-German periodicals is the struggle to achieve and sustain consensus for coherent group action.

## ORGANIZATIONAL CONCERNS

One identified source of difficulty is the isolation experienced by the individual and his or her apparent inability or reluctance to break down the walls of distrust built up through years of living in a racist society. The problem of isolation has been articulated in literary texts and also in editorials in *afro look*. A more serious barrier to group unity is an issue that is also critical for African-American feminists: gender and sexuality. Audre Lorde has articulated the issue perhaps most succinctly.

In her now famous comments at the “Second Sex Conference” held in New York in 1979, she criticized the conference organizers for being too exclusive in their invitations to women. Lesbians, poor and Third World women were not present at the conference. Lorde labeled as “academic arrogance” the notion that the privileged few could discuss and decide for the many.<sup>43</sup> The issue of sexuality and especially sexual preference is problematic for some Afro-Germans as a retrospective essay “Wohin geht die I.S.D.?” by Jeannine Kantara documents.<sup>44</sup>

Kantara’s text is an evaluation of the I.S.D. during its first decade using several thematic emphases: retrospective, the present, individualism vs. collective behavior, treatment of homosexuality and gender conflicts in the I.S.D., political goals and public education, and computerization. In discussing gender and sexuality Kantara remarked that at the previous national conference it had become clear that many were uncomfortable discussing homosexuality and wanted it removed from the agenda of national meetings.<sup>45</sup> Potentially more troubling, however, was the disagreement over priorities in the struggle against racism and sexism.

Kantara criticized the attempt to convince the women’s groups to give the fight against racism precedence over the struggle against sexism.

Black women must, of necessity, deal with both issues and, as Kantara reminded the I.S.D., its very existence was due in large part to the work of Black women. The explicit warning is that disregarding the legitimate interests of women could have dire consequences for the entire movement. The source of this feminist militancy is clearly Audre Lorde and other radical Black feminists whose work Afro-Germans had discovered during the past decade.

Audre Lorde's works were published by *Orlanda Frauenverlag* and in 1996 *afro look* presented an excerpt from another feminist whose texts had just been published by Orlanda: bell hooks. The excerpt from hooks' book, *Sehnsucht und Widerstand*, is placed in an interesting context. In the previous issue of *afro look* Louis Farrakhan's Million Man March had been critically reviewed. Now a text by bell hooks titled "*Die Politik radikaler schwarzer Subjektivität*" was presented as an obvious counter to Farrakhan's perceived sexist, anti-semitic and homophobic message. More importantly, however, the text is presented as being applicable to the situation in Germany.<sup>46</sup>

In the text hooks deconstructs the Black liberation movement since colonial times and especially in the 1960s by stating that in effect it has been an attempt to usurp the master's tools and possessions at the expense of women. According to hooks, Black men had been trying to gain access to the privileges of the white man without any thought as to the situation of Black women. She implies that the liberation movement was not successful because it did not address the problem of sexism in the movement. To the women readers of *afro look* the parallel between the situation described by bell hooks and that in the I.S.D. was more than obvious.

Despite organizational and conceptual difficulties it is remarkable what the Afro-Germans have been able to accomplish during the past decade. The women have been able to establish the basis for a Black feminist agenda by establishing linkages to other women's groups. In a series of publications, leading Afro-German spokespersons such as the late May Ayim, Helga Emde and Ika Hügel have joined with a variety of other groups to discuss issues of importance to women and people of color. These publications include *Geteilter Feminismus* (1990), *Dokumentation. Wege zu Bündnissen*

(1991) and *Entfernte Verbindungen* (1993). The subtitles of the first and last publication indicate the topics discussed.

*Geteilter Feminismus* appeared in the series *beiträge zur feministischen theorie und praxis* and bears the subtitle of *Rassismus. Antisemitismus. Fremdenhaß*; certainly appropriate topics for the year of German reunification. The subtitle of *Entfernte Verbindungen* sounds a similar chord: *Rassismus. Antisemitismus. Klassenunterdrückung*. Partners in these dialogues are white German, Jewish-German, Asian-German, Turkish-German, African, Asian, African-American, and Jewish-American women. These feminist coalitions are just one part of the cultural and political work of the I.S.D. and ADEFRA.

## BLACK GERMAN CULTURE

Reference has already been made to Afro-German periodicals. During the past decade ADEFRA has published the magazine *Afrekete* intermittently. The I.S.D., on the other hand, has published two magazines. The first was the short-lived *Onkel Toms Faust* whose title was apparently too controversial for some members. Since the late 1980s *afro look* has been published by the I.S.D.-Berlin but it is in fact a national organ for all of the I.S.D.'s even though not all of them make use of it.

Briefly during the early 1990s a monthly magazine titled *Strangers* appeared in Düsseldorf. Although a member of the I.S.D.-Düsseldorf was involved in the publication and its January 1994 issue contains a discussion of the Afro-Germans, the focus of *Strangers* was decidedly multicultural. Its title was borrowed from Frank Sinatra's 1970s classic, "Strangers in the Night," and the two issues which I had access to contained articles on African art, belly-dancing, Bulgaria, Nina Simone, Jimmi Hendrix, and a report by a Chinese Germanist on her experiences living in Germany.

*Afrekete* and *afro look* have been plagued by financial difficulties from their inception, and similar difficulties may have befallen *Strangers* since it apparently ceased publication in 1995. The Afro-German efforts to reach a mass audience have not been restricted, however, to the print media. Since 1996, for example, "*Afronet*z" has been on-line and offers an almost

daily flow of information about the situation of people of color around the world. The periodicals carry notices of cultural events, workshops, lectures, discussion groups, film festivals, and exhibits—some sponsored by the Afro-Germans but most merely of potential interest to them. For a time the I.S.D.-Hamburg had its own call-in program on that city's public access cable television channel. In the summer of 1994 it was my privilege to be present at the broadcast premiere in Hamburg of a feature film created by the I.S.D.-Berlin on the situation of asylum-seekers.

Berlin is also the site of the annual “Black History Month” celebration. Launched in the early 1990s this celebration is an adaptation of the event created by Carter G. Woodson in 1915 as “Negro History Week” and expanded in 1976 into “Black History Month” by then President Gerald Ford. The Afro-German “Black History Month” is an exploration via lecture, exhibition, performance, and publication of the varieties of Black experience and expression in a global context. This diasporic consciousness lies at the center of what is emerging as the Afro-German expressive culture.

Literature is certainly an important component, but not the sole component, of what is generally understood as culture. Canon formation is a way of formalizing certain values and ideas in a given culture that are deemed worthy of replication by the organizers of the canon. Afro-Germans have made an attempt at creating a literary canon by circulating in their periodicals a list of recommended readings which are occasionally—as we have seen—excerpted to encourage readership. In addition, a bibliographical list has been compiled of works by Black authors in German translation.<sup>47</sup>

This small bibliography, the second edition of which was created in 1993, offers a cross-section of Black literary expression. 403 titles by 206 authors are listed. 104 of the writers are from Africa, 74 from North America, 41 from the Caribbean, 12 from Europe (including Alexander Dumas and A.S. Pushkin), and 4 from Latin America. Fremgen's book, as well as *Farbe bekennen*, are mentioned along with the first novel by an Afro-German writer, Peggy Orth's *Hundstage - Sommer einer Jugend* as well as the first anthology of Afro-German poetry, *Macht der Nacht. eine schwarze deutsche Anthologie*. Another of the texts in the bibliography connects to another aspect of the African presence in Germany since 1945.



## AFRICANS IN GERMANY

Among the writers from Nigeria we find a text by Chima Oji, *Unter die Deutschen gefallen. Erfahrungen eines Afrikaners* (1992). Oji, a doctor who received his training in Germany and married a German, describes the problems he encountered living in the Federal Republic. The Afro-Germans are especially sensitive to the difficulties which Africans encounter in Germany because they too are also affected; indeed, a common complaint is that they are frequently mistaken for Africans by their white countrymen. This mistaken identity and the real need to define themselves as Germans of African descent has induced the Afro-Germans to explore their African roots.

To explore their African roots it is not necessary physically to travel to Africa. Since 1960 the African communities in Germany have grown steadily. Prior to reunification people of color from communist bloc and socialist countries lived, worked and studied in the GDR. Their counterparts from those countries allied with the West gravitated to the Federal Republic. In a harbor city such as Hamburg the rate of increase of the African population has been surprising. In the 1960s Africans were exotic individuals whose mere presence was cause for sensational newspaper accounts about students and workers who came to Hamburg and encountered unforeseen difficulties in obtaining housing, employment or just coexisting.

Special attention was, of course, focused on those Africans who violated social tabus. Inter-racial sex was apparently of special interest to newspaper readers and photos of Africans with blonde German women appeared occasionally. The aforementioned publication on Africans in Berlin sponsored by that city's *Ausländerbeauftragte* was motivated by the need to examine the lives and life experiences of 7,000 Africans who lived there in 1995. By contrast, Hamburg has an African population of almost 20,000 and in recent years has been the center of attention because of allegations of systematic police brutality that make the Rodney King incident seem trivial and random.

As a result of the large African population in Hamburg a network of cultural, social and political services has evolved along with a vibrant cultural life in which some Afro-Germans participate or at least mention

in the pages of their publications. Music is a fundamental ingredient of the African diaspora and in Germany Black music has a special attraction, and not just for Africans or Germans of African descent. To conclude our brief survey of the African presence let us then turn to the phenomenon of Black music in Germany.

## BLACK MUSIC IN GERMANY

Music by people of the African diaspora is not a recent discovery for Germany. After the American Civil War choral groups, such as the Fiske Jubilee Singers, toured Germany and were warmly received. The popularity of the spirituals around 1900 is at the very least indicated by the above reference in Thomas Mann's *Tristan* (1904). In the aftermath of World War I a veritable Black musical revolution occurred. Jazz was discovered and adapted by composers such as Kurt Weill and Igor Stravinsky. It also found devoted fans among the youth of the Weimar Republic. Hamburg's "Swing Kids" are an excellent example of the subversive quality of Black music as a counter-measure to Weimar modernity. It was not accidental that critics took note of its "jungle" rhythms or the raw sexuality of a Josephine Baker.

After the Second World War the influx of Black music into Germany continued. African-American performers frequently visited the Federal Republic and, in some cases, found a home there as was the case of the late Dean Dixon (1915-1976) who had a productive relationship with the orchestra of the Hessischer Rundfunk. Black popular music and its surrogates, such as Elvis Presley, have won a devoted audience in Germany since the 1950s. Rock and Roll and the protest music fostered by the social and political upheavals of the 1960s have had a special appeal to German youth. The changes in German society since that time have helped create an atmosphere in which Black European forms of hip-hop, rap and the controversial "gangsta rap" are flourishing.

In presenting a taxonomy of rap, Tricia Rose states:<sup>48</sup>

Rap music is a black cultural expressions that prioritizes black voices from the margins of urban America. Rap music is a form of rhymed storytelling accompanied by highly rhythmic, electronically based

music. It began in the mid-1970s in the South Bronx in New York City as a part of hip hop, an African-American and Afro-Caribbean youth culture composed of graffiti, breakdancing, and rap music. From the outset, rap music has articulated the pleasures and problems of black urban life in contemporary America.

Rap is therefore a part of the urban protest movement spawned by the stagnation of the Civil Rights movement and the beginning of the process of dismantling the poverty programs of the Great Society that reached its peak during the Reagan administration. As a narrative form of music, rap's cultural significance is associated with its transnational origins (African-American and Afro-Caribbean) and its role in the expressive triad of music, dance and art.

Black music is for Paul Gilroy a distinguishing feature of what he terms the "Black Atlantic" or African diaspora. Explaining its importance to Black residents of Britain, Gilroy states:<sup>49</sup>

The musics of the black Atlantic world were the primary expressions of cultural distinctiveness which this population seized upon and adapted to its new circumstances. It used the separate but converging musical traditions of the black Atlantic world, if not to create itself anew as a conglomeration of black communities, then as a means to gauge the social progress of spontaneous self-creation which was sedimented together by the endless pressures of economic exploitation, political racism, displacement, and exile. This musical heritage gradually became an important factor in facilitating the transition of diverse settlers to a distinct mode of lived blackness. It was instrumental in producing a constellation of subject positions that was openly indebted for its conditions of possibility to the Caribbean, the United States and even Africa. It was also indelibly marked by the British conditions in which it grew and matured.

While claiming this appropriation of Black musical traditions as an important part of the self-definition process of Afro-Caribbean settlers in England, Gilroy is quick to qualify that this process was by no means restricted to them. Indeed, he notes that Asian settlers in Britain<sup>50</sup>

[...] have also borrowed the sound system culture of the Caribbean and the soul and hip hop styles of black America, as well as techniques like mixing, scratching, and sampling as part of their invention of a new mode of cultural production with an identity to match.

The process of self-definition and cultural production through the medium of music, which Gilroy discerned in Great Britain has its counterpart in the rest of Europe as well as Germany.

Hip hop culture appeared in Germany in the 1980s. One indication of its arrival is found in the first magazine produced by the I.S.D.-Berlin, *Onkel Toms Faust*. Listed in its cultural calendar we find the dates for concerts by veterans of Black music such as James Brown and Chuck Berry, but also a concert at Berlin's Metropol featuring Whodini, Kool Moe Dee, DJ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince, and the Skinny Boys.<sup>51</sup> The first three acts represent two generations of East Coast Rap, performers who enjoyed commercial success after rap evolved from an unrecorded performance art found in the dance halls and discos of the Bronx into a polished art form marketed to urban and suburban America. The emergence of this new Black urban music form was engineered by Sugarhill Records, a label founded by Sylvia Vanderpool Robinson and her husband, Joe Robinson, in 1979.<sup>52</sup>

Sugarhill Records represented some of the pioneer rap acts such as Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five or the Treacherous Three—the latter was a trio of rappers and a deejay that included the aforementioned Kool Moe Dee. One of the rap pioneers who had direct contact with Germany was Afrika Bambaataa whose fame rests in part on his transformation of a New York street gang, the Black Spades, into the music and culture ensemble “Zulu Nation.” Bambaataa is revered as an innovator of musical performance, a philosopher and teacher who combined elements of Afrocentrism and a health-conscious life-style to promote Hip-hop culture whose roots he traces to the African griots.<sup>53</sup>

Ensemble or cooperative work was the hallmark of Bambaataa's creative work and that of other rappers who frequently performed with each other on musical projects that they showcased at various venues in New York City. The German avant-garde music group “*Kraftwerk*” was well known in those New York clubs<sup>54</sup> and their 1980 hit single “Trans Europe Express” was

appropriated by Bambaataa for one of his musical experiments. In the autumn of 1982 Afrika Bambaataa and members of Zulu Nation (Grandmixer D.S.T., Fab 5 Freddy, Phase II, Mr. Freeze, Dondi, Futura 2000, Crazy Legs, etc.) made the first of many trips to Europe as part of a project to spread Hip-hop around the world.<sup>55</sup> The first tour took them to, among other places, Paris but they would eventually touch Germany as the liner text for a compact disc by the Afro-German rap group “Advanced Chemistry” documents.

“Advanced Chemistry” is a trio composed of Torch, Linguist and Toni L. They were apparently organized in 1987 or 1988 and two of their compact discs available in 1995 were “*Fremd im eignen Land*” (1992) and “*Welcher Pfad führt zur Geschichte*” (1993). Both were produced and distributed by MZEE Records which was located in Heidelberg. Both also bear the inscription, Universal Zulu Nation Germany. The second also has “*Initiative Schwarze Deutsche und Schwarze in Deutschland*” with a postal address for Cologne. The liner text of “*Welcher Pfad führt zur Geschichte*” establishes Advanced Chemistry’s genealogy:<sup>56</sup>

In the beginning was the Bronx. Because of the activities of Zulu Nation from the individual, isolated styles (DJ’ing, Rapping, B-Boying, Writing. . .) emerged something complete, a culture: Hip-hop!

[. . .]

Every activist of today’s Hip-hop scene, whether in Bremerhaven or Brooklyn is in the tradition of the Zulu Nation whether or not s/he acknowledges it. Therefore: respect to the pioneers of the old school, because paying respect is just as much a heritage of black culture as the painting of public property or break-dancing.

Hip-hop’s jargon of authenticity and performance are replicated here in a new cultural context. DJ’ing, rapping, b-boying, and writing are performance techniques and combined with stock phrases such as “respect for the pioneers or elders” and “old school” establish a cultural tradition and respect for its authority that is analogous to the social status of the griot in West African society.

An anti-modernist trend in Hip-hop culture is discernible in the statement:<sup>57</sup>

Black culture also signifies openness. An openness for the mixing and adaptation of different cultural elements, as is the case in Hip-hop. All this which is foreign to white culture we term Funk. Funk is rebellion against society. When you scratch with papa's record-player or paint a train, that is rebellious, but it is always creative and productive. In New York the innovators of this culture were predominately African-Americans, Jamaicans, Haitians, Puerto Ricans. . It is no accident that because of the rebellion contained in this culture, many black Germans, Turks and Kurds, Jugoslavs, Roma and Sinti are attracted and do Hip-hop.

Hip-hop is presented as a counter movement to modernity, an anti-capitalistic rescue of subjectivity, and the denial of a central tenet of white culture, namely, authorship as exclusive ownership of a product or idea. Hip-hop is a democratic art built on the appropriation of various expressive media and materials which capitalist society labels as private property but which the hip-hop artist sees only as raw material for performance. The counter-cultural impulse of Hip-hop and its implicit emancipatory intent makes it attractive to marginalized groups on both sides of the Atlantic as well as on the Pacific Rim.

## SUMMARY

In the above we have examined only one aspect of the African presence in Germany since 1945. Besides the Afro-Germans there are also thousands of Black Africans living in Germany who, like the Afro-Germans, must deal daily with reminders of their marginalization in a society that judges them by their skin color rather than the content of their character. The Afro-Germans in attempting to address the root causes of their marginalization have sought to situate themselves within a global community of people of color. In so doing they participate in the hybrid expressive culture of that community. At the same time they must also deal with the difficult task of reconciling the struggle against racism with that against sexism. As the African-American experience demonstrates, abuse of social power can also occur within oppressed groups.

## ENDNOTES

1. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1993).
2. Peter Martin, *Schwarze Teufel, edle Mohren* (Hamburg: Junius, 1993).
3. Christian Degn, *Die Schimmelmanns im atlantischen Dreieckshandel: Gewinn und Gewissen* (Neumünster: Karl Wachholtz, 1984), 43-58.
4. *Ibid.*, 108-117.
5. These black loyalists were stationed in part in the Kassel garrison. Upon their deaths—which occurred rather frequently after their arrival in Kassel—their corpses were sent to Mainz to Samuel Thomas Sömmerring for anatomical experiments. He used his measurements on those corpses as a part of his study *Über die körperliche Verschiedenheit des Mohren vom Europäer* (1784); Sömmerring shared the skulls with Johann Friedrich Blumenbach who also developed his own theories on the origins of the various races based on empirical observations.
6. See Andreas Eckert, *Die Duala und die Kolonialmächte* (Hamburg: Hamburger Studien zur Afrikanischen Geschichte, Vol. 2, Historisches Seminar der Universität Hamburg, ed. L. Harding, 1995), 159-162.
7. Katharina Oguntoye, *Eine afro-deutsche Geschichte: Zur Lebenssituation von Afrikanern und Afro-Deutschen von 1884 bis 1950* (Berlin: Hoho Verlag Christine Hoffmann, 1997).
8. *Einbürgerungs-Akten Heinrich Ernst Wilhelm Anumu*, Aufsichtsbehörde für die Standesämter, 1917, in the Hamburger Staatsarchiv.
9. Letter dated July 30, 1918 in the file *Polizeibehörde, Abteilung IV (Politische Polizei) J. Nr. 6511/18, IV. 1*, Hamburger Staatsarchiv.
10. Elisa Forgey, “Die große Negertrommel der kolonialen Werbung: Die Deutsche Afrika-Schau 1935-1943” *Werkstatt Geschichte*, Heft 3:9, Dezember 1994, 25-33.
11. Paulette Reed-Anderson has produced an interesting chronicle of Africans in Berlin and documents much as Oguntoye did for Danzig the presence of the Michael family in Berlin. The Diek family also had close ties to Berlin: when Madenga Diek arrived in Hamburg in 1891, he was accompanied by his brother Anjo and Georg L. Ekambi. The latter two went on to Berlin to earn a living as performers; in Paulette Reed-Anderson, *Eine Geschichte von mehr als 100 Jahren. Die Anfänge der Afrikanischen Diaspora in Berlin* (Berlin: Die Ausländerbeauftragte des Senats, 1995), 29.
12. Katharina Oguntoye, 142.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*, 144.

15. Rosemarie K. Lester, *“Trivialneger”*: *Das Bild des Schwarzen im westdeutschen Illustriertenroman* (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag Heinz, 1982).
16. *Ibid.*, 288.
17. Amadou Booker Sadj, *Das Bild des Negro-Afrikaners in der Deutschen Kolonialliteratur (1884-1945): Ein Beitrag zur literarischen Imagologie Schwarzafrikas* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1985), 312.
18. Lester, *op. cit.*, 287.
19. *Ibid.*, 93.
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*, 98.
22. *“Madenga Diek kam aus Kamerun und blieb dann in Hamburg”* in *Emsbütteler Zeitung*, Feb. 5, 1976; I would like to express my appreciation to Frau Pauluth-Cassel of the Text-Dokumentation section in the archives of the Axel Springer Verlag in Hamburg who allowed me to copy this and numerous other news items on Africans in Hamburg for the period 1960-95.
23. For other examples compare Gisela Fremgen, . . . *und wenn du dazu noch schwarz bist: Berichte schwarzer Frauen in der Bundesrepublik* (Bremen: edition CON, 1984), 125f.
24. Gisela Fremgen, . . . *und wenn du dazu noch schwarz bist. Berichte schwarzer Frauen in der Bundesrepublik* (Bremen: edition CON, 1984); Katharina Oguntoye, May Optiz, and Dagmar Schultz, eds., *Farbe bekennen: Afro-deutsche Frauen auf den Spuren ihrer Geschichte* (Berlin: Orlanda Frauenverlag, 1986).
25. I.S.D. Rhein-Main, “I.S.D. Initiative Schwarze Deutsche. Get to know us. I.S.D. The Black German Initiative,” 1989. I would like to express my appreciation to Eleonore Wiedenroth who provided this brochure.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Afrekete: Zeitung für afro-deutsche und schwarze Frauen*, 1. Ausgabe, 1. Quartal, 1988, 2.
30. Prince Hall (1735?-1807), masonic organizer, social activist, and abolitionist; Harry Dean (1864-1935) and Marcus Garvey (1887-1940) were Black nationalists who exerted influence on the Black intellectuals of their day; Garvey was, of course, the more influential of the two owing to the strength of his organization U.N.I.A. (Universal Negro Improvement and Conservation Association and African Communities League) which still exists today.
31. Constitution attached to letter in *Polizeibehörde, Abteilung IV (Politische Polizei)*, *J. Nr. 6511/18, IV.1* in the Hamburger Staatsarchiv.



32. Leroy T. Hopkins, "Inventing Self: Parallels in the African-German and African-American Experience," 37-51, in Carol Aisha Blackshire-Belay, ed. *The African-German Experience* (Westport, CN: Praeger, 1996).
33. *Farbe bekennen*, 11.
34. *Ibid.*, 231.
35. *afro look*, Nr. 9, 1993, 12f.
36. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* (New York/London: Routledge, 1991), 23.
37. *Ibid.*, 24.
38. *Ibid.*, 28f.
39. *Ibid.*, 32.
40. *Ibid.*, 34.
41. *Ibid.*, 37f.
42. *Ibid.*, 39.
43. Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master's House," in: *This Bridge Called My Back: Writing by Radical Women of Color*, ed. Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983), 98.
44. Jeannine Kantara, "Wohin geht die I.S.D.," *afro look*, Nr. 20, 1996, 7-9; also cf. "Eurogames IV 1996 in Berlin" in *afro look*. Nr. 21, 1996, 19. A participant in the games remarked on the presence of gays in the I.S.D. who were reluctant to "out" themselves because of homophobia in the organization.
45. Kantara, *Ibid.*, 8.
46. "Sehnsucht und Widerstand," *afro look*, Nr. 20, 1996, 28.
47. I would like to acknowledge my debt to the late Vera Hyer whom I visited in the summer of 1994. The bibliographical list as well as other items in her extensive archives were shared with me. With her untimely passing the Afro-Germans lost a very important archivist of their movement.
48. Tricia Rose, *Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan, 1994), 2.
49. Gilroy, op. cit., 81f.
50. *Ibid.*
51. "Kulturkalendar," *Onkel Toms Faust*, 1. Ausgabe (Berlin: Initiative Schwarze Deutsche, 1988), 27-30.
52. Steven Stancell, *Rap Whoz Who: The World of Rap Music* (New York: Schirmer Books, Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1996), 274f.
53. *Ibid.*, 2.

54. Rickey Vincent, *Funk: The Music, the People, and the Rhythm of The One* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1996), 291.

55. Stancell, op. cit., 5.

56. Liner text reads as follows in German:

Am Anfang war die Bronx. Durch das Wirken der Zulu Nation, entstand aus den einzelnen, isolierten Ausdrucksformen (DJ'ing, Rapping, B-Boying, Writing . . .) etwas Ganzes, eine Kultur: Hip Hop! [. . .]

Jeder Aktivist und jede Aktivistin der heutigen Hip Hop Szene, ob in Bremerhaven oder Brooklyn steht in der Tradition der Zulu Nation, ganz gleich ob er oder sie anerkennt oder nicht. Deswegen: Respekt an die Pioniere der Alten Schule, denn Respekt zollen ist ebenso ein Erbe der schwarzen Kultur, wie das Bemalen öffentlichen Eigentums oder das Tanzen auf dem Boden.

57. Ibid.

Schwarze Kultur bedeutet aber ebenso Offenheit. Offenheit für die Vermischung und Übernahme von verschiedenen kulturellen Elementen, wie das im **Hip Hop** der Fall ist. Dies alles, was der weißen Kultur so fremd ist, nennen wir den **Funk**. Der Funk wirkt sehr rebellisch auf die Gesellschaft. Wenn Du mit Papas Plattenspieler scratchst oder einen Zug bemalst, so ist das rebellisch, doch es bleibt stets kreativ und produktiv. In New York waren die Innovatoren dieser Kultur überwiegend Afroamerikaner, Jamaikaner, Haitianerinnen, Puertorikaner . . . Es ist kein Zufall, daß sich auch in Deutschland wegen des rebellischen Inhalts dieser Kultur gerade viele Schwarze Deutsche, Türken und Kurden, Jugoslawen, Roma und Sinti . . . angesprochen fühlen und Hip Hop praktizieren.



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## I TOO AM GERMAN—AN AFRO-GERMAN PERSPECTIVE

Helga Emde

Black Germans (or African-American-Germans) is a term that describes Germans who are for the most part unknown to the white majority in Germany. Black German history does not merely start after the Second World War. Existing records indicate that Blacks and their families have lived in Germany for more than one hundred years. Although present at least since the nineteenth century as a result of the German colonies, the history of Black Germans is nonetheless unrecorded and thus unknown or ignored.

Black German history is but one aspect of an *unbewältigte Vergangenheit* (unmastered past). Being a minute and hardly recognized minority, their existence did not pose a threat to the majority. In fact, their invisibility made them tolerable if not acceptable. But even during the Nazi period, there were Black Germans and Africans who worked as performers in shows and movies that were vehicles for Nazi propaganda. These Blacks could feel secure only as long as they played clowns, dancers and singers.

Let me describe the situation and environment of postwar Germany in the 1950s and what it meant to grow up during this time. The image I have is the devastation and destruction of the city in which I grew up. There were houses, shops and buildings in rubble and ruin. I still recall seeing the fear and shock in people's eyes; almost everyone seemed sick or ailing. The Germans had just survived years of hunger, suffering and relentless air raid attacks. Now a simple thunderstorm could evoke the memories of the war. For many years in my mother's household little cases of imported articles were always kept for emergencies along with matches, candles and flashlights. Yet, postwar Germany was a time of reconstruction, reorganization and reorientation not only for the whole country, but also for the fascists. Racism was not automatically over, forgotten or buried. The ideology of a white Aryan superior nation with blue eyes and blond hair was still there and part of my daily life.

For example, I saw African-American soldiers all over the streets and places, which scared me. This for me was the first time in my life that I saw Black people. I was afraid because I had been taught that Black men

were dangerous, bad and brutal. I felt threatened by their smiles. It never occurred to me since I never realized that I was Black, that their smiles were simply smiles for a little Black.

How could I know that I was Black? I only saw white faces around me because I was the only Black in the family, school or community. On the other hand, I knew that I was different. My mother is a white German and many times while walking with her I heard strangers on the street asking her whether or not I was adopted. In Germany during the 1950s, white society was not able to deal with Black children as a biological product of a white woman. Therefore, they assumed the children must be adopted. Women like my mother, who had Black children, were ostracized and stigmatized for having committed a visible “crime” against their race. This was the reality for me and my mother in Germany during the 1950s. Many mothers could not deal with this double pressure from society and their own families. The Black children of white mothers were placed in orphanages. Even my mother’s brother advised her to put me in a children’s home. Because of this knowledge, deep in my soul I felt insecure and scared. I felt that if I did anything wrong, my mother could put me in a home. I felt as if the Sword of Damocles were hanging over my head.

Black-Germans or Afro-Germans in the 1950s were known as “War-Babies,” “Brown-Babies” or “Occupation-Babies.” The psychological effects of growing up as a Black child in postwar Germany can be more clearly understood by examining an article from a weekly newspaper in 1952, called “*Das Parlament*.” The headline was “What has become of the 94,000 ‘Occupation Babies’?” It reports, “Among the occupation babies, the 3,093 Negro mulattoes form a special group, presenting a human and racial problem of a special nature . . . The authorities of independent youth welfare agencies have for years been concerned about the fate of these mixed-blood children, for whom the climatic conditions alone in our country are not even suited. The question has been raised whether it would not be better for them if they were taken to their fathers’ countries.”<sup>1</sup>

This article indicated that from the beginning Black children were seen as a problem, a social problem, with which the society was not willing and able to deal; the children automatically became stigmatized.

Again this issue was raised in a parliamentary debate in 1952 in which the Christian Democratic Union concluded, and I quote:<sup>2</sup>

The mulatto question will remain an internal problem for Germany that will not be easy to resolve. We must make the German public aware of this issue, since mulattoes born in 1946 will be entering school in 1952. Of course we could not think of publicizing this issue as was done in one city at Mardi Gras time where the parade included a float bearing the sign “Made in Germany” On the float were German children made up as mulattoes.

This particular quote reminds me of the time when my mother was also asked to let me go as the “Sarotti-Mohr” in the Mardi Gras parade. The authorities offered her five German Marks and free coffee and cake, because we were exotic objects on display for the amusement and entertainment of the larger white society. It was 1868 when in Berlin the chocolate factory Sarotti was built with a Moor in a turban as its emblem. Today the “Sarotti-Moor” is as well known as the Mercedes star. The Sarotti-Moor was a product of colonialism, and its visions of sultans, sheikhs, sweets and opulent luxury.

Another date in 1952 was August 15 and 16, when the World Brotherhood (an organization created to overcome prejudice between groups), met in Wiesbaden, Germany, at the Amerika-Haus to deliberate about the “fate of ‘Mulatto’ or ‘colored’ children” in Germany. A booklet by the same title was sent to national and international organizations including Black organizations in the United States. The conference was meant, in particular, for educators and welfare workers with the goal of generating a higher degree of sensitivity in school and society for the future of Black children.

A second conference by World Brotherhood as a follow-up was scheduled on December 4 and 5, 1953 at the College for International Educational Science in Frankfurt, Germany. From the conference, one of the following desirable outcomes was hoping to be met: understanding the problem of the “mulatto children” as an international problem, i.e., the fate and legal situation of the illegitimate children of the armed

occupation forces of different nations; the United Nations should intercede on behalf of those children with the occupying forces of different nations; and, finally, that the United Nations should develop a convention in which the problem could be solved on a universally binding and international level.

Growing up in the 1950s, Black children had no chance to develop a positive identity in German society. Because of racism and the lack of role models, Black children did not realize that they were Black. They had to feel white; it was the only beauty standard they knew. Therefore, the psychological impact of growing up Black in Germany was devastating. In children's books there were only white children, and there were only white dolls available. Now, slowly that situation is changing because of the European unification and the number of countries with a significant Black population.

An example of the psychological effects can be seen in the experiences of a Black friend of mine who grew up in a children's home where she was always the focus of mockery about her Black skin. In her desperation to overcome her Blackness, she scratched, cut and brushed her skin until she caused skin blemishes or drew blood.

Another problematic issue was the hair: be it at home, at school or in public in general. It was so exotic that it was called and compared with horse hair. I remember everyone wanted to touch and feel it. This is one of the reasons why many Black Germans even today react very sensitively if anyone touches their hair. Beginning in the first grade and onward, we used to straighten our hair. It was a torture for a little child. We never learned to deal with our hair and our own mother could not teach us.

To be born and raised in a white world meant that we had low self-esteem and lacked the support to build positive self-images; thus, many of us would seek social and psychological acceptance from the white world. In addition, the white society was, and is, a substitute for our white mothers. For their love and praise we had to be the best, better than any white person. Despite this discrimination and psychological stress, we had to learn to survive.

Many Black Germans are suffering today from an identity crisis. They cannot only be Germans, they always have to explain their so-

called roots, which part of their parentage is Black and which is white, because Germans are assumed to be white. There is no legal recognition. The legal recognition we had was during the fascist time. The Jewish people had to wear the yellow star, for the gypsies it was the letter “Z” (“Zigeuner”). And “S” (“Schwarze”) designated Black. During the time of denazification people had to document that they had nothing to do with the Nazis. All those stigmas had been allegedly eliminated. In the mid 1980s, a friend of mine, a Black German woman, discovered that one of her legal documents still carried the letter “S.” She had to fight to have it removed. Due to the lack of role models in life, literature, art, and the media, we had few professional role models such as teachers, medical doctors, social psychologists, politicians, and professors. We had no Black schools, churches, communities, or other institutions to teach us about heritage; what it means to be Black!

However, the political and social situation in Germany has changed drastically during the last four decades and the situation of Black Germans did not remain unaffected by these changes. These four decades were marked by the extensive recruitment of migrant laborers first from European and later also from non-European countries. As a consequence, during the recent two decades, we experienced an increase of “*Ausländerfeindlichkeit*,” the German corruption of a mixture of xenophobia and racism which today, seven years after German Unification, has reached a semi-fascist racist dimension.

Because of the political and economic crisis, scapegoats were needed by the white German majority to compensate for social frustration. Graffiti on the walls documented “*Ausländer ‘raus*” and “*Nigger go home.*” There existed the fear that the white children were being deprived of a good education because of the presence of too many different nationalities in the classroom. But the majority of those children stigmatized for being non-German, had been born in Germany. German was their first language. And still they were not recognized as Germans. The German government refused to accept them as German citizens. They were still Turks, Greeks, etc.

A new generation of minorities vehemently began to question this ethnocentrist racialist logic which once was openly proclaimed and brutally implemented as the myth of Germanic ethnic-nationalism and



white racism. In the tense situation after German “unification,” it proved easy to appeal to populist racialist myth which had been supported by scholars and their “scientific” investigations of the basics of what they presented as anthropological truth. The basic texts of this nineteenth century scientific racism by Houston Stewart Chamberlain and Arthur Count Gobineau document that this racialist world view was not restricted to Germany. In fact, one can observe similar developments in other western industrialized societies. Nonetheless, I believe it to be important to concentrate on the conditions peculiar to Germany and to define racism in light of those peculiarities.

A small group of Black Germans has tried to become more visible and knowledgeable about our situation in Germany and globally. Due to the circumstances some of us began a media-based consciousness-raising program which started in 1985 in order to reach Black Germans. This ultimately resulted in the formation of what today is nationally known as the “Association of Black Germans” (*Initiative Schwarze Deutsche* (I.S.D.)), of which I was one of the founders. This organization laid the foundation for the Black German Movement and now there are I.S.D. groups in several German cities, both east and west.

I am also a coauthor of the book *Farbe bekennen: Afro deutsche Frauen auf den Spuren ihrer Geschichte*, published in 1986 by the *Orlanda Frauenverlag* in Berlin. The English translation was published in 1992 by the University of Massachusetts as *Showing our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out*. Both books have forewords by Audre Lorde whom I personally met at the time when the German edition appeared. She was a touchstone for most Black German women in their struggle and political development. She became a friend whom I respected and loved. In the foreword of the English language edition Audre Lorde stated:<sup>3</sup>

In the Spring of 1984 I spent three months at the Free University in Berlin teaching a course in Black American women poets and poetry workshop in English, for German students. One of my goals on this trip was to meet Black German women, for I had been told there were quite a few in Berlin.

Who are they, these German women of the Diaspora? Beyond the details of our particular oppressions, although certainly not outside the reference of those details, where do our paths intersect as women of color? And where do our paths diverge? Most important, what can we learn from our connected differences that will be useful to us both, Afro-German and Afro-American.

I asked one of my Black students how she'd thought about herself growing up. "The nicest thing they ever called us was 'warbaby'" she said. But the existence of most Black Germans has nothing to do with the second World War, and, in fact it predates it by many decades. I have Black German women in my class who trace their heritage back to the 1890s. For me, Afro-German means the shining faces of two women (I omit their name, H.E.) in animated conversation about their father's homeland, the comparisons, joys, and disappointments. It means my pleasure at seeing another Black woman walk into my classroom, her reticence slowly giving way as she explores a new self-awareness, gains a new way of thinking about herself in relation to other Black women. "I've never thought of Afro-German as a positive concept before," she said out of the pain of having to live a difference that has no name; speaking out of the growing power self-scrutiny has forged from that difference. I am excited by these women, by their blossoming sense of identity as they say, "Let us be ourselves now as we define us. We are not a figment of your imagination or an exotic answer to your desires. We are not some button on the pocket of your longings." I see these women as a growing force for international change, in concert with other Afro-Europeans, Afro-Asians, and Afro-Americans. We are the hyphenated people of the Diaspora whose self-defined identities are no longer shameful secrets in the countries of our origin, but rather declarations of strength and solidarity. We are an increasingly united front from which the world has not yet heard.

Despite the terror and isolation some of these Black women have known from childhood, they are freer of the emotional dilemma facing many white feminists in Germany today. Too

often, I have met an immobilizing national guilt in white women which serves to keep them from acting upon what they profess to believe. Their energies, however well intentioned, are not being used. They are unavailable to fight in the battles against racism, Anti-Semitism, heterosexism, and xenophobia. Because they seem unable to accept who they are, these women too often fail to examine and pursue the powers relative to their identity. They waste that power, or worse, turn it over to their enemies. Four decades after National Socialism, the question still lingers for many white German women: how can I draw strength from my roots when those roots are entwined in such a terrible history? That terror of self-scrutiny is sometimes disguised as an unbearable arrogance, impotent and wasteful. The words of these Black German women document their rejection of despair, of blindness, and of silence. Once an oppression is expressed, it can be successfully fought.

I recall the first national meeting of Black Germans in Wiesbaden. For all of us it was a historical moment. First we contacted the media, radio and television to discuss our issues and the need to reach out nationwide and let Black Germans know there would be a conference for Black Germans only. And in the fall of 1985, Black Germans met for the first time. It was overwhelming. About one hundred Black people from all over Germany. It was breathtaking. Black people of all shades, sizes and ages. And the most confusing moment for me was hearing the language, German, not English. And only Black people. One of the reactions of the white society was a postcard, sent to the television station, the *Saarländischer Rundfunk*, with the remark “*Deutsche sind weiss, Neger können keine Deutschen sein.*” It was a time in which Black Germans came into the spotlight of public interest and on August 2, 1986 there was a big newspaper article in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* titled “*Die farbigen Besatzungskinder feiern in diesem Jahr ihren 40. Geburtstag. Was macht Toxi heute?*” Or “*Die kaffeebraune Kleine namens Toxi stand für sie alle Pate.*” Not only the *Frankfurter Rundschau* published this article, but it was published in about ten different national newspapers. On the front page there was a big picture of me. It was in the 1950s, specifically, 1952

when a movie came out in Germany titled “*Toxi*.” From that day on, the name *Toxi* was given to all of us, it was the name for all occupation children, for the “*Besatzungskinder*.”<sup>4</sup>

In the late 1980s, supported by the World Council of Churches’ “Program to Combat Racism” (PCR), we established “Anti-Racism Training” (ART), a consciousness-raising program for white Germans to come to a realization of their own deeply-embedded psychological and social racist biases. With this program we reached out to community leaders throughout Germany. Realizing the often dramatic isolation of German Blacks and their white mothers, we felt the need for an urgent counseling program particularly geared to white women and their Black children. Establishing a network was the attempt to draw them out of their social isolation.

Reviewing children’s books, public school textbooks, as well as encyclopedias, we put pressure on publishers to delete racist connotations from their publications. Presently we are developing anti-racist curricula for public schools in cooperation with several school administrations on the local, as well as, on the state level. We are also working on an outreach program aimed at educational Church bodies and research programs of several universities.

Finally, I do not want to end my essay without mentioning the rise of the neo-fascist movement in Germany. I vividly remember 1991, when I read in the newspaper an article from Wittemberge, East Germany, on May 2, when white East Germans went on a spree of “Nigger bashing!” This white group went hunting Namibian immigrants for the specific purpose of torturing and killing. In fact, they did kill one young man. This was the year of riots, violence and killing. It was also the year I consciously made the decision to leave Germany. I made this decision because I was afraid for my life, fearful of getting killed for being the wrong color. The riots and killings made it clear that the German justice system could not protect Blacks and other visible ethnic groups. My decision to move to the United States, the land of my father, has allowed me to participate in the Black German movement on another level. My speaking with you is one step toward explaining the situation of Blacks in Germany.

At the end of October (1997), I am leaving this country in order to go back to Germany. I hoped never to have to do this. I wanted to stay but the struggle was too hard and due to the circumstances of that time, I have no proof for this country that my father was an African-American soldier in the Second World War.

## ENDNOTES

1. Katharina Oguntoye, May Optiz and Dagmar Schultz, eds., *Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Up* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 80.
2. *Ibid.*, 81.
3. *Ibid.*, VII.
4. “*Frankfurter Rundschau*,” August 2, 1986, ZB 5.

**AFRO-GERMANS AND NATIONAL IDENTITY**

Marilyn Séphocle

Although the African presence in Germany dates back to the Romans and Africans were already represented in twelfth century paintings adorning German castles, today Afro-Germans are often looked upon by Germans as foreigners or, at best, as oddities. Germans often pride themselves on not having participated in the slave trade, but some of the most important financial institutions that supported that trade were German. They were the trading houses of Fugger, Welser and Imhoff. Throughout the eighteenth century European courts imported Black pages from Africa. They were a status symbol and a symbol of conquests in faraway lands. Germany was no exception in regard to that practice. One of the most famous Africans brought to Europe was Anton Wilhelm Amo, a native of today's Ghana. He was presented as a gift to the Dukes of Wolfenbüttel in 1703. Educated like a nobleman by his protectors, he became a famous professor at the Universities of Halle and Wittenberg and was one of the significant figures of the German Enlightenment.

Another figure that is less known and quite mysterious is that of Machbuba, an Ethiopian woman, who was purchased and brought to Germany at the middle of the nineteenth century by Hermann Prince Pückler-Muskau (1785-1871). She died shortly after her arrival in Europe and a special grave enshrines her remains. A group of Afro-German women has undertaken the daunting task of using a camera to lift the veil of mystery shrouding Machbuba: a film is planned.

In the twentieth century, images of Black women in Germany have oscillated from a savage to a goddess, from a promiscuous tramp to an unwanted orphan. In 1926 in Berlin Josephine Baker opened the New Year's Eve Ball at the Palast Theater and was elevated to a rank unattainable by most German women: she was a goddess. She appeared often in the Nelson Revue. When one examines the press of the time, along with a slew of superlatives, the word "goddess" is most often used. African-American music, particularly Jazz, was à la mode. A few Black Germans started to gravitate to African-American musicians and played in some of the Jazz bands in open and cosmopolitan Berlin. In the era of Dadaism many Afro-Germans participated in historical costume films

such as Ernst Lubitsch's "Sumurun." African-American entertainers visited Berlin in the 1920s in shows that would be offensive to our politically sensitized ears, such as "Chocolate Kiddies."

Approximately a decade later the program to sterilize non-Aryans and especially Black men and women was initiated. This practice was even more widespread during the Second World War. Who were these Black men and women who fell victim to Eugenics? They were adolescents, young men and women in their early twenties. For the most part, they were the sons and daughters of Black French soldiers and German women. Most of them had grown up in orphanages. Some of the Black women, like Fazia Jensen, were daughters of German women and Cameroonians otherwise called "*Kolonialneger*" by the Germans who had hoped to create a cadre of German-educated Africans that would help them in their colonization enterprise.

In *Farbe bekennen* Ana and Frieda tell their story as two young Black women in the Third Reich. Their father, a Cameroonian merchant, went bankrupt when no one dared to buy anything from him. Their passports were confiscated leaving them without an identity or nationality. When Ana was pregnant, she often heard that she would have to have an abortion because the Third Reich was not ready to accept a Black child. When the child was four, no Kindergarten would accept her. Frieda was taken to a woman's clinic and sterilized. Some of the women were hidden in a convent where the *Gestapo* found them, had them sterilized and sent to the concentration camps. Also in the concentration camps were Black women who worked for Jewish families in France. Approximately 40,000 Blacks were sterilized. This event is the topic of Michelè Maillet's book, *l'Etoile Noire*, that relates the saga of Sidonie, a Black maid employed by a Jewish family in France who joined the ranks of those wearing a star in Auschwitz. Maillet's book was based on actual events and won a prestigious prize.

After the Second World War the presence of Black children on German soil became problematic. It became the subject of a parliamentary debate. Called a special problem, a German government report issued in 1952 recommended that the "climatic conditions of Germany were not suited for mixed-blood children and that they should be sent to their father's country."

Today the Afro-German population is approximately 500,000. They have begun to organize themselves at the grassroots-level in a non-political entity called the I.S.D. (*Initiative Schwarze Deutsche* [Black German Initiative]). It is interesting to note that women are the most active among Afro-Germans. They are the most eager to express themselves in writing. There are many reasons for this activity: the women seem more sensitive to racial and sexual stereotypes.

The activities of the Afro-Germans do not occur in a vacuum. Today there are fifteen million Blacks in Western Europe. Increasingly, Black German women meet with Black French and Black British women in an attempt to better understand their place in Europe. It is a very slow process because while there already exists a strong Black French or Black British culture, the Black German culture is still in the embryonic stage.

Black France can boast a long tradition of political participation at the highest level: Henri Lémery was minister of justice before the Second World War, Gaston Monerville—whose lifetime achievements were recently celebrated in the French Senate—was president of the French Senate under General de Gaule, and Henri Jean-Baptiste—who ranked at the top of his class at the Ecole nationale d'Administration—was one of President Giscard d'Estaing's closest advisors. France can also count among its highest ranking Blacks Lucette Michaux-Chevry, currently a senator and former minister of human rights and humanitarian affairs in the early 1990s, as well as Christiane Taubira Delannon, the first Black woman member of the European Parliament.

A list of Black French Olympic medalists would include Marie-José Percec in track and field and Surya Bonali in ice skating. Véronique de la Cruz joined the hall of fame of Black France when she became Miss France in 1992. In that same year Patrick Chamoiseau received the coveted Goncourt Literary Prize as the second Black French writer after the controversial René Maran. When the popular Ivorian-French singer, Alpha Blondi, says "Paris c'est l'Afrique" he is referring to the very diverse African and Caribbean cultural life that enriches Paris where one out of every six inhabitants is Black. Although many Black French artists and intellectuals are known for their "esprit d'avant garde," Paris was



also the home of Chevalier St. George, a famous Black aristocrat and “galant homme” who came very close to being guillotined.

The above are only a few examples of the historical Black figures on the other side of the Rhine. The compilation of a similar list for Great Britain would certainly include the House of Commons representatives Bernie Grant and Abbott and the recently ennobled Blacks among many others. While Black Germans are willing to study other Black groups and be inspired by their struggles, they strive to retain their own identity and to own their struggle. Not all Blacks who reside in Germany are Black Germans, however. Blacks who are indeed German are often identified by their compatriots as non-German. Given that they constitute a much smaller minority than Black Britons or Black French and are dispersed throughout their country, they do not yet represent a sizable constituency or a separate culture.

The following is a poem written by the late Afro-German poet, May Ayim (1960-1996). It evokes in its poignant simplicity the isolation felt by many Black Germans. It also reflects the inner struggle of a young Black German woman, her quest for identity, and her rejection of prejudice.

sein oder nichtsein<sup>1</sup>

in deutschland großgeworden habe ich gelernt, daß  
afrikaner  
stärker transpirieren, das arbeiten  
nicht so gewohnt sind  
auf einer anderen entwicklungsstufe stehen.  
manche sagen auch:  
die stinken, sind faul, primitiv

in deutschland großgeworden habe ich gelernt, daß  
rückständigkeit schon von außen  
und von weitem  
erkennbar ist:  
an der hautfarbe, dem kopftuch, der beschneidung,  
dem islam, dem analphabetismus, dem nomadentum,

dem körperbau, der gangart, den sprachlauten  
und daß  
man/frau  
was tun muß! retten muß! bewundern muß!

in deutschland großgeworden habe ich gelernt, daß  
mein name  
    >> neger(in)<< heißt  
und die menschen  
    zwar gleich, aber verschieden sind  
und ich in gewissen punkten etwas überempfindlich bin.

in deutschland großgeworden habe ich gelernt,  
zu bedauern  
schwarz zu sein, "mischling" zu sein, deutsch zu sein,  
nicht deutsch sein, afrikanisch zu sein,  
nicht afrikanisch zu sein, deutsche eltern zu haben  
afrikanische eltern zu haben,  
exotin zu sein, frau zu sein.

in deutschland großgeworden, bin ich unterwegs  
weg vom: hautfarbesein, nationalitätsein,  
religionsein, parteisein,  
großsein, kleinsein, intelligentsein, dummsein,  
sein oder nicht sein  
auf den weg zu mir  
auf den weg zu dir

[coming of age in germany I have learned that  
africans  
perspire more heavily, are not so accustomed to work  
are on a different developmental level.  
    some also say:  
    they stink, are lazy, primitive.

coming of age in germany I have learned that

backwardness is visible externally  
and at a distance:  
by the skin color, the kerchief, the circumcision,  
the islam, the illiteracy, the nomadism, the  
physique, the walk, the language sounds  
and that  
s/he  
must do something! has to rescue! has to admire!

coming of age in germany I have learned that  
my name  
is >>Negro/Negress<<  
and that people,  
though being the same, are different  
and that I am in certain regards supersensitive.

coming of age in germany I have learned  
to regret  
being black, being “mulatto,” being german  
not being german, being african,  
not being african, having german parents  
having african parents,  
being an exotic, being a woman

coming of age in germany I am moving  
away from: skin coloredness, nationalityness,  
religousness, party-ness,  
adulthood, littleness, intelligence, dumbness,  
being or not being  
on the way to me  
on the way to you] trans. by L. Hopkins

Ayim’s text reflects the Afro-German identity crisis precipitated by the events of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

In the late 1980s while the debate on the *Ausländer* was beginning to take shape, German reunification occurred shifting the focus from

multiculturalism and multiracialism to the new “Wessie-Ossie” dialogue or lack thereof. During the rapid process of the integration of the German Democratic Republic into the Federal Republic frustrations grew on both sides. East Germans felt that the new free market economy was being imposed on them. West Germans felt unprepared for the huge economic sacrifice of unification. Often right-wing extremists of all types vented their frustrations on the most convenient target: the foreigner or the foreign-looking individual. Black Germans appeared to be foreigners and were victimized, sometimes in the most brutal ways. It was no coincidence that 1986 marked the emergence of the I.S.D.s. These groups were started as support groups for Blacks in Germany who had suffered from discrimination, racism or doubts about their own cultural identity. The mission of the I.S.D. was to gather Black Germans for the purpose of making them aware of the issues facing them and to celebrate their history. The following are some of the groups’ programmatic goals:

We would like to contribute to a change in the general appreciation of German history - all aspects of it.

This includes dealing with Afro-German (Afro-European) history, which to great extent must be compiled and written down for the first time. This means that we should concern ourselves with our own biographies as a basis for a special, black-defined identity.

We demand that the white society put an end to prejudice, discrimination, racism and sexism, perpetrated against us Black German/Afro-Germans and against all other social groupings with a similar plight (e.g., seekers of political asylum, Sinti, Roma).

We demand that racist stereotypes and discriminatory expressions, terms, illustrations and race-slanted reports disappear from the media; beginning with children’s books, youth books, films, encyclopedias and ending with political journalism.

All groupings throughout Germany keep in contact. Ideas are also exchanged at coordination meetings, editorial meetings and at our general meetings held annually. Other opportunities for contact are during Black Film Festivals, public readings, parties, etc.

An important aspect of our work is to cooperate with groups from Black world movements, with people doing anti-racism work and other solidarity groups.

In the absence of a debate on national identity, the debate on a multiracial society is avoided. Currently, by and large, debates on both national identity and multiraciality are absent from the European political scene in general. While other countries perceive themselves as multiracial, with the exception of perhaps France and Great Britain, Europe clings to old images of itself, leaving its citizens of African and Asian descent on the periphery of the national identification process. This stereotype is further reinforced by transformation of Europe into a single market. In Germany where the words “culture” and “nation” have often been ethnically-coded, Black Germans often indicate that their German culture, their German language and their German passport certainly cannot spare them the wrath of a neo-Nazi attack.

The German term *Volksgeist* traditionally used to reflect national identity has a different connotation from the French term “civilization.” Friedrich Meineke’s classic definition is that of a “natural core based on blood relationships.” These “blood relationships” are a precondition for the development of a community. The history of Germany since the nineteenth century oscillates between cultural, political and economic articulations of nationalism. In this sense, the First World War represents a turn of events because it stopped economic success and disturbed the notion of national identity.

Social observers wonder whether post-1945 Germany has been able to anchor its national identity beyond economics and race in a sound institutional reality such as that of a representative democracy. Although by the late 1970s the Germans realized that the guest workers, who had worked and invested in Germany when Germany needed them, would

not simply vanish during recessionary times or because Germany was deemed a non-immigration country, the national identity construct has not kept pace with immigration. In general, Germans do not include new settlers and their German-born offspring in their national identity construct. High unemployment rates and the media overkill on the presence of foreigners that feeds on already deep-seated fears are often cited to explain this non-inclusion. Two perspectives on German identity, biologist-naturalism and multiculturalism, seem to exclude Black or nonwhite Germans.

### **THE BIOLOGIST-NATURALISTS**

The opponents of a multicultural society are in favor of a Germany for the Germans. They range from biologist-naturalists to ethnopluralists. Biologist-nationalism perceives the influx of foreigners as demographic disaster for the Federal Republic. The supporters of biologist-naturalism view the cultural and ethnic differences between peoples as insurmountable and acculturation or integration as a violation of natural law.

Wolfgang Seeger, one of the strongest supporters of biologist-naturalism, contends, for example, that language is part of the *Rassenerbgut* and that the children of foreign workers cannot be truly bilingual. It would be beyond the scope of this essay to demonstrate the extent to which this view is erroneous, not to mention racist. Afro-Germans whose language and culture are German and who uphold German values would fit nowhere in the biologist-naturalist scheme.

The Heidelberg Manifesto signed by fifteen professors has attempted to tone down the language of biologist-naturalism while still embracing the idea of a homogeneously ethnic Germany. The manifesto concludes that a multicultural society would lead to a catastrophe. The manifesto establishes a set of binary oppositions such as, Orient and Occident, Islam and Christianity, Turks and Germans. In addition, it also defines a scale of cultural affinities. According to that scale, for example, an Eastern European would be closer to a German and integratable, while a Turk would not be. This concept fails to take into account many variables such as the number of years spent in Germany, the level of education, the

career path, the family situation, or the individual effort expended to fit into society, to cite only a few. The Heidelberg Manifesto further contends that the concept of multiculturalism is unconstitutional.

## **ETHNOPLURALISM**

Ethnopluralism is another tendency among the opponents of multiculturalism. It criticizes a Western culture that became hedonistic and has destroyed its traditional values. Ethnopluralists want the cultural confrontation between Germans and foreigners to strengthen German identity. In this scheme Afro-Germans also do not exactly fit. There is no cultural confrontation between Afro-Germans and their contemporaries since their culture is German. Ethnopluralism became more and more palatable because it avoided the pitfall of overt racism but it also avoided confronting the problem of racism. Ethnopluralists are not in favor of a “melting pot,” but rather prefer a “salad bowl” society in which groups would not necessarily mix, just coexist.

Ethnopluralists also envision the possibility of acculturation or naturalization of foreigners. The position of the German government is essentially ethnopluralist. The drawback of this approach is that it tends to ghettoize those who are unwilling or ready to integrate themselves in German society. The governmental answer to the ghettoization issue is that of rewarding those who choose the integration path by naturalizing them. This method would not apply to Afro-Germans who are citizens already.

## **MULTICULTURALISM**

Multiculturalism is originally West German. The former GDR only inherited it. No definition is usually provided for this catch word which is often used to signify the use of a variety of cultures in a variety of contexts. The term often means the existence of several cultures in one nation. It was introduced in 1980 by the Catholic and Protestant churches during the *Tag des ausländischen Mitbürgers* (Day of the Foreign Fellow-Citizen) intended to broaden the horizon of the Germans on the

cultures and concerns of the foreign fellow-citizen. The emphasis here is the “other” as a foreigner and not the “other” as a compatriot.

Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Thomas Schmidt have argued in favor of multiculturalism. They seem to share the same point of departure with the conservatives, namely, the modernization of contemporary Germany. Any modern society is a multicultural society. The lack of acceptance of multicultural reality is what is threatening to Germany. This is in essence a view shared by many in the Green Party. The Green Party is the only party that has fully embraced the idea of multiculturalism and worked on a legislative framework for its realization.

There are many arguments supporting the formulation of the legislation. One argument is that Germany should be held responsible for its resident aliens as part of its global commitment to human rights. Another argument contends that expelling human beings can lead to disastrous demographic and economic consequences in light of the aging of the German population. A third position is that Germany’s labor market is stratified along ethnic lines and that immigrants do not exactly compete with Germans for the same kinds of jobs. Finally, the theory of the survival of the fittest also surfaces in the discussion. Some contend that the immigrants are the cream of the crop of their country and are therefore valuable to Germany.

The debate on immigration directly impacts on the problem of race in Germany. By focusing on culture and immigration, the multiculturalists avoid the complex issue of race and national identity in Europe. However, in a roundabout way they are forced to tackle it because multicultural also implies multiethnicity. Overall, the multiculturalist position is anthropologically optimistic. It believes in the ability of human beings to cope, to reinvent themselves, to solve conflicts, and to adapt.

While Germany is moving slowly from “*jus sanguinis*” to “*jus solis*” (or citizenship according to the place of birth, not according to ancestry), France seems to move in the opposite direction. The question remains as to which policy will prevail in Europe. With regard to the fifteen million Afro-European or Euro-Blacks (as they are often called) who already hold a European passport, many questions remain as to their participation in the European identity construct. Will they, despite their cultural



background, continue to be perceived as the “others” on the basis of their race? Will efforts be made to shatter the myth of a monoracial Europe? “*Deutsche sind weiß, Neger können keine Deutschen sein*” was a sentence uttered by a German television viewer in response to a show on Black Germans. Will such responses become passé in the future?

Germany is poised to assume the leadership of Europe. One of the credos of a unified Europe is the free movement of goods and people. As minorities face growing racism throughout Europe, they might consequently become some of the most mobile groups in the European community. The issue of their contribution to the national identity of the countries of which they are citizens is, however, not resolved. To insert the Black contribution or any other minority contribution in a debate on national identity would significantly enrich the debate and allow Germany to finally confront the old demons it has evaded for the last five decades.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>. May Ayim, “sein oder nichtsein” in *nachtgesang*, (Berlin: Orlanda Frauenverlag, 1997), 17f.

**“BLACK CHERRIES ARE SWEETER”:  
A NOTE ON AFRICAN-GERMAN EROTIC RELATIONS**

Andreas Mielke

Let me, too, begin with a personal statement: I know that the German tennis star, Boris Becker, married a “black” woman; but I do not know anything about her or the reaction of the Germans to this marriage. I do not recall any protests.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, I also do not know much about Afro-Germans besides what has been published. I admit this not because I want to appear particularly ignorant, or even Socratic, but rather because I think my own lack of knowledge and expertise, as personal and anecdotal as it may be, can be considered symptomatic. In other words, I believe that many Germans do not know much about Africans or Afro-Germans, nor do they very much care to know.<sup>2</sup>

My own interest in Afro-Germans is still marginal and even at that, I think, exceptional. For better or worse, it is a rather academic one and stems from my primary interest in German literature and culture. It is relatively new and certainly not German-born. Growing up in Germany I never met an African or Afro-German, although we did have an ‘*Afrikaner*’ in our family—my grandfather. The retired *Reichsbahnoberinspektor* (a senior imperial railroad inspector) had been to Africa when he was a young man. More precisely, he had served as a member of the colonial German army in *Deutsch-Südwest* (now Namibia). There he fought against Africans whom he called, in stories told with rolling eyes, “*Hottentotten und Hereros*.”

As if to top this alliteration, he referred to his particular enemies as “*Hottentottenhunde*” mainly, if I recall correctly, for their sneaky way of fighting the less flexible German soldiers. Today I know that their kind of partisan resistance was skilled and efficient guerilla warfare, directed against genocidal colonialists.<sup>3</sup> To the adoring boy, my grandfather’s mean opponents were not really Africans, not even *Neger*, but rather mythical creatures along the lines of dwarfs and gnomes, gremlins or trolls. The names of the historical resistance fighters, of Morenga or Witbooi for example, if they were ever mentioned, would have been as distant as those of ancient kings, like Alexander or Arthur perhaps, or Attila the Hun, more likely.<sup>4</sup>

The first *Neger*, or “*Schwarzen*,” I remember seeing as a young man were students in Hamburg. At that time, Germans referred to Africans and African-Americans as *Neger* as a matter of course; some still do so today.<sup>5</sup> (Afro-Germans were, of course, also unknown.) I was not interested in them at all. Why should I? We had more important things to do; or so we thought. In this case, however, my ignorance was not typical at all. Later research taught me that a good number of Germans, including poets, dealt with Africans in a great variety of ways.

Two poems from the sixties illustrate two extreme German images of African women: The one by Nicolas Born, “*Protest eines Bürgers im Essener Puff*” Who is a German? Historical and Modern Perspectives on Africans in Germany (Protest of a citizen in the Essen whorehouse) (1966), records a bourgeois voice that appears to be a clear rejection:

Auch das noch: Negerinnen!  
Sind wir hier in Deutschland  
Oder wo sind wir hier?  
Die Welt ist übergeschnappt  
Eines Tages setzen sie uns  
Chinesinnen in die Häuser  
Dann krieg ich den Rappel  
China und Afrika bestimmen die Preise  
Meine Nerven meine Nerven!<sup>6</sup>

[Now this, Negresses!  
Are we in Germany here  
Or where are we here?  
The world is nuts  
One day they'll set us  
Chinese women into the houses  
Then I will go bonkers.  
China and Africa determine the prices  
My nerves, my nerves!]

This represents bad racist stereotyping with a territorial claim echoed in the eighties also in the TV program, “*Deutsche sind weiß, Neger*

*können keine Deutschen sein*”<sup>7</sup> (Germans are white; Negroes cannot be Germans). Note, however, that even in this poem, the *Negerin* is not on the lowest rung of the ladder as she might have been in the eighteenth century’s ideological system of the great chain of beings. The man’s main concern here is not even women of this or that race; he worries about his economic power. The underlying question one ought to ponder in all discourses on race: Who is in charge of the prices?!

Born’s colloquial protest has the appeal of a true documentary voice; yet it does not document **the** German voice. In reality German men do not object to African women at all, certainly not in popular *Männerphantasien*. As participants in a booming intercontinental sex-tourism they go to Africa (and to Asia as well) to search for erotic and sexual titillation, pleasure or satisfaction—or power.<sup>8</sup> To many, African women are attractive. Franz Josef Degenhardt’s song of the great chauvinistic opportunist “*Horsti Schmandhoff*” ends with such a male fantasy:

Da stand im Leopardenfell, den Schwanzquast an der Hand  
die Fäuste in die Hüften gestemmt, und um die Stirn ein Band  
inmitten dreißig Weibern, alle nackt und schwarz und prall,  
ein fetter Horsti Schmandhoff, und der lächelte brutal-<sup>9</sup>

[There he stood in his leopard skin, the tail tuft in his hand  
the fists akimbo in his hips, around his head a band  
amid thirty women, all naked and black and full  
a fat Horsti Schmandhoff, and he smiled brutally-]

Stereotypes are not exclusively male problems, we also have *Frauenphantasien* in which African sex and power get terribly mixed. Ingeborg Bachmann’s steamy “*Liebe: Dunkler Erdteil*”<sup>10</sup> oozes with images of “Tarzan’s Africa,” in what Gugelberger calls “images and expressions of purest kitsch.”<sup>11</sup> The poem becomes powerful simply because of an ancient conceptual vocabulary that associates Africa and animalistic sex. Of course, Bachmann’s surrealistic assemblage of clichés has little to do with Africa except that it, too, documents that Africa is a continent basically unknown to most of us.

A generation later German poets do not write like this any more. After the fall of the Wall in 1989, the country's demographic character has also changed drastically.<sup>12</sup> Hamburg, for example, appears to be a multicultural city that includes many different, and surely not always welcome, ethnic minorities.<sup>13</sup> Of course, there are also *Negerinnen* in Hamburg's notorious St. Pauli and its sexy *Reeperbahn*, about which nobody seems to care. Today, the most noticeable objection to Africans in Germany is directed against drug dealers, particularly those who hang out at night in the neighborhoods' dark doorways.<sup>14</sup>

In the seventies, we students had more important things to do than deal with our minorities; we had to confront our own majority, the dubious authorities of our fathers' generation and that of the Big Brother, i.e., the United States of America, as well. We did not directly confront our parents' hidden or open racism; instead our protests focused on the pompous Shah of Iran and his notoriously brutal secret service, and the escalating U.S. war in Vietnam. On the other hand, we supported the Civil Rights Movement.<sup>15</sup> When the African-American athletes at the Olympic games raised their fists in protest against racial discrimination back home, young Germans applauded.

Many student protests were international, in particular when they had socialist components. Generally Rudi Dutschke, Ho Chi Minh or Angela Davis were not primarily identified as belonging to this or that race or ethnicity but rather as leftist, i.e., progressive. In this conveniently polarized world, the Left was considered international and the Right nationalistic, and thus chauvinistic. It took a bit longer to recognize that the capitalistic Right was an international, or multinational, phenomenon as well, albeit on another level. These demonstrations were often based on generational conflicts and had little to do with Africa and its peoples. Racism, if it ever was the topic, was something that took place elsewhere, obviously in America and South Africa. In this regard, the generations were in agreement, the older being able to point abroad also as a defensive gesture, perhaps as some kind of retrospective excuse for their own past racism (or even the Holocaust).

One particular set of demonstrations with an African connection occurred when students from Hamburg protested against a monument on the lawn of the main administrative building on Edmund-Siemers-Allee,

which happens to be the former German *Kolonialinstitut*. The monument represented a German colonial soldier [like my grandfather] in heroic posture [quite unlike the grandfather I knew] at whose feet a couple of Africans knelt. Students successfully demonstrated for the removal of this embarrassing document of German colonialism: When I finally graduated, the monument had disappeared from campus.<sup>16</sup> By then I knew more about dead Germanic languages (the required Gothic, Old and Middle High German) than about living ones nobody ever drew attention to, such as Afrikaans or Yiddish.

I began to ponder questions of race seriously only some twenty years ago. For that, I had to leave Germany and study in the United States. My thesis advisor sparked my academic interest in race issues: He wondered why the Germans of the late eighteenth century, the intellectuals of the Age of Goethe—who thought and wrote so much about liberty and humanity and became models in Germany’s culture, or *Bildung*—did not embrace the ideas of the American Revolution more than they apparently did.

My response, preformed in my rebellious student past in Hamburg, was immediate: Because the so-called American revolutionaries did not really fight for freedom but rather for material gains, i.e., tax relief. These “freedom fighters” not only owned African slaves; they kept them in bondage despite knowing the obvious inhumanity of the practice. My spontaneous reaction to the questioning of Germany’s literary heroes was partly defensive and, in retrospect, also naively patriotic. It was based on a twentieth-century distrust of that Big Brother who so happily collaborated with ruthless dictators all over the world while being racist at home.

After a few years of research I found—not without a certain gratification—German voices condemning the slave holder Washington outright as a hypocrite. The same research unveiled also that there were more German voices praising him. I also learned that minor writers, moralists and popular playwrights expressed more concern for and empathy with African slaves than the famous thinkers of the age.<sup>17</sup> Worse yet, some of our much celebrated *Dichter und Denker* (poets and philosophers), the models of our *Bildung* for the last two centuries, wrote some of the most stupid and ignorant sentences on Africans one can find.

The cultural heroes Germans were trained to admire, namely Kant, Schiller and Hegel were declared racists.<sup>18</sup>

Who of these men is speaking for “the Germans,” the exceptional thinker, or the common moralist? If challenged to characterize the German attitude towards Africans in general and to slavery, in particular, I would have to answer with Goethe’s Faust, “*Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach! in meiner Brust,*” a sentiment that can be cited time and again whenever we talk about racism of any one group of people. At least two souls: Further research opened such a variety of images that as far as the imagology of Africans in German literature and culture is concerned, another German writer, Theodor Fontane, begs to be quoted: “*Das ist ein weites Feld.*”

Let me outline this field. Afro-German relations are much older than commonly recognized, older than the term “Blacks” and older than the term “Germans.” In the beginning, they were part of a colorful history involving three continents—simultaneously separated and connected by the polychromatic Mediterranean Sea. Amber from the Germanic (Baltic) coast was traded in Egypt, and African sculptures were exhibited in the Roman colony still known today as Cologne. Rome was the great cultural mediator. The cult of the Egyptian goddess, Isis, found places of worship along the Danube. In the far West, Vandals kept moving past Gibraltar’s rock and Mauretania bringing Germanic ways and wares to the Roman city of Carthage in North Africa. In Europe’s East, the historical Attila, the Hun (Kriemhild’s husband in the *Nibelungenlied*) had an African entertainer at his court. Later, Charlemagne traded with the Sultan of Egypt as a matter of course.

In all areas these cultural media were heirs also of Greek philosophies, politics and powers some of which, by virtue of the Ptolemaic dynasty for example, were also Egyptian, i.e., African. It is impossible to delineate the enormous variety of encounters and relationships here; suffice it to say that they were complex and, as the extremely valuable volumes of *The Image of the Black in Western Art*<sup>19</sup> illustrate, for millennia produced a colorful multicultural environment that never was exclusively black and white.

In any case, before Germans noticeably contributed to the development of western culture, hundreds if not thousands of years had

produced a wide variety of African images in Europe. All over the Mediterranean seas and lands, Roman mercenaries, i.e., also African and Germanic prisoners of wars and slaves, fought side by side. In any Roman territory, city or camp, these men heard stories based both on facts and hearsay. They saw what the Romans saw: art, paintings, sculptures, and mosaics including those tiny pygmies or African bath attendants with genitals of remarkable size.<sup>20</sup>

There is little known about the women of the time, but it is certain that men and women dreamed of erotic and sexual relations. At least men did what men have always done, they compared:

Luxorius, an African poet at the court of the Vandal kings in the early sixth century, in one of his poems [. . .] contrasts the pretty girl from Pontus, symbolizing the Nordic and fitting the feminine ideal of the Vandals, with an ugly (*foeda*) Garamante, the southern type farthest from the Nordic. It seems that this was the poet's way of continuing the old tradition of the Greek Janiform vases. . . .<sup>21</sup>

I am in no position to speak to “the feminine ideal of the Vandals” and rather doubt that one, and only one, ever existed. The vocabulary employed here suggests a twentieth century opposition and separation of North and South and their “types” that in reality never was (not all Northerners are blonde, of course, nor are all pretty). But surely such comparisons have been made all along. These comparisons are still being made today, by males and females alike, and probably by members of all races.

The multicultural poet Luxorius, an African at a Germanic court, wrote in Latin. This was of course not unusual: For about seventeen hundred years Rome and its language, Latin, formed the basis of Western culture. If one wants to find the origins of Western racism, one needs to go beyond national boundaries and the age of colonialism, and study the Latin sources, including those of the Church fathers and their numerous clerical propagators and lay interpreters.<sup>22</sup> The history includes thousands of pious pilgrims and militant crusaders. All met or could have met Africans in Italy, Egypt's Alexandria or in Jerusalem, where for



centuries Africans and Europeans worshiped next to each other as a matter of course. The history of these encounters has not yet been written.

We know more about the images of Africans in religion. Not surprisingly, the allure of African women to the respective cultures' founding fathers was frowned upon by an opposing cultural tradition that labored to depict the erotic and sexual as negative, namely the religious tradition of clerics, monks and nuns. This tradition denied pleasures not only to themselves but also to others. [It has always been in the interest of the powers to be in control of the sexual desires of their subjects.] Hence, they accused the once celebrated Queen of Sheba of seducing the proverbially wise king, Solomon, into devil worship; and identified Egypt, the proverbially rich land of Potiphar and his wife, as the land of prostitution.

Along with the Western Church's invention of a negatively seductive Queen of Sheba, religion established Africa as the continent of unbridled sexual lust. It became the land of Ham, Noah's son presumably responsible for a curse lying on all Africans. The Bible offers a strange story of which parts appear to be missing. Ham, instead of covering his intoxicated father, tells his brothers about the drunk exposing himself in his sleep. In turn, Ham's son Canaan and his offspring receive the wrath of God.

These are only seemingly old stories, but my own *Stuttgarter Jubiläumsbibel* (1912)—inherited from my father and published at around the time when my frustrated grandfather chased evasive Hottentots in the Namibian deserts—still found it proper to comment [following 1 Moses 9.25]:

Hams Sünde wird an Kanaan, seinem jüngsten Sohn, und dessen Nachkommen gestraft; vgl., wie [. . .] Knechtsgesinnung und Knechtslos bis auf den heutigen Tag den Nachkommen Hams anhaftet. Auch der Fleischessinn geht fort; daher die Missionare fragen: Wann wird Afrika von der Sünde Hams frei werden?<sup>23</sup>

[Ham's sin is punished on Canaan, his youngest son and his offspring; compare how servility and the fate of servants [slaves]

still marks Ham's offspring. Also the [their] carnal sense continues; therefore the missionaries ask: When will Africa become free of Ham's sin?]

What actually was Ham's sin? [Apparently, Ham himself gets away unharmed.]

As tempting as it may be in view of the terrible Holocaust, it is problematic to identify a particular German attitude towards other races in general and Africans in particular. Germany has always been more of a multiethnic entity than popularly recognized, united with the rest of Europe by an academic discourse the language of which was Latin. In addition, Germans of the multiethnic Holy Roman Empire could not care less about national boundaries; and merchants and mercenaries traded, traveled and made money in any country that promised profits. The view that projects a national Germanic concept of a "mythical blackness"<sup>24</sup> into the Middle Ages and beyond, even if it is supported by anti-racist concerns, comes close to being racist itself. A German *Volksseele*<sup>25</sup> simply does not exist.

Of course, one might also ask (again): What is "German?" The most famous German emperor of the Middle Ages for instance, Friedrich II (1194-1250), lived most of his glorious life in Sicily, closer to Africa than any other European ruler. He surrounded himself with oriental and African counselors, dancers, eunuchs, knights, musicians, servants, and women. He knew Arabic culture perhaps better than that of the German backwoods. When he came to Magdeburg in 1235, he brought with him a huge parade of exotic creatures most Germans (Saxons) had never seen.

One of the results of this visit was the adoption of an Egyptian soldier and martyr, St. Mauritius (Maurice, in German popular as *Moritz*), as the patron saint of Germany's eastward expansions. Clearly Germans honored this imperial African like no other African and like few of their resident saints. Along with it came the first portraiture of an individual African in German art.<sup>26</sup> This stone sculpture of a pensive African knight in the armor of the sculptor's time is one of the greatest masterpieces medieval Germany ever produced.

As it happened, it was sculpted only a few years after Wolfram von Eschenbach wrote one of the greatest literary masterpieces medieval

Germany produced, the Arthurian epos *Parzival*. It, too, is highly recommended for anyone interested in African-German relations. Here one not only finds the first [non-biblical] African queen in German literature, Belakane, we also find a magnificently humorous treatment of interracial relationships. Wolfram knows about the differences in race and joyfully employs the sexual attraction between the representatives of these races.

Apparently, the African queen's Blackness was no problem for Wolfram, and hardly one for the European knight the author invented for the purpose of meeting and mating with her. They marry and subsequently produce Feirefiz [French for 'fair son'?), the literary precursor of all Afro-Germans.<sup>27</sup> Yet before the son is born, the disloyal European knight secretly leaves his African wife and the kingdom he has conquered by winning her love.<sup>28</sup> Nothing stops Wolfram from treating his characters as equals. Neither race, nor religion—Belakane and her son are pagan—seem to bother Wolfram, nor the fact that both the European Gahmuret and his African son Feirefiz turn out to be bigamists. What counts for Wolfram is the brotherhood of man, the relationship of all his *personae*.

Was all this fiction? We have very little knowledge about the historical encounters between Germans and Africans of that time; and we must be careful in assigning Wolfram a particular historical or social intent or racial program. His is also not necessarily a reflection of **the** German view since even for parts of this extraordinary story we have a long narrative tradition.

Gahmuret's and Belakane's intercontinental and interracial marriage had a number of significant precursors in the main traditions from which western culture developed. All these stories are not known today; and some come to us as if erasures took place, erasures that may indicate racial, racist and sexist prejudices. The Bible as we know it, for example, tells us of Potiphar's seductive wife, but neither she nor the Queen of Sheba has a name. The Ethiopian church tradition, in contrast, knows the queen as Makeba.

Even more telling is the "trace-story" of Moses' African wife. She not only has no name [Moses also marries Zippora]; she nearly disappeared from the standardized text were it not for one telling anecdote—which the

scripture's editors might have overlooked. Here Miriam and Aaron, Moses' siblings, complain about the favors God grants their brother and his African [= Ethiopian] wife. The punishment God subsequently bestows on Miriam is a skin disease, indicating that her allusion to her brother's African wife was a reference to the latter's skin color as well. [Aaron gets away unharmed.]

What does this have to do with Afro-German relations? Germans of the Middle Ages knew about young Moses' life in Egypt and that he fought as a warrior in Ethiopia, where he married an Ethiopian princess, Tabris. He leaves her because he has more important things to do. Before Luther translated the Bible, Germans could read about Moses and his Ethiopian wife in the popular *Historienbibeln*. [Moses here abandons her secretly by using a magic trick.] Colonialism and slavery could not like the story of Moses and his African wife. In the modern standardized version young Moses' Ethiopian adventures have disappeared.

The same narrative structure can be observed in an ancient non-biblical tradition as well. Aeneas, escaping from the burning Troy, lands in the African city Carthage where he marries Dido, the city's legendary founder (herself a refugee from Tyre but now African queen or at least queen in Africa). He, too, leaves his wife who then commits suicide. [Aeneas gets away unharmed.]

These narrative traditions are precursors of Wolfram's story of the African queen and her European knight, lover and husband. In all cases the protagonist abandons his African wife because he has more important things to do, the fulfilling of his narrative destiny: Moses has to take the Jews out of Egypt, Aeneas has to found Rome, and Gahmuret has to produce the future grail king, Parzival. Thus, in this respect Wolfram's story line is more European than German.

Both the negative and the positive interpretation of the Africans' sexuality, assumed or real, run through German [and Western] cultural history in parallel strands. They are still alive today. Following the Middle Ages, one has on the one hand the appreciation of the dark-hued "exotic" African, from Hieronymus Bosch to modern ads, often openly and gladly supported by sexy Africans, African-Americans and Afro-Germans of both sexes. On the other hand one has the objection, likewise

somewhat supported by those Africans who emulate European looks and manners.<sup>29</sup>

During the early Enlightenment, or the Age of Reason, Germans began (again!) to question the Church's rejection of the African's erotic attraction. Perhaps the first German poet of the colonial period to deal with the question poetically, was Hedwig Sidonie Zäunemann, a proudly single *poeta laureata* of the first half of the eighteenth century. It is a line from her playful poem ("*Dass eine schöne Mohrin einem schönen Europäer besser gefalle, als eine schöne Europäerin*") that gave the comparative title-quote to my talk, "Black Cherries are Sweeter."<sup>30</sup>

While Hedwig Zäunemann playfully pondered the superior sweetness of black cherries, African men produced the first (known) Afro-German literature. Some of the Black Moravians in Pennsylvania's German-speaking Bethlehem wrote journals, albeit in the traditional German of their pious brethren.<sup>31</sup> In Germany, Professor Anton Wilhelm Amo (ca. 1700-after 1753), the most educated Afro-German author of the time, however, still wrote—like the Ethiopian Abba Gregory (Gorgoryos, ~1600-1654?) and his German friend Hiob Ludolf (1624-1704)—most of his works in Latin.<sup>32</sup>

The African intellectual may have left his position and Germany due to an unsuccessful courtship, or after the publication of poems mocking him as a wild man. About the same time, a number of interesting interracial relationships in and outside Germany occurred. The specific German interests may be extremely varied: German travelers to and from South Africa, for example, reported freely about their interest in one particular aspect of the African's female genitalia, the famed "Hottentot apron," or elongated *labia*.<sup>33</sup> Documenting more respect was the interesting marriage between the Moravian missionary Freundlich and the former slave Rebecca on the [then Danish] Virgin Islands.<sup>34</sup>

During the last twenty years, much research has been done and published; some contradictory. Whereas in 1982 Sander Gilman could still claim that "Rathelf's German audience would not have allowed a miscegenous relationship,"<sup>35</sup> historical research, specifically that published by Peter Martin in 1993, has documented a good number of interracial marriages [and other relationships] between African men and German women, from the seventeenth century onwards.

The list includes famous Africans like the Russian general, Ibrahim Hannibal (d. 1781), and his German wife, Christine Schöberg, and the elegant Austrian free mason, Angelo Soliman (c.1721-1796), and his wife, Magdalena Christina Kellermann.<sup>36</sup> Less famous ones are numerous “court moors” or the dozens of Africans who as English loyalists rather went to dull places like Braunschweig than live in an American democracy where the freedom fought for did not include their freedom. The most notorious relationship of the nineteenth century was certainly that between a married German count, Pückler, and his African slave, Mahbuba [d. 1840], his “*unter allen Menschen geliebteste Wesen*” [of all humans the most beloved].<sup>37</sup>

General stupidity, ignorance, popular and scholarly chauvinism notwithstanding, the number of Afro-Germans today as well as in the past indicate that German women continue to find African men attractive, and vice versa. After all, most of today’s Afro-Germans appear to be the children of erotic and sexual relationships based on mutual attraction. These include, but are not limited to, those of colonial encounters between Africans and Germans at the turn of the century, the so-called “Rhineland bastards” fathered by French colonial troops after First World War and whom the Nazis later sterilized, and the *Besatzungskinder* (occupation children) mostly of African-American GIs after Second World War.

Naturally, there are also individual relationships that have nothing to do with colonialism and war. Well known is the opera star Grace Bumbry who in 1961 was introduced to Germany as the singing Venus in Wagner’s *Tannhäuser* opera.<sup>38</sup> According to this African-American, her German audience still has difficulties in accepting a love scene between a black man and a white woman. She herself married a (white) European and considers the problems arising from prejudices as those of others:

*SPIEGEL*: Sie waren neun Jahre mit dem blonden, blauäugigen Opernsänger Andreas Jäckel verheiratet. Hat das die Leute zu bösen Bemerkungen veranlasst?

Bumbry: Probleme hat es sicher gegeben, aber das waren nicht meine, sondern die von anderen. Ich muss meinen Platz an der Sonne selbst finden,

und ich werde niemandem gestatten, mein Leben zur Hölle zu machen, niemandem.<sup>39</sup>

[*SPIEGEL*: For nine years you were married to the blonde, blue eyed opera singer, Andreas Jaeckel. Did that cause people to make nasty comments?

Bumbry: Sure there were problems, but those were not mine, but rather those of others.

I have to find my space in the sun myself, and I shall not permit anyone to make my life hell, no one.]

Today it is close to impossible to open a German magazine without encountering images of dark-skinned models, famous ones such as Iman,<sup>40</sup> Naomi Campbell or Tyra Banks, and numerous anonymous beauties who exhibit underwear in the ubiquitous catalogues of the *Otto* or *Quelle* mail-order enterprises. Even though the presence of Africans and Afro-Germans and African-Americans (Blacks) in German culture is widespread today and may appear normal, the monster racism is not yet dead. Arabella Kiesbauer, for example, a popular TV moderator with a daily show, “*Talk*,”<sup>41</sup> knows all about it:

Im Falle von Arabella Kiesbauer [. . .] kam der Stoff für schöne Geschichten sogar frei Haus: rassistische Drohbriefe, ein Jahr später ein Briefbombenattentat, bei dem eine Mitarbeiterin verletzt wurde - und das zwei Tage bevor Kiesbauer auf einer “Playboy”- Pressekonferenz ihre Nacktfotos vorstellen wollte. Keinen Grund, die Pressekonferenz abzusagen: “So eine Synergie muss man nicht verhindern.”<sup>42</sup>

[In the case of Arabella Kiesbauer the stuff for nice stories even came free of charge: racist letters with threats, a year later an attack with a letter bomb injuring one colleague – and this two days before Kiesbauer intended to introduce her nude pictures at a *Playboy* press conference. No reason to cancel the press conference, “Such synergy one ought not stop.”]

The *Playboy* display of her sexuality is but a drop in an ocean of erotic images. Twentieth-century Germans of course are used to innumerable provocatively erotic African women from Josephine Baker to Tina Turner to naughty Janet (Jackson). The poster announcing Janet's 1998 tour through Germany not only draws attention to an overwhelming bosom; it directly and deliberately forces German voyeurs to recognize her overall sexuality.<sup>43</sup> The tattoo on her upper inner thigh—directing the view to her panties—is supposedly an African design.

Although we do not have any statistics, it is safe to assume that Africans are still attractive to many Germans. In 1996 for example, the Afro-German TV production director Sandra Traoré, born in Hamburg of a Senegalese father and herself mother of blonde Tyler, confirmed the lasting desirability of African women for “many” German men: “*Es gibt viele Männer, die sich gern mit einem schwarzen Mädels schmücken und auch mal 'ne Farbige im Bett haben wollen*”<sup>44</sup> (There are many men who like to decorate themselves with a black gal and also would like to bed a colored one).

The reaction of today's Africans and Afro-Germans both to their own identities and the perceptions experienced in Germany varies. A programmatic *Farbe bekennen*,<sup>45</sup> translated into English slightly more provocatively as *Showing Our Colors*,<sup>46</sup> is not necessarily desired by all Afro-Germans. “*Ich selbst sage nie: 'Ich als Afro-Deutscher'*”<sup>47</sup> (I myself never say, I as an Afro-German), says the TV journalist Cherno Jobatey. Afro-Germans do not speak with one voice; and why should they? They are individuals with various backgrounds, personalities and biographies. Nothing is as black and white as racists of all colors might want us believe.

Some are sensitive to discrimination even if it comes as a reference to their African “sweetness”; some shrug it off. Individuals may also change their views. The Afro-German actress Dennesch Ninnig “*konnte sich in der Schule noch so sehr anstrengen, sie blieb immer die Exotin, das süße 'Negerkind.'* ‘*Ich wünschte mir damals, so unauffällig wie möglich zu sein.*’ *Diesen Wunsch hat die Berlinerin später ins Gegenteil verkehrt*”<sup>48</sup> (no matter how much she tried, she always remained the exotic girl, the “sweet Negro child.” “At that time I wished to be as inconspicuous as possible.” Later, the Berliner turned this wish into its opposite).



An Afro-German singer with parents from Ghana, Kofi Ansuhenne, does not care too much about the teenage press that makes him an idol: “*Und daß er von der Teenie-Press zum schokobraunen Süßen stilisiert wird, ist ihm eigentlich egal*”<sup>49</sup> (and that the teen press stylizes him to a chocolate-brown sweetie doesn’t actually concern him). Nico Motchebon, Germany’s hope in the 800-meter race at the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, even claims that his color has never been a problem; on the contrary, “*ich habe einen höheren Wiedererkennungswert*”<sup>50</sup> (I have a higher recognition value).

Unfortunately, in 1990 such a recognition led to the death of at least one African in Germany, Amadeo Antonio from Angola.<sup>51</sup> In view of such incidents, one can only agree with the German-Nigerian Nkechi Madubuko who misses humanity in Germany, “*Was ich hier vermisse, ist Menschlichkeit.*”<sup>52</sup> Fortunately, however, this victim of German racists triggered demonstrations of Africans and other Germans who responded with concern, initiated organizations, projects, protests, and solidarity events, showing that they will neither tolerate racist crimes nor repeat their fathers’ and grandfathers’ failures.

The main problem for Afro-Germans is, naturally, that they are **not** “foreigners,” and thus may feel “*Fremd im eigenen Land*”<sup>53</sup> (foreign in your own country), or conclude with the student Alexander Ngoubamdjun, a member of the *Initiative Schwarze Deutsche*, “*Der deutsche Pass ist das Papier nicht wert, auf dem er gedruckt ist*”<sup>54</sup> (The German passport isn’t worth the paper on which it is printed). On the other hand, “*Deutschland wird multikultureller*”<sup>55</sup> (Germany is becoming more multicultural) hopes the businessman and rapper Boris Enkambi whose father is from Cameroon. Most Germans I know, as well as numerous grass-root organizations and appointed officials such as *Ausländerbeauftragte* (commissioners for foreigners) and their various publications distance themselves from exceptional transgressions; they pronounce the desire to establish or, better yet, recognize Germany as a multicultural nation.<sup>56</sup> It is just so much more difficult than seeing the world in “Black and White,” but in view of the Nazis’ racism that led to the Holocaust, it is worth our while and effort to recall that German

culture has also always produced positive images of *the Other*. After all, all Germans are not alike.

## ENDNOTES

The present paper is an updated version of a talk I gave at the AICGS workshop in Washington, D.C. in November 1997. I would like to thank my sister, Renate Mielke, for the unexpected and extremely generous invitation to Hamburg, and the editor for allowing this subsequent update.

<sup>1</sup> When I said this at the AICGS workshop, an audible but unquotable murmur objected: Apparently there have been voices against Boris' and Barbara's interracial marriage of which I am unaware.

<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, Germans generally know quite a bit about African-Americans. For reasons too complicated to explain here, I avoid the term "Blacks" as an American term although a good number of today's Afro-Germans have an American parent.

<sup>3</sup> After WWI, Germany lost all colonies; eighty years later, German influence in Namibia is still very much alive, cf. Wolf-Christian Fink, "Reportage: AZ [*Allgemeine Zeitung*, Namibia]," *Max* 6 (Nov. 1996 = "Das schwarze Heft"), 178-83; in Hamburg's bookstores one can find more travel guides to Namibia than to many major African countries. For a treatment of colonial literature cf. Amadou Booker Sadju, *Das Bild des Negro-Afrikaners in der deutschen Kolonialliteratur: Ein Beitrag zur literarischen Imagologie Schwarzafrikas (1884-1945)* (Berlin: Reimer, 1985).

<sup>4</sup> The best modern novel dealing with this period is Uwe Timm's *Morenga*. For a long time, I did not even know that my father's, "Wir sind doch nicht bei den Hottentotten," was a racist reprimand. Cf. also my *Laokoon und die Hottentotten, oder: Über die Grenzen von Reisebeschreibung und Satire* (Baden-Baden: Koerner, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Rudolf Walter Leonhard, "Wörter sind nicht schuld," *Die Zeit* (8 Nov. 1985): 71-72; as legitimate as it may be for Africans to object to the popular, supposedly neutral, German term "Neger," it ought not be translated as the clearly tendentious "Nigger" as done by Sander Gilman, *On Blackness Without Blacks: Essays on the Image of the Black in Germany* (Boston: Hall, 1982), xii.

<sup>6</sup> Nicolas Born, "Protest eines Bürgers im Essener Puff," *Tintenfisch* 4 (1971), 87. For a recent treatment of the topic "Africans" in German poetry cf. my *Ästhetischer Kannibalismus: Afrikaner in deutscher Lyrik* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> Christel Priemer, Conrad Dawo, "Deutsche sind weiß, Neger können keine Deutschen sein: Eine Dokumentation" (Saarländischer Rundfunk, 29 May 1986).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. several documents in Marie Lorbeer and Beate Wild, editors, *Menschenfresser - Negerküsse: Das Bild vom Fremden im deutschen Alltag* (Berlin: Elefant Press, 2nd ed. 1993); Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992).

<sup>9</sup> Franz Josef Degenhardt, "Horsti Schmandhoff," in: *Da habt ihr es: Stücke und Lieder für ein deutsches Quartett* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1970), 70-72.

<sup>10</sup> Ingeborg Bachmann, "Liebe: Dunkler Erdteil," in: *Werke*, edited by Christine Koschel et al. (Munich/Zurich: Piper, 2nd ed. 1982), 158-59. For some older women voices cf. Tamara Felden, "The Different Faces of Slavery: German-Speaking Women Authors of the 19th Century Discuss Race, Gender, and Culture," *Schatzkammer* 23, 1&2 (1997), 31-48.

<sup>11</sup> Georg Gugelberger, "Them in Our Literature and We in Theirs," in: *Blacks and German Culture*, edited by Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermand (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), 87-112; 94.

<sup>12</sup> Of the ethnic minorities listed in *Kleines Lexikon der ethnischen Minderheiten in Deutschland*, edited by Cornelia Schmalz-Jacobsen and Georg Hansen (Munich: Beck, 1995), *Afro-Deutsche* (here estimated at 200,000) are the only "hyphenated" group included.

<sup>13</sup> African images have become ubiquitous and quite diverse, cf. for example the following, more or less coincidental, publications from Hamburg 1997/98: [Report on the Afrika-Verein] "Afrika - Hamburgs verkannte Geldquelle," *Hamburger Abendblatt* 301 (27/28 Dec. 1997), 18; [Poster] *Janet*; [Title illustration voodoo scene] *Szene Hamburg* 1 (Jan. 1998); [Flyer] "Gegen die herrschende Drogen- und Flüchtlingspolitik: Erklärung der Roten Flora zu Drogenkonsum und -handel"; [Pamphlet] *Dritte Welt: Aktuelle Informationen des Dritte Welt-Kreis e.V.* 2 (Dec. 1997).

<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, the African proprietor of the discotheque *fulladu* at Hamburg's *Sternschanze* demands, by way of posters, a no-tolerance policy towards African dealers in the park across the street, whereas the leftist community center in the neighborhood, *Rote Flora*, protests the "ritual of persecution" by the authorities.

<sup>15</sup> In 1989, rebellious East Germans sang, "We Shall Overcome."

<sup>16</sup> Leroy Hopkins informed me that Peter Martin, author of *Schwarze Teufel, edle Mohren* (Hamburg: Junius, 1993), also took part in these demonstrations; according to Martin, the monument found a place in the Sachsenwald outside Hamburg.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. my articles, "Schwarze und weiße Sklaven: Zur Sklavenfrage in deutschen Gedichten des 18. Jahrhunderts," *Yearbook of German-American Studies* 19 (1984), 67-83; "First 'Seeds' and 'Fruits' - and the Withering and Blooming of the Germantown Protest Against Slavery," *Schatzkammer* 23, 1&2 (1997), 1-29. The first American protest against slavery in Pennsylvania was signed by German immigrants as early as 1688, the same year Brandenburg's *Großer Kurfürst* died, then the head of Germany's only moderately relevant seventeenth-century colony in Africa. It was also the year of Aphra Behn's famous novel with an African protagonist, *Oroonoko*.

<sup>18</sup> For a satirical tour-de-force through Germany's dumbest racism see Immanuel Kant/Eckard Henscheid, *Der Neger* (Negerl) (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1985); a more recent ridiculing of German ignorance is a Bavarian cabaret, *Tschurangrati* (Munich: Bayerischer Rundfunk, 1994).

<sup>19</sup> Ladislav Bugner, general editor, *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, trans. by Granger Ryan (several volumes; New York: Morrow, 1976 ff.) [= IOB].

- <sup>20</sup> *IOB* vol. I: *From the Pharaohs to the Fall of the Roman Empire*, 256, 260.
- <sup>21</sup> *IOB* vol. I, 312, note 148.
- <sup>22</sup> Further research will reveal more German and Latin documents than presently known, in particular, those dealing with crusades and pilgrimages, via Egypt, to the Holy Land (and its African churches). For excerpts of texts with African women cf. Mielke, *Nigra sum et formosa: Afrikanerinnen in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters* (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag Heinz, 1992).
- <sup>23</sup> *Stuttgarter Jubiläumsbibel: Die Heilige Schrift des Alten und Neuen Testaments nach der Übersetzung D. Martin Luthers. Mit erklärenden Anmerkungen* (Stuttgart: Privilegierte Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1912).
- <sup>24</sup> Cf. Sander L. Gilman., *On Blackness Without Blacks: Essays on the Image of the Black in Germany* (Boston: Hall, 1982), xii.
- <sup>25</sup> Florian Deltgen, "Der Neger im deutschen Kinder- und Jugendlid," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 29,1 (1977), 118-36.
- <sup>26</sup> A photograph of this sculpture decorates *IOB* volume II, part 1: *From the Early Christian Era to the "Age of Discovery."* There are, to be sure, earlier depictions of the Queen of Sheba: at Klosterneuburg (1181) she appears with bluish black skin and long blonde hair, a figment of the then popular typological imagination. Note, however, her truer-to-life attendants; cf. *ibid.* 129-33.
- <sup>27</sup> Of course, neither the fictional Gahmuret nor his son, Parzival (von Anshouwe, Anjou), were German, nor was Zazamanc, Belakane's kingdom, a historical African country; but Wolfram's German readers did not think in our nationalistic or ethnic terms.
- <sup>28</sup> Later, Feirefiz nearly kills his half-brother, but divine intervention allows them to recognize each other as brothers. In the end, after a quick baptism, the colored brother marries Parzival's aunt, eager to initiate a third interracial generation (even though he is already married).
- <sup>29</sup> Wolfgang Kunath recently discussed the problem for the Germans as well: "Black ist nicht für alle beautiful: Besonders die Frauen versuchen in Afrika ihre Haut mit Bleichcreme aufzuhellen, um attraktiver auszusehen," *Frankfurter Rundschau* 3 (5 January 1998), 6.
- <sup>30</sup> Sidonie Hedwig Zäunemann, *Poetische Rosen in Knospen* (Erfurt: J. H. Nonne, 1738) 530-35.

Nach schwarzen Kirschen steigt man hoch  
 Und suchet sie dem Baum zu rauben.  
 Ja ich behaupte diese noch,  
 Man greift mit Lust nach schwarzen Trauben,  
 Gibt nicht die ächte schwarze Tracht  
 Den größten Fest- und Ehren-Pracht,  
 Schmückt solche nicht die Silber-Haare?  
 Was Wunder, wenn mir in der Welt,

Dnidania allein gefällt,

Und ich mich höchst vergnügt mit einer Mohrin paare?

<sup>31</sup>. I have not yet seen Katherine Faull's "Self Encounters: African and German Autobiography in Colonial America," *Crosscurrents: African-American, Africa, and Germany in the Modern World*, edited by David McBride, Leroy Hopkins, et al. (Camden: 1997).

<sup>32</sup>. All mentioned with literature by Martin. An exception is the only known German poem by an African of the 18th century, Amo's congratulatory "An Moses Abraham Wolff" (1737):

Dein aufgeweckter Geist im klugen meditiren,  
und unermüdter Fleiss im gründlichen Studieren,  
Hoch Edler, macht dass Du in der Gelehrten Orden  
Ein Stern, ein heller Stern der ersten Grösse worden,  
Der immer heller wird in neuer Ehren Schein.  
So einen grossen Lohn giebt Weissheit ihren Söhnen.  
Genung, Vom Himmel muss die Lust, die ungemeyn,  
Dich und die Deinigen in Leuter Segen Kröhnen!

<sup>33</sup>. Sander Gilman has repeatedly published illustrations thereof, cf. "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth Century Art, Medicine and Culture," in: *'Race,' Writing and Difference*, edited by Henry Louis Gates (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1986), 223-61.

<sup>34</sup>. Christian Degn, *Die Schimmelmanns im atlantischen Dreieckshandel: Gewinn und Gewissen* (Neumünster: Wachholtz, 2nd ed. 1984).

<sup>35</sup>. Gilman, *On Blackness without Blacks*, 47.

<sup>36</sup>. Martin, *Schwarze Teufel, edle Mohren*, esp. 144ff.

<sup>37</sup>. Martin, 232-40; note also the theater play *Angelo Soliman* by Ludwig Fels, *Angelo Soliman. Lieblieb. Zwei Stücke* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1991).

<sup>38</sup>. Martin, *Schwarze Teufel, edle Mohren*, 439.

<sup>39</sup>. Anon. [Interview with Grace Bumbry], "Dann sag' ich halt adieu," *Der Spiegel* 44 (27 October 1997), 268. Ironically, Hermann von Sachsenheim in *Die Morin* (ca. 1450) called his African protagonist Brunhild; she functions as a legal expert at the court of Tannhäuser and his wife, Venus.

<sup>40</sup>. Anon. [Feature], "Iman: Beauty Queen," *Elle TopModel* 6 (1997), 66-9.

<sup>41</sup>. A December 97 Kiesbauer topic was: "Ich stehe auf verheiratete Männer" [I fancy married men].

<sup>42</sup>. Anon. [On Kiesbauer's manager], "Ein Zwölfer im Lotto," *Der Spiegel* 50 (8 Dec. 1997), 142-43.

<sup>43</sup>. Note, however, that in today's Germany the poster next to Janet's may also reveal completely uncovered breasts of a white woman as a matter of course, and no one seems to care—Germany is not America.

<sup>44</sup>. Uwe Pütz, "[Reportage:] Schwarze Deutsche," *Max* 6 (November 1996 = *Das schwarze Heft*), 122-30; 125.

- <sup>45.</sup> *Farbe bekennen*, edited by Katharina Oguntoye, May Opitz, Dagmar Schultz (Berlin: Orlando Frauenverlag, 1986, 2nd ed. Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuchverlag, 1992); discussed by Karin Obermeyer, "Afro-German Women: Recording Their Own History," *New German Critique* 46 (1989), 172-80.
- <sup>46.</sup> *Showing Our Colors*, edited by Katharina Oguntoye, May Opitz, Dagmar Schultz, trans. Anne Adams (Amherst: UP of Massachussetts, 1992); cf. also Tina M. Camp, "Afro-German Cultural Identity and the Politics of Positionality: Contests and Contexts in the Formation of a German Ethnic Identity," *New German Critique* 58 (1993), 109-26.
- <sup>47.</sup> Cherno Jobatey, in: Ralf Koch, "*Medien mögen's weiß:*" *Rassismus im Nachrichtengeschäft. Erfahrungen von Journalisten in Deutschland und den USA* (Munich: dtv, 1996), 71-96.
- <sup>48.</sup> Dennesch Ninnig in: "Schwarze Deutsche," *Max* 6 (November 1996), 122-30; 126.
- <sup>49.</sup> Kofi Ansuhenne in: "Schwarze Deutsche," *Max* 6 (November 1996), 122-30; 123.
- <sup>50.</sup> Nico Motchebon in: "Schwarze Deutsche," *Max* 6 (November 1996), 122-30; 124.
- <sup>51.</sup> Cf. Martina Müller, *Afrikaner in Berlin. Mit Beiträgen von Paulette Reed-Anderson und Martin Issa* (Berlin: Die Ausländerbeauftragte des Senats, 1993), 55.
- <sup>52.</sup> Nkechi Madubuko in: "Schwarze Deutsche," *Max* 6 (November 1996), 122-30; 129.
- <sup>53.</sup> Torch, "Fremd im eigenen Land," song of the German hip hop band, *Advanced Chemistry* (1992).
- <sup>54.</sup> Alexander Ngnoubamdjum in: "Schwarze Deutsche," *Max* 6 (November 1996), 122-30; 127.
- <sup>55.</sup> Boris Enkami in: "Schwarze Deutsche," *Max* 6 (November 1996), 122-30; 130.
- <sup>56.</sup> Cf. *Rassismus Nein*, edited by Sabine Hahnel and Tina Jerman [sponsored by the *Ministerium für Arbeit, Gesundheit und Soziales des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, et al.*] (Moers: edition aragon, n.d.); Anon., *Zusammenleben mit Ausländern: Aspekte der kulturellen Vielfalt in Deutschland. Porträts und Hintergrundsberichte* (Bonn: Inter Nationes, 1995). Note, however, these 1997 title headlines: "Ausländer und Deutsche: Gefährlich fremd - Das Scheitern der multikulturellen Gesellschaft," *Der Spiegel* 16 (14 April 1997).

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