Showing Our Colors

Afro-German Women Speak Out

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

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

Afro-German. The women say they've never heard that term used before.

I asked one of my Black students how she'd thought about herself growing up. "The nicest thing they ever called us was 'warbaby,'" she said. But the existence of most Black Germans has nothing to do with the Second World War, and, in fact, predates it by many decades. I have Black German women in my class who trace their Afro-German heritage back to the 1890s.

For me, Afro-German means the shining faces of May and Katharina in animated conversation about their fathers' homelands, the comparisons, joys, disappointments. It means my pleasure at seeing another Black woman walk into my classroom, her reticence slowly giving way as she explores a new self-awareness, gains a new way of thinking about herself in relation to other Black women.

"I've never thought of Afro-German as a positive concept be-
The Germans in the Colonies

The history and present situation of Afro-Germans are closely tied to Germany’s colonial history: the first Africans in Germany came here from the colonies to people who considered themselves to belong to the white “master race.”

Just as the imperial past has yet to be resolved in the minds of Germans—for it did not end by consensus but by defeat—so too the associated ideologies about “black” and “white” have yet to be surmounted. For an understanding of today’s manifestations of racism, it is essential to recall Germany’s much repressed colonial history and colonial consciousness.

From the time of the so-called voyages of discovery in the fifteenth century, European powers had colonized Africa’s territories. In the thirty years preceding World War I, when more territories were incorporated than in all the previous centuries, Germany was an active participant. Imperial Chancellor Otto von Bismarck was at first restrained in his colonial ambitions, because he had not anticipated any economic gain from colonization. His position changed when he recognized that colonial possessions could be used strategically as an instrument of economic policy to distract attention from Germany’s internal social, political, and economic problems.

The middle class should see in imperialism an objective by means of which the present danger to our economic existence might be overcome. The working class should see in the acquisition of colonies an objective to pursue for the whole nation, equally useful for all sectors of the population. In turning toward this objective they would be diverted...
from asserting their legitimate interests here in the country itself. The interests of the individual states whose agricultural or industrial concerns could have torn them asunder—thus casting doubt upon the inherited state and social order forged in the preindustrial era—would be cemented by the objective of imperialism, attractive for both domestic and foreign policy purposes.¹

In conservative circles, calls were soon heard for the establishment of colonies to which troublesome leftist workers and unionists could be deported. Friedrich Fabri, inspector of the Barmer Mission Society, commented on this idea, as did the colonial propagandist von Weber. In 1897 von Weber wrote to the prince of Hohenlohe-Langenburg:

The socialist ferment in the heads of our unpropertied, uneducated masses, becomes all the more dangerous, the more it continues to be swelled by intelligent elements from the educated classes, who as a result of the generally bad economic situation will augment their ranks in ever greater numbers. In order to bring the German state back to health and allow emigration to function as a safety valve for all the bad gasses and vapors threatening the mechanism of our state with explosion, at least 200,000 or, better, 300,000 people ought to emigrate annually.²

Colonial seizure of power diverted attention from the urgent need for changes in domestic policy and economic restructuring. A similar function was performed by waves of immigration to America and Australia from the mid-eighteenth century onward—as exit restrictions were increasingly liberalized and developments in transportation lowered travel costs. These movements served to relieve Germany’s economy of that portion of the population that could no longer be employed.³ Simultaneously the slave trade came into full boom, for rich Europeans in the New World were seeking the cheapest labor for plantations and industry. Thus the ascent and enrichment of one-half of the world engendered the crippling and enslavement of the other half. “We can assume that Africa, at least as of the fifteenth century, probably lost around 100 million people.”⁴ According to history professor Heinrich Loth, German authorities directly promoted or indirectly aided and abetted the slave trade and slavery. “In Togo and Cameroon slavery was sanctioned, . . . stabilized by the colonial system; and a consequence of the exploitation of the institution of slavery was also the promotion of the slave trade.”⁵ Togo, Cameroon, German East Africa (present-day Tanzania), and German Southwest Africa (present-day Namibia) made up the colonial possessions, to which the German Empire had held internationally (European) acknowledged claim since the Congo Conference convened by Bismarck (November 15, 1884—February 26, 1885). The boundaries drawn during that conference, which were determined on the basis of the economic and military interests of European statesmen, remain valid to today.

“Cultural Mission” and “Heathen Mission”: The Emigrants’ Sense of Mission

The social Darwinist ideology of the right of the strong (“the survival of the fittest”) to the assertion of power in nature and society gave a form of legitimacy to placing African peoples and territories under the “protection of the Mother Country” by means of shrewd diplomacy and militarily enforced contractual agreements.

The emigrants’ zeal for conquest manifested itself in a corresponding German national sense of mission, which looked upon the task of educating the “natives” to become proper German subjects as an obligation. They saw their educational mission as one of raising the “lower race” to a “higher level of culture.” This in spite of the fact that Vasco de Gama and his people had already concluded in 1497 that the inhabitants of the region in present-day Tanzania “were traveling the eastern seas and had better navigational knowledge than they themselves, and they encountered there city-states and governments that were just as flourishing and differentiated as anything similar in Europe.”⁶ The conquerors’ superiority in weapon technology resulted in defeated populations, forced labor, alienation, destruction of socially evolved structures, and the imposition of foreign structures of consciousness and education.
Deutsche Kolonien
1 Togo
2 Kamerun
3 Deutsches-Südwestafrika
4 Deutsches-Ostafrika

Französische Kolonien
1 Algerien
2 Marokko
3 Tunesien
4 Franz. Westafrika
5 Franz. Ägypten
6 Franz. Somaliland
7 Komoren
8 Madagaskar

Britische Kolonien
1 Gambia
2 Sierra Leone
3 Goldküste
4 Goldkönigreich
5 Neufundland
6 Brit. Somaliland
7 Uganda
8 Brit. Ostafrika

Italienische Kolonien
1 Ägypten
2 Brit. Ägyptischer Sudan
3 Südsudanische Union

Belgische Kolonie
1 Belgisch-Kongo

Portugiesische Kolonien
1 Portugiesisch-Angola
2 Portugiesisch-Tansania

Spanische Kolonien
1 Río de Oro
2 Spanisch-Guinea
3 Spanisch-Marokko

Gebiete, teilweise von Großbritannien beherrscht
1 Ägypten
2 Brit.-Ägyptischer Sudan
3 Südsudanische Union

Italienische Kolonien
1 Ägypten
2 Brit.-Ägyptischer Sudan

Portugiesische Kolonien
1 Portugiesisch-Angola
2 Portugiesisch-Tansania

Spanische Kolonien
1 Río de Oro
2 Spanisch-Guinea
3 Spanisch-Marokko

Unabhängige Staaten
1 Liberia
2 Äthiopien

Deutsche Kolonialgebiete

Gebiete, teilweise von Großbritannien beherrscht
1 Ägypten
2 Brit.-Ägyptischer Sudan
3 Südsudanische Union

Italienische Kolonien
1 Ägypten
2 Brit.-Ägyptischer Sudan

Portugiesische Kolonien
1 Portugiesisch-Angola
2 Portugiesisch-Tansania

Spanische Kolonien
1 Río de Oro
2 Spanisch-Guinea
3 Spanisch-Marokko

Unabhängige Staaten
1 Liberia
2 Äthiopien

Colonial Africa, 1914
Walter Rodney writes that the colonial governments imposed head taxes on land, cattle, and people. These could be paid only in the currency of the colonial masters (reichsmarks in the German colonies), so that the inhabitants were forced to cultivate export products or to work on the plantations and in the mines of the whites. Separation of the races was customary in all German colonies.

The "Native Authority Ordinances" for Southwest Africa from 1907 were the germ of the apartheid legislation still in force today. Africans were settled in ghettos near the residential and work places of the whites, obligatory passes and registration removed their freedom of movement. Prohibition of land acquisition and cattle ownership robbed them of their independent traditional basis of existence. Thus they had to become wage slaves for the whites.

A plethora of pseudoscientific literature and myths artificially magnified the differences between Europeans and the people of the black "race." The rumor of wild "barbarians" and man-eating cannibals was one of the traveling myths propagated in all the colonies, in no cases supported by proof from first-hand observation. The wilder the myths of the gruesomeness of the Blacks, the more easily the crimes committed against them could be justified as educative measures. The German philosopher Hegel based his treatises on the nature of Africans on colonial literature of this type, propagating racist views:

The human body is of an animal nature, but it is essentially the body of a being capable of representation; in short, it has psychological associations. But this is not the case with the negroes, and the eating of human flesh is quite compatible with the African principle; to the sensuous negro, human flesh is purely an object of the senses, like all other flesh. It is not used primarily as food; but at festivals, for example, many hundreds of prisoners are tortured and beheaded, and their bodies are returned to those who took them prisoner so that they may distribute the parts. In some places, it is true, human flesh has even been seen on sale in the markets. At the death of a rich man, hundreds may well be slaughtered and devoured. Prisoners are murdered and slaughtered, and as a rule the victor consumes the heart of his slain enemy. And at magical ceremonies, it very often happens that the sorcerer murders the first person he encounters and divides his body among the crowd.
For Hegel, Africa was “the land of childhood, which, lying beyond the day of self-conscious history, is enveloped in the dark mantle of night.” He considered its inhabitants unready for freedom. They were in need of awakening and education by Europeans. Hegel’s racism is in direct opposition to the humanistic ideology he is thought to represent. Fanon writes fittingly: “Bourgeois ideology, however, which is the proclamation of an essential equality between men, manages to appear logical in its own eyes by inviting the sub-men to become human, and to take as their prototype Western humanity as incarnated in the Western bourgeoisie.” In my opinion racism goes beyond discrimination: it is the economic, cultural, political, and social imposition of one’s own interests and interpretations.

The colonizers condemned the colonized to being what they turned out to be, and then criticized them for the way they turned out: the result of inhuman treatment can only be refusal, defense, and atrophy. The colonizers saw these forms of resistance as laziness, cunning, and meanness, and the lazier, more cunning, and meaner they called those who resisted them, the more natural it became for the colonizers to respond with regimentation, whip, and murder.

The negro is the born slave, who needs his despot as the opium smoker needs his pipe, and he lacks any noble characteristics. He is prone to lying and stealing, is 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 reactive capacity of his will.

. . . I have tried to make an impression on the Massai with forest fires, firecrackers, even with a coincidental eclipse of the sun on 12/23, but I found that the only thing that made an impression on those wild sons of the steppes were bullets of the repeater and double-barrel rifles and by persistently using them against their own bodies, at that.

This is the commentary of Dr. Carl Peters, founding member of the Society for German Colonization (1884) and of the German East African Society (1885), which took over territories, for the most part in East Africa.

German Women in the Colonies

Political diplomacy, military occupation, and defense were carried out exclusively by men. However, German women also immigrated in large numbers to the colonies and stood by their men’s side. Martha Mamozi estimates that women made up two-fifths of the total German immigrant population. Most of these women were nurses, domestic workers, and teachers. Many traveled to the colonies to work in the mission schools and stations there, to take jobs in already established households, or to get married. The Women’s Association of the German Colonial Society was founded in 1907 as an organization of women for women that facilitated and supported the travel of single women to the colonies. “As to skills, they had to ‘know how to cook, wash, iron, and make a simple skirt and blouse.’ Best suited were ‘country girls’ who were already familiar with poultry, husbandry, dairy farming, and garden work.” The director of the colonial school for women in Witzenhausen, Baroness Zech, formulated the mission contract for German women as follows:

Her energy should not take the form of a free, tomboyish nature, but through true femininity she should put the stamp of her nature on the new overseas Germany; she should not merely strive and work out there, but she should be imbued with the spirit of pure Christianity, the high priestess of German breeding and custom, the bearer of German culture, a blessing in the foreign land: German women, German honor, German devotion across the sea.

Women remained excluded from important colonial policy decisions. Even when they had to suffer under the chauvinism of their husbands, they frequently internalized it in such a way that blinded them to their own oppression. They participated in oppressing the Africans, and in those cases where German women made reports, they hardly deviated from the descriptions of the male colonialists. “Uncleanliness,” “carefree nature,” “born laziness” were some phrases frequently used to stereotype African women in order to justify the necessity of a “strong disciplinary hand.”

Simone de Beauvoir writes on the combination of racism, sex-
ism, and classism: "If they belong to the bourgeoisie, they feel solidarity with men of that class, not with proletarian women; if they are white, their allegiance is to white men, not to Negro women." 17

Where German women did not reflect critically on their situation, and this was most often the case, they were not able to positively interpret cultural differences around them and put them to their own use. Having internalized the male projections, they sought fulfillment in the roles accorded them of hardworking, modest wife and mother, receiving in return the privilege of being honored as the "guardian of tradition." The outpost of home and fatherland placed the German woman above every Black woman and man, and this advantage seemed enough to reconcile her to her subordinated role in relation to her husband. 18

On the one hand, Black women were denounced as "whores," 19 thereby justifying their rape by white men. On the other hand, German women were far less opposed to the diminution of sexuality and reproduction. Black women opposed the appropriation of their bodies with birth strikes, which the cessation of birth premiums could hardly hinder, 20 whereas it was not uncommon for white women to give birth to seven or more children. "I am not aware," writes Clara Brockmann, in 1910 in Southwest Africa, "not even through hearsay, of any case where a Kanaka woman has had nearly so many offspring." 21

The German woman is as indispensable today for the propagation of the "master race" as she was in the early twentieth century, and her standing in the white male world continues to be dependent to a great degree on offspring. Any solidarity with a Black woman, in this connection, would have been equivalent to a loss of prestige and power.

In ascribing negative traits, white women were considerably crueler and blinder toward Black women than toward Black men, possibly due to fear of rivalry and to self-hatred. Men were described as ugly far less often and received less contempt. Mamozai concludes, in the descriptions of Black women: "If colored people are all stupid, their women are in any case the stupidest and laziest." 22

And When You Leave,
Take Your Pictures with You

Our white sisters
radical friends
love to own pictures of us
sitting at a factory machine
wielding a machete
in our bright bandanas
holding brown yellow black red children
reading books from literacy campaigns
holding machine guns bayonets bombs knives
Our white sisters
radical friends
should think
again.

Our white sisters
radical friends
love to own pictures of us
walking to the fields in hot sun
with straw hat on head if brown
bandana if black
in bright embroidered skirts
holding brown yellow black red children
reading books from literacy campaigns
smiling.
Our white sisters radical friends
should think again.
No one smiles
at the beginning of a day spent
digging for souvenir chunks of uranium
of cleaning up after
our white sisters
radical friends
And when our white sisters
radical friends see us
in the flesh
not as a picture they own,
they are not quite as sure
if
they like us as much.
We’re not as happy as we look
on
their
wall.

 Colonization of Consciousness
through Mission and “Education”

If the culture-bearing power bears down upon the still largely uncultured peoples solely by means of such measures as taxation and the concomitant coercion to work, the latter either will be overwhelmed by it or will seek to shake off the power that is working on them. So the mission must stretch out its helping and redeeming hand to them by sowing Christianity and effect in them an inner conversion alongside the external one.

MISSIONARY GRÖSCHL

Julius Nyerere, president of Tanzania, states, in regard to the function of and content of the colonial education system that it “did not transfer the knowledge and values of Tanzanian society from one generation to the next, but was the conscious attempt to change these values and to replace the traditional knowledge with the knowledge of a different type of society.” In all colonies the transfer of skills was supposed to implant the values of the colonial society and to train [Africans] for service in the colonial apparatus. In these countries the official interest in education was based on the need for local office personnel and minor civil servants; beyond that, various religious groups were interested in imparting knowledge of reading and writing and further education to the population as a part of their mission work.

The physical and economic exploitation had many faces: forced labor, the plunder of raw materials, and so on. The psychological enslavement and the emotional/spiritual subjugation of native Af-ricans to the needs of the colonial power were taken over by colonial institutions and mission schools. Often missionaries protested against forced labor, land alienation, and mistreatment of people. In particular the wars of annihilation, such as that against the Herero—whose resistance ended in their near total extermination—led many missionaries to give up their “neutral” position and take up the cause of the oppressed. For the most part, however, the missionaries and the colonial administrations maintained a tacit relationship of mutual support. F. Fabri, inspector of the Rhine Mission Society, the largest in its day, was among those who openly encouraged cooperation between colonial administration and mission, and whose idea of African people was clearly stamped by the racial ideologies of his time.

Thus the question arises whether the backward state of certain races and peoples, apparently based on a divine decision, doesn’t also determine a different place for them in the holy healing place, and whether also in the New Covenant—the universality of Grace in the presence of Christ notwithstanding—in the present time of the world, a number of peoples and nations are and shall be set back until a new era in God’s kingdom. . . . For even if it is in truth a sin to God and men to claim, with the supporters of slavery and the Boers in South Africa, a difference in nature among the various human races, it corresponds neither to actual reality nor to the word of God to deny or minimize the effectively existent and far-reaching difference among the various human races. When a negro stands before us, black as ebony, with kinky, wooly hair, compressed skull and receding forehead, in contrast to the massively developed back of the head and the lower portions of the face, the lips expansively protruding, the nose pressed flat—when I behold him, now enlivened by the deepest sensual spark, then again in dull, lethargic indifference, impervious to the rod of the tormentor; to immerse oneself mentally in this sight—and tribes like the African Bushmen and the Australian Papuas present an even sadder and more moving picture—is to be struck with the irrefutable impression: those are not merely the traits of the materialist primeval man disfigured by sin; here lies a fundamentally singular secret, reaching beyond all notations of history.

FRIEDRICH FABRI, 1859
Even where less extreme racist opinions were represented and the basic equality of humans was not cast in doubt, there was, nevertheless, agreement that the “heathen” were to be reeducated.

We are all of one mind, the missions, too, that the negro soul is not as we want it and can use it. For it is only out of this conviction that we derive the justification for influencing the negro soul and for dislodging it from its previous path of development.

DR. KÜLZ, GOVERNMENT PHYSICIAN, 1910

Protestant and Catholic mission stations were established as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century in Africa. “These early mission settlements likewise formed the basis for the establishment of the school system on the continent.” In their educational content they contributed directly and indirectly to the training of children as well as adults in those “virtues” desirable for work in the administration, on the plantations, in the colonial masters’ households: punctuality, obedience, willingness to work.

In his mission book, Johann Emonts provides a description for children and adolescents in Germany:

The poor heathen children grow up practically like the wild animals of the field. They have the benefit of no, or, better stated, a wild, education. Those little wild children become big wild people, that is: mean, evil people, ruined in their manners, and as there is little about them that is good and pleasing they are therefore all the more unpleasant and wild to behold...

...First of all the wild heathenness must be taken out of them. It lies deep in their little black nappy heads. They must renounce the heathen manners and customs that they have practiced from their youth. They may no longer watch the heathen dances. They are to stay away from the heathen sacrifices and ceremonies from now on. They may no longer continue to trust in the many magic devices, fetishes, amulets. Their belief in spirits must disappear. Modesty and decency, order and punctuality, love of their neighbor and a sense of justice must be taught to them. It is clear that this is not possible in a few days or weeks. It takes years.

In addition to general “good deportment,” education was to transmit also the division of work along gender lines, as it determined the relationship between men and women in German (or European) society. African women were trained in and restricted to typical domestic activities, which formerly fell also in the male sphere of responsibility. Men were favored in admission to schools.

The introduction of wage labor particularly encouraged the polarization of the sexes: as a rule women did not receive paid work (they usually took over the unpaid duties of housewife), so that often prostitution became their only source of money; in cases where they received pay for work on the plantations, their remuneration was less than that of men.

The limitations of educational opportunities concurrent with the favoring of some individuals led to hierarchical structures that undermined the solidarity of the community. Those who could secure a position in the colonial administration system tended to identify with the oppressors, just as some village elders were corrupted through financial cooptation.

This internalization of one’s own oppression beside simultaneous (and usually only apparent) participation in power leads to grotesque relationships. Oppressed women defended the men’s world, subjugated peoples, their conquerors. “Us German boys got to stick together!” said a black man in Brazil in World War I, and another, when there was talk of the “new” fascist Germany: “We be some black Negroes, but we got Hitler blood!”

From a Ghanaian by the name of “Bismarck” I learned that this is a quite commonly heard name in his country. Underlying this might be the attitude that Winnie Mandela speaks of regarding her name:

My father always had the greatest admiration for the German people and their industrial achievements. That’s why he insisted on that terrible name “Winifred,” which subsequently became “Winnie.” He also believed in the Christian names, because of the missionaries. Whenever he disciplines us he would refer to the hardworking and industrious Germans. He wanted us to become as strong as they are. As if I had my fighting spirit from them! But since I became internationally known under that name, I’ll have to continue with it. After all, it is a constant reminder of our oppression.
The Colonial Heritage

The economic, political, social, and psychic colonization continues today. When in the 1960s most African countries were demanding independent status according to international law, a complete relinquishing by the former colonial powers was hardly possible.

Through diverse measures, taken both before and after independence, the new states of black Africa remained tied de facto to Europe (primarily to the respective colonial powers) economically, politically, and culturally. Shortly after the founding of the OAU, eighteen of the African states were joined to the EEC by the signing of the first convention of association, in Yaoundé, Cameroon (20 July 1963). The new states took over the social and economic apparatuses—administrative centers, ports, railroads, schools, hospitals, etc.—which were patterned on the needs of the colonial powers and concentrated principally in urban centers.

The reliance on apparatuses already in place facilitated political and economic stability, but also hindered forms of development oriented toward the specific needs of the country. Dragolyub Najman stresses the fact that even today numerous African educational systems are still based on those of their former rulers and should be regarded as unsuitable to the needs of the African countries. In nearly all countries—Tanzania being an exception—the school operates separately from traditional, informal educational institutions of family and ethnic group. It seldom creates a connection between the various cultural orientations and coexisting forms of production, and augments—through one-sided qualification for duties in the administrative sector—the flight from the countryside and unemployment.

Educational content colonizes consciousness in very subtle ways.

The black schoolboy in the Antilles, who in his lessons is forever talking about "our ancestors, the Gauls," identifies himself with the explorer, the bringer of civilization, the white man who carries truth to savages—an all-white truth. There is identification—that is, the young Negro subjectively adopts a white man's attitude.

In a variety of ways the idea is transmitted that white skin color is the better skin color and that European (i.e., white) consciousness is progressive thinking. Creams to retard pigment formation are offered everywhere on the African, American, and European market. Fanon wrote as early as 1952:

For several years certain laboratories have been trying to produce a serum for "denegrification"; with all the earnestness in the world, laboratories have sterilized their test tubes, checked their scales, and embarked on researches that might make it possible for the miserable Negro to whiten himself and thus to throw off the burden of that corporeal malediction.

The cosmetic preparations that work on the pigment material melanin enjoy great popularity even today and are used especially by women. Thus Awa Thiam urges that measures be taken against newspapers which publish advertisements for these bleaching agents. They should be boycotted or banned by Black countries. These products should be withdrawn from Black markets. There should be a campaign to spread information about
them among Black women as well as men. Let Black women and Black men wear their black colour with dignity and pride.44

Black women were and are the most exposed to oppression and must correspondingly undertake the greatest efforts to attack it. In precolonial society patriarchal structures hindered their full equality.45 In colonial society the woman was just as exploited as the man. But the man was, however, elevated above the woman by the fortified structures of patriarchy and hierarchy. And, in concert with Angela Davis, we must note: “If the most violent punishments of men consisted in floggings and mutilations, women were flogged and mutilated, as well as raped.”46 They were situated in an additional, direct power relationship to their oppressor.

Racism and sexism, in their multifaceted interaction, produce a situation whose complexity is not often recognized. Thus Awa Thiam rightfully assails Kate Millet as one of those feminists who place oppression of women and oppression of Blacks on the same level. “If rape is to women what lynching is to Blacks, then what do we make of the rape of Black women by Black men?”47 This is a question not often asked because it implies a very limited and false perception, one which Adrienne Rich describes as “tunnel vision.”48

Notes

3. “Thus the roughly 9.5 million people from third world countries living in the industrialized nations in the middle of the 1970s make up less than .5 percent of the inhabitants of all developing countries. From this it is clear that, unlike a century ago in Europe, emigration can hardly contribute in a significant way to the solution of the demographic problems of these countries.” From Jürgen Bähr, Bevölkerungsgeographie, Verteilung und Dynamik der Bevölkerung in globaler, nationaler und regionaler Sicht (Stuttgart, 1983), p. 318.
4. Joseph Ki-Zerbo, Histoire de l’Afrique noire d’hier à demain (Paris, 1978), p. 218. The figures vary between forty and two hundred million people, according to what peripheral factors are considered. See Gert Paczensky, Die Weißen kommen (Hamburg, 1970), p. 179. Many died during the long trek to the coast and under the torturous treatment on the sea passage: “Given that the sea passage lasted two months, we can surmise the mortality rate caused by epidemics. It was horrific. As a way of addressing this problem the Blacks were forced up on deck during the day, despite the dangers, so that they could get fresh air and even work a little. Dances were even arranged, with the threat of the whip where necessary. That was to help raise the morale of the most depressed among them. Nevertheless there were frequent revolts. Crew members were lynched. All the revolts ended in blood-
baths, often even necessitating the use of firearms. The leaders were executed in the presence of all, or were drowned or whipped to death. Sometimes their buttocks would be slit with a knife and a mixture of hot pepper and vinegar poured into the wounds. The leader of a hunger strike would be killed and force fed to the other slaves.”


13. Jean-Paul Sartre writes concerning the colonizer: “Thus, oppression is justified through itself: The oppressors create and maintain by force the evil that turns the oppressed more and more into that which he must be to deserve his fate. The colonizer can accord himself absolution only by systematically propagating the ‘dehumanization’ of the colonized, that is, by identifying a little more each day with the colonial apparatus. Terror and exploitation dehumanize, and the exploiter empowers himself to this dehumanization in order to exploit further” (Jean P. Sartre, Kolonialismus und Neokolonialismus [Reinbek, 1968], p. 26).


15. Mamoza, Herrenmenschen, p. 16.


18. There were always committed feminists who considered the abolition of slavery and all forms of exploitation as a part of their struggle against female oppression. In America it was the committed middle-class women of the white women’s movement who were in the front lines of the anti-slavery movement. They saw in the oppression of the slaves a part of their own oppression by male domination, which, however, led to an unjustified equating of “house slavery” and slave labor. See Angela Y. Davis, Women, Race & Class (New York, 1983), p. 34.


20. “The native, particularly the Herero, takes the position, after the revolt, that he wants to produce no children. He feels himself a prisoner, expressing this in every job that does not suit him; and he wants to provide no new laborers for his oppressor, who has deprived him of his cherished laziness. Anyone who has had the opportunity to see, especially among the Hereros before the revolt, the characteristically prolific broods, and then looks around today on most farms, the difference would be immediately remarkable. In this regard German farmers have been attempting for years to address this situation by offering a premium, perhaps a nanny goat, for every native child born on the farm, but generally in vain” (Brief eines Farmers 1912, cited in ibid., p. 52).


22. Ibid., p. 166.


24. From Buch der deutschen Kolonien (Leipzig, 1934), cited in Bald et al., Die Liebe zum Imperium, p. 115.


26. “At the beginning of the revolt there were about 100,000 Hereros. At the end, according to the last official statistics of the year 1913, the figure was 21,699. These were expropriated” (Paczynsky, Die Weißen kommen, p. 60).


29. From Verhandlungen des deutschen Nationalkongresses, cited in Bald et al., Die Liebe zum Imperium, p. 115.
African and Afro-German
Women in the Weimar Republic and under National Socialism

Defeat and Occupation of the Rhineland: The “Black Scourge”

German colonial rule came to an end in the very first years of World War I. With the exception of German East Africa the German colonies were occupied by French and English troops. For its role in the war, Germany lost all its overseas territories and was required by the cease-fire agreement to consent to the occupation of the left bank of the Rhine as well as the cities of Cologne, Coblenz, Kehl, and Mainz on the right bank. The Treaty of Versailles mandated the occupation by the victorious powers for a period of fifteen years and the gradual withdrawal of troops within this period, as long as Germany abided by the other treaty conditions (keeping up reparations payments, etc.).

Black colonial soldiers were also among the ranks of the occupation forces. Hence, when the Rhineland was occupied by French, Belgian, British, and American troops, Black soldiers were among them. The largest portion was in the French army, with between thirty and forty thousand Africans, some from Madagascar and Morocco, but for the most part from Algeria and Tunisia. During the war, Germany declined—more from necessity than of its own free will, for England had blocked Germany’s access to the seaway—to call Blacks into action. Hence it was easy for Germany to denounce the introduction of Blacks as an “act of inhumanity that was dangerous to the German people.” In 1920 Field Marshall Hindenberg wrote in his book Aus meinem Leben: