Strangers in their *Heimat*: A History of Afro-Germans from 1871 to 2013

by

James A. Gardner
Class of 2013

A thesis submitted to the faculty of Wesleyan University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts with Departmental Honors in German Studies
Acknowledgements

I offer special thanks to the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship for financing much of the research for this thesis, and a warm hug to Renée Johnson-Thornton and Krishna Winston for supporting me and the other Wesleyan Mellon Fellows. We would not have been able to do what we have done, and will do, without the two of you. To Taylor, Dana, and Erhard, who read, commented on, and edited preliminary drafts of this thesis, thank you. I am more than indebted to my mentor and advisor, Iris Bork-Goldfield, for her persistence, vigorous editing, and stimulating comments on this thesis, whether we were in Berlin, in Middletown, CT, or on Skype; I am forever grateful. I thank my former German host-families for their love, warmth, and for opening their homes and lives to me.

I acknowledge and thank Katharina Oguntoye for her tireless work for Afro-Germans inside and outside of her organization, Joliba. The time I spent working for her was the highlight of my time in Germany. I thank Nico Handtke for his love during this process. I dedicate this book to my sister, Brandy Gardner, for always being there for me when times were tough.
Abstract

The interracial relationships between German colonists and African women in the late nineteenth century, between white German women and African colonial soldiers in the Rhineland after World War I, and between white German women and black Allied soldiers after World War II share one significant aspect: they resulted in the birth of biracial Germans. This thesis proposes that Afro-Germans faced overt mistreatment, condemnation, persecution, and racism during three eras of modern German history, stretching from German unification in 1871 to the present day. This thesis will analyze the generally negative reactions to these interracial relationships and biracial individuals. Afro-Germans’ stories remained unheard until a group of young German women in Berlin claimed the term “Afro-German” in 1986. For some, Germanness is incompatible with blackness, but Afro-Germans began a movement, claimed their identity, demanded a place in German history, and challenged the pervasive pretense of a homogeneous German nation. Finally, this thesis argues that, after more than two centuries of marginalization and struggle, Afro-Germans have begun in the last three decades to gain recognition and expand the definition of “who is German.”
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................... 1  
Abstract ................................................................................................................................ 2  
List of Figures ..................................................................................................................... 4  
Introduction: Scope and Methodology ............................................................................... 6  
Chapter One ........................................................................................................................ 22  
  German Colonization of Africa ............................................................................................. 23  
  Interracial Relationships and the Afro-German Threat ....................................................... 26  
  Race and Racial Thinking ....................................................................................................... 33  
  Citizenship, Colonial Racial Policy, and the *Mischehendebatte* ....................................... 36  
Chapter Two ........................................................................................................................ 43  
  Occupation of the Rhineland and the ‘Black Shame’ ............................................................ 44  
  Noticing Color: Afro-Germans in the 1920 ........................................................................... 49  
  The Rise of Nazism: Persecution and Survival during the Third Reich ............................... 53  
Chapter Three ..................................................................................................................... 61  
  The New Afro-German Population ....................................................................................... 62  
  Reintroducing Race in Postwar Germany ............................................................................ 65  
  *Toxi* (1952): Liberalizing the Discourse of Race ............................................................... 70  
  Transatlantic Adoption of “Brown Babies” and Hostility in the *Heimat* ............................ 74  
Epilogue: Claiming Afro-Germanness .................................................................................. 81  
Bibliography .......................................................................................................................... 92
List of Figures

Fig. 1. “Showing Our Colors” ............................................................... 7
Fig. 2 Parzival .................................................................................. 14
Fig. 3 Congo Conference .................................................................. 25
Fig. 4 Samoa Einverleibung (Samoa Assimilation) .............................. 28
Fig. 5 Carl Peters ............................................................................ 35
Fig. 6 “Die Wacht am Rhein” ........................................................... 46
Fig. 7 “Was ist Schwarze Schmach” ................................................... 48
Fig. 8 “Die schwarze Schmach” ......................................................... 48
Fig. 9 “Rhein und Ruhr” .................................................................. 48
Fig. 10 “Protest der deutschen Frauen gegen die farbige Besatzung am Rhein” ............................ 48
Fig. 11 Neger, Neger, Schornsteinfeger ........................................... 52
Fig. 12 Toxi and Der Dunkle Stern .................................................... 71
Fig. 13 “Sarottimohr” ..................................................................... 78
Fig. 14 Günther Kaufmann ................................................................. 85
Fig. 15 Pink Rabbit Campaign ............................................................ 89
Fig. 16 Maya-Ayim-Ufer ................................................................. 90
Strangers in their *Heimat*: A History of Afro-Germans from 1871 to 2013
Introduction: Scope and Methodology

“To some, having an African-German identity is not even an issue, it is an impossibility; to others it is an incompatibility; and to even a small minority, it is a fragment of a multicultural and multiracial society”

—Marilyn Sephocle (15).

“Isolation means to be invisible, easily overlooked, and forced to fight alone. It took a while to acknowledge that, but we were determined to show our colors”

—May Opitz, aka Maya Ayim.1

In the late 1980s, a group of five courageous Afro-German women came together in Berlin and, through probing discussion of their identity, set in motion a movement that redefined the concept of “German.” The first product of their identity exploration was published in 1986, the groundbreaking collaborative volume, Farbe Bekennen: Afro-deutsche Frauen auf den Spuren ihrer Geschichte (Showing our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out). Farbe Bekennen allowed a historically neglected and marginalized voice in history to be heard. For the first time, German women of color dispelled the misconceptions and ignorance that surrounded their existence. They claimed their birthright, as well as the right of many other Afro-Germans, to be part of German history and German society, and their right to an identity. The Afro-German women in Farbe Bekennen challenged the concept of Germany as a homogeneously white nation and succeeded in revealing and claiming

1 This quotation appears on the back cover of the 1991 edition of Farbe Bekennen.
Afro-German history. Other publications on Afro-German identity followed in the subsequent decades, chronicling previously unheard stories (Zöller; Massaquoi; Nejar; Okuefuna and Jones). Yet Afro-Germans’ existence and struggles remained unknown to the white German populace. *Farbe Bekennen* was also largely ignored by the predominantly white German literary establishment or relegated to the sociological realm (Hopkins, “Writing Diasporic” 185).

My recent work in 2012 with one of the coauthors of *Farbe Bekennen*, Katharina Oguntoye, in her multicultural organization for Afro-Germans, *Joliba—Interkulturelles Netzwerk in Berlin e.V. (Joliba—Intercultural Network in Berlin)*.
educated me on much of Afro-Germans’ identity but still left unanswered many of my questions pertaining to their history. I worked side by side with and for individuals who were rarely mentioned in works on German history. I continued to wonder who, exactly, Afro-Germans are and why they so rarely appear in mainstream historical texts. Over the course of my internship at Joliba, I discovered a failure on the part of the historiography to acknowledge the persistently negative reception of Afro-Germans in German history.

This thesis proposes that Germans of African heritage faced mistreatment, condemnation, persecution, and racism during three eras of modern German history stretching from German unification in 1871 to the present. This marginalization renders Afro-German history inaccessible to many Afro-Germans and to German society at large. Before examining history, I must first indicate the scope of this study and explain the terminology that will be used in this work. I will begin with a reflection on the term “Afro-German.”

_Afro German: a term with many denotations and connotations_

The term “Afro-German” was modeled on the identity described in the 1960s as “Afro-American.” In 1984, the Caribbean-American poet and civil right activists Audre Lorde sought out black German women while teaching a course on African-American women poets at the Freie Universität in Berlin. She worked with these women, who would later author _Farbe Bekennen_, and, encouraged by their stories, ultimately encouraged them to designate “Afro-German” as a positive self-identifier
Leroy Hopkins, Molefe Kete Asante, Tina Campt, and other scholars have since discussed the similarities and fundamental differences between “Afro-German” and “African-American” history and identity. The fundamental difference in the collective histories of the respective groups makes a direct comparison difficult; and the experiences of these groups should not be equated. Very few African-Americans suffered from Nazi persecution; and very few Afro-Germans took part in the African-American Civil Rights Movement 1955–68. Afro-Germans are not simply the German equivalents of African Americans.

In this thesis, the term “Afro-German” will be used as in *Farbe Bekennen* to encompass a heterogeneous category. Because Germans of African or African-American heritage have not universally adopted this nomenclature for themselves, it does not always represent their self-identification. I use this term because in the past black Germans have often been described pejoratively, and the use of “Afro-German” will allow for these individuals to be discussed without the negative connotations attached to earlier terms. “Basterds,” “Rhineland Bastards,” “Schwarze Schmach” (Black Shame), “war babies,” “occupation babies,” and other negative terms were used specifically to call attention to their “otherness,” the circumstances of their birth, or their race. These derogative terms will be used in this thesis only to illustrate the discrimination and abuse encountered by these individuals at different points in their history.
Cultural and Historical Dislocation

The African-American historian and philosopher Molefi Kete Asante applies the terms “cultural dislocation” and “historical dislocation” to the discrimination that Afro-Germans faced (3-7). He describes cultural dislocation as living one’s life on someone else’s terms, which, in the case of the Afro-Germans, refers to living in the culture created and expressed by white Germans. Though this concept will be implicitly present in this thesis, more attention will be paid to Asante’s notion of historical dislocation, which he considers closely related to the cultural aspect of dislocation. He defines historical dislocation as the unawareness of connections to others, especially Afro-Germans. He states:

For the African Germans this produces an unusual situation in which individuals are born in Germany, are educated in Germany, and view themselves as German, yet in the minds of their fellow citizens and sometimes in their own are not truly German because they do not have pure German ancestry (5).

Although this description applies to Afro-Germans born in Germany, Asante neglects those who were legally Germans “by blood,” by suggesting that the Afro-Germans were born in Germany. He fails to include the Afro-German children of German men and African women born during the German colonial era in the late 1800s, the focus of Chapter 1. Asante’s definition wrongly implies that the principle of jus soli, citizenship determined by birthplace, was applicable to all Afro-Germans, therefore that Afro-Germans were only born in Germany. Some, however, were born in Africa during the German colonial era at a time when nationality was based on the principle of jus sanguinis, citizenship passed by right of blood, in this case from
father to child. With that in mind, Asante’s concept of historical dislocation will be broadened here to include Afro-German children who could have claimed German citizenship because their fathers were German. In my usage, Afro-Germs will be understood as individuals of African and German heritage who can claim German nationality through blood or birthplace. In other words, they have at least one parent of German origin.

*Disparate Conceptualizations of Nationality*

The importance of blood and the principle of inheriting a nationality rather than acquiring it through assimilation are two significant factors that distinguish Afro-Germs from other marginalized groups within the African Diaspora, for example black Americans and French Africans. As Asante points out, the ideas of race and nationality in the United States and in France do not intertwine or stay dependent on one another (6-7). The American construction of nationality rests on *jus soli*—being born in the United States—or on being accepted by the U.S. through naturalization. Mastering the French language, being born in a Francophone country, and accepting French culture all guarantee French nationality. French citizenship can thus be bestowed upon people of different racial and historical backgrounds. There were, however, two types of German citizenship: the terms *jus soli* (*Recht des Bodens* or *Geburtsortsprinzip*, right of soil) and *jus sanguinis* (*Recht des Blutes* or *Abstammungsprinzip*, right of blood). Following amendments to the citizenship law in 2000, German citizenship has been granted because of the child’s birth in Germany
and not merely because of the nationality of the child’s father. Prior to 2000, to be considered German necessitated authentication through German blood lineage.

Nineteenth-century German law established and preserved this stipulation through the *Abstammungsprinzip* and was also linked to the nineteenth- and twentieth-century pseudo-scientific work of eugenicists like Eugen Fischer, who made popular the unofficial subcategory of German nationality: race.

**Defining Race**

The concept of race has evolved and mutated over the course of German history in the past two and a half centuries. This thesis often uses the terms “race,” “racism,” and “racist,” so it is important to remove any ambiguities that may arise from different definitions, each particular to the time period in which it is used. Race, when referring to the racial discourse of the German colonial era, connotes and incorporates the concept of an innate and inheritable racial hierarchy within a black/white dichotomy. The idea of blacks created and fueled racial discourse, especially in relation to biracial individuals, as blacks were perceived to be barbarians, innately inferior, and the polar opposites of whites (Campt, “Converging,” 83-85). The racial ideology of Hitler and his demagogues, with its Aryan/non-Aryan separation, needs less explanation. It is important to note Hitler’s use of and reliance on eugenics, especially as directed against German Jews in the *Nürnberger Gesetze* (Nuremberg Laws) of 1935. After Hitler, talking about race became taboo, but Nazi racial theory was still present in the heads of many Germans. A new racism in the
form of pseudo-xenophobia emerged; that is to say, many white German journalists, writers, and academics consider it xenophobia, but those being attacked and discriminated against are Germans by birth, and thus not foreigners (Fehrenbach, *Race* 184-85). In the case of the Afro-Germans during this time, blood became less important than phenotype.

*Further Limitations: Pre-colonial Afro-Germans, other Blacks in Germany*

Starting in the Middle Ages, African kingdoms forged long-standing commercial connections to Germanic states that resulted in continuous interaction between Africa and Europe. In “Expanding the Canon: Afro-German Studies,” Leroy Hopkins cites multiple instances of interaction between Germanic states and Africa from antiquity until the 1800s, when Europeans formed many racial perceptions and stereotypes (121-26). The significance implicit in the existence of any blacks in Germany deserves attention. However, to give a comprehensive account of all blacks in Germany, or of the diasporic connection between Africa and Germany, would exceed the scope of this study. There are many references to blacks in German literature from the Middle Ages to the present day (Gugelberger, “Them”). In his article “Race, Nationality and Culture: The African Diaspora in Germany,” Hopkins gives an historical overview of interactions between Africans and Germans (“Expanding”). The importance of these many instances of German perceptions of blacks is self-evident.
It is highly possible that biracial individuals were born of relationships between Germans and African scholars, court servants, entertainers, and merchants, but little research exists on Afro-Germans before the establishment of German colonies in Africa. The historian Carol Aisha Blackshire-Belay gives a few examples of the African-German interaction before the colonization of Africa. For example, she states that the thirteenth-century epic *Parzival* by Wolfram von Eschenbach contained the first literary reference to an Afro-German (see Fig. 2). She also pinpoints the development of West African trade after 1440 as the source of one of the first major
influxes of blacks into Western Europe (93). One may hope that archival research will open the doors to more information on pre-colonial Afro-Germans.

As mentioned, “Afro-German” will be used to describe a heterogeneous group. In order to be consistent and also remain conscious of the fact that Afro-Germans claimed the term in the 1980s, this work will refer only to individuals of African heritage with claims to German nationality as “Afro-Germans,” not to all blacks residing within Germany. African and African-American expatriates are also a part of Afro-German history, because many became parents of Afro-Germans. Additionally, this thesis will not place much emphasis on the size of the Afro-German populations because the numbers are generally hard to determine for each of the three periods of German history. The colonial administrations in the German colonies were not able to record the exact numbers of biracial Afro-Germans children, as some were biracial children of Dutch, French, or other European heritage, and many of these individuals were merely classified as Africans. Following World War I, the only official numbers on Afro-Germans came from social welfare records, which are not representative of or applicable to all Afro-Germans during that period. Afro-Germans born during the post-World War II occupation of Germany are estimated at around 3,000-5,000, but those numbers vary by source. The purpose of this study, however, is not to answer the question of how large the Afro-German population was, but rather who Afro-Germans are through an examination of their history.
Afro-German history and identity formation have fascinated some scholars for decades, especially those interested in comparative analysis and diasporic studies. Scholars such as Carmen Faymonville and Leroy Hopkins have published studies on the experiences of Afro-Germans as well as their connection to the African Diaspora (Hopkins “Writing”). In her study on transnational formations of “black German” identity, Carmen Faymonville assesses the African diaspora in the context of twentieth-century global migrations and intersections of “blackness” and “Germanness” (364-382). In her 2004 dissertation, African Diasporas: Afro-German Literature in the Context of the African American Experience, Aija Poikâne-Daumke explores the allusions to Africa in African-American and Afro-German writings. Poikâne-Daumke also examines “New Afro-German Literature” in reunified Germany through the lens of African-American literature, arguing that this “fosters a better understanding of Afro-German literature and culture” and that both groups “have experienced cultural and historical dislocation,” albeit with situational differences (9).

Though ambitious and informative, Poikâne-Daumke’s comparative assessment falls prey to the error repeated by many diaspora- and identity-related works: confirming and affirming the identity of one group through comparison with another. It is with this absence of an agreed-upon identity among Afro-Germans in mind that I emphasize Afro-German history, not the formation of an Afro-German identity. The general lack of intergenerational bonds and of a consistent self-
identification, combined with geographic separation and diverse backgrounds have all hindered the formation of a collective identity. Despite this disunity, the personal narratives in *Farbe Bekennen* prove that Afro-Germans’ histories and stories connect through similar struggles for acceptance.

These personal narratives will be used to illustrate retroactively the historical information in this thesis. I will also draw heavily on secondary literature and media sources focused primarily on Afro-Germans. Special attention will be paid to government policies, public discourse, and debates within German institutions that directly affected and pertained to Afro-Germans and to interracial coupling. Many parts of German society consistently rejected those with Black heritage, from the beginning of the German endeavor to create colonies in 1884 until the mid-twentieth century. Through prohibitory legislative policies, open persecution, vehement outcry against “racial mixing,” and warnings about the “dangerous” existence of Afro-German progeny, German governments and some sectors of German society positioned themselves as opponents of black-white coupling and as antagonists of the biracial offspring of such relationships. Primary documents such as government transcripts, particularly those of the 1912 Reichstag Debates, and newspaper articles will be used and analyzed as examples of this negative response to and perception of Afro-Germans.

History bears witness to flagrant disregard of Afro-Germans’ nationality—all because of the African part of their heritage. The first chapter of this thesis assesses the German colonial era, which officially began in 1874 and concluded abruptly with
Germany’s defeat in WWI. The chapter will explore negative reactions to interracial relationships and biracial progeny on the part of the German colonial administration and the German parliament. Many authors skim over this time period, either perceiving the post-WWI birth of biracial Afro-Germans as the first instance of Afro-Germans becoming an identifiable part of German society or not acknowledging the existence of Afro-Germans at all. These writers fail to recognize that Afro-Germans were born during the German colonial era. The interracial relationships between male German colonists and African women in Germany’s colonies in the late nineteenth century and the subsequent birth of children with dual heritage spurred heated racial debates in the German metropole about the children’s citizenship.

These debates occurred simultaneously with the prohibition of interracial marriage in the protectorates and other legal methods introduced to reduce and hinder what was considered miscegenation. Male settlers in interracial relationships were ostracized, denigrated, and deprived of political rights, whereas the African women were seen as inferior, oversexed, and corrupting. Their children were declared dangerous to colonial rule and racially malignant to German blood; and their citizenship was questioned in the German parliament and often even revoked by local colonial administrations. Although little scholarly literature has been produced on this aspect of the Colonial period, these policies and debates and the response to the multiracial children offer a vivid picture of the negative reception of mixed-race children by German politicians, the German colonial administration, and other concerned Germans, which would reappear in and affect discourse on Afro-Germans after WWI.
The second chapter of this thesis covers the period following the end of WWI, when Germany’s colonies were taken away and the Rhineland was occupied by black French, Belgian, and British troops. These “degrading” events and the fraternization between black colonial soldiers and white German women were later used by the National Socialist Party under Adolf Hitler as an example of the pollution of “Germanness.” The black fathers were reviled as rapist invaders and the mothers ostracized and demeaned as racial traitors. Through his propaganda promoting racial purity, Hitler created a new understanding of German national identity expressed in racial and biological terms, an identity that did not include the Afro-German children but would follow them long after the end of the Nazi regime.

Afro-Germans in the 1920s and 1930s faced persecution, denaturalization, and sterilization by the Nazis. They came to embody the international condemnation and demasculinization of the deutsche Kulturnation, or German cultural nation. The Afro-Germans of this generation also exemplify Asante’s definition of historical dislocation, as well as my own definition: they had been born, socialized, and educated to be German, and they identified more or exclusively with their German heritage but were not considered German. The first part of the chapter, in addition to providing historical context, will depict the national and international outrage that the interracial relationships spurred, which was later projected onto the Afro-German progeny. Since quite a few Afro-Germans of the post-WWI generation have published autobiographies in the last three decades, personal narratives will be used extensively in the second part of this chapter to portray their lives in Nazi Germany.
Following the defeat of the Nazi regime and the end of WWII, fraternization between black Allied soldiers and white German women occurred during the occupation of Germany by the Allied Powers. These relationships were viewed with discomfort. The third chapter of this thesis examines the negative reception and perception of interracial couples as well as of their biracial children. It explores the conceptualization of “race” in Germany in the aftermath of Nazi-perpetuated racial ideology, which after WWII also included a variant of American racism in a black/white dichotomy. Some of the white German mothers worried about their dire circumstances, a hostile environment, or their children’s inability to fit in culturally, and allowed their children to be put up for transatlantic adoption in places where they would not be culturally dislocated. In many cases the children were sent to African-American families in the US. This chapter spans the reception of the Afro-German occupation babies in the 1950s and 1960s and concludes with the discussions on guest workers and their progeny in the 1970s, which ultimately prepared the way for Afro-Germans and other minorities to make their voices heard in the 1980s.

The concluding chapter of this thesis focuses on the recent claiming of an identity by Afro-Germans and their discovery of a voice. I will discuss three aspects of this new era in Afro-German history: (1) Afro-German organizations, (2) the use of visual culture, and (3) the assertion of political agency to change the language that refers to them or their history. I describe three of the main Afro-German organizations that emerged following the publication of Farbe Bekennen. While working for one of these organizations, Joliba, in 2012, I learned about many of the political and organizational initiatives spearheaded by Afro-Germans and white
German sympathizers. Their attempts to demarginalize and publicize the Afro-German experience led to the use of film, the creation of Afro-German magazines, and appearance of articles in major German publications. It has been nearly 30 years since the beginning of the Afro-German movement in the 1980s, and progress has been made. The last chapter of this thesis documents what I hope will be Germany’s transition into a truly multicultural society.
Chapter One

“It is a known fact that in mixed marriages between whites and coloreds the bad characteristics of the parents are passed on to the children to a higher degree than the good”

—Theodor von Leutwein.²

“Behind the prohibition of interracial marriage was the worry that should such marriages be legalized, a very central aspect of colonial power could crumble—the difference between ruler and ruled, between white and black”

—Andreas Eckert.³

European exploration and Europe’s later subjugation of Africa, involved direct confrontation with African “natives” and created key elements of the Post-Enlightenment negative racial ideology. Upon their arrival in Africa in the 1880s, a number of German colonists took African women as wives or concubines. This put them in opposition to the prevailing racial theories and ideologies of Social Darwinism, expressed in colonial administrator Theodor von Leutwein’s quote above. This chapter will focus on tension between the colonists’ actions and racial thought, the fierce parliamentary debates in Germany on interracial relationships, the birth of a cohort of Afro-Germans, and the use of white German women to “remedy” the temptation of miscegenation. The period of German colonialism extended officially

² “Es ist eine bekannte Tatsache, dass sich bei Mischehen zwischen Weißen und Farbigen die schlechten Eigenschaften der Eltern auf die Kinder in höherem Grade vererben als die guten” (qtd. in von Leutwein 233). All translations within this thesis are mine unless noted otherwise.

³ “Hinter dem Mischehenverbot stand die Sorge, dass, würde man solche Ehen legalisieren, längerfristig eines der ganz zentralen Grundmuster kolonialer Herrschaft wegfallen könnte—die Differenz zwischen Herrschenden und Beherrschten, zwischen Weißen und Schwarzen” (Knopp 66).
from the Berlin Conference of 1884 to the end of WWI in 1918. Although brief in comparison to that of other European powers such as France and England, it left cultural impressions in the form of colonial racial perceptions and references, which will be mentioned in the Epilogue. Ideological questions arose in the newly formed German Empire (1871) on Deutschum (“Germanness”) in reaction to German expansion in the African colonies, to interracial relationships, and more importantly, the appearance of biracial miscegenation (El-Tayeb 39).

**German Colonization of Africa**

The initial European interest in Africa has been thoroughly researched in regard to colonialism and the slave trade. For many merchants, Africa, due to its natural and human resources, represented an economic opportunity. Missionaries and religious groups viewed Africans as prospective converts for a Christian empire. Africa was, however, first seen as a curiosity, as uncharted territory to which explorers could attach their names. The German nation-state Brandenburg-Prussia began the German colonization of Africa before Germany existed as a unified country. In March 1682, Frederick William, the Great Elector of Brandenburg, founded the *Kurfürstliche Brandenburgisch-Afrikanische Compagnie* (Brandenburg African Company) after a successful expedition in August 1681. In May 1682 the Great Elector then sent an expedition to establish the first Brandenburg colony in West Africa’s “Gold Coast.” His son, the Prussian king Frederick Wilhelm I, abandoned the colony in 1717 and ended this preliminary period of German
colonization (Schwenk 16). More than a century later, German companies were established in the Cameroons near the Niger Delta to handle the preexisting raw materials trade whose market values were increasing.

In 1884, the German chancellor Otto von Bismarck succumbed to pressure from merchants and imperialist politicians (McKenzie 29), despite his initial objections to the acquisition of colonies. Bismarck announced protectorates over German Southwest Africa (1884-1915), Cameroon (1884-1914), and Togoland (1884-1914) in West Africa, Ruanda-Urundi (1885-1917) and Wituland (1885-1890) in East Africa, and Angra Pequena (1884-1914). In nineteenth-century Germany, many Germans viewed the acquisition of colonies as proof of achieved nationhood. Having colonies had become a status marker for European nations, and by acquiring its own, Germany hoped to compete with other imperial nations such as Great Britain, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, and France. The politics and personal agenda behind Bismarck’s approval of German acquisition of colonies have been and can be disputed; but his role in challenging the European powers of the time to acknowledge Germany’s presence internationally is evident (Knopp 18-19).

In November 1884, Bismarck convened the Congo Conference in Berlin to organize the colonization agenda for the new, imperial German nation. The goal was to protect German trade and German interests by safeguarding raw materials and export markets (Washaausen 115). This official conference, however, did not initiate the colonization; rather it exacerbated the scramble already under way in Africa and increased the settlements that had been founded there by merchants. It also gave official protection and authorization to German colonial organizations such as the
Deutsche Kolonialverein (German Colonial Association), founded in 1882, and the Verein für Handelsgeographie und Kolonialpolitik (Central Association for Commercial Geography and Colonial Policy), founded in 1879 (Reed-Anderson 17). Following Bismarck’s removal from office in 1890, German imperial politicians became more adamant about acquiring a colonial empire, which by 1913 encompassed an area of a million square miles in Africa with a population of around 15 million (Blackshire-Belay 100).
Interracial Relationships and the Afro-German Threat

After their arrival on the new continent in the 1870s, the German colonists attempted to settle, integrate, or assimilate themselves. The initial settlers were mainly men who acquired their land, livestock, and social networks through marriages with women of Afro-European descent, generally Afrikaners, whose families held positions of power or land. Wildenthal describes the colonists from the pre-unification era as “imperial patriarchs” (80). They participated in the acquisition of land or property and enjoyed the benefit of cheap labor due to political connections from their strategic marriages. Krista O'Donnell points out how these relationships were originally seen as respectable:

Like many mixed-race communities at the turn of the century, the disproportionately male German society in GSWA [German Southwest Africa protectorate] generally viewed long-term interracial relationships as respectable unions, especially if they involved women of biracial backgrounds who had been raised with European customs in established settler households (46).

In the 1880s, as soon as German shipping, commercial, intellectual and political figures pressing for imperial advance received Bismarck’s official approval, German soldiers arrived to assist with the first stages of colonization in the German Southwest Africa protectorate (SWA), today known as Namibia. SWA was the German empire’s primary settlement colony, contained the largest German population, and saw more intervention in everyday life by colonial officials in Germany and in the colony’s local administration than other German colonies. SWA had a large Afro-European population “stemming from eighteenth-century and even
earlier colonial settlements, and their numbers grew substantially under German occupation” (O’Donnell 42). The arrival of soldiers helped with the increase in numbers; they soon made up the majority of the first settlers (Wildenthal 40-42; Walther 31). Many of the imperial soldiers remained in the colony after their military service ended and started making a life for themselves there. Like the “imperial patriarchs,” they entered into relationships with African or Afro-European women.

SWA Governor Friedrich von Lindequist (1905-7) presented this perspective on the arrival of the imperial soldiers:

As a result of the reinforcements caused by the bellicose unrest and through the expected numerous departures [to civilian life] of soldiers of the imperial colonial army, a considerable increase of the white population, especially of the German element, will result.

As experience has taught, many of the young men are inclined to enter into a conjugal relationship with native, namely Bastard [sic] girls, in the absence of white girls. They are moved simply through the circumstance that the Bastard girls quite often bring a herd of livestock, an oxen wagon, and not seldom also a farm into the marriage.  

The protectorate was home to Afrikaners, colonial British, and a large African population. This diverse populace exacerbated the colonial administration’s concerns about German emigrants assimilating into foreign cultures and losing their “Germanness” along with their ties to the Heimat (homeland). The colonial administration advertised for and supported an increase in Germans, and simultaneously meticulously oversaw the immigration of Germans to the colonies to prevent unwanted individuals from entering. Dr. Paul Rohrbach, a former settlement commissioner, advised those who did not have at least 50,000 marks to remain in

---

4 Qt. in Walther 35. The “Bastard” population, also known as Rehoboth Bastards, was an interracial group in Africa with African-European, generally Dutch, heritage. The term “Bastard” is a derivative of the Dutch word “Basters,” meaning “bastard” or “crossbreed.”
Germany. Rohrbach was operating under the assumption that anyone who had that much money would also “automatically be endowed with the preferred characteristics—that is, he would be self-reliant, parsimonious, prosperous, adaptable, patient, loyal to the empire, aware of racial differences, and in possession of a good reputation” (qtd. in Walther 28, emphasis mine).

The colonial administration discouraged Germans of lesser socioeconomic status, such as soldiers and members of the working class, from voyaging to the colonies and implemented discriminatory regulations to promote a racial hierarchy (Walther 28-29). This racial hierarchy placed the white German and sometimes the Afrikaner population above the “native” African population because of their skin

![Image](image.png)

Fig. 4. *Samoa Einverleibung* (Samoa Assimilation). This postcard from 1900 illustrates the initial relationships between black Samoan women and white German men in German Samoa (1900-1914). The dress and polite mannerisms of the German man reflect the type of colonist that the colonial administrators wanted to emigrate. The depiction of the black woman does not reflect the then prevailing stereotypes of black women as wild and barbaric, but it does present them in a suggestive manner and in seductive dress, with bare arms and legs inconsistent with European female dress of the time.

Source: Deutsche-Schutzgebiete.de.
color and European origins; and it was used to justify the subjugation of the “native” Africans and the expropriation of their land (Walther 33). White Germans fell victim to this racial hierarchy as well. Those who mingled socially or sexually with the “native” population were deemed inferior, “unsuitable” settlers (see Fig. 4). The colonial administration in SWA and Governor Lindequist considered white Germans who consumed too much alcohol, stole, or participated in any activities that were socially unacceptable in Germany bad examples of “whiteness” and thus unsuitable as settlers. Included in this group of “unsuitables” were those who treated the native population as companions rather as inferiors (Walther 34).

If German men who engaged in sexual relations with Africans were considered “unsuitable” settlers in Southwest Africa, racial purists saw their children as pernicious and dangerous to Deutschtum. Sexual relations with a native woman were deemed demasculinizing and indicative of verwildern (going native). The Afro-German progeny of such unions embodied the “moral and cultural degradation” of the white German man and his power. Many colonial administrators insisted that the very presence of Afro-Germans suggested black Africans’ acquisition of political power and the gradual deterioration of German rule. Walther writes that the Afro-German children represented “an assault upon the values embodied and promoted by the upper-middle class in its conceptualization of Deutschtum.” He continues, “They represented all that was bad in German society. They posed a threat to bourgeois visions of the German race and German rule in SWA; consequently, the alarm was sounded” (35).
In his essay “The threat of ‘woolly-haired grandchildren,’” Matthew Fitzpatrick presents a vivid example of the postcolonial life. Fitzpatrick shows how white German women were considered necessary for the establishment of a “functional German family” in the colonies in Grimm’s novella *Wie Grete aufhörte ein Kind zu sein*. The novella is set in 1903 in SWA, and appears in Grimm’s 1913 popular collection *Südafrikanische Novellen* (South African Novellas).

In this domestic microcosm, the portrait Grimm constructed was one of dysfunction, in which antinomian sexuality and racial mixing threatened the German nature of the colonies. The origins of the dysfunction were explicitly related to the absence of a European woman able to impose domestic order on the settler household. With the death of the white European mother, the family lost the bearer, protector and transmitter of Europe’s respectable (*bürgerlich*) culture and domesticity in the alien colonial setting. The mother left behind a feckless husband and an impressionable female child who had not yet had time to imbibe the pivotal social and cultural role played by women in the colonies (Fitzpatrick 356-357).

Grimm was not alone in the belief that there was a great need for white women in the German colonies. Sending white German women to the colonies was one method considered by the colonial administration to combat “ungermannness” and reduce the incidence of miscegenation. The colonial administration and organizations like the Women’s League actively sought German women and assisted them in their voyage and assimilation to the colonies. The *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft* (German Colonial Society or DKG) promoted the dispatching of more than 2,000 white German women to the colonies between 1898 and 1914 (O’Donnell 45). The main purpose of this relocation of women was the establishment of more “decent” German women in the colonies to prevent interracial relationships, marriage, and ultimately procreation. Despite the commodification implied by their being dispatched and
transported as “Christmas packages” (Walther 47-49), the raison d’être of these women was to act as culture carriers and prevent the moral, cultural, and economic degeneration of the German males (47). Their mission was so important that colonial education schools were opened in Germany as training centers for women traveling to the colonies.

The colonial administration also noted the economic incentives that encouraged German men to seek native women; to counteract this motivation, they provided financial support for men to bring their wives to the colonies. The presence of white German women would give the male settlers no reason to seek out native women. White German wives were pressured by other white German wives and the colonial administration to recognize and demonstrate their superiority over native women, and to refrain from doing anything that could potentially jeopardize white superiority. They were encouraged to keep an eye on African women servants (Walther 53). The belief was that the disproportional representation of white German men over white German women gave attractive African women the confidence to snatch up a German man, and that this fact made them into “lazy” servants, who then had to be disciplined. German women were instructed, especially by the popular Wilhelmine colonial journal Kolonie und Heimat, not only on guarding against the wiles of attractive African women servants but also on how to deal with Africans. They were reminded that being white German women was advantageous in that they were the only ones who could bear proper, white children. Some white German women were also enlisted as domestic servants to increase the “number of eligible
German women in the protectorate” (Walther 53) and to reduce the number of African women in German households.

This feminine “remedy” proved largely unsuccessful. Many of the women were unable to adapt to conditions in the colonies, as they lacked the necessary knowledge and cultural understanding for survival on another continent. The majority of women, however, carried out their mission to marry white German men and have families. Some “unsuccessful” women returned to Germany; others turned to prostitution, which was encouraged and controlled by the colonial administration, because it was seen as a way to prevent interracial sex (Walther 56-57). The colonial officials also regularly imported white European, preferably German, women to serve as prostitutes. The officials regulated who could be prostitutes, where they lived and worked, and how they should dress and behave. This officially recognized and managed prostitution was intended not only to fight the growth in the biracial population but also to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

Until the revolt of the Herero and Nama (1904 to 1908) in the colonies, and despite the disapproval of their very existence, the Afro-German progeny were generally accepted and tolerated. Their status in the colonies at that time depended solely on the legitimacy of their parents’ relationship and their fathers’ social status (O’Donnell 40). Some children were sent to Germany to receive a German education. This practice changed, however, after Herero and Nama rebels fought against the German colonial rule and approximately 60,000 Africans lost their lives. The colonial administration began to worry about potential betrayal by interracial children. The concern was that the Afro-Germans would give their loyalty not to their paternal
Heimat but to the African rebels (Fitzpatrick 357). The administration in the colonies feared that the “mulatto” children would assume high offices and positions within the colony, and, should a conflict between Africans and colonizers occur, that the mixed-raced individuals would side with their native brethren rather than with the Germans. Given the alarm, aversion, and apprehension surrounding their very existence, the presence of Afro-German children prompted a whirlwind of legal, political, social, cultural, and legislative action. As German law entitled the wives of German nationals as well as their children to German citizenship, the children’s existence gave rise to pseudo-scientific theories on “race-mixing” and discussions of race from the German mainland to the German colonies in Africa.

Race and Racial Thinking

The Negro is the born slave whose despot is as necessary to him as the pipe is to the opium smoker, and he lacks any noble traits. He is dishonest, thievish, disloyal and deceitful; and if superficial observers believe they perceive a certain affability in him, it comes exclusively from the limited irritability of his nervous system and the consequent blunted capacity of his will to relax.⁵

These words on the *Eingeborenen* (natives), spoken by Dr. Carl Peters, a founding member of the Society for German Colonization (1884) and German East Africa Society (1885), thoroughly reflect the position of the proponents of Social Darwinism (El-Tayeb 37-38). In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt

⁵ “Der Neger ist der geborene Sklave, dem sein Despot nötig ist wie dem Opiumraucher seine Pfeife, und es fehlt ihm auch jeder vornehme Zug. Er ist verlogen, diebisch, falsch und hinterlistig, und wenn oberflächliche Beobachter an ihm eine gewisse Bonhomie wahrzunehmen glauben, so liegt dies ausschließlich an der geringen Irritabilität seines Nervensystems und der daraus folgenden stumpfen Reaktionsfähigkeit seines Willen[s]” (Blackshire-Belay 98).
describes the “master race” syndrome in which “leaders like Carl Peters, who decided that they too had to belong to a master race […] had seen with their own eyes how peoples could be converted into races and how, simply by taking the initiative in this process, one might push one’s own people into the position of the master race” (206).

The form of racial thinking Arendt alludes to bred the soon-to-follow perception of the Germans as destined the colonizers and the Africans as those meant to be colonized. This racial thinking was supported largely by ethnographical research and the racial theories of scientists such as Ernst Haeckel and Eugene Fischer, who wrote volumes on the dangers of racial mixing (Fischer; Campt, “Converging,” 88-90).

Theodor Gotthilf von Leutwein, the SWA colonial administrator (1894-1904), used pseudo-scientific reasoning to show that African women were degrading Germanness.

The woman and the offspring do not rise to the educational level of the man and father, but rather the man sinks back to that of the woman. His house does not become a site of German ways and German family life, but rather he goes downhill and degenerates more or less in his hut that puts its stamp on his through the essence of the woman and pulls the man down, after perhaps initial reluctance, in his thinking and actions to the level and sphere in which the woman was born and feels comfortable.6

Von Leutwein’s “fact” gives insight into the kind of thinking that fueled colonial policy and reaction to the interracial relationships and the Afro-Germans.

The combination of a “race-mixing theory” with eugenic theory and Social Darwinism resulted in the labeling of interracial relationships and mixed-race

6 “Nicht die Frau und die Nachkommenschaft steigt auf zu der Bildungsstufe des weißen Mannes und Vaters, sondern der Mann sinkt zurück auf diejenige der Frau. Sein Haus wird nicht zur Stätte deutschen Wesens und deutschen Familienlebens, sondern er verlumpt und verkommt mehr oder minder in seiner Hütte, die den Stempel durch das Wesen der Frau aufgedrückt und den Mann nach vielleicht anfänglichem Sträuben schließlich in seinem Denken und Handeln auf den Standpunkt und die Sphäre hinabzieht, in der die Frau geboren ist und sich wohl fühlt” (qtd. in von Leutwein 233-234).
children, regardless of their legitimacy, as representations of a “disgusting pollution of Germanness” and moral savagery. The colonial administration attempted to deter interracial marriages by all means. Interracial marriages, marriage-like cohabitation and intercourse with native women were all ultimately banned by the SWA colonial administration in 1905.

In the early 1900s, this administration imposed stringent immigration restrictions to reduce the number of “undesirable” men admitted to the colony, who were considered likely to enter such “dangerous” relationships (Walther 37). On the
basis of activities like theft, overconsumption of alcohol, rape, some men were excluded from colonial society or even deported, being considered threats to the racial hierarchy and Deutschtum. New laws classified the Afro-German population as “indigenous” and considered the biggest danger to the government. They were banned from the schools, the social functions, and other social activities to which they had been previously admitted. The Afro-Germans were barred from white German colonial society and deprived of their German rights.

**Citizenship, Colonial Racial Policy, and the Mischehendebatte**

Though they were not seen as such, the Afro-Germans born in the African colonies were legally German citizens. Prussian laws formed the foundation for Afro-German claims to German citizenship in the late 1800s and spurred the debates that took place in 1912. Until 1870, each of the states of the German Confederation retained autonomy over the terms for citizenship within its region. Most state-enacted reforms strengthened the state while weakening the nobles and guilds and increasing the loyalty of citizens, and the state citizenship laws were no exception (Sargent 19-20). Howard Sargent argues, “Early forms of state citizenship in Germany tended to employ the principle of descent as the key basis for citizenship, not as a biological definition of Deutschtum but simply to exclude alien immigrants, many of whom were ethnically German” (21). The citizenship laws discriminated against Jews and other minorities. The exclusionary nature of the previous legislation carried over to the 1842 Prussian law on citizenship, which eliminated the previous right to
naturalization in the Prussian state through extended residence. Fearful of an increasing number of people in need of poor relief, Prussia also revoked the citizenship of Prussians who emigrated.

The “Law Respecting the Acquisition and Loss of the Quality as a Prussian Subject, and his Admission to Foreign Citizenship,” signed by Friedrich Wilhelm I on December 31, 1842, defined and granted citizenship through fulfillment of one of the four following options, at the discretion of the Prussian authorities: (1) descending from a Prussian male, regardless of place of birth, (2) legitimation, (3) marriage to a Prussian citizen, or (4) performing “deeds of naturalization,” such as entering the service of the Prussian state. Each German state retained authority over its own nationality laws through the North German Confederation’s 1870 Gesetz über den Erwerb und den Verlust der Bundes- und Staatsangehörigkeit ("Imperial Law Respecting the Acquisition and Loss of Federal and State Nationality"). The Prussian model, however, was extended into the new German law following the founding of the German nation. This law granted established federal citizenship on the basis of membership in one of the constituent states in order to be applicable to Germany’s new territories and millions of immigrants (Sargent 23).

The “ethnocultural” model of citizenship, which was based on descent (jus sanguinis, right of blood) rather than residence in the territory of a state (jus soli, right of soil), remained the paradigm until it was revised through the creation of the Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz ("National Citizenship Law of the German Empire and States") of 1913. This granting of citizenship implicitly followed a unifying and inclusive definition of “German,” according to which any individual
who fit one of the criteria could acquire German nationality and, more importantly, be considered German (Sargent 31). The citizenship law soon faced a fundamental challenge in the form of legitimate biracial children born of German fathers and African mothers. The so-called *Mischehendebatte* (‘Interracial Marriage Debate’) in the German parliament responded to the interracial marriages in the colonies. The 1912 debate, which took place a year before the creation of the law on citizenship, contributed to the separate fifteen-year-long discussion of the basis for citizenship.

Despite the existing legislation that stated clearly that the marriages and the children were legitimate, contemporary German politicians, academics, and many others argued that the biracial children, as well as individuals with Asian or African heritage, could not be German citizens. The unofficial barriers mentioned previously were imposed alongside formal bans against interracial marriage, despite the adherence of these relationships to the nineteenth-century patriarchal definition of family (Fitzpatrick 359). Even with the strict visible and invisible barriers, it soon became clear to the colonial administration that the problem of interracial interactions, relationships, and marriages could not be solved swiftly or easily. The administrators then sought assistance from the Reichstag. The *Verschickung* (dispatch) of white German women to the colonies to fight the “indecent” and *regelwidrige* (illegal), situation had not been effective. The settlers perceived the actions of the colonial society as an obvious intrusion into their lives and their rights. In May 1912 the German Parliament discussed and voted on the legality and the morality of “mixed marriages,” as well as the rights of Afro-German children.

---

7 The citizenship laws remained in effect until the Nazi Party came into power in 1933 but were reinstated after 1945 and remained law until 1999, with minor revisions in 1977 and 1993 concerning immigration and naturalization.
Although the Reichstag vote did not constitute a clear decision in this debate, the discourse called into question the rights of the settlers, the legitimacy of their progeny, and the morality of their interracial relationships.

The authority of the Reichstag over the colonies was an important question of the era. The colonial administration issued proclamations—rather than passing laws—in order to avoid criticism and intervention by the German Parliament. The Reichstag already had the power to review the budget of the colonial administrations, and any policies adopted by the colonies needed the approval of the Reichstag, which gave it significant power over the colonies. With the marriage bans in German South West Africa (in 1905), in German East Africa (in 1906), and in German Samoa (in 1912), the German colonial administrations were making autonomous decisions that challenged the authority of the Reichstag. In blatant opposition to the North German Confederation’s 1870 “Imperial Law Respecting the Acquisition and Loss of Federal and State Nationality,” the colonial administrations created a race-based determination of German nationality, annulled interracial marriages, and illegally expatriated many of the multiracial progeny. The concepts “race” and “interracial relationships” did not appear in the federal law. Even the often-used term *Mischling* (“half-breed”) was without legal significance (Wildenthal 85).

The colonial administrations expressed their frustration about interracial relationships in their protectorates to the Reichstag, which did not immediately see it as a topic of importance. The issue of “marriage bans” became important to the German Parliament only in 1912 due to its role in the budget debate in the German colonies (Przyrembel 44; Reichstags-Protokolle 1647-48). The German population,
the Reichstag, and some missionaries raised violent objections to the marriage
prohibitions. On May 2, 1912, the state secretary for German Samoa, Wilhelm Solf,
who from 1900 to 1911 was also governor of the colony, opened the debate in the
Reichstag. He defended the colonies’ legal regulation of “racial intermarriage” with a
question teeming with Social Darwinism:

You send your sons to the colonies: Do you want them to bring black
daughters-in-law home? Do you want them to put woolly-haired
grandchildren in the cradle? [...] Even worse, the DKG pays 50,000 marks
annually for white German girls to be sent to the SWA. Do you want the girls
to return with Hereros, Hottentots and hybrids as husbands? [...] Do we want
our race to be hybridized?

Georg Ledebour of the Social Democratic Party rebutted Solf’s questions
vehemently: “You [Dr. Solf] want to have colonies, you want to subjugate foreign
peoples, you send young men out there in the prime of their lives, and then you want
to forbid marriage! In reality, you just want to root out sexual relations.” With other
imperial powers such as Britain, France, and Portugal in mind, Ledebour argued that
interracial relationships were “an inevitable result” of colonization. He denounced the
contradictions in Solf’s arguments on marriage and pointed out that Solf took issue
not with the interracial marriages but with descendants of these marriages and their
legitimacy as German citizens. He criticized the colonial policy, which called for
spreading Christianity and Christian morals throughout the colonies on one hand, but

---

8 “Sie senden Ihre Söhne in die Kolonien. Wünschen Sie, dass sie Ihnen schwarze Schwiegertöchter ins
Haus bringen? Wünschen Sie, dass sie Ihnen wollhaarige Enkel in die Wiege legen? Aber noch
schlimmer: die deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft gibt jährlich 50,000 Mark dafür aus, dass weiße
Mädchen nach Südwestafrika geschickt werden. Wollen Sie, dass die Mädchen mit Hereros,
Hottentotten und Bastarden zurückkehren als Gatten? [...] Wollen wir, dass unsere Rasse verbastardiert
[wird]?” (Przyrembel 45).
9 “Sie [Dr. Solf] wollen Kolonien haben, Sie wollen fremde Völker unterwerfen, Sie schicken da junge
Kerls in der Blüte ihres Alters hinaus, und dann wollen Sie die Ehe verbieten! In Wirklichkeit wollen
Sie eben den Geschlechtsverkehr ausrotten” (qtd. in Reichstags-Protokolle 1649).
forbade Christian marriage between “whites” and “blacks” on the other hand. He even advocated for interracial marriages:

We Social Democrats [...] demand full and free humanity. We demand humane consideration so that, when men of our blood are forced into such colonial relationships, we make their lives easier, not defame them or the women they love. When you bring young men to the colonies, these relationships and conditions will arise.\(^{10}\)

Opposition to the “proliferation of mixed-bloods” was voiced by Matthias Erzberger of the Center Party (Zentrumspartei), who presented the view that a ban on interracial marriage was a reasonable consequence of the developments in the colonies.\(^{11}\) With 203 votes, the deputies passed a bill in which “the validity of marriages between whites and natives in all the German protectorates, and the rights of the illegitimate children” would be regulated at a later date (Reichstags-Protokolle 1740). With the outbreak of war less than two years later, the Reichstag never revisited this issue. Six years later, Germany relinquished control of its colonies after its defeat in WWI.

The purpose of these discussions, debates, and laws was to tackle what many Germans saw as an incompatibility and a danger to Deutschtum: biracial Germans with African heritage. Many in the colonial administrations and German mainland delegitimized the Afro-German population by questioning its claim to German national identity. With their existence labeled a black mark on the era of German

\(^{10}\) “Wir Sozialdemokraten [...] verlangen volle und freie Menschlichkeit. Wir verlangen menschliche Rücksicht darauf, dass, wenn Männer unseres Bluts hineingetrieben werden in solche kolonialen Verhältnisse, man ihnen das Leben erleichtert, dass man sie nicht defamiert, dass man die Frauen, die sie lieben, nicht defamiert. Wenn Sie junge Männer in die Kolonien bringen, so kommt es zu solchen Verhältnissen und zu solchen Zuständen” (qtd. in Reichstags-Protokolle 1651).

\(^{11}\) Erzberger argues for that the rights of the Afro-Germans were incontestable. He states “keine Macht der Erde ist so gross, dass sie in das Naturecht der Mischehen eingreifen und diese Ehe verbieten darf” (qtd. in Reichstags-Protokolle 1740).
imperialism, the struggle for some Afro-Germans might have ended with the removal of German rule in 1918. According to Walters, some Afro-Germans born in the colonies did make their way successfully to Germany in search of education. Unfortunately their stories largely remain unknown, as very little literature tracks their lives following the marriage bans or Germany's surrender of its colonies as required in the Versailles Treaty. It is clear, however, that the negative reactions to their existence in the colonies and to their claims to German nationality influenced the perceptions of the next large Afro-German cohort, the children of black soldiers stationed in the Rhineland and white German women following Germany’s defeat in WWI.
Chapter Two

“In school, we were taught that] God made all whites and blacks; the half-breeds are the spawns of the devil [...] The half-breeds can inherit only the bad characteristics from both races”

—Frieda P. in *Farbe Bekennen*.12

“In a bastardized and Negroized world, all concepts of human beauty and sublimity, as well as images of in an idealistic future for our humanity, would be forever lost”

—Adolf Hitler in *Mein Kampf*.13

Germany’s defeat in World War I held terrible consequences for many Germans. The constraints on German military power, economically crippling war reparations, removal of many German territories all crushed the country’s morale. In addition to losing its colonies in Africa and Asia, Germany was subjected to occupation by Allied troops in the Rhineland and later in the Ruhr region. Because of the negative impact the treaty had on everyday life in Germany, many Germans were attracted to the anti-Versailles position taken by the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP). The Nazi Party’s ascent to power led to the state-organized persecution and systematic murder of approximately six million Jews, as well as five

---

12 This quote is from the recollections of Anna G. and Frieda; two Afro-German sisters whose last names are not given. “Alle Weißen und Schwarzen hat Gott gemacht, die Mischlinge stammen vom Teufel [...] Die Mischlinge können nur die schlechten Eigenschaften von beiden Rassen erben” (qtd. in Oguntoy, Opitz, and Dagmar 70).

13 “Denn in einer verbastardierten und vernegerten Welt wären auch alle Begriffe des menschlich Schönen und Erhabenen sowie alle Vorstellungen einer idealisierten Zukunft unseres Menschentums für immer verloren” (qtd. in Hitler 421).
million people from other targeted groups, including the population of Afro-Germans residing in Germany.

Fathered by black colonial soldiers, the Afro-German generation embodied the demasculinization and defeat of Germany in WWI to racist white Germans. The presence of this interracial progeny solidified and justified the nationalistic and racial thought, because they and other peoples of non-Aryan birth were portrayed as “aliens” in Germany. To more radical Germans, all non-Aryans posed a malignant danger, a threat that needed to be surgically excised in order for Germany to be restored to health. This perception led to the Afro-German population being marked as “undesirable” during the Nazi regime in Germany. Their smaller numbers kept them from being a high priority on the Nazis’ removal list, unlike the Jews and gypsies, but they too were humiliated, denigrated, and persecuted. This period marked a dangerous phase in Afro-German history, ranging from the state-supported restrictions on interracial marriage imposed by the German colonial administration to state-supported persecution, ostracism, sterilization, and, in some cases, murder practiced by the Nazi government.

**Occupation of the Rhineland and the ‘Black Shame’**

“Where armored vehicles were absent, the enemy sent waves of blacks, waves of African bodies. Woe to us when these waves broke through our lines and massacred, or worse, tortured our defenseless men.”

---

14 “Wo Panzerwagen fehlten, hatte der Gegner uns schwarze Wellen entgegengetrieben, Wellen aus afrikanischen Menschenleibem. Wehe, wenn diese in unsere Linien einbrachen und die Wehrlosen mordeten, oder was schlimmer war, marterten” (qtd. in von Hindenburg 352).
In his autobiography, Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg summarizes the indignation many Germans felt at the use of black combat troops in WWI. Such anti-black sentiment, though at odds with previous German military practice,\textsuperscript{15} carried over to the black troops who occupied the Rhineland as mandated in the Treaty of Versailles (Lusane 71). German intellectuals protested the use of “non-white, uncivilized savages” to occupy along the bank of the Rhine and in the cities of Cologne, Coblenz, and Mainz (Last 15). Newspapers and magazines, especially the satirical magazine, Kladderadatsch, printed fear-inspiring and sensational articles on alleged atrocities, accompanied by corresponding caricatures (see Fig. 9). Of the 85,000 Allied troops occupying the Rhineland from 1919 to 1930, approximately 20,000-40,000 were black Belgian, British, and French colonial troops or African-American troops (Wigger; Oguntoye, Opitz, and Dagmar 45). German newspapers often published Germans’ overtly racist and negative reactions to the colonial occupation troops, like the following:

\begin{quote}
What offends European sensibility in the use of Black troops is not their blackness but rather the fact that savages are being used to oversee a cultured people. Whether these savages are totally black or dark brown or yellow makes no difference. The prestige of the European culture is in danger. That is what is at stake. And precisely those people, those such as England and France that are dependent upon the dominance they exercise over colored peoples, should consider that with the degradation of Germany in the eyes of the colored, they degrade the white race and with this endanger their own prestige.\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{15} Germany’s use of African troops during the reign of Kaiser Wilhelm was generally not mentioned during the protests against the Allies’ black troops.

\textsuperscript{16} Emphasis mine. The article referenced was published on May 26, 1921, “Die farbigen Truppen im Rheinland” [The Colored troops in the Rhineland] (qtd. in Campt Other 52-53).
This excerpt exemplifies not only many Germans’ fear of the degradation of Germany and Europe by “savage” peoples but also an appeal to the white victors to make common cause with the Germans. Rumors of black troops prostituting, molesting, and raping white Germans—women, girls, and boys—and spreading venereal diseases ignited waves of protest in Germany immediately after the troops’ arrival (von Ankum 152). In his work *Hitler’s Black Victims*, Clarence Lusane disproves many of the charges against the French colonial troops (74-75).

The sexualized and racialized discourse spread as protests became more international. In 1920, deliberations took place in the Reichstag in regard to the black
troops. Months after the circulation of ranting racist articles by the journalist Edmund Morel, the *Deutscher Notbund gegen die schwarze Schmach* (German Emergency League Against the Black Shame) was founded in Munich (Maß Weisse 100; Goodwin 206-7). With the declared purpose of the “Erhaltung und Verteidigung der ‘weissen Rasse’” (Preservation and Protection of the White Race), the League declared:

Black Shame disgraces our women! Black Shame massacres our boys and girls! Black Shame contaminates the Pfalz, the Saar, and the Rhineland! Black Shame means the perdition of the white race. Our goal, our deed, is to protect our women from it; to wrench our children away from it; to remove it from Pfalz, Saar, and the Rhineland; and to warn the White World about it.17

The *Deutscher Notbund* was not alone in condemning the black troops, although they disseminated many flyers and petitions to have all black troops withdrawn (see Fig. 7). German political parties called for parliamentary action in 1923 (Maß Schwarzen 44-57; Blackshire-Belay 110-11; Hauss 87-90). The removal of the new, black “threat” from within German borders drew international support (Goodwin 206; Koller 307-09). Irish and German American numbering around 12,000 protested in February 1921 at New York City’s Madison Square Garden, 59,000 Swedish women signed a petition, the Italian colonial minister, and Pope Benedict XV all demanded the departure of the black soldiers. The interactions resulted in heated public discussions of the social and moral implications of a black population in Germany. White women, some soon-to-be mothers of Afro-German

Fig. 7. The leaflet “Eine Lebensfrage für die weisse Menschheit! Was ist Schwarze Schmach” (“A Vital Question What is Black Disgrace”) was made and circulated by the Deutscher Notbund in the 1920s. Fig. 8. This “Die Schwarze Schmach” poster depicts a black soldier violently grabbing a white German woman. Fig. 9. The poster “Rhein und Ruhr” (“Rhineland and the Ruhr region”) offers an ominous caricature of the French colonial troops’ occupation of the major German industrial areas through a large grotesque black face bearing down on the area. Fig. 10. A poster caricaturizing the black troops for “Protest der deutschen Frauen gegen die farbige Besatzung am Rhein” (“German Women’s Protest against the colored Occupation in the Rhineland”).

Sources: Fig. 7. Undated Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv (Wigger). Fig. 8. Undated Qantara Online. Fig. 9. Undated in the Museum Köln’s 2003 exhibition “Besondere Kennzeichen: Neger” Schwarze im NS-Staat.” Fig. 10. Walther Reimer, 1920 in the Deutsches Historisches Museum’s “Fremde? Bilder von den ‘Anderen’ in Deutschland und Frankreich seit 1871” 2010 exhibition.
children, were often portrayed as victims, but they also faced social ostracism, especially if they willingly engaged in sexual intercourse with African or African-American men (Maß Schwarzen 55). The perception many white German men held was that black men now had access to white women. Thus the threat was not only to the German nation. Black male sexuality was perceived as more significantly threatening the supremacy of white men or figuratively emasculating them (von Ankum 152; Campt, “Converging” 86-106).

Noticing Color: Afro-Germans in the 1920

The objections to black troops then shifted to include the newly discovered population of Afro-German children, as physical manifestations of the “black shame.” During this time, Eugen Fischer, Charles Davenport, and other contemporary eugenicists and scientists developed theories about the negative consequences the German race would experience as a result of Rassenkreuzung, or racial crossbreeding, which further exacerbated popular fears and anger (Campt, “Converging,” 89).

A Swedish pastor named Martin Liljeblad fueled the fire. Personally disturbed by the rumors of racial mixing on the Rhine, Liljeblad searched for statistics as well as other official documents on Afro-German children (Oguntoye, Opitz, and Dagmar 51-52). Unable to obtain the documents from a German delegation to Sweden, Liljeblad traveled to Germany specifically to do research on the children. He insisted that he had met Afro-German children with black and white stripes on their backs (Koller 52), a throwback to the pre-colonial assumptions about biracial children.
such as in *Parzival* (see Fig. 2). The pastor’s claim is clearly nonsense, but his influence in Sweden was not to be discounted. Liljeblad gave numerous public presentations in Sweden in 1924. He inveighed against miscegenation, supported petitions to have the black soldiers removed, and published his own propaganda brochure, “The World’s Shame at the Rhine” (Maß Weisse 86). Liljeblad spurred discussion reminiscent of that in the German colonies. Although Liljeblad’s significance is generally not noted in texts on Afro-Germans of the time, it was his “research” that enabled the Nazis to locate and persecute them. It was at his behest that social welfare offices in Germany increased their efforts to register the Afro-German children (Maß Weisse 86). Several years later the Gestapo under Hitler used these registrations to find and sterilize approximately 385 of 600-800 documented Afro-German children (Maß Weisse 84-85; Campt Other 73).

The Afro-Germans born in the 1920s in Germany, regardless of whether their fathers were visiting black diplomats, black soldiers, or black performers, were perceived as implicit threats to the purity and power of the white German race. This perception was fortified by heated political discussions on the “black shame” in the Rhineland, negative media portrayals of blacks, and campaigns to remove foreign elements from Germany (see Fig. 7-10; Koller 303-311). The uproar constructed a racialized image of “blackness” that reprised the colonial concept of black Africans as barbarians and savages, developed in the preceding centuries. These myths surrounding “blackness” were reflected in children’s-book illustrations, popular literature, films and newspapers, and contributed to an environment that differed greatly from the general indifference to or acceptance of Afro-Germans before the
occupation of the Rhineland. Any benevolent interactions with the small black and Afro-German population in Germany in the early twentieth century were quickly forgotten. It did not help that the only images some Germans had of blacks and Afro-Germans during the 1920s were gleaned from eugenicist and racist publications, soldiers’ tales brought back from colonial wars, and Kulturschauen, exhibits showing primitive people in their “native” habitats (Lusane 56-63).

Born in 1926 and raised by his white German mother, hundreds of miles from other Afro-Germans in the Rhineland region, Hans J. Massaquoi recalls his first time at Hagenbeck’s Zoo in his hometown of Hamburg. At the zoo, an African village with a human exhibit was displayed, housing, who the guide described as, “authentic Africans.” Massaquoi acknowledges his confusion, when, as a child, he observed very few similarities between the members of the human exhibit and the photographs of his royal Liberian family:

Except for their skin color and hair, the Africans on display looked nothing like my relatives or any of the Africans I had met at my grandfather's house. All of the villagers were barefoot and dressed in tattered rags. Two women, draped in dingy-looking cloths, were rhythmically pounding a heavy wooden stick into a mortar [...] The men were sitting around in small groups, intently watching the spectators while chatting away in an unintelligible language between puffs from short, primitive-looking pipes (Destined 25).

His grandfather, the former king of the Vai in Liberia, was the Liberian consul general in Germany in the 1920s. Massaquoi depicts the low status of Afro-Germans in the racial hierarchy. The white Europeans were on top, and many Afro-Germans were implicitly categorized, with others with African heritage, as savages and outcasts or inferior because of their skin color. Massaquoi states that the only thing that separated the Africans at the zoo from the animals “was the absence of the deep,
water-filled moat that separated men from beasts” (*Destined* 25). Before he left, a German zoo visitor noticed Massaquoi and called him “one of their kids” (*Destined* 26).

The respected position of the few African scholars, students, and diplomats in Germany is reversed due to the presence of Africans in the *Kulturschauen*, which were held in most major cities in Germany at that time, and their favorable reception destroyed with black soldiers labeled savages and rapists. The terms *Mischlinge* (“half-breeds”), *Mulatte* (“mulatto”) and “Rhineland Bastards,” used during the 1919 to 1922 newspaper campaign against the occupation, indicate that the children of willing and unwilling interracial sexual encounters bore the brunt of Germans’ anger towards the Allies and occupiers.
The Rise of Nazism: Persecution and Survival during the Third Reich

Not all Germans shared Adolf Hitler’s view quoted at the beginning of this chapter. Many did agree, however, with his supposition that the politicians and financiers had betrayed Germany during the war, and brought about Germany’s defeat. Shocked and embittered by the capitulation in November 1918, some Germans took to blaming the Jews, Marxists, and others, who had supposedly betrayed Germany on the home front. This notion became the *Dolchstosslegende* or stab-in-the-back legend (Kershaw 61-63; Kaes 5). After joining the German Workers’ Party (DAP) and gaining a following with his vitriolic beer hall speeches, Hitler consolidated his power as chairman of the renamed National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP). While imprisoned for a failed putsch that took place in Munich in November 1923, Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf*, part ideological exposition and part autobiography. Hitler railed against what he saw as the twin “evils,” Communism and Judaism. He also blamed the Weimar politicians, particularly the Social Democrats, and the Marxists for most of Germany’s post-WWI problems.

Hitler was one of many politicians to criticize and protest against the Versailles treaty’s conditions, many of which Germans did not accept as legitimate. His convoluted, anti-black rhetoric in regard to the occupation in the Rhineland directly affected the Afro-German population in Germany and also validated the concerns that many had in regard to the *revanche* of the French. He stated:

> It was and is the Jews who bring the Negro into the Rhineland, always with the same ulterior motive and clear goal of destroying the white race, which
they hate, by the miscegenation that would inevitably eventuate, thus toppling
[the Germans] from their cultural and political level so that they [the Jews]
may in turn rise to the position of master.\textsuperscript{18}

Here Hitler “skillfully” combines his hatred of the Jews with the black occupation,
and, by arguing that the Jews are responsible for the occupation of the Rhineland,
introduces the anti-Semitic sentiments he would later make the centerpiece of his
propaganda. The Jews, Communists, Afro-Germans, homosexuals, gypsies, mentally
and physically disabled, and other “undesired elements” within Germany would later
become targets of Hitler’s violent persecution. After his ascension to power and with
the rise of National Socialism, these minorities found themselves in a xenophobic and
“otherness”-conscious society.

While Jews were the main victims of Nazi terror, being publicly attacked,
discriminated against, and dehumanized, Afro-Germans and other blacks in Germany
were not viciously pursued. Susann Samples notes, “Unlike the Jews, the African
Germans and other black foreign nationals and colonials were automatically set apart
from the Aryan Germans by their usually darker complexions. Nonetheless, these
individuals—for the most part—managed to survive the Third Reich” (qtd. 53).
Samples paints a picture of blacks under the Nazi regime, one in which their survival
is largely due to, not in spite of, their skin color and nationality. John Welch, an
African-American journalist stationed in Germany in the early 1930s, claimed that he
did not observe any mistreatment, prejudice, or discrimination directed against blacks
in Germany (Samples 57). Samples implies that Welch’s low social status as an

\textsuperscript{18} ”Juden waren und sind es, die den Neger an den Rhein bringen, immer mit dem gleichen
Hintergedanken und klaren Ziele, durch die dadurch zwangs läufig eintretende Bastardierung die ihnen
verhasste weisse Rasse zu zerstören, von ihrer kulturellen und politischen Höhe zu stürzen und selber
to ihren Herren aufzusteigen” (qtd. in Hitler 357-59).
African American in the US and his prior experiences with racism clouded his vision. The day-to-day reality for Afro-Germans became more difficult because of open racism, everyday discrimination, and alienation tied to their status as nicht-Arier and the pervasiveness of racism in German society.

Massaquoi noticed the exclusion right after the Nazis seized power. While at a playground, he was accosted by a white German mother as he waited for his turn at the seesaw. After stating simply that it was his turn to get on, he heard the woman shriek, “What do you mean ‘my turn’? [...] You people had your turn! Now, it’s our turn. You aren’t even supposed to be in this playground. Can’t you read?” (Destined 47). She pointed to a sign at the entrance of the playground that said: “Non-Aryans are strictly forbidden from entering this playground.”19 After learning what the term non-Aryan meant, and discovering that he was indeed one, Massaquoi vowed never to set foot in the playground again (Destined 48).

Like many other children of his generation, Massaquoi wanted to join the Nazi Youth organization, the Hitler Youth. In his autobiography, he describes an experience in the classroom during the time when Hitler Youth membership became mandatory for German boys. His instructor, Herr Schürmann, who publicly supported the Nazis, instructed students who had not yet joined the Hitler Youth to stand up and give their reasons. Some students had personal objections for joining, and some had parents who had not given them permission to join. When Massaquoi stood up to give his reason, Herr Schürmann cut him off, saying, “It’s all right; you are ineligible to join the Jungvolk [a subdivision of the Hitler Youth for boys aged 10-14]” (qtd. in Destined 103). Massaquoi, now determined to be part of the organization, later talked

19 “Nichtariern ist das Betreten dieses Spielplatzes strengstens verboten” (qtd. in Massaquoi Neger 72).
his mother into taking him to the nearest Jungvolk office, where they were both treated with contempt. The Hitler Youth leader who greeted them verbally rebuked Massaquoi’s request and confirmed Massaquoi’s position as an Aussenseiter (outsider): ‘‘I must ask that you leave at once,’’ he said. ‘‘In case you have not noticed, I have to tell you that there is no place here for your son, either in our organization or in the Germany we are about to build. Heil Hitler!’’

The Afro-German sisters Frieda P. and Anna G. recall their experiences with the early phases of Nazi racism in Farbe Bekennen. Born in Danzig between 1915 and 1925 to a Cameroonian man and an East Prussian woman, they experienced the time after the late 1920s as particularly terrible. “On the street in Berlin, we were spat on and jostled, called ‘bastard,’ ‘half-breed.’ It was awful” (qtd. in Oguntoye, Opitz, and Dagmar 69). In 1932 their father was ordered by their school’s administration to remove them from school, despite the fact that Anna was supposed to graduate soon. Later, he suffered at his workplace when the SS, the paramilitary and security organization of the NSDAP, took over the previously Jewish-owned business; the family was subsequently forced to move. Frieda recalls particularly painful school experiences in the mandatory class on Rassenkunde (study of race) at their new school, where she was forced to listen to racist dicta such as the one quoted at the beginning of this chapter.

Though Afro-Germans’ experiences varied depending on their location, socio-economic status, connections to their communities, families, and in some cases luck or other factors, they all faced danger during the Third Reich. While dating the

---

20 “‘Ich muss Sie bitten, sofort zu gehen,’ sagte er. ‘Falls Sie es noch nicht gemerkt haben, weise ich Sie jetzt darauf hin, dass es für Ihren Sohn hier keinen Platz gibt, weder in unserer Organisation noch in dem Deutschland, das wir gerade aufbauen. Heil Hitler!’” (qtd. in Massaquoi Neger 130).
daughter of an SS officer, Massaquoi realized just how precarious his position was in Germany. He faced his ultimate rejection by his home country when he volunteered to join the German army during WWII and was vehemently rejected *(Destined 170-174 and 195)*. Other Afro-Germans came into contact with a more deadly side of Nazi ideology. Born in Frankfurt in 1920, Hans Hauck was the out-of-wedlock son of an Algerian soldier in the French Army and a white German woman. He was considered one of the “Rhineland Bastards” *(Campt Other 25)*. Unlike Massaquoi, he succeeded in joining the Hitler Youth while living in the Saarland. He was shown kindness by an SS officer who helped Hauck find work on the railway. However, in late 1936 Hauck became the target of a Nazi atrocity. He and approximately 385 other Afro-Germans, many also called “Rhineland Bastards,” were sterilized as part of the Nazi racial purity measures *(Campt Other 73)*. Although the Nazis began official sterilizations in 1934 under the 1933 Law to Prevent Hereditarily Sick Offspring, Afro-Germans were sterilized secretly, as they generally had no actual genetic sickness, through a procedure that had only the appearance of legality *(Campt Other 78-79)*. Hauck remembered the experience:

> I began my apprenticeship with the railroad at fifteen [...] and during my apprenticeship, in 1936, I was sterilized. I was called up by the police with my grandmother. And I was sentenced in a pseudo-court proceeding and sterilized [...] There were five others sterilized with me [...] After the judgment they immediately loaded us up and took us to [the] hospital. There we were operated on, and in ten days I was released. [...] And they informed me. I wasn’t allowed to marry—I could marry no German girl (qtd. in Campt Other 72-73).

Frieda P. remembered being saved from sterilization because a sympathetic German man helped her escape from the clinic where she was being held. Neither she
nor her sister were subjected to the horror that Hauck and many of their acquaintances and family members faced (Oguntuye, Opitz, and Dagmar 74-75). They recall other forms of persecution and discrimination. In 1940, for example, in accordance with the Rassengesetz (race laws) they were no longer deemed citizens of Germany and had their passports revoked. James Wonja Michael, born in 1916 in Berlin to a white German mother and Cameroonian father, also experienced denaturalization as Nazi laws on citizenship became stricter. He described his experience in Reed-Anderson’s work.

[It] was in 1937. We were in Paris [...] My passport had just run out, so I went to the German consulate to have it renewed [...] “What do you want?” the clerk demanded. “To renew my passport,” I answered. “Your passport?!?” he said. “What are you, are you German?” “Yes, here is my passport,” I answered. He examined it. “Born in Berlin on 2 October 1916” and so on and so forth. Then he took my passport and went away with it.

A quarter of an hour or more went by before he returned—but without my passport. I said: “I thought you were going to give my passport back to me.” He said: “No, we are going to keep your passport. You are no longer German. Black Germans do not exist.” Then I was really angry. What was I supposed to do without identity documents and such? Nothing! How could I prove that I was really born in Berlin? This was the worst moment in my life (qtd. 80).

The Afro-German actress and singer Marie Nejar recalls a similar discussion with her German grandmother, in which she was encouraged to claim French nationality (Nejar 156-157). In addition to suffering sterilization, public humiliation, and denaturalization, an unknown number of Afro-Germans were sent to concentration camps and never returned (Lusane 16).

Despite the persecution, some Afro-Germans did remain in Germany and survived, as the result of opportunities that other groups, particularly the Jews, were denied. Frieda P. remembers visiting a concentration camp in 1943 after the son of a
friend, who had been sent to the camp in Bromberg, was left in her care. “I wanted to know if I should keep the child or if I should give him to his uncle in Berlin. A man [an official] immediately said to me, ‘I only have one thing to say to you: make sure that you get away from here as fast as you can, so that you don’t end up here’” (Oguntoyé, Opitz, and Dagmar 76). Though Frieda P. was later forced into compulsory labor until the end of the war, the fact that she received a warning from the official in the concentration camp sets her experience apart from that of the Jews and gypsies, who generally received no such warning before they were pursued or killed by the Nazis.

On a visit to the Arbeitsamt (employment office), following his graduation, Massaquoi noticed that an SS member, a Herr von Vett, had a “strange affinity” for him and the blacksmith aspirations he had had as a young adult. This attitude confused Massaquoi, who was used to more fanatical and overtly racist Nazis (Massaquoi Destined 150-151). Herr von Vett, like some other Nazis, assumed that Germany would reclaim its former colonies in Africa, and thus saw an advantage in having Afro-Germans. Herr von Vett suggested that Massaquoi would be of great use to Germany with his background as a machinist, as Germans would be sent to Africa to train a new work force. Massaquoi was ultimately promised an apprenticeship, and the promise was kept. Frieda P., her sister Anna G., and other Afro-Germans performed in the propaganda Kolonialfilme (colonial films) made in the late 1930s and early 1940s, benefiting from the Nazis’ imperialist aspirations and need for black actors (Nejar 114-118; Oguntoyé, Opitz, and Dagmar 77).
Unlike the Afro-Germans in Germany’s African colonies, many of the Afro-Germans born in Germany during the Weimar Republic did not have the protection of a claim to German citizenship through white German fathers. As Tina Campt notes, “When National Socialism overturned the young Weimar Republic, the public discourse that had constituted the Afro-German population of the Rhineland as a racialized threat to the purity of the German national body made them an available target for persecution in the Third Reich” (“Converging” 84). Campt’s argument is both literal and figurative. The treatment of the Afro-Germans worsened under Hitler, but the earlier racial discourse around their existence and endangerment of Germanness persisted. Due to their smaller numbers and lack of group consciousness and cohesiveness, the Afro-Germans were of a lower priority than the Jews and political enemies of the Nazis. The daily actions and racial language of the Nazis resulted in further dislocation for many in the already isolated Afro-German population by dehumanizing them and making them outsiders in their own Heimat. This sentiment would go on to pervade the relationship the next Afro-German cohort had with their home nation in the decades following the end of the Nazi reign of terror.
Chapter Three

“Mach nicht so traurige Augen, weil du ein Negerlein bist”

—Sung by the Afro-German Marie Nejar. 21

On May 8th, 1945, German Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel signed surrender terms on behalf of the Nazi government in Berlin, a day after German troops capitulated to the Allied forces. This unconditional surrender marked the end of World War II in Europe. Germany’s defeat marked a pivotal moment in German history. The much-disputed term Stunde Null (zero hour) has been generally used to describe Germany’s break from the Nazi regime. Many Germans used the end of the war to put the horrors they had suffered under the Nazis and the catastrophes of World War II behind them. Afro-Germans born before or after World War I were also no longer a part of the public discourse. The uproar over their conception in the Rhineland region and their persecution under the Nazis were generally added to the baggage of the Nazi regime that was set aside after Stunde Null.

It was due to their skin color and the historical context into which they were born that the Afro-German children of black Allied occupation troops returned to the attention of white Germans. The speculations and worries of some white Germans about the Afro-Germans reignited racial discourse in the 1950s and 1960s reminiscent

21 “Mach nicht so traurige Augen, weil du ein Negerlein bist” (Don’t make such sad eyes because you are a pickaninny”) is the title of the song sung by Afro-German singer and actress Marie Nejar, also known as Leila Negra or “Toxi,” for the 1952 feature film named after the character.
of the outrage surrounding the “Rhineland Bastards,” Nazi racial ideology, and American racism in the early twentieth century.

The New Afro-German Population

The Afro-Germans returned to the attention of German academics and politicians in the 1950s during the occupation of Germany by the Allied forces. Three to five thousand mixed-race, mostly out-of-wedlock children of black soldiers and white German women gradually entered the public consciousness when they started kindergarten in the 1950s (Fehrenbach, “Narrating,” 137). As the historian Heide Fehrenbach points out, the fathers of these children represented a variety of nationalities and ethnicities—continental American, Puerto Rican, and Senegalese (“Narrating,” 137). This diversity in heritage was generally overlooked; the children were usually categorized as belonging to a homogeneous racial group, when the only similarity many of them had with one another was their German nationality.

The children were granted their mothers’ nationality, but they were rarely viewed as unconditionally German in a social or cultural sense (Fehrenbach, “Narrating,” 137). Discussions arose as to whether the Afro-Germans would integrate well or, as was generally assumed, would pose educational and societal problems. Worried German citizens considered Besatzungskinder (occupation children) disadvantaged, likely to face integration difficulties, prejudice because of their birth, or other troublesome social circumstances (Oguntoye, Opitz, and Dagmar 85). It was often assumed that integration difficulties and other social issues would lead to
delinquency and crime. Experts agreed that Germany was not suited to handle such a population, and that the children would be better off elsewhere, preferably in the homelands of their farbig (colored) fathers.

Among the occupation babies [approximately 200,000 in total], 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 wouldn’t be better for them if they were taken to their fathers’ home country.22

Although it reads like a publication from the German colonial era, the argument above appeared in the weekly political newspaper Das Parlament in 1952; it summarizes committee deliberations in the West German parliament. Some members of the Social Democratic Party of Germany questioned the legal status of the children born out of wedlock. The report considers the Afro-German children a “special problem” for Germany. This language echoes that of the 1912 Mischehendebatte, where the “problem” of Afro-Germans born in Germany’s African colonies to white German colonials was debated in the German Reichstag. This postwar Afro-German population, unlike the Afro-Germans born in Africa before 1912 and those born during the occupation of the Rhineland, was virtually without rights until the late 1950s, for children born of fraternization received no child support. The racial difference between the Afro-Germans and white Germans was once more considered a cause for concern.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the post-WWI generation of Afro-Germans encountered many of the same atrocities that the Jews, gypsies, and other

22 Das Parlament is a political newspaper that has been published by the German Federal Agency for Civic Education or Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung since 1952 (Lemke Muniz de Faria 344).
ethnic groups in Germany did, though on a smaller scale and with better chances of survival. The postwar West German government generally did not recognize their suffering under the Nazis or provide any type of restitution or compensation of the sort some groups were granted in the decades following the end of the Third Reich (Oguntoye, Opitz, and Dagmar 85). In their 1960 study, the psychologists Eyferth, Brandt, and Hawel imply that the Afro-German population of the 1920s was too small and almost too insignificant to require further study or acknowledgement. “After World War I some 800 children of colored French soldiers were born. Of those only a very few are still living in Germany. Many seem to have emigrated or to have died early.”

Although many Afro-Germans did indeed leave their home country before the end of WWII, Eyferth, Brandt, and Hawel do not discuss the persecution these Germans endured at the hands of the Nazis that ultimately led, for many of them, to forced expatriation or untimely death.

Many of these older Afro-Germans emigrated to the US and to Canada after WWII (Blackshire-Belay 114). Hans Jürgen Massaquoi was one of many. He spent two years in the US Army as a paratrooper and studied journalism at the University of Illinois. As a journalist, Massaquoi worked for the popular Jet and then Ebony magazines (Destined). Hundreds of Afro-Germans remained in Germany and faced, along with the Afro-Germans born in the post-WWII period, racism in their native country. In discussing her postwar experiences, the Afro-German Anna G. explains how she was treated like a foreigner, despite her German birth. This treatment contributed to the difficulty she had in reapplying for German citizenship and, after

---

23 “Nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg wurden etwa 800 Kinder farbiger französischer Soldaten geboren. Von ihnen leben nur sehr wenige in Deutschland. Viele scheinen ausgewandert oder früh gestorben zu sein” (qtd. in Eyferth, Brandt, and Hawel 60).
some time spent abroad, for social welfare in the 1960s (Oguntoye, Opitz, and Dagmar 81).

**Reintroducing Race in Postwar Germany**

Little public discourse existed on Afro-Germans in the years immediately following WWII. Many Germans were more focused surviving in the war-stricken country. Topics on “race” and “racism” in relation to Jews and other racial minorities in Germany, especially associated with Nazi Germany, ceased and became taboo after *Stunde Null*. This changed in the 1950s with the hyperawareness of biracial children born in the occupied zones. The post-WWII Afro-German “occupation babies,” the children of white German women and Allied soldiers of African heritage, became a new focus in German society. In what Heide Fehrenbach deems the “cultural devolution of Nazi-era racial ideologies,” the topic of “race” did not truly disappear after *Stunde Null*, rather it remained dormant until it shifted from pre-1945 discussions about Jews to those about blacks in Germany in the 1950s (“Narrating” 156). The Afro-German poet, pedagogue and activist May Opitz, also known as Maya Ayim, summarized three types of prejudices that the mixed-race children faced:

1. Resentment of the enemy occupation forces was readily directed against black children, the visible offspring of the “intruders.”

2. Prejudice because of the social background of the children. Their mothers were blamed for the children’s illegitimate birth and it was readily assumed that as “Yankees’ girls,” they only got involved with black men for material advantages [cigarettes, sweets, stockings, coffee, etc.]. As long as the children were young this prejudice was leveled exclusively against the mothers; the children were seen as cute and innocent. In the
expectation that “the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree,” the children themselves soon became objects of this prejudice.

3. Prejudice founded on handed-down colonial or National Socialist ideologies of race, according to which “mixed-race” people were supposed to represent inferior heritage and intelligence (qtd. in Oguntoye, Opitz, and Dagmar 87).

Social scientists, newspapers, white German authors, and politicians were interested in the new mixed-raced children. Popular media and magazines, which generally reach large segments of the German public, also took an interest in the children (Lester 122). With Africa becoming a popular topic as one colony after another gained independence, cartoons and magazines regurgitated grotesque colonial caricatures of Africans and blacks, reminiscent of the negative propaganda in reaction to the Rhineland occupation. The cartoonist Brickmann incorporated black figures into his comic strip, and the Afro-German Leila Negra’s 1952 song “Mach nicht so traurige Augen, weil du ein Negerlein bist” (“Don’t make such sad eyes because you are a pickaninny”) became very popular (Lester 123-124).

Scores of scholarly studies, newspaper articles, articles in popular magazines such as Neue Revue, Stern, Bunte, Quick, and even movies reintroduced the discussion of “race” in the 1950s, always in a black-white dichotomy (Fehrenbach, “Narrating ‘Race’” 157). The terminology in many of the reports and articles stressed the racial difference of the Afro-Germans in both implicitly and explicitly negative tones. Authors used words such as “Neger” (Negro or nigger), “Mischling” or

---

24 Lester points out that the illustrated weeklies reached well over 50 percent of the West German reading public, and had a significant impact on public opinion.
25 As mentioned in the Introduction, the word “Neger” has multiple connotations in German society depending on the context of its use. In many contexts, it merely is a racial indicator, the equivalent of “Negro.” It has also been used as the derogatory “nigger” in many situations.
mixed-blood, “Mulatte” or mulatto, and “Bastarisierung” or bastardization to discuss and describe the Afro-Germans without considering the racial theories the words implied. In his 1952 dissertation “An Anthropological Study on Mulatto Children in Berlin in Regard to Social Relationship,” the ethnographer Walter Kirchner attempts to research the “bastard population.” His work mixed racial equality with racially particular behaviors. Though he never directly states that the Afro-German children were inferior to white German children, he attempts to explain possible differences in their behavior as racially determined. His work was based on and linked racial theory in the postwar period to that of the Nazis, Eugen Fischer, and to those prevalent in the USA in the 1950s (Oguntoye, Opitz, and Dagmar 92). He writes:

As far as racial factors are concerned, it can be assumed that the precocious development demonstrated by mulatto children will probably stop at puberty. Intellectual ability in particular will likely remain moderate, according to available studies of American Negro half-breeds. Therefore, it may be assumed that the strong instinct-driven behavior, as shown by the mulatto children, will remain present as a Negroid racial trait.26

As the children began entering the German school system in the 1950s, they were either “pitied or pilloried” in various reports (Campt Other 137). A 1960 study directed at teachers, social workers, and parents, Farbige Kinder in Deutschland (Colored Children in Germany), aimed to make those with connections to the children aware of the potential struggles that the Afro-German children and their mothers

---

26 Ibid. “Was die rassischen Faktoren angeht, so ist anzunehmen, dass der Entwicklungsvorsprung, den die Mulattenkinder aufzuweisen haben, wahrscheinlich mit der Pubertät aufhören wird. Besonders die intellektuelle Leistungsfähigkeit dürfte nach vorliegenden Untersuchungen an amerikanischen Negermischlingen mäßig bleiben. Dagegen ist anzunehmen, dass die starke Triebhaftigkeit, die sich bei den Mulattenkindern zeigte, als negrides Rassenmerkmal bestehen bleiben wird….” (qtd. in Oguntoye, Opitz, and Dagmar 92). Emphasis mine.
would face. Some studies stressed, contrary to popular notions of the time, that Afro-German children differed little from white Germans in learning capacity, intelligence, delinquent tendencies, etc. Though more positive in their color-blind approach, these studies still propounded the notion of the Afro-German children as irrevocably different. The trauma resulting from misinformation had some mothers trying to scrub their children’s skin white (Lester 122). Such reports multiplied into the 1960s as the majority of the children reached puberty and entered job training, higher education, and other aspects of adult life.

The reception of the children reflected the negative perceptions many Germans had of the children’s parents, which echoes that of many Germans following WWI. The fathers generally drew the resentment of white German and white American men for attracting and courting white women. After the number of such relationships increased, the American military forbade and strictly punished black troops’ fraternization with white women, on the grounds that it violated anti-miscegenation laws in the U.S.A. White military superiors denied black soldiers’ requests for marriage licenses, and in many cases the soldiers were suddenly transferred to other military posts (Oguntoye, Opitz, and Dagmar 94). The Office of the Chief of Staff explained the stance that necessitated the separation of the couples: “The marriage between a Negro and a white person is considered against the best

---

27 Lester describes this work as a voluminous study conducted by the Department of Psychology of the University of Hamburg under the direction of Klaus Eyferth. She credits the study with doing away with many misconceptions surrounding Afro-German children. The study also showed that most white German women were not willing to give their children up for adoption (Lester 121-122).

28 The American military was desegregated in 1950 and the restrictions on engagements and marriages between black soldiers and white German women were eased (Plummer 67; Höhn 86).
interest of the service [since] a marriage of a Negro and a white foreign person would create a *social problem* upon return to the United States.”

Despite the overt racism of their own government and military officials, the black Allied soldiers, especially African Americans, were generally well received in Germany by the civilian population (Lester 121)—so long as they were *Befreiungssoldaten* (liberation soldiers) and not sleeping with white German women. German women who fraternized with the black soldiers, however, were often looked down upon or ostracized by both white Germans and white Americans. The mothers had no legal recourse, as West German civil law required only German fathers to pay child support, and the German courts had limited jurisdiction over occupation troops. The Allied High Commission for Germany also offered the mothers no legal assistance (Wiltenburg and Widmann). Some Afro-Germans sought to prove their paternity and legally be acknowledged as their fathers’ children. In some cases, the legal battles continued into the 1990s and 2000s. In a 1946 article titled “Pregnant Frauleins Are Warned!” published in the US Armed Forces daily *Stars and Stripes*, U.S. policy towards the women was summarized as follows:

> Girls who are expecting a child fathered by an American soldier will be provided with no assistance by the American Army [...] If the soldier denies paternity, no further action will be undertaken other than to merely inform the woman of this fact. She is to be advised to seek help from a German or Austrian welfare organization. If the soldier is already in the United States, his address is not to be communicated to the woman in question, the soldier may be honorably discharged from the army and his demobilization will in no way be delayed. Claims for child support from unmarried German and Austrian mothers will not be recognized. If the soldier voluntarily acknowledges paternity, he is to provide for the woman in an appropriate manner (Biddescombe 636).

---

29 Lemke Muniz de Faria argues that what is here referred to simply as “a social problem” would be reactionary implementation of the Jim Crow laws and brutal punishments of blacks in the United States, especially in the southern states, common at the time (345). Emphasis mine.
Many women were denied social welfare in addition to being shunned by their families and friends, and were forced to suffer some of the discrimination focused on their children. Some found themselves losing their jobs or their houses. As one report stated, “The neighbors point their fingers at the ‘nigger’s whore’ and her ‘bastard.’ The [white German] husbands, or possible future husbands, force the mothers to choose between them and their [Afro-German] child.” The choice between husband and child, coupled with financial problems and social ostracization, would force some mothers to put their Afro-German children up for adoption, domestically and internationally, in an attempt to protect their children or themselves. Although many mothers chose adoption, quite a few also refused to choose their marriage over their child (Lester 121).

*Toxi* (1952): Liberalizing the Discourse of Race

I would like so much to go home
To see my homeland [*Heimat*] once again
I can’t find my way on my own

Who will love me and take me along?

—*Toxi’s* theme song sung by Elfriede Fiegert (qtd. in *Race after Hitler* 105).

These lyrics very much reflected the situation of the Afro-German title character of the movie *Toxi* played by Elfie Fiegert, who, like the fictional title character Toxi, is the daughter of a black GI and a German woman. After WWII,
Germans found themselves facing the discourse of the “brown babies” not only in print but also on the movie screen. *Toxi*, the fictional story of an Afro-German girl, explores the subject of the black “occupation children.” Its release in the spring of 1952 coincided with the general entrance of around 500 Afro-German children into German schools as well as the aforementioned polarized reactions to their existence. *Toxi* was perhaps the first sympathetic cinematic depiction of Afro-Germans. The film begins with Toxi’s ailing maternal grandmother leaving the five-year-old child on the doorstep of the Jenrichs’ middle-class home. Her mother is dead, for reasons never explained, and her father, an African-American GI, has returned to the US. Her separation from her family is similar to that faced by many other Afro-German children, whose maternal families worried about the negative popular reactions to

Fig. 12. *Toxi* (1952) and *Der Dunkle Stern* (The Dark Star) (1955) were Elfie Fiegert’s only two successful roles. In the 1960s, as “Brown Babies” were no longer considered newsworthy, Fiegert was demoted from leading roles to small speaking parts.

Sources: (Left) Die Online-Filmdatenbank, (Right) Ebay.com
mothers and the children. In such situations, the mothers gave the children up for adoption, approximately 300 children in total. In the movie, the circumstances of Toxi’s conception are not emphasized, and viewers are obliged rather to focus on Toxi’s plight. This separates the film from most of the publications on this cohort of postwar Afro-Germans and humanizes the children.

The film goes on to expose the racial views stratified along generational lines in Germany. On the night of her arrival in Theodor Jenrich’s household during his birthday celebration, Jenrich calls Toxi a “Negerkind” or “negro-child,” and admits that his problem with her stems only from her race. One of Theodor’s guests agrees with him; Theodor’s daughter Herta and her partner Robert, young adults who reside in the house, treat Toxi warmly, indicative of a sympathetic generation of white Germans who had grown up during the Nazi Regime. Theodor’s two younger daughters, who later befriend Toxi, represent the postwar generation, untainted by the racist Nazi ideology; the grandparents treat Toxi simply as a child, possibly because of their pre-Nazi experiences.

The film tackled the issues of racial integration, adoption, and racial tolerance coupled with rehabilitation—Theodor finally comes to accept Toxi and gain a sense of paternal responsibility for her—but it still demonstrated German reluctance to acknowledge the Afro-German children as wholly German. Moviegoers flocked to the movie, making it one of the top ten box-office hits of the year and Elfriede Fiegert a star (Fehrenbach Race 107; Fehrenbach, “Narrating,” 136). The film and its title character commanded the attention and affection of a large audience. In addition to liberalizing the discourse on race in postwar Germany, the film seemed to counteract
white Germans’ fears of and misconceptions about Afro-Germans, who many white Germans assumed would pose a problem for Germany. One should not, however, ignore the numerous problems implicit in this function of the film and its subtle assumption of a national identity in which Germanness equated to being white. In one of the final scenes, Toxi’s African-American father returns to take Toxi home with him to the United States and contributes to the ultimate happy ending of the film, which had begun with Theodor’s rehabilitation. As Fehrenbach concludes, the film implies that the “German family, and white German identity, is healed first through inclusion of the racialized other, then restored to whiteness by her elective exit” (qtd. in Fehrenbach Race 119). Toxi’s plight included abandonment, social isolation, marginalization, exoticization, and ultimately emigration. Her fate became synonymous with that of other black Besatzungskinder who lacked agency, legitimacy, and purpose within German society (Fehrenbach Race 121-123; Fehrenbach, “Narrating,” 148-150). During the following decades, the name “Toxi” entered the German language as a proxy for Afro-German children in newspaper articles and popular literature (Fehrenbach, “Narrating,” 155).

Toxi is the first feature film in an unofficial series of two, the second being Der dunkle Stern (The Dark Star), directed by Hermann Kugelstadt and released in 1955. Rather than amplifying the theme of a positive reception of Afro-German children and a commitment to racial tolerance, Der dunkle Stern “marks a noticeable narrowing of the definition of tolerance; a marked unwillingness even to entertain the possibility of racial integration” (Fehrenbach Race 125). Moni, the Afro-German title character, is forced to find a place outside of the white German Heimat; she joins a
circus. For Fiegert, who played Moni three years after her role as Toxi, similar exclusion seems to follow for the rest of her cinematic career. The trajectory of her career included being an Afro-German occupation child in Toxi to being a sexualized and exoticized foreign beauty in Das Haus in Montevideo (The House in Montevideo) in 1963, which like Der Dunkle Stern does not take place in Germany, and also corresponded to treatments of Afro-German women in popular literature. Fiegert acknowledged that she was seen only as a “Toxi” Mischling and typecast in feature films or documentaries concerned with the “social problem” posed by Afro-Germans (Lester 130-131). She and other Afro-Germans no longer received public attention in the 1960s, unless it was in regard to their leaving Germany.

Transatlantic Adoption of “Brown Babies” and Hostility in the Heimat

Many American Negro families are trying to get permission to adopt one of these [Afro-German] children. The requests were always denied up to this point. The children are considered to be German citizens and [...] are not permitted entry into the USA. Yet they would hardly be conspicuous among the Negro population and would have better chances for the future than here, although the coloreds in the USA are still disadvantaged (Lester 121).

A plea on behalf of Afro-Germans came 1951 in form of an article published in the African-American magazine Ebony, “Germany’s ‘Brown Babies Must Be Helped! Will You?’” (Lemke Muniz de Faria 342) The article reported the story of Margaret Ethel Butler, an African-American schoolteacher and the widow of a U.S. officer who had been stationed in Mannheim. Since 1947, she had been attempting to

30 Lester discusses two novels, Meine schwarze Schwester (My Black Sister) 1961 and Mach mich weiss, Mutti (Make Me White, Mommy) 1963, in which both Afro-German protagonists were products of a rape (Lester 127-128).
adopt two Afro-German children (a boy and a girl) and arrange for their emigration to
the United States (Lemke Muniz de Faria 342). While reading the Chicago Tribune in
late 1947, she had learned of the discrimination facing many Afro-German children,
and happened to come across a photograph of ten small Afro-German children in a
Rheingau orphanage. “Overwhelmed with compassion” (qtd. in Fehrenbach Race
133), she decided to adopt two of them. Margaret Butler remained persistent despite
substantial bureaucratic obstacles created by both the American and German
governments. Her determination to help as many of the children as possible motivated
her to draw on a multitude of personal and social contacts. In what later became
known as the Butler Case, her numerous requests, petitions, and visits to West
Germany were extensively reported in both the West German and the African-
American press. Due to Butler’s efforts, some 300 Afro-German children received the
opportunity to grow up in the U.S. with African-American couples, rather than spend
the rest of their youth in orphanages.

The coverage of the fate of Afro-German children in the African-American
press in the 1950s differed greatly from that of the German press. African-American
organizations such as the NAACP tracked the fate of the children and criticized
Germany’s treatment of them, though they offered little practical assistance to the
Afro-Germans. The reaction to the children was not one of nervous, and often
unsympathetic, speculation as it was in Germany; rather, newspapers such as the
Chicago Tribune, the Pittsburgh Courier, and the Baltimore Afro-American elicited
supportive awareness and action with provocative stories (Fehrenbach Race 144-147).
Accounts of the mistreatment of Afro-German children struck a chord with African-
Americans, who could identify with the struggle of kindred blacks in other countries. One article in the *New York Amsterdam News*, “Washington Iota Phi Lambda Sorors Adopt German Child of American GI,” reported in 1949 on the sponsorship of an Afro-German child by the concerned members of a sorority (9). The Washington chapter of the Iota Phi Lambda Sorority was a chapter of the first African American Greek-lettered business sorority.\(^{31}\) Ernestine G., the mother of the Afro-German girl, fought to keep her while faced with social ostracism from neighbors and associates, in addition to bearing the brunt of dismal economic conditions.

Having read the mother’s plea in a series of letters to the president of Howard University, the sorority members began sending CARE packages containing food, clothing, and other necessities to Ernestine G., to which she responded with many letters expressing her gratitude and happiness (Fehrenbach *Race* 133-134). Though there was no actual adoption involved, the supportive stance of the members of the Washington sorority mirrored that of many other African-Americans. Fehrenbach points out how some newspapers published appeals to their readerships to send CARE packages to the Afro-German children and their mothers. One newspaper even printed the addresses of some two hundred German mothers of Afro-German children and encouraged readers to contact them directly to offer their support (*Race* 133-134).

The outpouring of support from the African-American community was not confined to sending CARE packages. African-American couples opened their homes to as many as 300 Afro-German children in the two decades following the war (Fehrenbach *Race* 133). These efforts were generally welcomed or encouraged by

---

German welfare officials and politicians, who argued that the children could not integrate well because of their “racial peculiarity” or would be met with hostility in Germany. Lemke Muniz de Faria describes the concept of “racial peculiarity” as including “the assumption of inferior intelligence, an impetuous temperament and precociousness” (343). Fehrenbach reveals, however, that West German Basic Law supported integration and prohibited discrimination. She asserts that, although “the official public line” of municipal, state, and federal officials, social workers, educators, and others reflected the law, it most likely did not reflect their own personal beliefs on integrating the Afro-German children (*Race* 136).

These arguments have some merit, as shown in the responses to the Afro-German children, and many West Germans’ attitude towards transatlantic adoptions. With the success of the Butler Case celebrated in the German press, many government officials and social workers advocated for the “Toxi” solution, “the children’s emigration from this ‘traditionally white land’ to a historically multiracial one” (qtd. in Fehrenbach *Race* 136-137). The wishes of the mothers were generally ignored if they did not include putting their Afro-German child up for adoption. Many of the Afro-German children living in the United States were not aware of who their fathers were or able to form an identity due to their physical, social, and cultural dislocation.

For those Afro-Germans like Helga Emde who were able to remain in West Germany, covert and overt forms of racism became a part of everyday life, and were generally internalized or ignored. Helga Emde, like many other Afro-German children, grew up being exoticized for her appearance. She describes always being
considered “big and strong” for her age—an allusion to the stereotype that people of African descent had abnormal strength (Oguntoy, Opitz, and Dagmar 104-05). She and other Afro-Germans remember being called names like “Negerkuss,” “Sarottimohr,” or “Mohrenkopf.” Although each of these terms referred to chocolate sweets popular in the twentieth century, when used to refer to Afro-Germans, the terms took on a negative and stigmatizing connotation. The word “Mohr” (moor) was perceived as an insult by many Afro-Germans due to its allusion to racist colonial representations of wild people with dark skin, thick lips, and coarse hair, but the terms became colloquialisms during the 1960s, possibly at the expense of the Afro-Germans.

Fig. 13. “Sarottimohr” is a mascot created in 1918 for the 50th anniversary of a German chocolate company, later bought by Nestlé in 1929. In the 1960s, the figure became very popular due to increased advertising. Though often criticized for its representation of blacks as servers and slaves, the mascot was not changed until 2004, a sign that changing the image of blacks in Germany did not occur overnight (Gudermann 7-9).

Many Afro-Germans grew up isolated from black children and adults, despite the increasing number of African and African-American students, African refugees, and army personnel in postwar Germany. Emde discusses how she feared and ran away from black soldiers in the rare moments when she happened to encounter them in the 1950s and 1960s. She concludes that this was a symptom of her internalizing the popular negative perception of blacks (Oguntoye, Opitz, and Dagmar 104). In some cases, this internalization led to psychological difficulties. The West German government’s decision to send many Afro-German children, regardless of their IQs (Lester 126), to special education programs or *Sonderschulen* reduced the number and quality of jobs the Afro-Germans were able to attain. Thus, some found themselves not only struggling to figure out who they were, in response to what society perceived them to be, but also to find a place in the society. They were left without a cohesive Afro-German community until the 1980s when Germans slowly came to terms with the idea of Germany becoming an immigrant nation.

The increasing numbers of *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers) settling in Germany changed German’s perception of Germany from a more or less homogeneous society to a multicultural one. Most Germans accepted the influx of *Gastarbeiter* from neighboring countries such as Italy, Spain, Turkey, and Greece in the 1950s and 1960s because their hard labor made Germany prosper. However, as their numbers and that of their German-born children increased, the response to them changed and sometimes became even hostile. Therefore, the West German government implemented programs that (1) focused on limiting the numbers of contracted foreign
workers, (2) funded sending them and their families back to their “country of origin,” and (3) proposed policies that would help integrate any immigrants who wished to stay.

Still, as unemployment rose in the 1970s and 1980s, more and more Germans became upset and blamed the immigrant groups for the economic woes. A few politicians and political groups, particularly the Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NDP or the German National Democratic Party), stressed a variety of concerns: high unemployment caused by a downturn in the world economy, integration challenges, and the fear that Germans of “pure blood” would become minorities in their own country (Oguntoye, Opitz, and Dagmar 135). Calling themselves Neo-Nazis, some of the rightwing extremists demanded an ethnically homogeneous Germany. This small but loud movement created new waves of racism and discrimination for Afro-Germans and others perceived to be “aliens” (Chin 80). Consequentially, counter-movements and concerned citizens furthered positive public discourse about multiculturalism, integration, and tolerance of migrant workers and their children. Out of this sentiment, government and privately funded initiatives were founded to help with the integration process. This environment also offered Afro-Germans the platform and opportunity to speak out about their own situation and be heard.
Epilogue: Claiming Afro-Germanness

“The Afro-German Community is embarking upon a cultural journey”


“Vor unseren Augen stand unsere Vergangenheit….”

—*Farbe Bekennen* (9).

Since the latter part of the twentieth century, Afro-Germans have been exposing and condemning much of the discrimination and racism that they face in Germany and have faced throughout German history. The 1980s brought a new era of assertiveness and self-identification. As previously mentioned, with global discourse beginning to address xenophobia, homophobia, misogyny, racism, and other forms of oppression, Afro-Germans have spoken up to question and discuss their history of persecution in Germany. In addition to opening the floodgates to critical research into Afro-German history, their publication of *Farbe Bekennen* began a search for cultural identity, an interest in intergenerational dialogue among Afro-Germans, and an exchange of personal narratives.

Following the publication of *Farbe Bekennen* in 1986, many Afro-Germans found ways to create a more cohesive community, more outreach initiatives, and forms of infrastructural assistance for other Afro-Germans, African immigrants, and immigrants in general. The Afro-Germans thus participated directly in the discussion
of their situation and spearheaded initiatives to improve conditions. Social work organizations, intercultural and multicultural events, discussions on antiracism and racism, demands for reevaluation of language, and Afro-Germans’ entrance into many occupations all marked a new era of their history. Afro-Germans seized agency, claiming their rights as Germans, rather than having their rights, culture, and nationality defined by a dominant group, as had been the case since the unification of the German nation in 1871. Now that they have begun finding their voice, Afro-Germans have received support from groups in other countries, such as African Americans. They have also found allies in other German minorities and in sympathetic white Germans.

_Afro-German Organizations_

After _Farbe Bekennen_, Afro-German women founded groups such as ADEFRA, which stands for _Afrodeutsche Frauen_ (Afro-German women), in Munich and ISD, which stands for _Initiativ Schwarze Menschen in Deutschland_ (Initiative of Black People in Germany), in 1986 in Berlin. ADEFRA has focused directly on the group that initiated the search for self-identified Afro-German women. It has offered a forum in which the women can share personal experiences and openly discuss their opinions on politics, education, health, etc., in Germany. ISD has been open to a more diverse group of people, welcoming anyone who is a part of the African diaspora (Wiedenroth-Coulibaly 1). Soon after the founding of these two groups, affiliated branches formed in major cities such as Hamburg, Munich, Frankfurt, and Stuttgart.
(Hopkins, “Speak,” 533). As organizational limbs of the Afro-German *Schwarze Bewegung* (Black Movement), these and subsequent groups began reaching out to Afro-Germans and African immigrants, as well as using the media to attract the attention of the German population as a whole. Afro-Germans printed pamphlets and magazines to further spread their message to other Afro-Germans, and to the white German population as well. The publications included *Afrekete* (from ADEFRA in the 1980s), *Blite-Jugendzeitschrift* (from ISD-Berlin, 1999-2002), *afro look*, and local publications covering Afro-centric events and promoting so-called “Afroshops,” stores in urban centers that cater to African immigrants and Afro-Germans.

Founded by Katharina Oguntoye in 1997, *Joliba* is one of the more recent organizations for Afro-Germans and African immigrants. It focuses on social outreach for intercultural families and multicultural education. At *Joliba* in Berlin-Kreuzberg, visitors can buy African and Afro-German literature, participate in discussions on the experiences of Afro-Germans, receive free language instruction, and enjoy a multicultural luncheon every Thursday. Ms. Oguntoye and *Joliba* are involved in almost any event for blacks in Berlin, for example African culture shows, and Berlin’s Black History Month, which began in 1990 but was shortened to Black History Week in 2004. In 2012 and 2013 Afro-German groups in Berlin returned to hosting Black History Month events, most of which were well advertised in universities, in major German newspapers, and through social networking websites such as Facebook, and thus were well attended. In 2011, Hamburg organized its first Black History Month after 15 years of inactivity, offering:
Artistic skits in diverse musical styles, dance performances, lectures, discussions, exhibitions, film viewings, poetry, book readings, workshops, talk shows, culinary specialties, arts and crafts, and a special youth program.  

*Making Themselves Visible*

In addition to publications and organized programs, Afro-Germans have also reached out through television and film. By the 1980s, the number of blacks in Germany was estimated to be around 100,000, of whom approximately 30,000 were Afro-German (Oguntoye, Opitz, and Dagmar 127). Afro-Germans had slowly become more visible as a population, in addition to their increasing presence in sports, music, and film. The director Rainer Werner Fassbinder, one of the most prominent filmmakers of the New German Cinema in the 1960s and 1970s, directed several films with black and Afro-German actors like Günther Kaufman. The black actors spoke German in some films and had roles that did not allude to *Toxi* (see Fig. 12).

In 1986 two provocative television broadcasts were aired: “Ein bisschen schwarz—ein bisschen weiß oder: Was es heißt ein ‘deutscher Neger’ zu sein” (A Little Bit Black, a Little Bit White, or: What It Means to Be a “German Negro”) and “Deutsche sind weiß: Neger können keine Deutschen sein” (Germans Are White: Negroes Cannot Be German). In 2005, Jörg Grünler directed a filmed adaption of Hans J. Massaquoi’s autobiography “Neger, Neger, Schornsteinfeger!” which ran in 2006 as a two-part special on the ZDF channel (see Fig. 11). The film was nominated for the 2007 Golden Camera for Best German TV Film. By cinematically questioning

---

32 “[...] künstlerischen Darbietungen diverser musikalischer Stilrichtungen, Tanzvorführungen, Vorträgen, Diskussionen, Ausstellungen, Filmbeiträgen, Poetry, Lesungen, Workshops, Talkshows, kulinarische Spezialitäten, Kunsthandwerk und einem speziellen Jugendprogramm.” Quoted from the ISD website, *neu.isdonline.de*. 

---
and refuting the legitimacy of a homogeneous white German nation, Afro-Germans began interjecting themselves into German society and educating the masses about their history through visual culture, in some cases learning in the process about that history themselves (Hopkins, “Speak,” 534).

Following the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, Afro-German organizations spoke out collectively in response to increased right-wing terrorism originating in the former East Germany—around sixteen hundred attacks on blacks occurred in Germany in the late 1990s and early 2000s (“Afrikaner”; Schläger; Radke; Halle 161). The organizations reversed the lack of publicity, which would have continued the two centuries of discrimination, persecution, and marginalization. One cinematic


Source: Augsburger Allgemeine Online
response, Angelina Maccaron’s 1998 film *Alles wird gut (Everything Will Be Fine)*, responded with enlightening humor to the everyday micro-racism that many Afro-Germans faced. *Alles wird gut* and the Afro-German television personality Pierre Sanoussi-Bliss’s 1998 film *Bin ich schön (Aren’t I Pretty)* both address diversity with the Afro-German community and the intersections of other identities Afro-Germans might have, for example queer identities. There are now films on Afro-German history as well. In 2010, the award winning news producer Regina Griffin, directed a documentary that told the story of six “Brown Babies” born during the postwar occupation.

Germans are becoming more aware of Afro-Germans and their claims to German nationality (*Race* 185). However, blatant ignorance and misunderstanding still exist. The German journalist Günter Wallraff even donned blackface makeup in an attempt to experience the lives of Afro-Germans for his controversial 2009 film “Schwarz auf weiß” (“Black on White”). Many Afro-Germans criticized the lack of Afro-Germans in Wallraff’s film as well as its superficiality and misguided attempt to understand their situation (Stender). The film exemplifies the lack of awareness about the Afro-German situation as well as the pervasive lack of knowledge among Germans about the historical discrimination and persecution that Afro-Germans faced in the past and still face. Lack of education breeds ignorance. That many Germans refuse to acknowledge the existence and plight of Germans with darker complexions testifies to an ignorant mindset. The Afro-Germans remain one of the few groups that are still not mentioned in popular Holocaust studies, discussions, and research on the Nazis. A recent initiative by Katharina Oguntoye to include Afro-Germans in Berlin’s
Deutsches Historisches museum exhibitions attempts to rectify this exclusion. There have still been relatively few exhibitions on Afro-Germans in major museums in the 2000s (see Fig. 9 and Fig. 10).

Making Themselves Heard

“Having grown up in Germany, I am on my way away from being a skin color, a nationality, a religion, a party, big, small, intelligent, dumb, on my way to myself, on my way to you”

—Maya Ayim in “Showing her Colors” (Goertz 308).

As one of the major voices in Afro-German movement of the 1980s, May Ayim used her poetry to reflect not only her inner conflicts with her Afro-German identity, but also the situation of other Afro-Germans (see Fig. 16). Outside of the realm of literature, Afro-Germans are using media, protest, and politics to educate on and promote antiracism. Groups are using YouTube, Facebook, and other social networking and multimedia sites to promote campaigns such as “Rassismus Raus” (“Out with Racism”), and “Zeig Rassismus die Rote Karte” (“Show Racism the Red Card”) (“Hannover 96 schmeißt”). Since the 1990s, the Afro-German anti-racism musicians movement, Brothers Keepers, have released two albums “Lightkultur” 2001 and “Am I My Brother’s Keeper?” in 2005. “Lightkultur” is a pun on the controversial term “deutsche Leitkultur” (German guiding culture). Leitkultur became associated with a dominant monoculture during national debates in Germany on immigrant and integration in the early 2000s. Afro-German musicians in Brothers
Keepers, Ade Bantu, D-Flame, Xavier Naidoo, and Mamadee also took part in the 2006 anti-racism documentary “Yes I Am” following the fatal attack on a black man by a right-wing extremist teenager.

Even with these initiatives, little discussion in academia has taken place in Germany about racism against Germans, especially towards Afro-Germans. Discussions on multiculturalism and intersection of identities in regard to Afro-Germans generally take place only in small, Afro-German-led events. In the U.S., on the other hand, conventions and conferences have been held annually on Afro-Germans to promote awareness of Afro-German in recent years. One popular event, for example, is held at Barnard College, presented by their Africana Studies Program and the Goethe-Institut of New York since 2011. A similar annual convention is held in August at Amherst College in Massachusetts; its Black German Heritage and Research Association (formerly the Black German Cultural Society). Headed by Afro-German Rosemarie Peña, the association’s website states that the association’s mission is “document[ing] and promot[ing] the activities of Black Germans and the historic and contemporary presence of Black people in Germany.”

Despite this lack academic discourse in Germany, Afro-Germans and their supporters continue to educate people about Afro-Germans’ history, identity, and exposure to everyday racism. Numerous street names in Berlin carry strong allusions to the German colonial period (Aikins), though their meanings are rarely explained. Street names such as “Togostraße,” “Kamerunerstraße,” and “Lüderitzstraße” refer to former German colonies; Togoland, Kamerun (Cameroon), and German Southwest Africa (Namibia; Lüderitz is a harbor town there). These streets and more make up
the so-called *Afrikanische Viertel* (African neighborhood) in Berlin-Wedding.\textsuperscript{33} Christian Knopp and Marius Krohn summarize the disputes over the imperialistic nature of the street names in their 2012 online article “Blues in Schwarzweiss: Die Black Community im Widerstand gegen kolonialrassistische Straßennamen in Berlin-Mitte” (Blues in Black and White: The Black Community in Opposition to Racist Colonial Street names in Berlin-Mitte).

In 2009, many Afro-Germans and sympathizers protested the name, “Mohrenstraße” as part of the “Pink Rabbit” campaign. Many Germans insisted that the name be changed to “Möhrenstraße” (Carrot Street) because the colonial and pre-

\textsuperscript{33} Other streets include: Afrikanische Straße, Damarstraße, Dualastraße, Ghanastraße, Guineastrasse, Mohasistraße, Otawistraße, Petersallee, Sambesistraße, Sansibarstraße, Senegalstraße, Swakopmunder Straße, Tangastraße, Transvaalstraße, Ugandastraße, Usambarastraße, Windhuker Straße, and Nachtigalplatz (named after Gustav Nachtigal, a German African researcher).
colonial use of the word “Mohr” does not match the current colloquial use and has racist connotations (see Fig. 15; Zeller and Wegmann). Some names have been changed. For example, the Groebenufer in Berlin-Kreuzberg named after Otto Friedrich von Groeben who ran a West African expedition in 1683, was renamed after Afro-German activist May Ayim in 2010 (see Fig. 16). It should be noted that some African immigrants and Germans approve of the street names (Vollmuth; “So sollen”).

Most recently in 2013, classic German children’s books are undergoing evaluation and discussion due the use of, what some consider, colloquially derogative and racist terms (Ayiyi). These include *Die kleine Hexe* (*The Little Witch*), *Der Räuber Hotzenplotz* (*The Robber Hotzenplotz*), and the German translation of

![Street marker on a waterfront dedicated in 2009 to Afro-German activist, poet, and educator Maya Ayim in 2012. Born in 1960, May Opitz was the daughter of a Ghanaian medical student and a white German woman. A German foster family raised her. She was the co-author of *Farbe Bekennen* and the Afro-German organization *ISD*. After suffering a mental and physical collapse while preparing for Black History Month in 1996, she was hospitalized and readmitted for depression in June of that year. In July 1997, she committed suicide.

Source: James Gardner, in photo.
Swedish author Astrid Lindgren’s *Pippi Langstrumpf*. Some proponents of changing the language within these books argue that these popular books indoctrinate children with racial views. And a term like “Neger” in the books is now politically incorrect. The question of modernization versus censorship is currently fueling debate amongst Afro-Germans and white Germans respectively (Neufeld).

Afro-Germans are asserting that they have a place in history and have been doing so for nearly forty years. They are rightfully German and assert that they will determine how they are referred to and will alter popular and cultural references to themselves if necessary. Prejudice and violence directed at immigrant groups or minority groups in Germany are largely considered to be forms of xenophobia in Germany, not racism, despite the fact that many of the individuals targeted are German natives. By gathering supporters and critiquing the pretense of a homogeneous Germany, Afro-Germans are not only still “showing their colors,” but they are also disproving any myths that surround their existence. While it would be erroneous to assume that all is well now with every Afro-German, Afro-Germans are gradually making their claim to a normalized and irrevocable position in German society while simultaneously actualizing the idea of a diverse and multicultural German society.
Bibliography


Das Parlament. 19 March 1952.


Nagl, Tobias. “Louis Brody and the Black Presence in German Film Before 1945.” *Not So Plain as Black and White: Afro-German culture and history 1890-“


Wiedenroth-Coulibaly, Eleanore. “Schwarze Organisierung in Deutschland.”
2012.


Wiltonburg, Mary and Marc Widmann. “WWII G.I. Babies: Children of the Enemy.”

Zeller, Joachim and Heiko Wegmann. “‘Mohren’- Ein Stereotyp in der

Zöller, Abini. Schokoladenkind: Meine Familie und andere Wunder. Hamburg: