

Black Germans and the Holocaust

Lecture delivered at the International Slavery Museum, Liverpool, on 27 January 2015

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Let me start at the end of the story with the post-war testimony of a woman called Soya K. She was the daughter of a Cameroonian man and his German wife. Raised by her mother after her parents divorced, she was 15 when Hitler came to power in 1933. In April 1951 she applied to the Berlin Compensation Office for substantial compensation in view of what she had suffered between the Nazi takeover in 1933 and the end of the war. This was the story she told: In the summer of 1933, Nazis took over the suburban villa where she and her mother lived, declaring that a cellar was good enough for people who were racially inferior. In 1936 she was expelled from her secondary school, along with a half-Jewish schoolmate. In the summer of 1936 she was declared stateless. Having hoped to study medicine, she was unable to get work because of her skin colour, so she trained as a dancer and travelled to France with a theatrical revue. Back in Germany in 1939, she was advised that she needed to prove that she was an Aryan in order to continue working. A check of her family background revealed that her mother's father had been a baptised Jew, and the result was that both she and her mother now fell under Nazi antisemitic legislation. Soya was banned from the stage, her mother subject to forced labour in industry once the war broke out. Soya had meanwhile got involved with a white German man, and in early 1941 was pregnant with their child. She was summoned to a meeting with the Gestapo at which she was threatened with sterilisation, and decided to go underground. With the help of her mother and the father of her child she lived illegally in and around Berlin until December 1943, when her partner moved to Prague, taking her with him. She was arrested there by the Gestapo in November 1944 and held in prison until the liberation. In prison she was beaten and contracted tuberculosis. In 1951 she was claiming compensation for damage to her health and her career, for loss of property and for loss of freedom under aggravated circumstances.

At first the Compensation Office denied her claim. They read her account as a claim that she had been persecuted because she was Jewish. They queried her mother's claim to have been half-Jewish on technical grounds. They also doubted that Soya had been threatened with sterilisation in 1941, because so far the authorities had no evidence that there had been an official policy or practice of sterilising Jews before late 1942.

Soya appealed this decision. She explained that it was her lawyer who had insisted that she present herself as a Jewish victim. She thought that he had simply not been able to make sense of her case because it WASN'T like all the Jewish compensation cases he was used to, and she cited a remark he had repeatedly made, to the considerable amusement of his workmates: 'Well I may be prepared to believe that your father's a Negro but there's no guarantee that the authorities will, since they can't see you!' Along with her letter of appeal she sent five photographs of herself 'which prove incontrovertibly that it's not just "according to me" that my father was a Negro.' In a subsequent review the Compensation Office acknowledged that she was certainly a mulatto (the term she used) or *Negermischling* (the official term), and that it was entirely plausible that she had been persecuted because of her relationship with a white German; she was granted a substantial lump sum.

I've given some attention to this particular case because it has a number of features that are typical of situation of black people in Nazi Germany. Soya K. suffered a pattern of

* This lecture is based on research carried out in collaboration with Dr Robbie Aitken (Sheffield Hallam University). More detail and sources can be found in Robbie Aitken and Eve Rosenhaft, *Black Germany. The Making and Unmaking of a Diaspora Community 1884-1960* (Cambridge 2013).

harassment and social exclusion that began very early after the Nazis took power, the denial of opportunities for schooling and work, and the increasing pressure of police surveillance and gradual closure of safe spaces and opportunities for escape in wartime. It is also typical that the threat of sterilisation stands at the centre of Soya's account. When the Compensation Office accepted her appeal they made no comment on this point, but she had argued at length in her letter that whatever might or might not be the case for Jews, her own fear that she might be sterilised was grounded in what she *knew* about what had happened to other black men and women of her generation. At the same time, the spectacle of a black person 'passing' (or 'being passed') as Jewish in order to validate her claim to racial persecution – funny if it weren't so sad - and the way in which the assessment of her claim turned on the extent to which her qualification for victimhood was visible in her face, tells us something about what people didn't and don't know about Black Germans in the Holocaust.

Let me step back now and outline the pattern and trajectory of official policy towards Blacks in Nazi Germany. There is no question that fear and hatred of *Jews* stood at the centre of Nazi thinking about what the Nazis called 'race' and motivated the key measures that the regime introduced. At the same time it's clear that *Blacks* were marked out from a very early stage as a group that would need to be dealt with in the general reordering of society if the purity of German 'blood' was to be ensured for the future. Commonly they were paired with Jews in Nazi imagery and discourse – as if to explain that if you hated and feared Jews you needed to hate Blacks too. Before the Nazis came to power nationally in 1933, Wilhelm Frick, who would be appointed Interior Minister in Hitler's government, introduced measures against black music and black performers in Thuringia, where he was regional Interior Minister. In the first two years of the regime it was widely expected that any racial laws that the regime brought in would apply to Blacks, and the proposal for a new criminal code that was published in 1933 not only called for sexual relations between 'a German and a member of an alien community of blood or race' to be treated as 'treason against the race'. It also proposed punishments for those who did 'damage to the honour of the race' by flagrantly and 'shamelessly' consorting with 'members of coloured races', and it referred the legal practice of racial segregation in the southern United States as a model. In the event, Nazi racism first took legal form in the Nuremberg Laws of September 1935, and these were directed entirely and explicitly at Jews: Jews were stripped of their German citizenship and marriage and sexual relations between Jews and other Germans were banned. Nevertheless, the American idea of 'race' as a matter of skin-colour was a powerful element in the discussions among Nazi policymakers that led up to the Nuremberg Laws. The Justice Minister thought it would be easy to get ordinary Germans to accept and adhere to new race laws as long as they could *see* who the racial aliens were. He said, 'The idea of criminalising race mixing as such would face far fewer difficulties if only it wasn't the Jews who were de facto at the top of the list.' But they were at the top of Hitler's list, and he dictated the final shape of the Nuremberg Laws. It remained for Interior Minister Frick, with his track-record on anti-black legislation, to extend the citizenship and marriage provisions of the laws to 'Gypsies, Negroes and their mongrel children' in November 1935. In 1939 Blacks were officially banned from performing in public (and it may well have been this ban rather than a personal one based on her Jewish background that affected Soya K.) Black children were formally excluded from state schools in Austria in June 1939 and in the rest of the Reich in March 1941. The last formal measure directed at Blacks as such was a decree issued by Himmler on 10 October 1942. Local police authorities throughout Germany and the occupied territories were ordered to locate and report back to the Reich Criminal

Police Bureau on all *Neger* and *Negermischlinge* currently living in their areas of responsibility.

It isn't entirely clear what lay behind the 1942 order. But it looks like part of a general radicalisation in policy towards the whole range of 'racial aliens' that took place in wartime. Himmler's order for the registration of Blacks was issued at the same time as he was giving close attention to the question of how Germany's 'Gypsy' population might be managed, and the result of his deliberations in that case was that the overwhelming majority of German Gypsies were deported to Auschwitz. In carrying out the deportation of Gypsies, the police authorities were more radical than Himmler himself, and that is symptomatic of a wider campaign on the part of the police to 'clean up' Germany by simply interning social outsiders in concentration camps and expecting them to die there. Now, anyone interned in a concentration camp had their racial status recorded, but in the second half of the war we find some evidence that people were being arrested simply for *being* black - like 14-year-old son an African American man Gerd Schramm, arrested in 1944; his prisoner card at Buchenwald concentration camp gave '*Negermischling*' as the reason for internment. All in all, then, it seems likely that if the war had taken a different turn plans would have been made to eliminate black people from Europe through deportation, internment or murder.

These policies and measures applied in principle to all Blacks and *Mischlinge*. In fact, there was no such thing as 'a Black' in 1933, when Hitler came to power in Germany. The country's black population came from a range of backgrounds and had many different positions in German society; in practice, the way they were treated by the authorities and the quality of their experience varied with these differences, particularly in peacetime. There are no definitive figures for the numbers of black adults in Germany at any one time; in 1933 there were certainly substantial numbers of African Americans, some British and other European colonials and possibly as many as 300 Liberians, settled or regular visitors. The core black population, and the one that was a permanent preoccupation of the Nazis, was made up of natives of the former German colonies, mainly men who had settled in Germany, and their German-born children, most of whom had white German mothers. These included some eighty-five individuals with a Cameroonian background and a further forty or so of Togolese or East African origin. They were based mainly in Hamburg and Berlin, but not exclusively. They were also well networked among themselves; while the experiences of harassment, discrimination and war tended to drive the community apart, a number of them testified, like Soya K., to the fact that news got around about what was happening to friends and relatives. It is these people that I'm going to focus on in what follows.

As far as the Nazi authorities were concerned, the colonial background of these men and women was as important as the fact of their skin colour. Germany had lost its colonies under the terms of the Versailles settlement after the First World War. Since 1919, Cameroon and Togo had been largely controlled by France and East Africa by Britain. For the people who had been born in those territories and found themselves in Germany after the First World War, this situation meant both that they were stuck in Germany and that the German authorities took a particular interest in them and a degree of responsibility for their welfare; between the wars, many German Africans depended directly on Foreign Office funds for their income, particularly during the depression. These stranded colonials and their families were interesting to the German government while Germany harboured some hope of regaining its colonial empire, and this hope persisted up to the eve of the Second World War. At one point in the late 1930s it looked as though the British and French governments might be willing to return Germany's colonies in order to buy peace in Europe. Under these circumstances, former colonial subjects had a propaganda value if

their loyalty could be retained. Erika M., who survived the war to win a 'glamorous granny' prize in Hamburg in 1970, worked in the national insurance office in Hamburg; she was sacked on the basis of the 1933 law that banned non-Aryans from employment in public service, but the Interior Ministry insisted that she be reinstated because she was the daughter of a colonial subject. Even plans and measures for segregation took account of the historical status of this group of Blacks. Following the order that black children be excluded from school, one Foreign Office official suggested that all children of African colonial migrants could be isolated and taught together at training school for women who were planning to go into colonial service. This plan was never put into effect, but a more large-scale scheme for simultaneously putting former colonials to use and keeping them under control was.

The Deutsche Afrikaschau was a touring troupe established with the support Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry. It started as a project to provide work for unemployed black people, and one of the original organisers was an Afro-German. But it was adopted by the Nazi government and developed as a vehicle for colonial propaganda. It was also a means by which black people could be brought together, kept in view and segregated from the majority community. Between 1935 and 1939 the Afrikaschau toured Germany performing 'native customs', selling colonial products, showing slides about the colonies, and giving lectures about their so-called 'homelands' and their service in the colonial forces during the First World War – so-called, because in fact a good many members of the troupe were German-born and some were African Americans or Afro-Caribbeans. In a situation in which it was difficult for Blacks to get work in any occupation except some kind of performing, the Afrikaschau provided an income for many of them and a safe space in which they could maintain some kind of community. At the end of 1938 plans were developed to force all 'colonials' to join the Afrikaschau; people were increasingly put under pressure to join by the withdrawal of other forms of financial support or by being denied the papers that would allow them to tour abroad. (You'll remember that Soya K. toured Europe with a travelling revue after training as a dancer.) In the event, though, the plan to corral black people in this way was dropped. This was partly because the performers wouldn't stay on message – they would talk about how great life in the German colonies had been and then greet the white audience as brothers and fellow Germans. The Afrikaschau was dissolved in 1939, at the same time as the ban on all public performances by Blacks that I mentioned earlier.

However, performing continued to offer career prospects and safe spaces for black people; those who were young in the 1930s and 1940s had some positive memories and these were often about working in the film industry, where the boom in films celebrating Germany's colonial history provided work for black actors and extras. Until Germany's successes in the Second World War made it possible to displace them with cheaper black POWs, a handful of Afro-German adults and young people were able to earn well, and in the film studios as in the Afrikaschau there were opportunities to exchange information, renew old contacts and make new ones. In the 1980s Dorothea R. remembered: 'We earned good money, had fun, and didn't have too many qualms about it. [...] It was pleasant, comfortable: no politics, no Nazis, just happy people. We were all together - young and old Africans.'

Dorothea was born in 1920, and was still young at the outbreak of the war, and she is not the only member of her generation who in later life reported moments of satisfaction or normality even under Nazi rule. Marie Nejar, who would become famous in the 1950s as the popular singer and film star Leila Negra, grew up in a mixed neighbourhood in Hamburg where she remembered being relatively protected from official racism. In general, though,

it was the generation that came of age in the 1930s that suffered the worst consequences of Nazi racism. Members of the second and third generations, as *Mischlinge*, were perceived by racial theorists of the 1930s as particularly degenerate, dangerous by their example and without any of the redeeming authenticity of 'real' Africans (a discourse that will be familiar to this audience, having been at the centre of the 1930 Fletcher Report on the 'race problem' in Liverpool). And by the very fact of being young they were also particularly exposed to the everyday racism of ordinary Germans that was encouraged by official policy and to the racialisation of bureaucratic practices. The same Dorothea R. who in the 1980s had fond memories of life on the film set also reported a series of experiences that echo those of Soya K.: being abused on the street, humiliated in school and excluded well before any official policy sanctioned it, and turned out of the family home. For her, too, the threat of sterilisation stood at the centre of her postwar testimony, and it seems clear that the most frequent source of individual and collective trauma was the violent frustration of people's expectations of sexual fulfilment and family life.

As it happens, when the Nuremberg Laws were extended to black people and Gypsies, the ban on extramarital sexual relations with 'Aryans' was not. The term for illicit interracial sexual relations was *Rassenschande*, and there was never a successful prosecution for *Rassenschande* against a black person. But at least two African-born men died in custody as a result of sexual relations with white women: Cameroonian-born Jonas N'Doki was charged with and convicted of rape allegedly committed while he was travelling with the *Afrikaschau*, though the terms of the prosecution and the death penalty imposed made it clear that it was his 'race' that was at issue. The East African Mohamed Husen was interned in Sachsenhausen concentration camp without formal charges, but the reason was that he was involved with a white woman; he died there.

Where mixed couples were living together and even where they were married local Nazi organisations undertook campaigns to separate them, and individuals, both men and women, and black and white, suffered arrest and internment in the aftermath. White wives were targeted for harassment, and a number of divorces in these years suggests that the campaign was successful. Some couples stayed together and postponed marriage until after 1945. Others kept their marriages going in the face of massive pressures.

Those who were not yet married but wanted to marry faced other challenges. Any German seeking to marry after 1934 had had to apply for a marriage licence and to undergo a medical examination; Blacks were subject to further tests. The Nuremberg Laws effectively banned any marriage between a 'German' and a person of 'alien blood', and anyone who was suspected of being 'of alien blood' had to undergo a physical examination to determine how 'alien' they were. These examinations were extremely humiliating, involving measurements, photographs and sometimes invasive procedures. The predictable outcome was that the couple was denied permission to marry, and all the evidence suggests that this was routinely followed by sterilisation, which the subjects would be forced into if they did not give their consent. That was the experience of Dorothea R., though like Soya K. she evaded sterilisation by going into hiding. (Her hiding place was rather crowded, she observed, because her mother was also harbouring the husband of Dorothea's cousin Josefa and a friend, who had escaped from Stutthof concentration camp; Josefa was still in Stutthof with her white mother, who did not survive the camp.) These are the Mr and Mrs N. (he was Cameroonian) met when they were both working in a restaurant in Hanover, and they five sons and a daughter; we know that the fourth son was sterilised in 1944, two months after his 22nd birthday and five months after the birth of his own son. His sister was interned in the women's concentration camp Ravensbrück in 1940, when she was 25; she was probably sterilised there, and subsequently released. She survived, unlike another

half-Cameroonian woman of her generation, also interned as 'antisocial', who died in the camp in March 1944. The youngest son of the family spent time in a concentration camp in the Netherlands, while the two older sons can be seen in family photos 'integrating' into the everyday life of Nazi Germany – the eldest in the uniform of the army reserve.

I want to emphasise the pressure on families and the fear or reality of sterilisation as a shared experience of the settled black community in Germany. A better known case of wholesale sterilisation was undertaken in 1937, when some 700 children who had been fathered by French colonial troops who had been stationed in the Rhineland after World War I were systematically sterilised as they reached adolescence. This was a very particular group in the eyes of the German authorities, not just racially mixed (they included the children of North Africans and South-East Asians as well as some Sub-Saharan Africans) but also the living symbol of a national humiliation, and at that time it was decided that it would *not* be politically acceptable to sterilise all black or mixed-race children. The more diffuse and slow-growing threat suffered by the families of Germany's own colonial subjects was more typical of the way in which 'race' was embedded in everyday life in Nazi Germany. It didn't call for a special government campaign. It arose as a matter of course from the implementation of the Nuremberg Laws BECAUSE these families were settled and mixed marriage was a normal practice.

Young people (and their parents) were also affected by the way in which welfare and social policy were racialised. After the Nazi takeover social workers and public health officials played an important role in carrying out 'racial policy' 'on the ground'. The short life of Fritz K, who was adopted and raised by his Togolese father after his mother abandoned him, illustrates how black children were particularly likely to suffer as their families were socially and economically marginalised. In 1936 Fritz, then eleven, was being monitored by the Bremen Youth Bureau. His father was already under pressure to split up with his new partner, in spite of their having a new baby, and he asked that Fritz be placed in a boys' home in the Berlin suburbs. Fritz was sent to work on a farm. This led to protests from local Nazis which reached the Nazi Party headquarters. In response, Martin Bormann, Hitler's secretary, observed that a boy working on a farm was bound to be living with the household, and that this was completely unacceptable in the case of a *Negermischling*. Fritz had actually seemed to be settling down in the country, but the Bremen authorities fetched him back to the city. An attempt to resettle him with his father and find him factory work failed, and he went back to live in the home, going out to work for a farmer during the day. In March 1939 the Bremen Mayor's Office began proceedings to annul Fritz's adoption, which would have left him completely unprotected. On 1 June 1939 he was found with a gunshot wound in the forehead, fired from his employer's revolver; the authorities were unable to say for certain whether the wound was deliberately self-inflicted or accidental. His father visited him in hospital before he died the next day. Fritz had just turned 17.

What opportunities for escape or rescue existed in this situation? Here we need to acknowledge that German Blacks were not only networked among themselves, but had international connections. It's clear for example that African Americans were interested in and informed about the situation of Blacks in Germany, as in other European countries, largely as the result of the sustained attention of the African-American press; Robert S. Abbott, editor of a leading African-American newspaper *The Chicago Defender*, had cousins in Germany, and he knew many of the first generation of Afro-Germans by name. Moreover, and as we've seen with the special consideration given to former colonial subjects, foreign policy considerations fed directly into the making of official policy towards Blacks. You'll remember that I said that there was a proposal as early as 1933 to criminalise relationships between Germans and 'members of the coloured races'; this was shelved

largely because of protests from foreign states who had nationals in Germany who might have been affected, including Liberia and some Asian and Latin American countries. For former colonials and their children, the most likely foreign protector was in fact France, or for some of them Britain: Under the terms of the Versailles Treaty the countries which took responsibility for managing former German colonies also took responsibility for protecting their native populations, and by the late 1920s the French government at least had admitted that former German colonials and their families in Europe too had a claim to protection. They could also apply for French passports. In Germany itself their status remained unclear unless they had formally acquired German citizenship, which very few had. The Nazi regime moved to 'resolve' this in two steps - and this was what Soya K. meant when she said she had been made stateless: As the identity papers that people routinely carried came up for renewal they were replaced with 'Aliens' Passports' that declared that they were not-Germans, described them otherwise solely as *Neger*, and were not valid for travel.

It was often at the point where these changes impacted on people's lives - Soya K. unable to travel to earn a living -that they made the decision to get French passport and leave, and we have records of about two dozen adults and children who resettled in France in the 1930s. A number of them hoped to return to the old colonies, but this option was blocked by the French colonial authorities because they continued to fear (in spite of everything) that these men might be friendly to the Germans. They also thought they KNEW that the presence of black men with white wives and 'mixed' children - in Germany they had been *Mischlinge*, in France they were *métis* - would be bad for morale in the territories. So the refugee families stayed in France, most of them in Paris.

In Paris between 1935 and 1938, anticolonial activists from the relatively large French-speaking black community joined with white and black antifascists to pressure the French government to help the Africans in Germany and allow them to stay in France. African-American organisations were also alerted to the need for rescue. We know that they were monitoring the situation in Germany, but it's striking that the message that circulated in the national journals of the leading American civil rights organisations, the NAACP and the Urban League, in the spring-of 1935 came from the head of the French League against Antisemitism He declared that the situation of black Germans was 'even worse than the Jews, because they lack an organization of their own to arouse an interest in their problems.' In a century in which national struggles for shrinking social and material resources and global conflicts appear to set Jews and people of colour against each other, we do well to remember an age when solidarity was the order of the day.

This episode was brought to a close by the outbreak of Second World War. From the point of view of Nazi Germany the war was a racial crusade, in which France was represented as a degenerate power contaminated by the colonial black presence. The campaign against France thus meant that very early on in the war overtly anti-black propaganda was stepped up and a heightened mood of anxiety reigned in Germany. With the arrival of German troops on French soil in 1940, there was every reason to fear for the fate of black people. In the first month of the invasion more than 1500 black French troops were murdered outright by German troops. Once France had been defeated and divided between an occupied and a free zone, Blacks were banned from performing in public for a brief period, and in September 1940 'Jews, *métis* and Negroes' were banned from crossing the line of demarcation between the two zones. Blacks and Jews were forbidden to travel first class on the metro, and this affected Blacks first because their 'race' was visible. For most French people of colour things rapidly settled down to a drum roll of everyday discrimination which even allowed for the development of a flourishing black cultural life in

Paris. For those of German origin, though, terror followed the German army and administration: Not only were political refugees tracked down and kept under surveillance, but 'racial' refugees too came under pressure. In the Michael family the three younger children all left Germany to work with performance troupes abroad, the two daughters in France. The younger daughter, Juliana, reported a terrifying moment when the Gestapo turned up in the backwoods in France looking for 'Jews or anybody who looked alien'; she escaped arrest by proving she was a Christian and pretending she didn't know any German.

The SS also undertook a programme of 'recovering' German women in the occupied territories who had married foreigners, with a view to re-educating the women and if necessary sterilising their children. Thus in 1944 Luise M., who had fled harassment by Nazis in Frankfurt with her Cameroonian husband and their son, found two Gestapo men at her door in Paris making the same demand the Nazis had made back in Germany: that she abandon her husband and child. The project for repatriating German women reveals the Nazi ambitions for a general reordering of the European population – an ambition that the German state pursued all the more vigorously as ever larger populations fell under its control – even when it was clear that Germany could not win the war. Remember that that October 1942 order for the registration of all Blacks and *Mischlinge* applied not only to Germany but to all the occupied territories.

As far as we know, that order fell pretty flat, and this brings me to my conclusion; the few police chiefs and concentration camp commandants whose responses to that order have survived seemed genuinely uncertain as to what the order was for. They thought they understood the regime's priorities and they were gaining experience in tracking down Jews and even Gypsies. That Blacks now figured as a group to be rounded up didn't necessarily compute. This could be because there were relatively few black people around – fewer now than before. We know for certain of 19 former colonial subjects and their children who spent time in concentration and labour camps, and there were others of African heritage there too, but they would not necessarily have been identifiable from camp records; 'Black' was not an established prisoner category. Most people of colour were interned as 'antisocial', criminals or workshy, or were simply held in 'protective custody'. Wartime confusion and living in hiding also made black people less visible. It might also be that in places where there were black families known to the police the kinds of *routine* encounters they were used to blocked the view of the police for the logic of more radical and comprehensive measures; sometimes the police were *less* racist than the Gestapo.

I see a similar uncertainty in the strategy adopted by Soya K.'s lawyer in 1951, when he assumed that to be a plausible victim of Nazi racial persecution you had to have been a Jew. In the early postwar years the idea that there was no more to Nazi racism than eliminationist antisemitism really did block the claims of other persecuted groups to recognition and compensation. Those writers and activists who have insisted that we have to acknowledge other victim groups like Gypsies, Blacks and homosexuals have often felt the need to insist that their experience must have been identical to that of Jews. But in order to get a grasp of what happened to Germany's first black community, we need to be attentive to the *variety* of experiences that made up what we've come to call the Holocaust. And we need to be aware of the variety of experiences even of *black* people under Nazi rule and of the ways in which they moved in and out of the sights of Nazi policymakers. Racist attitudes towards Blacks operated *alongside* policies directed at Jews, rather as prejudice and hostility towards Blacks had its own history (its own GERMAN history which was part of a transnational history of racism), intersecting with antisemitism at key points while retaining a force of its own. We also need to be aware that 'German Blacks' were always something more than Blacks: If they really were German, even the Nazis saw them in the

light of their own and Germany's colonial past, and their white neighbours continued to see them as exotic and even attractive in their difference - often to the frustration of the authorities. Sometimes they even saw them just as neighbours.

There is no doubt that the project of the Nazis was to submerge these social and cultural distinctions in a rigorous hierarchy of race - to turn 'colonials' into Blacks, in the same way as antisemitic measures operated to turn Jewish Germans into 'Jews' - and to shut them out of German society. This was a vision that the Nazis pursued with ever greater determination as the prospects of recovering a colonial empire evaporated in wartime. In its own terms, the Nazi project failed. Not only was the Reich defeated in war, but the Nazis never succeeded in making most white Germans 'unlearn' the old-fashioned kinds of racism and turning them into 'scientific' racists. However, harassment, forced emigration and sterilisation left their mark, damaging individual lives and making the reconstruction of the young black German community practically impossible after the end of World War Two. Those who had survived the Holocaust thanks to good luck, tenacity and the help of friends and family continued to face 'old-fashioned' racism – as we can see in the story of Soya K. and others who claimed compensation after the war. It was really only in the 1980s that the survivors of that first black community were able to tell their stories. That was when a new generation of young black women, the daughters of African-American occupying soldiers and African immigrants, started looking for their own black German heritage and tracked down older women, like Dorothea R. The results of their research were published in a volume published in English entitled *Showing Our Colours*, a fascinating example of a dialogue between the generations and a foundational text for Afro-German consciousness.