

The Civil Rights Struggle, African-American GIs, and Germany
Digital Archive, Oral History Collection and Research Project

A collaborative project of
CHI **HCA**
 Heidelberg Center
 for American Studies
VASSAR



Recipient of the NAACP Julius E. Williams Distinguished Community Service Award 2009



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“[A]s we see so many of our World War II veterans coming to the twilight of their years, it is especially important for us to remember, to record, remind ourselves of how much that generation did on all of our behalves.”

U.S. President Barack Obama in Dresden, Germany, after visiting the Buchenwald concentration camp on June 5, 2009

“[For black soldiers], but especially those out of the South, Germany was a breath of freedom. [They could] go where they wanted, eat where they wanted, and date whom they wanted, just like other people.”

Colin Powell about his tour of duty in West Germany in 1958, from *My American Journey* (1995)

Until recently, the story of the African-American civil rights movement has been told largely within the context of American history. Our research project and digital archive shows how Germany emerged as a critical point of reference in African-American demands for an end to segregation and for equal rights.

From as early as 1933, African-American civil rights activists used white America’s condemnation of Nazi racism to expose and indict the extent of Jim Crow racism at home and to argue that “separate” can never be “equal.” America’s entry into the war allowed these activists to step up their rhetoric significantly and to call for an end to segregation.

Drawing on the experience of soldiers stationed in Germany, these activists claimed that it was in post-Nazi Germany that black GIs found the equality and democracy denied them in their own country. Once the civil rights movement gained momentum in the late 1950s, black GIs deployed overseas became crucial actors in the civil rights struggle. By the early 1960s, sit-ins to integrate lunch counters were taking place not only in Greensboro, NC, but also in establishments on and around U.S. military bases in Germany.

After Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s visit to Berlin in 1964, the rise of the Black Power movement, and Angela Davis’s solidarity campaigns in both East and West Germany in the early 1970s, African-American GIs only intensified their collaboration with German student activists to fight racism both in the U.S. military and in German communities.

Since 1945 almost 20 million American soldiers, along with their families and civilian employees, have served tours of duty in Germany, and about 3 million of those Americans have been African American.

By giving voice to their experience and to that of the people who interacted with them, we will expand the story of the African-American civil rights movement beyond the boundaries of the U.S., hoping to advance a more nuanced and sophisticated sense of how America's struggle for democracy reverberated across the globe.

Project Directors:

- Maria Höhn (Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY)
- Martin Klimke (GHI Washington/HCA Heidelberg)

For further information, if you want to share your personal experience by contributing to our oral history collection or support our research in any other way, please contact us at:

mail@aacvr-germany.org

or visit us online at:

www.aacvr-germany.org



NAACP HONORS TRANSATLANTIC RESEARCH PROJECT ON AFRICAN-AMERICAN GIS, AND GERMANY

Celebrating its 100th anniversary this year, the prestigious civil rights organization NAACP (the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) decided to present its *Julius E. Williams Distinguished Community Service Award* for 2009 to Maria Höhn (Vassar College) and Martin Klimke (German Historical Institute, Washington, DC / Heidelberg Center for American Studies, University of Heidelberg) for their research project and digital archive on “The Civil Rights Struggle, African-American GIs, and Germany” (www.aacvr-germany.org).

The award is named after the first national director of the NAACP Department of Armed Services and Veterans Affairs. Mr. Williams joined the civil rights organization in 1966 and organized the Veterans Affairs Department in 1969. He served in World War II, the Korean Conflict, and Vietnam. His awards include the Legion of Merit Medal, the Soldier's Medal, and the Purple Heart.

The award recognizes an organization that has influenced broad service initiatives to develop veterans and community service partnerships. It was given at the Centennial Convention of the NAACP scheduled for July 11–16, 2009, in New York City. The award presentation took place during a private reception preceding the NAACP's Annual Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Awards Banquet on July 14. Speakers at the event included James T. Conway, Commandant of the Marine Corps and member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as well as David N. Dinkins, the first African-American mayor of New York City.

For further information on the NAACP's relationship to African-American GIs, see:
www.aacvr-germany.org/award

For press material concerning this project, please visit:
www.aacvr-germany.org/press

NAACP Julius E. Williams Distinguished Community Service Award Nominee 2009

The Civil Rights Struggle, African-American GIs, and Germany

A collaborative research project of the German Historical Institute (GHI), Washington, DC, the Heidelberg Center for American Studies (HCA), University of Heidelberg, and Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY.

Initiated by Maria Höhn and Martin Klimke, this research project and digital archive (www.aacvr-germany.org) explores the connection between the establishment of American military bases abroad and the advancement of civil rights in the U.S. It investigates the role that African-American GIs played in carrying the demands of the civil rights movement abroad beginning with World War II. Höhn and Klimke's initial focus has been Germany, which has been home to the largest contingent of American troops deployed outside the United States for the past 60 years.

Since 1945 almost 20 million American soldiers, along with their families and civilian employees, have served tours of duty in Germany, and about 3 million of those Americans have been African American. By giving voice to their experience and to that of the people who interacted with them over civil rights demands and racial discrimination on both sides of the Atlantic, Höhn and Klimke are preserving and expanding the history of the African-American civil rights movement beyond the boundaries of the U.S.

Their research project, which includes an oral history collection and a digital archive, has three main goals:

- first, to gather historic material related to this important but little known chapter of the African-American civil rights movement as well as its connection to German history while preserving the sources in a digital archive;
- second, to make these sources available worldwide and free of charge to scholars, teachers, students and interested parties around the globe;
- third, to foster the growth of a community of individuals who are engaged in teaching and learning about the African-American civil rights movement, its reverberations outside the U.S., as well as about the history of African-American GIs who were deployed in Europe during and after the Second World War.

Maria Höhn, an established scholar of the American military presence in Germany whose works are well known in North America and Europe, teaches German history at Vassar College. Her seminal book, *GIs and Fräuleins: The German-American Encounter in 1950s West Germany*, published in 2002 by the University of North Carolina Press, was the first ever to address the experience of black soldiers in postwar Germany.

Martin Klimke is a research fellow at the German Historical Institute, Washington, DC, and at the Heidelberg Center for American Studies (HCA) at the University of Heidelberg in Germany. A widely published historian on protest movements, his latest book, *The Other Alliance: Student Protest in West Germany and the United States in the Global Sixties*, will be published by Princeton University Press in 2009.

Höhn and Klimke are currently writing a history of the experience of African-American soldiers, activists, and intellectuals in Germany in the 20th century entitled *A Breath of Freedom: The Civil Rights Struggle, African-American GIs, and Germany* which is forthcoming with Palgrave Macmillan in Summer 2010.

Their photo exhibition “The Civil Rights Struggle, African-American GIs, and Germany” is currently on display in both Germany and the U.S.

For further information about the project, the photo exhibition, the book, and the award, please contact:

Laura Stapane: mail@aacvr-germany.org

or visit us online at:

www.aacvr-germany.org

www.aacvr-germany.org/exhibition

www.aacvr-germany.org/book

www.aacvr-germany.org/award







“The Civil Rights Struggle, African-American GIs, and Germany” / “Der Kampf um die Bürgerrechte, afroamerikanische GIs und Deutschland”

Until recently, the story of the African-American civil rights movement has been told largely within the context of American history. Only since the collapse of the Soviet Union have scholars shown how U.S. foreign policy concerns and the competition with the Soviet Union forced policy makers in Washington to support the civil rights agenda. What receives almost no attention in this Cold War interpretation, however, is America's involvement in Europe, and the role that the expansion of the American military base system and the encounter with Germans after WWII played in the unfolding drama of the civil rights struggle. Yet, by bringing a segregated Jim Crow army to military bases outside the physical boundaries of the United States, America literally transposed its racial conflict and its actors onto foreign soil.

This exhibition shows how Germany emerged as a critical point of reference in African-American demands for an end to segregation and for equal rights. From as early as 1933, African-American civil rights activists used white America's condemnation of Nazi racism to expose and indict the abuses of Jim Crow racism at home and to argue that “separate” can never be “equal.” America's entry into the war allowed these activists to step up their rhetoric significantly and to call for an end to segregation. The defeat of Nazi Germany and the participation of African-American GIs in the military occupation only strengthened their determination. Drawing on the experience of soldiers stationed in Germany, these activists claimed that it was in post-Nazi Germany that black GIs found the equality and democracy denied them in their own country.

Once the civil rights movement gained momentum in the late 1950s, black GIs deployed overseas became crucial actors in the struggle. By 1960, sit-ins to integrate lunch counters were taking place not only in Greensboro, NC, but also in establishments on and around U.S. military bases in Germany. Because military deployments to Germany usually lasted 2 to 3 years, African-American GIs were able to establish contacts and often friendships within neighboring German communities. Beginning in the early 1960s, black GIs started to collaborate with German student activists in places like Frankfurt and Berlin to support demands for civil rights in the U.S. After Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s visit to Berlin in 1964, the rise of the Black Power movement, and Angela Davis's solidarity campaigns in both East and West Germany in the early 1970s, African-American GIs only intensified their collaboration with German student activists to fight racism both in the U.S. military and in German communities.



By illustrating the untold story of African-American GIs and the transnational implications of the African-American civil rights movement, this exhibition hopes to advance a more nuanced and sophisticated sense of how America's struggle for democracy reverberated across the globe. It presents the first results of a joint research initiative of the German Historical Institute, Vassar College, and the Heidelberg Center for American Studies at the University of Heidelberg.

Exhibition Schedule (Preliminary) - Germany & USA

Ramstein Air Base Documentary & Exhibition Center

May 29 – July 19, 2009

Verbandsgemeinde und Stadt Birkenfeld

August 31 – September 25, 2009

Berlin - Landesvertretung Rheinland-Pfalz

November 26 - December 22, 2009

Munich - Bavarian American Center at America House Munich

February 21 - March 05, 2010

Mainz - University of Mainz

April 7 - 21, 2010

Augsburg - University of Augsburg

May 2010

Heidelberg - Heidelberg Center for American Studies (HCA), University of Heidelberg

Summer 2010

Amerikazentrum Hamburg

Fall 2010

Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY

October 1 – 29, 2009

Further dates are currently under negotiation with the following locations and institutions:

Amherst, MA - University of Massachusetts

Lancaster, PA - Franklin and Marshall College

Newark, NJ - James Brown African American Reading Room at the New Jersey Public Library

Baltimore, MD - Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland in Baltimore

University, MS - University of Mississippi

Berkeley, CA - University of California

Cambridge, MA - W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for African & African American Research, Harvard University



Ramstein Air Base Documentary & Exhibition Center



Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY



"A remarkable exhibition - subjugated histories that should emerge as central to our historical memories of transnational solidarities!"

Angela Davis



Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY



African-American Civil Rights and Germany in the 20th Century

Conference at Vassar College (Poughkeepsie, NY)

October 01 - 04, 2009

Jointly organized by the German Historical Institute Washington DC and Vassar College (Poughkeepsie, NY)

Conveners: Maria Höhn (Vassar College) and Martin Klimke (GHI Washington)

Made possible with the generous support of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), The President's Office, Dean of Faculty, History Department, German Studies, American Culture, Africana Studies, International Studies, Art Department, Political Science, Development Office, AACV.

Participants: Kenneth Barkin (University of California, Riverside), Leon Bass (Philadelphia), Manfred Berg (University of Heidelberg), Angela Davis (University of California, Santa Cruz, emerita), Eve Dunbar (Vassar College), Mortiz Ege (Humboldt University of Berlin), Karl-Heinz Füssl (Technical University of Berlin), Katharina Gerund (University of Düsseldorf), Matt Herron (Taking Stock, San Rafael, CA), Hansjürgen Hilbert (Hilgert & Witsch KG, Krautscheid), Gerald Horne (Houston University), Andrew Hurley (University of Melbourne), S. Marina Jones (UNC-ChapelHill/GHI), Helma Kaldewey (Tulane University), Wilfried Kaute (Cologne), Christine Knauer (University of Tübingen), Peter H. Köpf (The Atlantic Times, Berlin), Daniel Lee (University of California, Berkeley), Brian Mann (Vassar College), Mia Mask (Vassar College), Joe McPhee (Poughkeepsie), Frank Mehring (Free University of Berlin), Quincy Mills (Vassar College), Maggi Morehouse (University of South Carolina, Aiken), Eli Nathans (University of Western Ontario), Christina Oppel (University of Münster), Anke Ortlepp (GHI Washington, DC), Rosemarie Peña (Black German Cultural Society), Peggy Pische (Vassar College), Dan Puckett (Troy University), Matthias Reiss (University of Exeter), Robert Sackett (University of Colorado), Christian Schmidt-Rost (Free University of Berlin), Alcyone Scott (Midland Lutheran College, Nebraska), Tyrone Simpson (Vassar College), Laura Stapane (Oldenburg/GHI Washington DC), Roland Stolte (Marienkirche, Berlin), Debra Tanner Abell (Pittsburgh), Harriet Washington (Rochester), Judith Weisenfeld (Princeton), KD Wolff (Frankfurt).

The conference brought together scholars of history, literature and cultural studies from Germany, the U.S., and Australia to explore the links between the African-American Civil Rights Movement and Germany throughout the twentieth century. The pre-conference program started on Wednesday afternoon with a screening of the film “The Negro Soldier” from 1944, directed by Stuart Heisler, U.S. War Department, and introduced by Mia Mask. Subsequently, Leon Bass, a World War II veteran, gave a lecture, “Fighting in the Jim Crow Army: A Black Sergeant Remembers Buchenwald.” As a nineteen-year-old, Bass served in the 183rd Engineer Combat Battalion, a segregated unit of the U.S. Army, and was among the soldiers who liberated the Buchenwald concentration camp in 1945. Born and raised in Philadelphia, Bass gave a moving recollection of his own struggles with racism in the U.S. military during his training in the South, and of putting his life on the line for a country that did not deem him “good enough.” He recounted how seeing the atrocities committed at Buchenwald led him to become an agent for social change upon his return to the U.S.

The first conference day began with a panel discussion, “Tracing an Untold History: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s Visit to Cold War Berlin in 1964,” chaired by conveners Maria Höhn and Martin Klimke. Höhn and Klimke introduced King’s largely forgotten visit to the divided city of September 1964, during which he visited the Berlin Wall, opened the city’s cultural festival, delivered a sermon to more than 20,000 West Berliners at an outdoor arena, and was awarded an honorary degree by the Theological School of the Protestant Church. They also played audio excerpts of a previously unreleased speech Dr. King gave in East Berlin’s St. Mary’s Church at Alexander Square during the same visit. Roland Stolte further illuminated King’s visit by discussing how Berlin Mayor Willy Brandt and Provost Heinrich Grüber facilitated it. Grüber, the former pastor at East Berlin’s St. Mary’s Church, had been an active opponent of the Nazi regime and had gained international attention when he testified during the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961.

The panel continued with a vivid eyewitness account by Alcyone Scott, one of King’s interpreters during his visit, who detailed King’s border crossing at Checkpoint Charlie without a passport and described the impact of his message of nonviolent resistance and hope during his sermon at the overcrowded St. Mary’s Church. Discussing the primary and secondary sources related to King’s visit, Laura Stapano explained the digital archive of The Civil Rights Struggle, African-American GIs, and Germany. The project, a collaboration of the GHI Washington, the Heidelberg Center for American Studies at Heidelberg University, and Vassar College, serves as a platform to make textual and audiovisual material (oral histories, images, films, etc.) on the relationship between the Civil Rights Movement, African-American GIs, and Germany available online and free of charge to increase scholarship and teaching on the global impact of the civil rights struggle. After this panel, the exhibition “African-American Civil Rights and Germany” was opened, which includes about fifty historical photographs and other materials from the digital archive, such as the guest book King signed in East Berlin, the full recording of his sermon, and a historical painting of “Dr. King and His Family” from East Germany.

On the second conference day, Kenneth Barkin examined W. E. B. Du Bois's time at Harvard University and in Germany (1892-94), as well as his subsequent perceptions of the country, in a panel on "Transatlantic Journeys." Barkin argued that not his studies but Du Bois's everyday experiences in German society exercised the most influence on his position on racism in the U.S. and made Prussia seem like a "racial paradise." Karl-Heinz Füssl's paper focused on Black Mountain College, NC, established in 1933 and home to a number of prominent German and European refugees (e.g., Josef and Anni Albers). Füssl described how, from its foundation, debates on whether to allow black students and faculty preoccupied people at the college and created a rift within the faculty, similarly dividing the European refugees. He argued that the campus integration project eventually failed at least in part because of the pervasive segregation surrounding the college community. Harriet Washington subsequently explored the origins of prejudices against and stereotypes associated with black people from antiquity through to modern slavery, demonstrating how the respective images and imaginations shaped the medical field and German scientists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Section II, "Black Soldiers, Germans, and World War II," started with Matthias Reiss's presentation on the experiences of German prisoners of war in the U.S. Reiss complicated traditional narratives by highlighting the ways in which the presence of these POWs in American society "helped to undermine the legitimacy of racial segregation." According to Reiss, their ambivalent status was marked by the fact that their direct relationships with African-Americans, although temporary, were generally friendly. At the same time, white POWs enjoyed privileges in comparison to black GIs that allowed the latter to compare Nazi racial discrimination to their own discrimination in the US. Maggi Morehouse in turn emphasized the importance of Truman's Executive Order of 1948 to desegregate the U.S. military. Morehouse made the case for reframing the master narrative of the civil rights movement using this landmark policy decision instead of looking at the 1954 Supreme Court decision "Brown vs. Board of Education" as the starting point.

Christina Oppel opened section three, "Debating Civil Rights on Both Sides of the Atlantic," with an analysis of the role Nazi Germany played in African-American discourse in the 1930/40s. In Oppel's view, African-American intellectuals not only used the analogy to fascism to charge the U.S. with hypocrisy, but also attempted to situate their struggle within the larger framework of human rights in the context of the Atlantic Charter and the formation of the United Nations. Christine Knauer then addressed German and African-American interactions and media representations of interracial rape in postwar Germany. Pointing to the crucial role of race in each case, Kana particularly examined how these sexual assaults were characterized in official reports, political discourse, and the public debate. In the section's last paper, Robert Sackett explored the West German media coverage of U.S. race relations from 1949-67. Sackett noted how this discourse both on racial discrimination and black militancy, especially from 1960 on, utilized Nazi Germany as a comparative frame for viewing the situation on the other side of the Atlantic.

A keynote lecture by Angela Davis, “Between Critical Theory and Civil Rights: A Sixties' Journey from Boston to Frankfurt to San Diego,” concluded the second day of the conference. Before an audience of over four hundred, Davis reflected on meeting her academic mentor Herbert Marcuse at Brandeis University, studying with Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer at the University of Frankfurt, and her visits to East Berlin in the 1960s and early 1970s. Underscoring the importance of Critical Theory and her experience abroad for her political coming-of-age as an African-American activist, she also recounted the personal significance the international outpouring of support she experienced during her trial and incarceration in the U.S.

Helma Kaldewey opened the next conference day and the section on “Bringing the Cold War Home” with an examination of Louis Armstrong's Eastern European tour in 1965. Kaldewey focused on Armstrong's time in East Germany, his close relationship with jazz specialist and radio host Karl-Heinz Drechsel, and East Berlin's attempt to use jazz to its own political advantage in the propaganda wars of the Cold War. Based on his dissertation, Daniel Lee investigated the debates and official positions about relationships and marriages between African-American GIs and white German women both in West Germany and the U.S. Illustrating the staunch opposition to interracial marriage by white segregationists, the differing opinions on it among African Americans, as well as its media representations and treatment in the U.S. military and by local German officials, Lee's results once again showed how the presence of these couples influenced discussions about racial equality and civil rights in the U.S. up to the landmark 1967 Supreme Court decision “Loving v. Virginia.”

In section five, “Framing Civil Rights,” Eli Nathans examined the radio and TV broadcasts conservative West German journalist Peter von Zahn made on the U.S. in the 1950s and early 1960s. Revealing that the United States Information Agency (USIA) funded the first two years of these programs, Nathans argued that Zahn's sympathetic but critical broadcasts contributed to the liberalization of West German society and fundamentally shaped the ways the racial situation in the U.S. was perceived. Frank Mehring investigated how the Marshall Plan re-education films in Europe propagated democracy, free trade, international cooperation, and a vision of multi-racial tolerance. Using the example of Georg Tressler's “Wie die Jungen sungen” (1954), and directly referring to the civil rights struggle in the U.S., Mehring demonstrated how racial encounters among children of European and African background in an international school in Vienna are used to foster color blindness, integration, and the creation of a new, collective European identity.

The section “Jazz and Civil Rights in a Divided Germany” opened with Christian Schmidt-Rost's analysis of the discourse on jazz in East Germany. Looking at jazz magazines and concert series, Schmidt-Rost traced the ways the political interpretation of jazz in East Germany changed from the postwar period to the mid-1960s and how it intersected with the civil rights struggle. Andrew Hurley, on the other hand, scrutinized the jazz discourse in West Germany from the 1950s to the 1970s on the example of Joachim-Ernst Berendt. Hurley demonstrated that Berendt, initially fascinated with the musical qualities of jazz, came to view it as a tool for liberalizing postwar West German society.

Berendt commented on the alliance between jazz and the civil rights movements of the 1950/60s and openly criticized the ideology of black power and black nationalism at the beginning of the 1970s, regarding it as fascism. This presented another illustration of the German past overshadowing the perceptions of the civil rights struggle.

A roundtable on “Expanding the African-American Diaspora” concluded the conference day, focusing on lacunae in scholarship. Judith Weisenfeld proposed several areas that require closer examination: the religious dimension, e.g., links between Germany and Black Caribbean Moravians, some African-American artists' appropriation of European culture as African-American culture, or the history of the Women's Auxiliary Corps's history in Germany. Matt Heron described his life as a photographer during the U.S. civil rights movement, his support of SNCC, as well as his project, “National Archive for Civil Rights Movement Photography,” which underscores the crucial role of visual representations for both the domestic dynamic and transnational attraction of the civil rights struggle. Sara Lennox called for more interdisciplinary and transnational work, emphasizing the need to use the categories of “race” and “whiteness” in the German case. Gerald Horne seconded the call for more interdisciplinary studies and suggested closer cooperation between African-American Studies and German Departments and laid out further topics of research in this area. The subsequent discussion encouraged researchers to further address gender, especially concerning dependents of U.S. military personnel in Germany.

The last conference day started with the section entitled “The Commodification of Civil Rights.” Katharina Gerund examined Angela Davis's impact on the “West German imagination.” Gerund argued that, as a black female student, Davis defied the traditional discursive categories of “Black Panther” or “black GI” and emerged as one of the leading representatives of the “other” America. Moritz Ege analyzed representations of African Americans in advertisements, books, and magazines, and the “Afroamericanophilia” expressed within West German visual culture in the late 1960s. Ege argued that members of the German student movement attempted to emulate African Americans in language and style and conceived of interracial relationships as a means of demonstrating anti-racism.

The conference concluded with a panel on “History and Memory across the Atlantic,” in which several participants shared their transatlantic experience related to the civil rights struggle. As a composer, improviser, and instrumentalist employed by the U.S. army, Joe McPhee was stationed in Germany from 1964-65 and often returned to participate in jazz concerts. Debra Tanner Abell, born in Germany and raised in the U.S. as the daughter of a white German mother from Lower Bavaria and an African-American GI from Philadelphia, talked about her childhood in the U.S. and about returning to Germany as a seventeen-year-old to trace her parents' love story and visit her place of birth. Participating via videoconferencing, Karl-Dietrich Wolff, former president of the German Socialist Student League (SDS), shared his perceptions of the African-American civil rights struggle when he visited the U.S. and spoke about his role in establishing the Black Panther Solidarity Committee in West Germany.

The conference sparked lively discussions about the transnational impact of the history of the U.S. civil rights movement and Germany, as well as aspects of the theory and methodology of writing this history. It underlined the crucial need for scholars to further examine the global impact of the U.S. civil rights movement and how experiences of African Americans abroad affected the civil rights movement at home.



Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY



Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY



Maria Höhn (History Department, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY) who teaches German history at Vassar College, is an established scholar of the American military presence in Germany, and her book, *GIs and Fräuleins*, published in 2002 by the University of North Carolina Press was the first book ever to address the experiences of black soldiers in Germany. A German translation of her book *Amis, Cadillacs, und "Negerliebchen": GIs im Nachkriegsdeutschland* was published with Verlag Berlin-Brandenburg in 2008. Together with Seungsook Moon she has co-authored and co-edited *Over There: Living with The U.S. Military Empire*, which is forthcoming with Duke University Press in 2009, and explores the impact of U.S. military bases on gender and race relations in West Germany, South Korea and Japan.

As a result of her ongoing research project on African-American GIs and Civil Rights in Germany, she has published numerous essays in both Germany and the U.S. Those essays explore how African-American GIs stationed in Germany enunciated their demands for civil rights, and how both German and American society responded to those demands. Höhn has also published essays that explore German and American debates on interracial marriages, and on the political collaboration between German student radicals and Black Panther GIs during the late 1960s and the early 1970s. She is the past recipient of an NEH Faculty Humanities Grant, and other prestigious fellowships.

Martin Klimke is a research fellow at the German Historical Institute, Washington, DC and the Heidelberg Center for American Studies (HCA) at the University of Heidelberg, Germany. His 2005 dissertation *The Other Alliance: Student Unrest in West Germany and the U.S. in the Global Sixties*, was awarded the prestigious Ruprecht-Karls Prize for best doctoral thesis at Heidelberg University in 2006, and will be published by Princeton University Press in 2009. Klimke has been working extensively in the area of transnational history and social movements and has published numerous articles on processes of cultural transfer and global protest networks. He is the co-editor of the publication series *Protest, Culture and Society* (Berghahn Books, New York/Oxford) and, among others, *1968 in Europe: A History of Protest and Activism, 1956-77* (New York/London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

Since 2006 he has been the director and coordinator of the international Marie-Curie project European Protest Movements Since 1945 which is supported by the European Commission. Klimke has already published essays on Black Power in Germany in the 1960/70s and is working on his second book entitled *The Nuclear Crisis: Transatlantic Peace Politics, Rearmament, and the Second Cold War*.



S. Marina Jones is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She finished her M.A. in Translation in 2001 at Kent State University. In 2005, she completed her M.A. in Germanic Languages at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a thesis titled *Autobiographical Voyages: The German Black Atlantic*.

Her research and teaching interests include modern European, women's and gender history, the African Diaspora and race relations. Marina is currently a doctoral fellow in the history of African Americans and Germans at the German Historical Institute, Washington, DC.

Abstract to the Dissertation Project: 'Outsiders Within': Afro-Germans in West Germany – Discourses, Perceptions and Experiences, 1949 – 1989

This dissertation project analyzes the West German discourses of Afro-Germans in print media and the Afro-German perceptions of these discourses as well as Afro-German experiences between 1949 and 1989. The following four main groups of primary sources are used: documents of the government and the political parties, print media (newspapers, political journals and illustrated magazines) of a broad political spectrum, Afro-German autobiographies and up to thirty-five oral history interviews with Afro-German men and women of

three different age cohorts (born between 1940 and 1980).

The project makes a contribution to the emerging field of Black German and European Studies by contrasting the discussions of a mainly “white” German society with the Afro-German perspective. It maps the path to changing notions of German identity and to the integration of different groups of Germans into West German society.



Natalia King is a PhD candidate at Boston College, in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts. She is currently a doctoral fellow in the history of African Americans and Germans at the German Historical Institute, Washington, DC.

Natalia's research interests include Modern European history, Modern German history, the African Diaspora, and race.

Abstract to the Dissertation Project: *Blacks, Blackness and Race in the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic, 1945-1990*

This dissertation examines what the black experience and German notions of blackness, in the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic, can tell us about German attitudes towards blacks in the wake of World War II.

This project is concerned with blacks residing in the Germanys between 1945 and 1990; specifically, African Americans, Africans, Afro-Caribbeans, and Afro-Germans. I argue that we can understand the white German attitude towards blacks in the FRG and the GDR by considering Cold War politics, the effects of the Nazi legacy, and the role of the New Left in the FRG.

While there are works surveying the growth of black populations in the FRG, there are few

studies examining black populations in the GDR. Through a comparative study, this project will rectify this imbalance and shed light of the character of German anti-black racism and conceptions of race in both the East and the West.



Dorothea Blank (Vassar College) is currently a senior at Vassar College where she is majoring in history. In her thesis she is focusing on the fall of the Berlin Wall and German reunification.

She is specifically interested in the social consequences of reunification and the continuing divisions within German society twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Thea Brophy (Calvin College) studied World History, English, and Spanish at Calvin College where her undergraduate thesis examined the role of the student protest movement in the Tlatelolco uprising in Mexico City in 1968.

She did graduate work in Latin American history at Rutgers University, focusing on 20th century grassroots movements and social justice issues. She is currently an academic counselor at Calvin College, and also does freelance editing and manuscript consulting work for various historical projects.

Hannah Fritschner (Vassar College) is currently a senior at Vassar College, where she is majoring in Medieval and Renaissance Studies and works as a research assistant for Professor Maria Höhn.

In her thesis she explores the theological debates surrounding the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin in medieval Europe and their manifestations in Italian Renaissance art. Hannah is excited to have joined the research team of African-American Civil Rights and Germany.



Danny Gilberg (Vassar College) is currently a senior at Vassar College, where he is majoring in history. His senior thesis is on the experiences of black American athletes in Nazi Germany.

In his research, he is more specifically focusing on the black press and their coverage of the 1936 Olympics and the Joe Louis-Max Schmeling fights.



Alexander Holmig (Berlin) was born in Brandenburg a. Alexander Holmium (Berlin) was born in Brandenburg a. d. Havel (Germany) and studied History, Political Science and Sociology at Berlin's Humboldt-University.

He is a historian and freelance researcher and is currently working on a PhD-thesis focused on the interrelation between Pop and violence on the subcultural edges of the late 1960s and early 1970s student movement in West Germany.



Madeleine Joyce (Vassar College) is a senior at Vassar College. She is an American Culture major with focuses on History and Drama. She is currently writing her thesis in the form of a play on the different culture African-American soldiers encountered in Germany in the 1950s as compared to what they knew at home in America.

Her involvement with this project began in January of 2009 when she conducted her first interview with a WWII veteran. Since then she has collected more oral histories, and edited those interviews for the website. Madeleine hopes to merge her love for history, drama and social awareness into a career as a theater maker.



Rebecca Katz (Vassar College) is currently a senior at Vassar College, where she is majoring in American Culture with concentrations in history and studio art. She is working on her thesis, a documentary graphic novel on the relationship between collective memories of President John F. Kennedy's assassination and September 11th, 2001 within Jewish, New York families.

Rebecca is excited for the opportunity to document and be a part of AACVR's conference on African-American Civil Rights and Germany in the 20th Century.

Sylvia Landau (University of Mainz) is a student at the Johannes Gutenberg University located in Mainz (Germany). She studies History, Journalism and Linguistics.

After spending a semester abroad at the University of Auckland (New Zealand) and the University of Dijon (France), she is currently working as an intern for the German Historical Institute in Washington, DC.

Sophie Lorenz (University of Heidelberg) has studied History, Political Science, and Public Law at the University of Heidelberg since 2003. In her master thesis "Between 'Race War' and 'Class Struggle': Student Protest, Black Power and Black Panther Solidarity in West Germany, 1967-1972" she analyzes the ideological development of both West German student activists and the Black Power Movement that led to the creation of a transnational protest identity by the late 1960s.

The thesis also aims to explore not only how German student activist recontextualized and identified with Black Power, but also how political solidarity with this ideology influenced West Germany's public discourse on race.



Elisabeth Piller (University of Heidelberg) received her B.A. in History and Religious Studies from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She is especially interested in transnational and American religious history. In her honors thesis she employed the literary review “Decision” (1941) as a lens through which to understand European and American writers’ transcultural dialogue in conceptualizing an intellectual response to the National Socialist notion of “Kultur” before Pearl Harbor.

Her M.A. Thesis will examine the 1920s Ku Klux Klan from a transnational historical perspective and contextualize it within a larger discussion of reactionary populist movements on both sides of the Atlantic.

Jessica Regunberg (Winnetka, IL) studied history at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie (NY) where she worked as a research assistant for Professor Maria Höhn. In her thesis she examined the role of Jewish female displaced persons in Germany after WWII. She was on the executive board of the Feminist Alliance at Vassar College and has served on the History Majors' Committee for the last two years.

Graduating from Vassar in 2009 with honors and the prize for the best thesis in history, Jessie is currently teaching high school history at North Shore Country Day School in Winnetka, IL.

Laura Stapane (GHI Washington) studied History of Art and Media Studies, History and Political Science at the University of Oldenburg. After finishing her MA thesis about family portraits as a reflection of the bourgeois culture in the late 19th century (“The Wilhelmine Bourgeoisie as Depicted in Art: An Analysis of its Self-Presentation in Family Portraits”), she worked at the KHI (Kunsthistorisches Institut) in Florence (Italy) and in Washington, DC.

She is currently working for the GHI (Washington) as a project coordinator, where she is responsible for the coordination of “The Civil Rights Struggle, African-American GIs, and Germany” project as well as for “The Nuclear Crisis” project.



Adene Wilson (Vassar College) attended Vassar College, graduating in 1969 as a music major. After teaching elementary school one year in New Haven, CT, she joined the Spackinkill School System in Poughkeepsie, NY, where she taught first and third grades for thirty-three years, retiring in 2002.

Since retirement, she has studied Italian and German and continues to play the violin. Currently, she tutors students with special academic needs. She is the co-founder of Vassar College's Modfest, a two-week mini-festival of music, dance, poetry, film and drama now in its eighth year

Associated Scholars and Institutions

- AAGE (African-American German Exchange) e.V.
- Archive of Soldiers' Rights, e.V. Berlin, Germany
- Black German Cultural Society (BGCS)
- Collegium for African American Research (CAAR)
- Das Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Germany
- Goethe-Institut Washington, DC
- Humanties Council of Washington, DC
- Institute for Cultural Diplomacy (ICD), Berlin / New York
- National Geographic Society
- Ramstein Air Base Documentary & Exhibition Center
- St. Mary's Church (Evangelische Kirchengemeinde St.Petri - St.Marien), Berlin, Germany

Associated Scholars Include

- Manfred Berg, History Department, University of Heidelberg
- Dieter Brünn, Director of Archive of Soldiers' Rights, e.V. Berlin, Germany
- James Danky, Project Director African American Journals and Newspapers, University of Wisconsin, Madison
- Michael Geib, Director of Ramstein Air Base Documentary & Exhibition Center
- Leroy Hopkins, German Studies, Millersville State University
- Sophie Lorenz, History Department, University of Heidelberg
- Jennifer Lundquist, Department of Sociology, University of Massachusetts
- Mia Mask, Department of Film, Vassar College
- Maggi Morehouse, History Department, University of South Carolina Aiken
- Anke Ortlepp, German Historical Institute, Washington, DC
- Judith Weisenfeld, Department of Religion, Princeton University

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EINFLÜSSE DER US-BÜRGERRECHTSBEWEGUNG

Schwarze Befreier

Die Erfahrung aus dem Kampf gegen die Nazis ging in die Bürgerrechtsbewegung in den USA ein. Nun werden Erlebnisse schwarzer GIs in Deutschland werden erforscht.

VON PETER KÖPF



Rhein-Main Air Base in Frankfurt am Main 1993. Sie war bis 2005 ein Stützpunkt der US-Luftwaffe. Foto: dpa

Am Tag nach der Befreiung des Konzentrationslagers Buchenwald forderte ein Vorgesetzter den damals 19-Jährigen amerikanischen Soldaten Leon Bass auf, ihn zu begleiten. Bass, ein schwarzer GI, sieht die "Walking Dead" und stellte sich bald eine Frage, die ihm schon einmal durch den Kopf gegangen war, als er in den Ardennen tote US-Soldaten auf Lkws gesehen hatte: "Was tust du hier? Wofür kämpfst du?"

Zweierlei, so Bass, habe er damals verstanden: Zum einen, dass das Böse überall ist. Und zum anderen, dass es hier in Deutschland "ähnlich" wie zu Hause war. Leon Bass erzählt, er habe in Deutschland die "Fratze des Bösen" in den KZs gesehen: denn dessen Insassen - Juden, Zigeuner, Zeugen Jehovas, Katholiken, Gewerkschafter, Kommunisten und Homosexuelle - seien im KZ gewesen, weil die Nazis sie als "nicht gut genug" (not good enough) betrachteten, in ihrer Gesellschaft zu leben, als minderwertig. Auch er, Leon Bass, sei zu Hause als minderwertig betrachtet worden. Auch er sei für "not good enough" gehalten worden, in Georgia aus einem Wasserspender zu trinken, der für Weiße reserviert war; "not good enough", in Texas in einem

Restaurant für Weiße zu essen. Vor allem aber sei er "not good enough" gewesen, in der Armee in einer Kompanie zu kämpfen, in der Weiße und Schwarze gemeinsam standen. Und er ahnte damals, er werde nach seiner Rückkehr in die USA wieder "not good enough" sein, die Bürgerrechte zu genießen, für die er in Europa kämpfte.

Seine Geschichte erzählte Bass kürzlich auf einer Konferenz über "African American Civil Rights and Germany in the Twentieth Century" am Vassar College in Poughkeepsie (USA). Er weiß selbstverständlich, dass es ein Unterschied ist, ob Angehörige einer Minderheit keine Rechte haben oder kein Recht auf Leben, und dass der Rassismus in den USA nicht mit der Vernichtung der europäischen Juden verglichen werden kann. Aber die Erfahrung aus dem Kampf gegen die Nazis half Leuten wie ihm, gegen den Rassismus in den USA, zu argumentieren.

Zwei bis drei Millionen Soldaten der nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg in Deutschland stationierten US-Truppen waren afroamerikanischer Abstammung. Ihre Erfahrungen in Deutschland und ihr Beitrag zur Entwicklung der Bürgerrechte in den USA ist Thema eines amerikanisch-deutschen Forschungsprojekts, an dem das German Historical Institute in Washington, das Heidelberg Center for American Studies und das Vassar College in Poughkeepsie (USA) beteiligt sind und das in ein weltweit verfügbares digitales Archiv münden soll. In der Berliner Landesvertretung Rheinland-Pfalz zeigt die Ausstellung "African American Civil Rights and Germany" nun eine Auswahl eindrucksvoller Fotografien und Karikaturen aus diesem Archiv.

"Es hat keinen Sinn, Demokratie zu predigen, und um sie zu erreichen, mit Milliarden Dollar und Millionen Toten und Verwundeten zu bezahlen, und dann die kämpfenden Männer auf der Basis ihrer Hautfarbe zu trennen", schrieb *The Crisis*, die Zeitschrift der National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), am 1. Juni 1945. Die unbeantwortete Frage in den USA nach Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs lautete: Wieso können wir die deutschen Rassengesetze beseitigen, unsere eigenen aber nicht? Wie kann es sein, dass eine segregierte Armee versucht, die Deutschen zur Demokratie zu erziehen? Wie können wir mit einer Armee in diesem Zustand die Führung in der westlichen Welt beanspruchen?

Im "European Theatre", also auf dem europäischen Kriegsschauplatz, ging es um zwei Siege, um "double victory": Die Schwarzen wollten den Sieg gegen die Feinde der Demokratie im Ausland und gegen die Rassendiskriminierer zu Hause. Diese Hoffnung war umso berechtigter, als die African Americans sich ausgerechnet im Land der Nazis erstmals wie gleichberechtigte Menschen fühlten. Colin Powell, der 1958 in Deutschland

stationiert war, formulierte es in seinem Buch "My American Journey" so: "Für schwarze GIs, vor allem für die aus dem Süden, war Deutschland ein Atemzug der Freiheit - sie konnten hingehen, wohin sie wollten, essen wo sie wollten, und ausgehen, mit wem sie wollten, genauso wie andere Leute auch."


Das Ausmaß der Akzeptanz schwarzer GIs durch die Deutschen dürfe nicht überschätzt werden, schränkt allerdings die am Vassar College lehrende deutsche Historikerin Maria Höhn ein. "Die Tatsache, dass so viele schwarze Soldaten ihren Aufenthalt in Deutschland als Befreiung ansahen, sagt vermutlich mehr über das Ausmaß der Diskriminierung von Afroamerikaner in den Vereinigten Staaten aus als über die Toleranz der Deutschen in dieser Zeit."

Unterm Strich trug die europäische Erfahrung durchaus zum Ende der Segregation bei, zunächst im Militär selbst. Maggie Morehouse, Geschichtspräsidentin an der University of South Carolina (Aiken) erinnerte an Trumans Executive Order 9981 von 1948, einen "wichtigen Meilenstein der Civil-Rights-Bewegung". Darin habe Truman die Segregation innerhalb des Militärs beendet. Zumindest auf dem Papier. Die "deutsche Erfahrung" hatte Wirkung gezeigt. Einige Lektionen für ihren Freiheitskampf hatten die Schwarzen an unerwartetem Ort erhalten, im Land der Nazis.

F.A.Z.-Angebote

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Rassismus, Amerikas größter Exportartikel

Schwarze amerikanische Soldaten fühlten sich in Deutschland erstmals gleichwertig. Danach wagten sie zu Hause den Kampf gegen ihre Entrechtung. Thesen einer Tagung.

POUGHKEEPSIE, im Oktober


Es ist noch nicht lange her, da musste Maria Höhn sich für ihre Arbeit rechtfertigen. Wo immer sie die Ergebnisse ihrer Forschung präsentierte, stand jemand aus dem Publikum auf und rief: "Wie können Sie als Deutsche es wagen, über amerikanischen Rassismus zu reden?" Die Historikerin, die am noblen Vassar College in Poughkeepsie lehrt, hat Verständnis für die Aufregung: "Meine Erkenntnisse kratzen nebenbei ja auch ein bisschen am Mythos der ‚greatest generation‘."

Doch inzwischen haben auch amerikanische Wissenschaftler das heikle Thema entdeckt, das lange beschwiegen worden war: Es geht um die lehrreichen Erfahrungen der schwarzen amerikanischen Soldaten in Deutschland nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg. Ausgerechnet im "Land der Mörder" lernten sie nach dem Krieg viel über den Rassismus im eigenen Land. Diese deutsche Erfahrung hatte maßgeblichen Einfluss auf die Bürgerrechtsbewegung.

Jetzt luden Maria Höhn und Martin Klimke vom Deutschen Historischen Institut in Washington die Forschergemeinde zu einer Konferenz im Vassar College in Poughkeepsie (New York) über "African American Civil Rights and Germany in the Twentieth Century". Doch nicht sie, sondern ein Zeitzeuge beschrieb am anschaulichsten, wie der Zweite Weltkrieg sein Leben und das seiner Kameraden verändert hatte: Leon Bass war nur ein Jahr in Deutschland gewesen, hatte im Winter 1944/45 als Neunzehnjähriger mit dem 183rd Engineer Combat Battalion in General George S. Pattons Armee geholfen, die Gegenoffensive der Deutschen in den Ardennen abzuwehren. Als er die toten US-Soldaten auf den Lkw sah, die an ihm vorbeifuhren, habe er erkannt, dass auch er sein Leben aufs Spiel setzte. Wie auch wenige Wochen später, als er am Tag nach der Befreiung die "walking dead" im Konzentrationslager Buchenwald sah, habe er sich gefragt: "Was tust du hier? Wofür kämpfst du?"

Zweierlei, so Bass, habe er damals verstanden: Das Böse ist überall. Und es war hier in Deutschland "ähnlich" wie zu Hause. Antisemitismus heiße zu Hause nur anders: Rassismus. Bass sagte, er habe in Deutschland die "Fratze des Bösen" gesehen, das KZ mit seinen Insassen - den Juden, Zigeunern, Zeugen Jehovas, Katholiken, Gewerkschaftern, Kommunisten und Homosexuellen. Diese Menschen seien im KZ gewesen, weil die Nazis sie als "nicht gut genug" betrachteten, als zu minderwertig, um in ihrer Gesellschaft zu leben.

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Auch er, Leon Bass, sei zu Hause als minderwertig betrachtet worden. Auch er sei "not good enough" gewesen, in Georgia aus einem Wasserspender zu trinken, der für Weiße reserviert war; "not good enough", in Mississippi im vorderen Teil des Busses zu sitzen, wo die Weißen Platz nahmen; "not good enough", in Texas ein Restaurant für Weiße zu betreten.

Vor allem aber sei er "not good enough" gewesen, in der Armee in einer Kompanie zu kämpfen, in der Weiße und Schwarze gemeinsam standen. Und er ahnte damals, er werde nach seiner Rückkehr in die Staaten wieder "not good enough" sein, die Bürgerrechte zu genießen, für die er in Europa gekämpft hatte. Stattdessen war er zu Beginn der Ausbildung aussortiert und in eine Gruppe von Schwarzen gesteckt worden. Und auch während des Kriegs trainierten, wohnten, aßen und kämpften "weiße" und "schwarze" Truppenteile in der segregierten Armee getrennt.

Dass dies nicht zwangsläufig so sein musste, lernten rund eine Million schwarze US-Soldaten ausgerechnet in dem Land, das für die schlimmsten rassistischen Taten aller Zeiten verantwortlich war. Der afroamerikanische Schriftsteller William Gardner Smith, der 1947 in Deutschland gedient hatte, lässt in seinem Roman "Last of the Conquerors" einen schwarzen Unteroffizier sagen: "Weißt du, was ich gelernt habe? Dass ein Nigger nicht anders ist als alle anderen Menschen auch. Ich musste hier herüberkommen, um das zu lernen. Ich musste hierherkommen und mir das von den Nazis beibringen lassen."

Auch die Zeitungen der Schwarzen beobachteten genau, was in Deutschland geschah: "Viele unter ihnen, speziell diejenigen aus dem Süden, erlebten erstmals die Freiheit, sich mit einer weißen Frau treffen zu können, ohne dafür bestraft zu werden", schrieb "Ebony" im Oktober 1946. "Zu einer Zeit, als in den Südstaaten Lynchen noch üblich war, erschien Deutschland wie ein Hafen der Toleranz." "Newsweek" kam ebenfalls schon 1946 nicht umhin, darüber zu berichten, dass "viele Amerikaner in ihrem Verhalten gegenüber den afroamerikanischen Soldaten viel feindseliger waren als die Mehrheit der Deutschen". Sogar die amerikanische Militärzeitschrift "Stars and Stripes" gab zu, dass weiße GIs die "größte Quelle für rassistische Propaganda gegen die schwarzen Soldaten" seien, nicht die Deutschen.

Die große Akzeptanz schwarzer GIs durch die Deutschen dürfe dennoch nicht überschätzt werden, resümiert Höhn. "Die Tatsache, dass so viele schwarze Soldaten ihren Aufenthalt in Deutschland als Befreiung ansahen, sagt vermutlich mehr über das Ausmaß der Diskriminierung von Afroamerikanern in den Vereinigten Staaten aus als über die Toleranz der Deutschen in dieser Zeit."

Für die Vereinigten Staaten war der bloßgelegte Rassismus eine Blamage. Nicht genug, dass zahlreiche Soldaten in den Osten desertierten, weil sie glaubten, im Sozialismus, wo es keinen Rassismus gebe, besser leben zu können. Moskau beeindruckte im Kampf um Einfluss in Asien und Afrika mit dem Anspruch, die freiere Ordnung zu bieten.

Im "Land of the Free" selbst ging es um Glaubwürdigkeit, und die unbeantwortete Frage lautete: Wieso können wir die deutschen Rassengesetze beseitigen, unsere eigenen aber nicht? Wie kann es sein, dass eine segregierte Armee versucht, die Deutschen zur Demokratie zu erziehen? Wie können wir mit einer Armee in diesem undemokratischen Zustand die Führung in der westlichen Welt beanspruchen?

Was auf der Tagung in Poughkeepsie verstörte und aufwühlte, waren nicht nur die Erzählungen von Leon Bass, sondern auch die nonchalanten Vergleiche zwischen Nazi-Deutschland und Amerika. Dass schwarze Bürgerrechtler wie NAACP-Führer Walter White zu Beginn der Nazi Herrschaft die Unterdrückung der Juden in Deutschland mit der eigenen zu Hause gleichsetzten, ist verständlich. Das gilt auch für das Wort des Harvard-Professors Kelly Miller, der 1934 schrieb, Deutschland habe "kein Monopol auf Diskriminierung". Allerdings konnte man zu diesem Zeitpunkt noch nicht wissen, dass die Nationalsozialisten Todeslager errichten würden.

Kenneth Barkin von der University of California in Riverside erinnerte in seinem Vortrag über W.E.B. Du Bois, Mitgründer des NAACP, an das Wort des Historikers Heinrich von Treitschke: "Der Süden der Vereinigten Staaten ist nicht Teil der westlichen Zivilisation." Du Bois hatte in den neunziger Jahren des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts in Deutschland studiert und gelernt: "Ich begann zu glauben, dass weiße Menschen menschlich seien."

Auch Amerika hatte seinen zivilisationsgeschichtlichen Sündenfall, sollte das wohl heißen. Aber Barkin spricht nach der deutschen Katastrophe. Muss nicht mehr ausdrücklich erwähnt werden, dass es ein Unterschied ist, ob Angehörige einer Minderheit keine Rechte haben oder kein Recht auf Leben?

Auch Maggie Morehouse, Associate Professor für Geschichte an der University of South Carolina in Aiken, scheute nicht davor zurück, ihrem Land ein schlechtes Zeugnis auszustellen: "Eine der ‚größten‘ Haltungen, welche die Amerikaner exportierten, ist Rassismus." Aber sie differenziert: Rassismus sei "ein weltweites Geschäft mit unterschiedlichen Gesichtern". Wenn man so gewichtet, ist auch Deutschen heute auszusprechen erlaubt, wofür Maria Höhn vor wenigen Jahren noch gescholten worden war. Heute sagt Robert Sackett, Historiker an der University of Colorado: "Selbstverständlich dürfen Deutsche über den amerikanischen Rassismus reden." PETER KÖPF

Text: F.A.Z., 14.10.2009, Nr. 238 / Seite 32

Kongress in New York Bürgerbewegung und Bürgerrechte

VON SEBASTIAN MOLL

Als Vorsitzender des Sozialistischen Deutschen Studentenbundes war der spätere Kafka- und Hölderlin-Verleger KD Wolff es nicht eben gewohnt, mit seiner Meinung hinter dem Berg zu halten. Und so nahm er auch kein Blatt vor den Mund, als er 1969 während eines USA-Besuchs als Zeuge vor einem Senats-Ausschuss für "innere Sicherheit" geladen wurde. "Das ist typisch", schmetterte er dem bekannt rassistischen Südstaatsensator Strom Thurmond entgegen, als dieser ihm einen Übersetzer verweigerte. "Sie berauben ja nicht nur mich meiner Sprache. Sie berauben auch die schwarze Bevölkerung dieses Landes ihrer eigenen Sprache und ihrer eigenen Kultur."

Der Auftritt vor dem Senatsausschuß brachte KD Wolff eine Ausweisung ein und er hängt ihm bis heute nach. In der vergangenen Woche durfte Wolff erneut nicht in die USA einreisen, weil wegen seiner alten "Auffälligkeiten" im Zuge der neuen Anti-Terrorgesetze sein Visum annulliert wurde. Wolff sollte auf einem Kongress außerhalb von New York als Zeitzeuge über die Zusammenhänge zwischen der amerikanischen Bürgerrechtsbewegung und Deutschland sprechen.

Seine Ära, die 60er Jahre, war zweifellos der Zeitraum, in dem diese Verbindungen am offensichtlichsten zutage traten. Die deutschen Studenten, allen voran Wolff, solidarisierten sich mit den Black Panthers in den USA. Die Menschen demonstrierten zu Zigtausenden in deutschen Städten für die Freilassung der inhaftierten schwarzen Bürgerrechtlerin Angela Davis. Davis war in den USA in den Widerstand gegangen, und sie hatte in Frankfurt bei Adorno studiert.

Die Konferenz in Vassar, bei der Angela Davis selbst Hauptrednerin war, machte jedoch nicht bei der nostalgischen Reminiszenz dieser schönen solidarischen Tage halt. Im Gegenteil - sie deckte ein komplexes Beziehungsgeflecht zwischen Deutschland und dem politisierten schwarzen Amerika dar - angefangen von den ersten GIs, die nach dem Krieg in Deutschland auftauchten, bis hin zu einer wenig bekannten Rede, die Martin Luther King 1964 vor einem euphorischen Publikum in der Marienkirche in Ost Berlin hielt.

Für viele schwarze GIs, besonders aus dem Süden, war die Besatzungszeit in Deutschland, ein "Atemzug der Befreiung", wie es Ex-Außenminister Colin Powell ausdrückte. "Sie konnten in jedes Restaurant gehen, sich frei bewegen und mit jeder Frau ausgehen, die ihnen gefiel." Deutschland hatte nicht wie die USA den Ballast der Sklaverei und der Apartheid. Die Situation war jedoch komplizierter, als es schien. Da war zum einen die deutsche Schuld, die bei der völligen Abwesenheit von Juden im Nachkriegsdeutschland kein Ventil hatte. Die Schwarzen waren die am offenkundigsten "Anderen" in Deutschland, wie der Referent Robert Sackett von der Universität Colorado ausführte, und dienten deshalb zumindest zum Teil stellvertretend als Objekte der Wiedergutmachung. Für die Fraternisierung begünstigend kam hinzu, dass die Rassendiskriminierung in den USA die vermeintliche moralische Überlegenheit der Besatzer relativierte. Es war ein gewisses Trostpflaster in der völligen Kapitulation, eine Linderung der Erniedrigung.

Auf keinen Fall bedeutete die scheinbare Wertschätzung der schwarzen GIs jedoch eine Abwesenheit von Rassismus im besetzten Deutschland.

Gemischtrassische Beziehungen zwischen Schwarzen und deutschen Frauen etwa waren von Anfang an auch in Deutschland stigmatisiert.

In der DDR war derweil die Solidarität mit den unterdrückten Schwarzen in den USA offizielle Parteilinie. Eine Tatsache, die das Regime dort in eine schwierige Lage brachte, als Martin Luther King 1964 kurzentschlossen nach Ost-Berlin fuhr. Denn seine Predigt, bei der er sagte, dass "überall, wo Menschen die trennenden Mauern der Feindschaft abbrechen, Christus seine Verheißung erfüllt", hatte eine subversive Botschaft. Und das gemeinsame Singen des Gospels "Let my people go", machte die Sache nicht eben besser. "Es war der bewegendste Moment meines Lebens", erinnerte sich in Vassar Alcyon Scott, die damals King als Übersetzerin begleitete.

Eine solche subversive Botschaft trug Angela Davis freilich nie in die DDR. Stattdessen ließ sich die bis heute überzeugte Kommunistin von Honecker hofieren. Und anscheinend hat sie noch immer ein eher unkritisches Verhältnis zur Ostberliner Republik. In ihrer Rede in Vassar schwärmte sie von den Zehntausenden von Postkarten ostdeutscher Kinder, die sie erreichten, als sie 1971 in einem US-amerikanischen Gefängnis saß. Dass dies gewiss keine spontanen Solidaritätsbekundungen waren, möchte sie nicht glauben. Bis heute, so die Kernbotschaft ihrer Erinnerungen, machten diese Postkarten ihr Hoffnung auf eine wahrhaft internationalistische Befreiungsbewegung. So outete sich die emeritierte Philosophin und Kulturwissenschaftlerin beinahe auf den Tag genau 20 Jahre nach dem Mauerfall als vielleicht letztes Opfer der DDR-Propaganda. Ein trauriges transatlantisches Missverständnis

KD Wolff, der sich als ein großer Freund und Liebhaber Amerikas und der amerikanischen Kultur begreift, kann das gewiss nur bestätigen.

[document info]
Copyright © FR-online.de 2009
Dokument erstellt am 06.10.2009 um 17:23:06 Uhr
Letzte Änderung am 06.10.2009 um 20:34:17 Uhr
Erscheinungsdatum 07.10.2009 | Ausgabe: d

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SHARE

The Civil Rights Struggle, African-American GIs, and Germany to Open at the Palmer Gallery



Corporal William E. Thomas and Private First Class Joseph Jackson on Easter Morning. Date: March 10, 1945. Photo: NARA, College Park, MD.

POUGHKEEPSIE, NY. - The Civil Rights Struggle, African-American GIs, and Germany, a ground-breaking multimedia exhibition, acclaimed on both sides of the Atlantic, that chronicles the little-known history and experience of African American GIs in Germany will be on view at the [James W. Palmer III Gallery](#) at Vassar from Thursday, October 1, through Thursday, October 29.

By illustrating the untold story of African American GIs and the transnational implications of the African American civil rights movement, the curators of this exhibition—Maria Höhn, associate professor of history at Vassar, and fellow historian Martin Klimke from the Heidelberg Center of American Studies (HCA) at Heidelberg University and the German Historical Institute (GHI) in Washington, DC—hope to advance a more nuanced and sophisticated sense of how America's struggle for democracy reverberated across the globe.

In addition to the 50 historical photographs, the exhibition will feature memorabilia of Dr. King's 1964 visit to East and West Berlin from the collection of Marienkirche (St. Mary's Church) in the former East Berlin, including the guest book with his inscription and recordings of his sermons and speeches in Berlin.

The exhibition is organized around six historical themes: "From WWI to WWII"; "Occupation and Fraternization"; "Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Germany"; "Black Power Solidarity"; "Angela Davis in East and West Germany"; and "The GI Movement." The combined works illuminate how Germany emerged as a critical point of reference in African American demands for an end to segregation and for equal rights.

The multimedia research project, of which this exhibition is a part, is a joint research initiative of the German Historical Institute, Vassar College, and the Heidelberg Center for American Studies at the University of Heidelberg. Professor Höhn and Dr. Klimke are the directors of the project and have been honored for their work by the NAACP with the 2009 Julius E. Williams Distinguished Community Service Award. In addition to the exhibition, they are convening an international scholarly conference to be held at Vassar, October 1-4, whose speakers will include Angela Davis, African American WWII veteran Leon Bass, as well as many scholars from the United States, Canada, Australia, Great Britain, and Germany.

The public is invited to the panel discussion held in conjunction with the conference, "Tracing an Untold History: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Visit to Cold War Berlin in 1964," on Thursday, October 1, at 5:30pm in the Villard Room. Panelists will include Rolande Stolte, Theological Consultant for Church and Public Education of Marienkirche in Berlin; Professor Alcyone Scott, of Midland Lutheran College, Nebraska, who was one of Dr. King's translators during the 1964 visit, and Laura Stapano from the German Historical Institute. The discussion will be moderated by exhibition curators Höhn and Klimke.

From as early as 1933, African American civil rights activists used white America's condemnation of Nazi racism to expose and indict the abuses of Jim Crow racism at home and to argue that "separate" can never be "equal," according to Professor Höhn. This exhibition shows how Germany emerged as a critical point of reference in African American demands for an end to segregation and for equal rights.

Through America's entry into World War II, the civil rights activists in America were able to trumpet their call for an end to segregation. Through the defeat of Nazi Germany and the example and participation of African American GIs in the military occupation, their determination was strengthened and they claimed that it was in post-Nazi Germany that black GIs found the equality and democracy denied them in their own country. The examples chosen by Höhn and Klimke for the exhibition highlight this time.

Once the civil rights movement gained momentum in the late 1950s, black GIs deployed overseas became crucial actors in the struggle. By 1960, sit-ins to integrate lunch counters were taking place not only in Greensboro, NC, but also in establishments on and around U.S. military bases in Germany. Because military deployments to Germany usually lasted 2 to 3 years, African-American GIs were able to establish contacts and often friendships within neighboring German communities.

Beginning in the early 1960s, collaboration started between black GIs and German student activists in places like Frankfurt and Berlin to support demands for civil rights in the United States. After Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s visit to Berlin in 1964, the rise of the Black Power movement, and Angela Davis's solidarity campaigns in both East and West Germany in the early 1970s, African American GIs only intensified their collaboration with German student activists to fight racism both in the U.S. military and in German communities.

The exhibition, which has received wide praise on both sides of the Atlantic, was first on view at the German Historical Institute (GHI) in Washington, D.C., and will travel to other locations in the United States, following the show at the Palmer Gallery. A concurrent exhibition is on view in Germany, with the first showing at the Ramstein Air Base Documentary & Exhibition Center last summer. The exhibition will continue to travel to other German locations through 2010, including Frankfurt, Berlin, Munich, Heidelberg, Mainz, and Augsburg.

About 171,000 German soldiers were held in American prisons until 1946. That they, above all in the southern states, were treated better than black workers, gave the growing civil rights movement a powerful weapon.

Prisoners like us

German POWs and black workers on the fields felt a common "underdog" status | By Matthias Reiss

All of us, one life here in very order. We sleep in beds which have white covers and are not with boxes and beds. Up all now, we were treated nearly better. When I was taken prisoner, I considered a life of better for a quiet different," he says Private Heinz Fuchs, a POW in Camp Ogden, Utah, on his travels in Germany in September 1946.

Eventually, more than 171,000 soldiers in German uniform would come to be interned in the United States during World War II. The last large contingent arrived after the surrender of the Army Group West in Tunisia in May 1945. The 111,000 "Americans" were joined by those captured in Italy in 1943 and about 162,000 German soldiers who were captured after D-Day.

The Germans were brought to the United States to work and also to relieve the Allied troops in Africa and Europe from their care. Most of them arrived in the halls of processing WWII camps ships, although a few lucky ones crossed the Atlantic on converted passenger liners. Very few had been to the United States before or had any extended knowledge of U.S. life. Many women recorded disapprovingly that "contempt of America as a country without its own values," without a "lead," a country which is only interested in making money, is widespread among all classes of Germans.

Although the former POW Reinhold Pabel admits that they were all "somewhat prejudiced," he also stresses that nearly all POWs were "quite curious as to find out for themselves what the United States was really like." One prisoner noted in his diary when he arrived in July 1945:

"Indescribable are the thoughts that move in at this moment. The American, nice, addresses his before us, we are in the process of coming into it, getting to know in the United States of America."

For the duration of the war, the United States clearly observed the POW Geneva Convention in order to prevent retaliation against its soldiers in enemy hands. The POWs were unencumbered by the southern conditions at the camps and the abundance of food and other goods. The Germans reported with disconcerted amazement in a letter in November 1943: "I am really in a golden cage."

The work program offered many POWs the opportunity to leave their golden cage during the day. An "escape-submarine" and a change of guards initially prevented the efficient use of POW labor. This changed with the introduction of the "soldaten card" policy in February 1946. From then on, maximum employment of prisoners was more important than the protection of escapes, and security was quickly reduced to a symbolic minimum.

Countdown officers consistently complained about the low ability of the prisoners they received. An investigation by the War Department (conducted in March 1944) that "these men contribute little to the part of selected personnel used in general programs of work, due mostly to the fact that most of such selected personnel are physically, mentally or through lack of training, ill-suited for this type of duty."

In contrast, American soldiers and civilians often described the German POWs as "magnificent physical specimens," "physically superior, muscular types" or "the specimens of physical perfection." The prisoners from



Africa especially attracted attention and admiration. For a man from Texas, the Germans were "just the best bunch of boys you ever saw," while a reporter who visited Camp Garden, Oklahoma, confirmed that he found them "wonderfully neat, extremely polite, splendidly disciplined, these young men are - frankly - hard to dislike."

Americans who employed POWs often shared their feelings. Many Germans worked in agriculture, catering, logging and lumber when the war had caused a shortage of white-

collared labor. Many of these jobs had been traditionally performed by black Americans who were no longer available to white employers, despite substantial efforts to recruit them working or defer their induction. The German POWs filled logging and general employment often showed their appreciation in various forms, some even invited them to restaurants to see their own homes. The Inspector General's Department was not pleased and wrote in a March 1941 report: "The average employer and his losses, knowing that the German prisoner of war, except for ideological concepts, is in general little different from the rank and file of our own soldiers, are apt to become overly friendly and well-wishers of the prisoner of war's welfare."

The vast majority of POWs were interned in the back or border areas where they often worked next to black Americans in the fields and forests. The availability of POW labor kept the wages for blacks at a low level and also had "rather a good effect on some of our own Negroes by leading to keep them on the job lines," as one employer from Alabama put it.

Nevertheless, the German POWs reported almost uniformly that the African Americans treated them friendly and regarded them as "prisoners like us."

"We were three fellow-sufferers," one former POW recalled. "Bad times, prisoner times." For the moment, the joint "underdog" status was more important than the racial divide. POWs and black Americans shared stories, songs, food and drink, and many Germans came to regard the blacks as the anti-thesis of white, unkind, capitalist America who "lived without a heart."

While black Americans frequently clashed with Italian prisoners of war who accepted

greater freedom than their former German allies, there is little evidence of direct tension between Germans and black Americans. However, black American soldiers frequently questioned the treatment of German POWs with their own treatment and reported in countless letters that "there are German prisoners here and they live better than we do."

Although not all of these reports were accurate, German POWs often did enjoy better treatment and more rights, such as access to "whites only" facilities. The fact that "black prisoners" were given access to restaurants or military commissaries all but in black American soldiers provided the growing civil rights movement in the United States with a powerful weapon.

Racial discrimination also limited the effectiveness of the induction program for the German POWs. The program, which started in 1944, tried to turn the prisoners into Americans by presenting them in as far as possible under the circumstances the best aspects of American life and institutions. Some POWs responded by assimilating American values with the treatment of black Americans. However, the majority of them were more concerned with what they would be allowed to return home.

The Americans wanted the impression that participation in the induction program would lead to quicker repatriation but this was not true. The first to return to Germany were "warless" prisoners and "unfortunates," i.e. amputees. The last regular shipment of German POWs left the United States on July 22, 1946 of which around 171,000 of the POWs were handed over to Great Britain and France as workers. For the prisoners, this was a "modern slave trade over the golden walls." Some of them had to endure over two more years of captivity and forced labor.

Matthias Reiss is historian at the University of Texas.



American troops watch German POWs in Mexico (bottom), as they dig (bottom) and working in a garage (top).



September 2010 **The Miami News • 16**

Charly Lucas' big mistake

The detestous of a black-American soldier to East Germany created a problem for the U.S. and eventually cost him his life

By Peter H. Koopff

The general news in Germany reported the story of a black soldier who had been shot in the head and sent to an American military hospital in West Germany. The soldier, Charly Lucas, was a member of the 8888 Central Postal Directory, a unit of the U.S. Army that was based in Berlin. Lucas was shot on the night of August 17, 1961, while he was on duty in the city. The shooting was the result of a misunderstanding between Lucas and a German soldier. Lucas was holding a rifle and the German soldier mistook him for a spy. Lucas was shot in the head and died of his wounds. The incident was a tragedy for the U.S. Army and for the people of Berlin. It was a reminder of the dangers of the Cold War and of the importance of communication between the two sides of the city.




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Local participation sought for black history project

Personal stories wanted for research on African-American GIs in postwar Germany

by Kate Goldsmith

Vassar College history professor Maria Hoehn is looking for African-American soldiers who were in Germany following World War II, or who were stationed there during the 1950s or 1960s, to relate their experiences for posterity. "The Civil Rights Struggle, African-American GIs, and Germany," is an ongoing digital archive, oral history collection and research project initiated by Hoehn and Martin Klimke, a research fellow at the Heidelberg Center for American Studies at the University of Heidelberg, Germany, and the German Historical Institute in Washington, D.C.

The project explores the connection between the long-term establishment of U.S. military bases in Germany and the advancement of civil rights in America. Since 1945, almost 20 million American soldiers have served tours of duty in Germany, about three million of whom have been African-American.

"What I found is that African-Americans had a good experience in Germany," says Hoehn, an established scholar of the American military presence in Germany. "This was the first time, especially those from the South, they were in a country without Jim Crow laws."

Former Secretary of State Colin Powell—who served a tour of duty in West Germany in 1958—observed in his book, "My American Journey": "[For black soldiers], but especially those out of the South, Germany was a breath of freedom. [They could] go where they wanted, eat where they wanted, and date whom they wanted, just like other people."

Having tasted such freedom, the soldiers came home to fight for civil rights. Their experience, in turn, inspired the civil rights movement in Germany and other countries.

"I remember growing up [in Germany], how this was happening in my own neighborhood," says Hoehn. "How Germans wanted to align themselves with the Black Panthers."

It is ironic that postwar Germany was a haven for any group suffering persecution based on race. In earlier research, Hoehn interviewed about 100 Germans on their experiences with black soldiers during and immediately after World War II.

"Initially, they [the Germans] were afraid of them," she says, because most had never seen black people before. "[The black soldiers] had trepidation about going into the belly of the beast." However, under the circumstances a mutual sympathy developed.

"These first encounters [of the black soldiers] were with old men, women and children," says Hoehn, "and at this basic level, the Germans were starving."

Hoehn's "GIs and Frauleins" (2002) was the first book to address the experiences of black soldiers in Germany. The current project began about five years ago, when Hoehn and Klimke met at a conference. Klimke was studying the impact of black power on German student radicals.

"He was interested in the intellectual history, the revolutionary thinking in the 1960s," says Hoehn. "I was much more interested in how that played out as a social historian." Hoehn pointed



out that, since they were interested in the same topic, it would make sense for them to collaborate instead of competing with each other.

This past July, Hoehn and Klimke received the Julius E. Williams Distinguished Community Service Award from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The award recognizes initiatives to develop veteran- and community-service partnerships.

Upon learning of the honor, Hoehn admits, "I have to say I was absolutely speechless. I was close to tears. It was so meaningful for me. I work very hard at the history; it's not just academics."

The award also brings Hoehn full circle from her beginnings as a scholar.

"I was a non-traditional student; I only went to college in the United States when I was 21 years old," she says. "My first research paper was on the NAACP ... The other thing that was so amazing: Julius E. Williams is actually someone in my research!" Williams, a decorated veteran of World War II, the Korean Conflict and Vietnam, was the first national director of the NAACP Department of Armed Services and Veterans Affairs.

"It's a wonderful scholarship project, but it's tremendously rewarding on so many levels," says Hoehn.

Those veterans wishing to participate in the project may contact Hoehn at (845) 437-5677.

Hoehn also wants readers to know about a conference, "African-American Civil Rights and Germany in the 20th Century," which will take place at Vassar College Sept. 30-Oct. 4. Although primarily designed for history scholars, Hoehn says there will be three events tied to the conference that will be of interest to the general public.

On Sept. 30 at 6 p.m., World War II veteran Leon Bass will discuss his recollections as a member of the liberating army in a talk titled "Fighting in the Jim Crow Army: A Black Sergeant Remembers Buchenwald."

"He's a fantastic speaker," says Hoehn. "What's interesting about Leon Bass is he was moved by the whole liberation experience. He's done a lot of education with synagogues and temples."

On Friday, Oct. 2, Angela Davis will present "Between Critical Theory and Civil Rights: A Sixties' Journey from Boston to Frankfurt to San Diego" at 7 p.m. The talk will be followed by a reception.

Clockwise from top left: Corporal William E. Thomas and Private First Class Joseph Jackson on Easter Morning, March 10, 1945. Source: NARA, College Park, MD. In July, Maria Hoehn and Martin Klimke received the 2009 Julius E. Williams Distinguished Community Service Award from the NAACP. Kwame Mune, former NAACP president and congressman from Maryland, presented the award. Photo submitted: Silent March of German students and African Americans (students or GIs) to support civil rights, Frankfurt am Main, Germany, 1963. Source: Frankfurt Stadtarchiv/R. Dabrowski.

Davis, professor emerita at the University of California, Santa Cruz, studied with social philosopher Theodor Adorno at the University of Frankfurt in Germany.

"This is where she became a real political activist," says Hoehn, adding that Davis will talk about her travels.

A photography exhibition will be on display at Vassar College during the

month of October. The exhibition presents the first results of the project, a joint research initiative of the German Historical Institute, Vassar College and the Heidelberg Center for American Studies.

Visit www.aacvr-germany.org for more information about the project, including transcripts of many of the oral histories.

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Kalifornien, wie es singt und lacht

POP Der Sommerstaat ist zwar pleite, aber Brett Denners neues Album klingt nach guter Laune

Ein Jahr Stimmung
Auf dem ersten Blick würde der bunte, bunte Sommerstaat von dem kalifornischen Sänger Brett Danner nicht als ein besonderer US-California-Act auf einer Welttournee aufzufassung reisen. Doch wenn der 37-jährige Kalifornier (Geburtsort: Los Angeles) in einem kleinen Club in Berlin auftritt, wird er sofort zum Star. Denn er singt nicht nur amerikanische Songs, sondern auch eigene, die er selbst geschrieben hat. In den Songs von Brett Danner ist ein Stück von Kalifornien zu hören, das man nicht nur in den Songs, sondern auch in der Art, wie er singt, spüren kann. Er singt nicht nur amerikanische Songs, sondern auch eigene, die er selbst geschrieben hat. In den Songs von Brett Danner ist ein Stück von Kalifornien zu hören, das man nicht nur in den Songs, sondern auch in der Art, wie er singt, spüren kann.

Einmal wieder: Danner will bei uns nicht, was er will. Nachdem er die College-Band hat, lernt er aber in ein Freund einer schickigen Managerin von Luke Meyer kennen, die sich von einem Label beginnt singt und zu schreiben, dass in ihrem Studio ein paar Songs von Danner hören und sie ist für die US-Produktionen zuständig. Gemeinsam schreiben sie Danner gleichzeitige Texte auf und schreiben sie in zwei auf Monate Label 'The Angels' B. B. B.

Danner schreibt und will die Klänge
schreiben, weil das die Case zu machen. Der Autor der meisten Songs, die er in seinem Studio geschrieben hat, ist Brett Danner. Er singt nicht nur amerikanische Songs, sondern auch eigene, die er selbst geschrieben hat. In den Songs von Brett Danner ist ein Stück von Kalifornien zu hören, das man nicht nur in den Songs, sondern auch in der Art, wie er singt, spüren kann.



Brett Danner: Singt für die Klänge

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Stars von Jonny Kaufmann bis Patricia Kautz

Stars von Jonny Kaufmann bis Patricia Kautz
Die Sommerzeit ist ein wichtiger Bestandteil der Kultur in Kalifornien. In den Songs von Brett Danner ist ein Stück von Kalifornien zu hören, das man nicht nur in den Songs, sondern auch in der Art, wie er singt, spüren kann.



Historische Aufnahme einer schwarzen Frau, die auf einer Bank in San Francisco sitzt (Foto entstand in Frankfurt am Main)

Die Fräuleins der Freiheit

NACHRECHTEN Hunderttausende schwarze GIs kamen als Besatzer nach Deutschland. Sie wurden hier weniger diskriminiert als in ihrer Heimat. Ein Buch und eine Ausstellung erinnern daran

Ein Jahr 1947
Es geschah im Jahr 1947, im Sommer. Die US-Armee in einer kleinen Stadt in Deutschland. Ein schwarzer Soldat, der als Besatzer nach Deutschland kam, wurde hier weniger diskriminiert als in seiner Heimat. Ein Buch und eine Ausstellung erinnern daran.

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Should They Be Allowed?

What happens when German historians research racism in America?

Maria Hilke and Martin Klimke, both German historians, are coming quite a way in the U.S. with their field of research: the relationship between Black American soldiers that served in Germany and the civil rights struggle in the U.S. In the former land of the Nazis of all places, Black Americans felt that their lives could be better than back home, where the law supported racial segregation. In Germany, they came and went as they pleased and could even date white women. This "unexpected freedom" that the soldiers experienced ended up making the civil rights movement back home.

The oldest, most renowned civil rights organization in the U.S., the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), will be officially honoring the Julius E. Williams Distinguished Community Service Award to Hilke and Klimke's book project (The Civil Rights Struggle, African American GI, and Germany) in July.

The Atlantic Times spoke with Hilke.

Ms. Hilke, you teach and do research on racism and the occupying U.S. troops in postwar Germany. Should a German be allowed to write about that?

Maria Hilke: The main subject of my dissertation, which I completed in 1995, was racism between Germans and Black American soldiers, particularly focusing on the Americans in Rheinland-Pfalz. During subsequent research, American war veterans told me that they had experienced Germany as a land of liberation. They encouraged me to further explore the topic of American racism and the racial segregation that still existed in the military back then.

Of course, sometimes members of my American audience became outraged and indignant. I will never forget a woman who stood up and asked me how I, as a German, could dare to speak about racism in America. My feelings have also put a few doors in the north of the "Garden of Eden."

To what extent did the "German experience" impact the civil rights movement in the U.S.?

Germany was a very special place for Black soldiers because in Germany, they experienced a society without legal restrictions based on race for the first time. When they came to Germany, the land of Hitler and Stalin, they thought they would have a rough time as Black soldiers. But in reality, they experienced the exact opposite. The "Black" press in the U.S. argued that the soldiers were being treated very well and that they could get into any bar or restaurant – and even date white women. Logically, the question that followed was: Why could Germany abolish segregation legislation but not America?

Many of the great civil rights activists were in the military before



Minutes on the long way to equal rights: soldiers of an all-black flying squadron in World War II (above). The March on Washington on Aug. 28, 1963 (below).



The Representative of the State of Rheinland-Pfalz in Berlin at the top. They are also in the process of compiling a digital archive (The Civil Rights Struggle, African American GI and Germany) that documents the link between the experience of Black soldiers and the progress of the civil rights movement in the U.S. www.aacvr-germany.org. (Top left: J. A. Stone College will host the African American Civil Rights and U.S. 20th Century conference.)

they joined the civil rights movement. They came back to America and although they had not been politically active previously, decided to commit their lives to civil rights. The NAACP had a growth spurt like never before at that time.

And racism had disappeared from Germany with the catch of a magic wand?

Of course not. In Rheinland-Pfalz (for example, Holocaust survivors – the Eastern European Jews who arrived there with the Americans – ran many of the restaurants and clubs frequented by the soldiers. Anti-Semitism and racism in regard to the African American soldiers came to a head in the debates surrounding these clubs. Some people argued that by running clubs for Black soldiers, the Jews were opening up the floodgates for immorality in Germany.

This is just one example of the persistence of racism in Germany at this time and how it impacted the Black soldiers and their acquaintances.

Black Americans endured the situation in a guilty phrase: in Germany, the "Innereisland" (IA) persecuted the Jews and in America, the Blacks were lynched. Is that a fair comparison?

In the 1930s, before anyone had any idea of the extent to which the Nazis would go to racial hatred, the American press was reporting on the comparison. The Urban League magazine Opportunity for example, wrote that it of course understood the difference between American racism and the race laws in Germany. The former represented the laws and "traditions" of discrimination and violence in force in the South and the latter were enacted by the German state. But for the victims of a lynch mob, what is the difference between a society that doesn't care about a Black American's life and a murder that appears to be backed by national law?

Journalists working for the Black press certainly had to use strong words to promote their cause. But once again, was the Nazi comparison appropriate?

Let me make the issue more straightforward. After 1945, when the photos of the Holocaust were published, Black soldiers said that the situation had been much worse than they had imagined. But they also recognized it as a consequence of racism – something that they also had at home.

At the time, Hitler's Germany was in the international spotlight, because of the Nuremberg Laws as well as the genocide it perpetrated. At the same time, Americans immediately abolished Germany's race laws in 1941. However, after this, the American Black press questioned why their government couldn't do in Washington what it did in Germany. America's South did not get rid of the Jim Crow laws until the 1960s. Peter H. Kamp

The African Times

A monthly newspaper from Germany



PA/AKG-IMAGES; PA/AKG-IMAGES

Maria Höhn and Martin Klimke, both German historians, are causing quite a stir in the U.S. with their field of research: the relationship between black American soldiers that served in Germany and the civil rights struggle in the U.S. In the former land of the Nazis of all places, black American GIs learned that their lives could be better than back home, where the law supported racial segregation. In Germany, they came and went as they pleased and could even date white women. This “unexpected freedom” that the soldiers experienced ended up stoking the civil rights movement back home.

The oldest, most renowned civil rights organization in the U.S., the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), will be officially presenting the Julius E. Williams Distinguished Community Service Award to Höhn and Klimke’s umbrella project (The Civil Rights Struggle, African American GIs, and Germany) in July.

The African Times spoke with Höhn.

Ms. Höhn, you teach and do research on racism and the occupying U.S. troops in postwar Germany. Should a German be allowed to write about that?

Maria Höhn: The main subject of my dissertation, which I completed in 1995, was racism between Germans and black American soldiers, particularly focusing on the Americans in

Rhineland-Palatinate. During subsequent research, American war veterans told me that they had experienced Germany as a kind of liberation. They encouraged me to further explore the topic of American racism and the racial segregation that still existed in the military back then.

Of course, sometimes members of my American audience became outraged and indignant. I will never forget a woman who stood up and asked me how I, as a German, could dare to speak about racism in America. My findings have also put a few dents in the myth of the “Greatest Generation.”

To what extent did the “German experience” impact the civil rights movement in the U.S.?

Germany was a very special place for black soldiers because in Germany, they experienced a society without legal restrictions based on race for the first time. When they came to Germany, the land of Hitler and Nazism, they thought they would have a rough time as black soldiers. But in reality, they experienced the exact opposite. The “black” press in the U.S. reported that the soldiers were being treated very well and that they could go into any bar or restaurant – and even date white women. Logically, the question that followed was: Why could Germany abolish segregationist legislation but not America?

Many of the great civil rights activists were in the military before they joined the civil rights movement. They came back to America and although they had not been politically active previously, decided to commit their lives to civil rights. The NAACP had a growth spurt like never before at that time.

And racism had disappeared from Germany with the swish of a magic wand?

Of course not! In Rhineland-Palatinate for example, Holocaust survivors – the Eastern European Jews who arrived there with the Americans – ran many of the restaurants and clubs frequented by the soldiers. Anti-Semitism and racism in regard to the African American

soldiers came to a head in the debates surrounding these clubs. Some people argued that by running clubs for black soldiers, the Jews were opening up the floodgates for immorality in Germany.

This is just one example of the persistence of racism in Germany at this time and how it impacted the black soldiers and their acquaintances.

Black Americans reduced the situation to a pithy phrase: in Germany, the “Sturmabteilung” (SA) persecuted the Jews and in America, the blacks were lynched. Is that a fair comparison?

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after this, the American black press questioned why their government couldn’t do in Washington what it did in Germany; America’s South did not get rid of the Jim Crow laws until the 1960s.

Peter H. Koepf, July 2009



German historian Maria Höhn (picture) has taught at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York since 1996. Her book “GIs and Fräuleins” was published in 2002 (published in German as “Amis, Cadillacs und ‘Negerliebchen’” by the Publishing Company for Berlin-

Brandenburg in 2008). Martin Klimke is a research fellow at the German Historical Institute in Washington, DC and the Heidelberg Center for American Studies at Heidelberg University. They have co-curated a photography exhibition currently at the Westrich Museum in Ramstein. Starting on July 19, it will travel to Frankfurt/Main, Munich, Heidelberg, Augsburg and Mainz and ultimately be hosted by the Representation of the State of Rhineland-Palatinate in Berlin as of Nov. 26. They are also in the process of compiling a digital archive (The Civil Rights Struggle, African American GIs and Germany) that documents the link between the experience of black soldiers in Germany and the progress of the civil rights movement in the U.S.: www.aacvr-germany.org.

From Oct. 1-4, Vassar College will host the African American Civil Rights and Germany in the 20th Century conference.

Jennifer H. Svan: Historians study black vets' role in civil rights, Stars and Stripes, July 19, 2009



Army Pvt. 1st Class Eugene Davis of the 375th Engineer Battalion paints over a swastika on a train car in Pallenberg, Ger-

many. The image is part of a gallery of photos for an ongoing research project by historians Maria Höhn and Martin Klimke documenting the stories of black servicemembers in postwar Germany and how those experiences helped shaped the civil rights movement in the U.S. and abroad. The researchers are looking for more black veterans who served in postwar Germany to share their stories.



Tankmen of the 761st Tank Battalion and infantrymen of the 3rd Battalion, 409th Regiment, 103rd Division, 7th U.S. Army, make pancakes together near Reisdorf, Germany, on April 3, 1945. The image is part of a gallery of photos for a research project by historians Maria Höhn and Martin Klimke documenting the stories of black servicemembers in postwar Germany and how those experiences helped shaped the civil rights movement in U.S. and abroad. The researchers are looking for more black veterans to share their stories.

In the words of retired Gen. Colin Powell, post-

war Germany was “a breath of freedom“ for black soldiers, especially those out of the South: “[They could] go where they wanted, eat where they wanted, and date, whom they wanted, just like other people.“

Germany, on the heels of a Holocaust flamed by anti-Semitism, would seem to be the last place on earth to experience any wisp of racial freedom.

But two historians studying the experience of black American GIs in postwar Germany maintain that racial discrimination was not institutionalized as it was in the southern United States at the time. So, interracial interactions were possible, if not always popular. “When they got out of the South, it was their first experience of a society without racial boundaries,” said Maria Höhn, who teaches German history at Vassar College and wrote "GIs and Fräuleins: The German-American Encounter in 1950s West Germany," published in 2002.

Höhn and her colleague Martin Klimke are collecting the oral histories of black veterans who served in postwar Germany and are looking for more to interview for a research project that, even in its infancy, has been honored by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Höhn and Klimke have about 50 interviews lined up with black veterans, but want to talk with at least 100.

“Our major concern is to get these stories on the record, not only for history but also for the families,” said Klimke, a research fellow at the Heidelberg Center for American Studies at the University of Heidelberg in Germany. Younger generations have “no idea their grandparents or parents spent so much time in Germany and

witnessed these things.”

Titled “The Civil Rights Struggle, African-American GIs and Germany,” the project explores the connection between the establishment of American military bases abroad and the advancement of civil rights in the U.S., and the role that black GIs played in carrying the demands of the civil rights movement abroad beginning with World War II.

Höhn and Klimke are initially focusing on Germany, which has been home to the largest contingent of American troops deployed outside the United States for the past 60 years. Between 1945 and the end of the Cold War in 1989, about 2 million to 3 million black military personnel, family members and civilian employees lived in Germany.

For many black servicemembers, the irony of fighting Nazism and promoting democracy abroad while being subjected to the racist fist of Jim Crow changed their perspective and fueled a purpose, the researchers say, sparking their involvement in the civil rights struggle after they returned to the United States.

“As a consequence of their experiences, but also the opportunities offered by military life, GIs were empowered,” Höhn said.

“The goal is to build a large oral history collection that will keep on growing in the future with the help of the military community and the people who interacted with them,” Klimke said.

They’re searching for black servicemembers who served in Germany from 1945 until the end of the Cold War to share “any kind of stories or reflections ... on their time in Germany or on how their military service changed their

perspective on civil rights in the United States,” Klimke said.

Those stories, as well as photographs and documents from the era, are part of an exhibit that’s traveling around Germany and the United States this year and next. There is discussion of bringing the exhibition to military bases throughout Europe next summer, Klimke said.

The project, supported by the German Historical Institute in Washington, D.C., Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., and the Heidelberg Center for American Studies, is also being made into a digital archive available online at: www.aacvr-germany.org. The site provides contact information for black veterans interested in speaking with the researchers.

Höhn and Klimke hope that by giving voice to the experiences of black servicemembers in postwar Germany, they’ll expand the story of the civil rights movement beyond the boundaries of the United States.

So far, those voices have told powerful, poignant stories. Says Leon Bass, who as a 19-year-old black sergeant was among American soldiers who liberated Buchenwald, a Nazi concentration camp, in April 1945:

“There were so many different groups placed in that camp by the Nazis. And what did the Nazis use as a yardstick as to who would be chosen to go there? They said those people who were not good enough, those people who were inferior, they could be segregated. So, you see what I mean? Segregation, racism, can lead to the ultimate, to what I saw at Buchenwald.”



„Freiheit für Angela Davis“ war die Parole der weltweiten Unterstützung für die amerikanische Bürgerrechtlerin. Das Foto entstand 1973 vor der Allen Oper in Frankfurt und ist in der Washingtoner Ausstellung zu sehen. Foto: Kenan Sozen

Deutsche Lektionen

Obama war nicht der Erste: Auch Martin Luther King wurde in Berlin gefeiert

WASHINGTON, 26. November
Als Barack Obama im Sommer seine Rede in Berlin hielt, bemerkte er: „Mir ist klar, dass ich nicht so aussehe wie die Amerikaner, die zuvor in dieser großartigen Stadt gesprochen haben.“ War es Absicht oder ein Versehen? Jedenfalls klangerte er in der Ansprache auf seine Hautfarbe aus, dass bereits vor ihm ein prominenter schwarzer Amerikaner von den Berlinern als Redner umjubelt worden war. Vom 12. bis zum 14. September 1964 weilte Martin Luther King auf Einladung des damaligen Berliner Bürgermeisters Willy Brandt in der Stadt. Zu den Terminen des Bürgerrechtlers zählte auch eine Predigt vor rund 25.000 Menschen in der Waldbühne.

Kings Berlinreise ein Jahr nach Präsident Kennedys legendärem Auftritt am Brandenburger Tor gehört zu den weitgehend vergessenen Ereignissen deutsch-amerikanischer Geschichte. Dabei handelt es sich nicht nur um ein punktuelleres Versäumnis. Die transatlantische Dimension der amerikanischen Bürgerrechtsbewegung ist insgesamt bislang kaum historisch beleuchtet worden. In diese Lücke stößt ein deutsch-amerikanisches Gemeinschaftsprojekt des Deutschen Historischen Instituts (DHI) in Washington, des Heidelberg Center for American Studies (HCA) und des Vassar College im Bundesstaat New York. Ergebnisse des Forschungsvorhabens „The Civil Rights Struggle, African American GIs, and Germany“ wurden nun an DHI von den beiden Historikern Maria Höhn, Professorin am Vassar College, und Martin Klimke vom HCA in Kooperation mit der Kulturförder-einrichtung „Humanities Council of Washington“ präsentiert. Dazu gehört auch eine Sammlung historischer Bilder und Schriftstücke, die Kings Auftritt in Berlin und die Begegnungen schwarzer GIs mit Deutschen zwischen 1935 und den späten siebziger Jahren dokumentieren.

Der Aufenthalt in der geteilten Stadt, so Klimke, habe Kings Überzeugung geschärft, dass der Kampf gegen die Rassentrennung nur eine Facette globaler Probleme sei. Kings Vision vom „Welthaus“ und sein Aufruf zur „weltweiten Gemeinschaft“, die er drei Monate nach der Berlinreise bei der Verleihung des Friedensnobelpreises vortrug, seien zweifelsfrei durch die

seiner Erfahrungen beeinflusst. Schon in seiner Predigt in der Waldbühne habe King den Kampf gegen die Rassentrennung in den Vereinigten Staaten mit dem Ringen der beiden politischen Ideologien in der geteilten Stadt verglichen.

Gegen den Widerstand des amerikanischen Außenministeriums, das seinen Reisepass hatte einzuziehen lassen, war der Bürgerrechtler auch in Ost-Berlin aufgetreten. Nachdem er mit Hilfe des in West-Berlin amtierenden amerikanischen Pfarrers Ralph Zorn am Checkpoint Charlie unter Vorlage einer Kreditkarte statt seines Passes über die Grenze gelangte, hielt King am Abend des 13. September 1964 zwei Predigten. „Hier sind auf beiden Seiten der Mauer Gottes Kinder, und keine durch Menschenhand gemachte Grenze kann diese Tatsache auslöschen“, rief er den Menschen zu.

Während King in der westdeutschen Presse begeistert gefeiert wurde, blieb sein Besuch in den Tageszeitungen der DDR unerwähnt. Sofern die amerikanische Presse Kings Berlinreise zur Kenntnis nahm, geschah dies, da King sich in scharfen Worten gegen den republikanischen Präsidentschaftskandidaten Barry Goldwater ausgesprochen hatte. Dessen Wahlkampagne weise „gräfliche Zeichen von Hitlerismus“. Mit dem Vergleich zwischen Nazi-Deutschland und der Rassentrennung in den Vereinigten Staaten griff King auf ein Instrument zurück, dessen sich schwarze Aktivisten und die schwarze Presse nach Darstellung von Maria Höhn bereits seit 1935 im Kampf um Gleichberechtigung bedient hatten.

Den entscheidenden Schub habe diese Kampagne jedoch durch die Erfahrungen schwarzer Soldaten bekommen, die, segregiert in der amerikanischen Armee, im Nachkriegsdeutschland „den Atem der Freiheit“ (Colin Powell) spürten. Die Erfahrung, ausgerechnet in dem Land, das zu Demütigung und Toleranz erzogen werden sollte, das tun zu können, was ihnen zu Hause verwehrt wurde, veranlasste Schwarze wie den Schriftsteller William Gardner Smith zu dem Gelöbnis, „nie-mals in den alten Gewohnheiten zurückzufallen“. Viele schwarze Veteranen, so Höhn, seien erst aufgrund ihrer Erfahrungen in Deutschland in der Bürgerrechtsbe-

wegung aktiv geworden. Weiter geschickt wurde die Protestbewegung unter GIs in Deutschland von der Studentenbewegung. Die Unterdrückung der Afroamerikaner durch den Feind America machte die GIs aus Sicht von Aktivisten wie dem Vorsitzenden des Sozialistischen Deutschen Studentenbundes (SDS), K.D. Wolff, zu Revolutionären par excellence. Daniel Cohn-Bendit bemerkte einmal über seinen damaligen Mitstreiter: „K.D.s Glück wäre vollkommen gewesen, wenn auch er hätte schwarz sein können.“

Auf der Bundesversammlung im September 1967 erklärte der SDS-offiziell seine Solidarität mit der „Black Power“-Bewegung im Kampf gegen amerikanischen Imperialismus und Kapitalismus. Durch Demonstrationen vor amerikanischen Kasernen, Besuche in Lokalen, die von schwarzen GIs frequentiert wurden, sowie über Studentinnen, die mit schwarzen Soldaten ausgingen, gelang es den Studentenfürerern, afroamerikanische Mitstreiter für zahlreiche Aktionen zu gewinnen. Auch wenn die Allianz Anfang der siebziger Jahre zerbrach, hatte die Solidaritätskampagne nach Darstellung von Höhn signifikante Wirkung für Amerika wie für Deutschland. „Als direkte Folge“ einer gemeinsamen Protestveranstaltung von Studenten und GIs am 4. Juli 1970 in Heidelberg habe die Regierung Nixon umfassende Reformen zur Bekämpfung von Rassismus in der amerikanischen Armee gestartet, die von der Gruppe der schwarzen Parlamentarier in Washington als „amerikanische Revolution“ gepriesen wurden. Parallel dazu ergriff die Regierung von Bundeskanzler Willy Brandt Maßnahmen gegen Diskriminierungen schwarzer GIs durch die deutsche Bevölkerung, insbesondere durch Vermieter und Lokalbesitzer. Mindestens ebenso wichtig sei die Tatsache, dass das Thema „Rasse“ in den öffentlichen Diskurs Westdeutschlands zurückgelockt sei. Erst die Auseinandersetzung mit der Lage der GIs habe dazu geführt, dass sich Deutschland einer Debatte über Ausländerfeindlichkeit sowie über die eigene rassistische Vergangenheit geöffnet habe.

KATJA GELINSKY
African American Civil Rights and Germany
in German Historical Institute, Washington, Bz.
12. Januar 2008

„Erstmals als Mensch behandelt worden“

Demokratie und Anti-Rassismus sollten US-Soldaten nach 1945 die Deutschen lehren. Aber „Re-Education“ gab es auch in die andere Richtung: Sie mündete in die schwarze Bürgerrechtsbewegung. Bewegte Jahre, auch für die Pfalz.

VON ANKE HERBERT

„War es die Rache der Schwarzen Panther? In der Nacht zum Montag wurde das Café Roma in der Kaiserslauterer Rosenstraße ein Kaub der Flammen.“ Als die RHEINPFALZ im Januar 1972 über eine zerstörte Gaststätte schrieb, in deren Schaufensterschibe vier farbige US-Soldaten Molotow-Cocktails geworfen haben sollen, lagen bereits bewegte Monate hinter der Region. Es war die Zeit, in der der afroamerikanische Bürgerrechtskampf auch in Deutschland Spuren von Gewalt hinterließ, in denen insbesondere die Westpfalz zum Zentrum der Auseinandersetzungen geworden war. Doch obwohl sich dafür viele Hinweise in kommunalen Archiven finden, erinnern sich nur die wenigsten daran.

Von 1945 bis heute waren rund 20 Millionen US-Soldaten und ihre Angehörigen in Deutschland stationiert, darunter etwa 2,5 Millionen schwarze GI. Über Vor- und Nachteile, die das insbesondere für Rheinland-Pfalz gebracht hat, wurde und wird viel diskutiert. Auch die große Politik und ihre Strategien wie der Kalte Krieg sind Thema. Maria Höhn, Professorin am Vassar College im US-Bundesstaat New York, erforscht ein ganz anderes Feld: „Das war und ist ja auch ein großer Kulturaustausch – nur ist darüber kaum etwas bekannt.“ Wie war das im Alltag, was blieb auf beiden Seiten hängen, sind Fragen, die sie stellt. Im Fokus hat sie die Region Kaiserslautern-Ramstein-Baumholder, schließlich stammt die 34-Jährige aus Hoppstädten-Weiersbach im Kreis Birkenfeld.

Ende der 1990er Jahre – bei Interviews mit Zeitzeugen – wurde Höhn auf etwas aufmerksam, das sie sich bis dahin nicht hatte vorstellen können. „Sie sprachen alle davon, dass 1950/51 ‚Negereinheiten‘ in der Region stationiert gewesen seien.“ Dabei gab es – zumindest in der Theorie – seit 1948 keine Rassentrennung mehr im US-Militär. Höhns Interesse war geweckt. In Martin Klinka vom Heidelberger Center for American Studies fand sie einen Gleichgesinnten. Gemeinsam förderten sie viel Interessantes zutage, einiges davon zeigt die aktuelle Ausstellung „Der Kampf um die Bürgerrechte“ im Ramsteiner Dokumentations- und Ausstellungenzentrum zur Geschichte der Air Base und der US-Amerikaner in Rheinland-Pfalz.

„Ich liebe dieses gottverdammte Land. Hier bin ich zum ersten Mal als Mensch behandelt worden.“ Diesen Satz eines schwarzen US-Soldaten, der in den 1950er Jahren in Deutschland seinen Dienst versah, bringt auf

den Punkt, um was es geht. Die GI sollten die Deutschen Demokratie und Anti-Rassismus lehren – Gelegenheit für die afroamerikanischen Truppenangehörigen festzustellen, dass es damit mit Blick auf die schwarze Bevölkerung in den USA auch nicht weit her war. „Die Situation der Schwarzen in Amerika wurden mit jener der Juden im Dritten Reich verglichen“, beschreibt Maria Höhn. „In Deutschland konnten wir den Atem der Freiheit spüren“, formulierte es der frühere US-Außenminister Colin Powell. Natürlich hatten die schwarzen Soldaten auch in Deutschland mit Rassismus zu kämpfen. Doch gab es beispielsweise keine Gesetze, die ihnen vorschrieben, wo sie im Bus sitzen mussten.

Was sie in Deutschland erlebt hatten, nahmen die Soldaten mit nach Hause – das war der Beginn der US-Bürgerrechtsbewegung, zu der auch die Organisation „Black Panther“

November 1970 war es gar zu einem Schwurwechsel an der Air Base Ramstein gekommen: Zwei ehemalige GI und „Black Panther“-Aktivisten wollten Infomaterial auf den Stützpunkt bringen. Bei der Zugangskontrolle gab es eine Schießerei, ein deutscher Wachmann wurde verletzt. Zwei der drei Amerikaner konnten später gestellt und verhaftet werden. Im Sommer 1971 wurde der eine freigesprochen, der andere zu vier Jahren Haft verurteilt. Der Prozess um die „Ramstein 2“, ein Schlagwort der Aktivisten, das den Tatort und die Anklage gegen zwei Bürgerrechtler zusammenfasste, sorgte bundesweit für Schlagzeilen; nach dem Vorfall trat auch der Verfassungsschutz in der Westpfalz auf den Plan.

Sonstigen deutsche Hilfstellungen fanden die schwarzen Bürgerrechtler in der linken Studentenschaft der damaligen Jahre, vor allem beim Sozialistischen Deutschen Studentenbund. Er versuchte, diesen Kampf für seine Ideen einer Weltrevolution zu nutzen. Es gab ein Solidaritätskomitee, das auch Veranstaltungen organisierte, wie im Oktober 1970 in der Kaiserslauterer Fruchthalle. Zu einer Großdemonstration gipfelte der Protest in Zweibrücken, als der „Ramstein 2“-Prozess anließ. Die Westpfälzer nahmen vieles gelassen hin. Risse wurden sie allerdings, wie damals die „Süddeutsche Zeitung“ berichtete, als das Bismarck-Denkmal vor dem Landgericht mit einem Schild „100 Jahre Bismarck – 100 Jahre Kapitalismus, Ausbeutung, Unterdrückung und Scheißerei“ „entehrt“ wurde. Daraufhin soll ein Trupp Pfälzer mit dem Ruf „Demem werden wir es zriegen“ die Demonstration gestimmt und letztlich „gesiegt“ haben.

In Deutschland reagierte schließlich die große Politik. Es gab Bonner Erlasse, wie sich die Bürger korrekt gegenüber Afroamerikanern zu verhalten hatten. „Das ist ein tolles Beispiel, wie eine regionale Sache bis ganz nach oben durchschlägt“, sagt Maria Höhn. Und ein Beispiel dafür, wie eng die deutsche und die amerikanische Geschichte durch die Stationierung verbunden sind. „Das muss bewahrt werden“, sagt Höhn außerdem und ist daher dankbar, dass sich das Ramsteiner Dokumentations-Zentrum genau dies zur Aufgabe gemacht hat.

Und wer weiß, vielleicht hätte Barack Obama gestern einen Abstecher in die Ausstellung unternommen, hätten es Zeitplan und Sicherheit erlaubt. Schließlich stehen die Fotos und Texte in direktem Zusammenhang mit dem ersten schwarzen Präsidenten der USA – auch wenn dieser ein eher distanzierendes Verhältnis zu Deutschland haben soll.



zählte. Ein besonderes Symbol wurde ebenfalls „exportiert“: Im September 1964 besuchte der Bürgerrechtler Martin Luther King West- und Ost-Berlin. Von da an sprach er gern von der Berliner Mauer, wenn es um Rassentrennung ging. Seine Ermordung und der Vietnamkrieg waren es schließlich, die zu einer Radikalisierung des Bürgerrechtskampfes führten – auch in der Westpfalz.

Voller Sorge schrieb Hans Jung, damals Oberbürgermeister von Kaiserslautern, im November 1970 an Generalmajor Raymond L. Shoemaker in Kaiserslautern-Vogelweh. „Die Sicherheit der Bürger muss gewährleistet bleiben“, forderte er angesichts von Ausschreitungen zwischen weißen und schwarzen US-Soldaten in den zurückliegenden Monaten. Zuvor schon hatte die Landstüber Gendarmerie Alarm geschlagen: Die Sicherheit könne sie nur bei personeller Verstärkung garantieren. Am 19.

„Ramstein2“ im Bild



Gestern noch war sie im Deutschen Historischen Institut in Washington zu sehen, heute läßt sie im Ramsteiner „Museum im Westrich“ eine Ausstellung über den afro-amerikanischen Kampf um Bürgerrechte und wie sich die Stationierung schwarzer GIs in Deutschland darauf ausgewirkt hat. Dafür steht auch der Strafprozess „Ramstein2“. Eröffnet wurde die Schau aus Kurztexten und vielen Schwarzweiß-Fotos am Donnerstag; mit dabei Maria Höhn, Professorin am Vassar College im Bundesstaat New York und Rheinland-

Pfälzerin. Sie gehört zu den Initiatorinnen dieses amerikanisch-deutschen Forschungsprojekts. Michael Geib, Leiter des Dokumentationszentrums zur Geschichte der US-Amerikaner in Rheinland-Pfalz, rechnet mit vielen US-Besuchern – wie es bereits am Donnerstag der Fall war. Besonders eingeladen sind Schulklassen, die mehr über die kämpferische Zeit ab den 1950er Jahren wissen wollen. Geöffnet ist montags bis freitags, 9.30 bis 17.30 Uhr, samstags, 9.30 bis 12.30 Uhr, und sonntags 14 bis 18 Uhr. (ahb/Foto: Giraed) **SÜDWEST**

„Schwarze Panther“ und die „Fräuleins“

Wie die Rheinland-Pfälzerin Maria Höhn als US-Professorin die gemeinsame Nachkriegsgeschichte aufarbeitet

VON ANJA ROBERT

BRUNNEN, KAISERSLAUTERN Wenn Maria Höhn von ihrer Arbeit erzählt, ist die Professorin kaum zu beruhigen. Nicht nur, was die Informationsflut angeht, sondern ebenso, was ihr Vortragswort betrifft. Die Vorstellung, dass sie in diesem Sinn auch über amerikanischen Studenten am Van-Var College im Bundesstaat New York unterrichtet, ist durchaus angebracht. Schließlich geht es in ihrem Stundenplan die jüngere deutsche Geschichte, auch um amerikanischer Seite. Von ihrer Registrierung lässt abgesehen: Wer kleine-dafür-zugewinn-ten-sein-als-einer-Mehrwald-Pfälzerin, die „mit dem Atom“ groß wurde und seit 25 Jahren, der Erde wegen, in die USA überwandelt.

1923 wurde Maria Höhn in dem kleinen Ort Hoppstädten-Wersbach im heutigen Kreis Zwickersfeld geboren. „Meine Eltern hatten eine Gaststätte mit Hotel, dort bin ich mit drei überall stationierten Amerikanern aufgewachsen“, erzählt sie. Amerikanische Kinder besuchten mit ihr den deutschen Kindergarten, umgkehrt ging sie mit ihrer Familie in die amerikanische Kirche, „weil die gelohnt war“. 1983 schließlich, nach einem Lehrauftrag in Israel, machte sie sich auf in die Vereinigten Staaten. Mit etwas über 30 hatte sie alles nachgeholt, was für ein Studienaufenthalt war, und begann, deutsche Geschichte zu studieren. 1993/94, bei Recherchen zu ihrer Doktorarbeit, fand sie dann genau Thema, das sie seitdem lehrhaftig amerikanische Soldaten (GI) im Nachkriegsdeutschland, ein Gebiet mit vielen Facetten: die Auswirkungen auf die Pfalz sind dabei ein Schwerpunkt.

„Deutschlands ‚Wilder Westen‘“, „Rheinland-Pfalz als zentrales Konfliktgebiet“, „Die Kaiserlauterner Stationen Affäre“ – Überschriften in ihrer jetzt als Buch erschienenen Doktorarbeit, die schlaglichtartig beleuchten, um was es geht. Das Zusammenleben mit den US-Soldaten war nicht gerade einfach. Insbesondere, mit denen gekämpft wurde, gab es überall in Deutschland; aber an den Stationierungsorten konnten eben zusätzlich die Fremden verantwortlich gemacht werden“, sagt Höhn. Freit nach dem Motto: „Atom und Wüstenland haben viel kaputt gemacht.“ Die Auseinandersetzung mit den Auswirkungen der Truppen war folglich auch ein Stück deutsche Schuldgeschichte – und auch bis in die obersten Eben der Politik.

Doch war es nicht nur die unmittelbare gefährdete Moral, die Angst um die Tugend der „German Filles“ und anderes mehr, was mit dem GI am Ärgsten verbunden wurde. Ein besonderer Anreiz lag in die 1950er Jahre hinein waren die afroamerikanischen US-Soldaten. Zwar hatten diese aufgrund ihrer Hautfarbe auch mit vielen Vorurteilen zu kämpfen, stießen aber in Deutschland auf weitaus weniger staatliche Diskriminierung als in den USA und insbesondere innerhalb der Streitkräfte. „Sie sollten dem Deut-



Ein Tanzpaar Anfang der 50er Jahre in Kaiserslautern. Obwohl völlig respektabel, waren die deutschen Frauen und die schwarzen GI großen Anfeindungen ausgesetzt. Letztlich aber sei dies der Anfang vom Ende der Diskriminierung gewesen, sagt Professorin Maria Höhn (oben).

FOTO: VERLAGSSTIFTUNG WILHELM

schon die Demokratie bringen und stellen dabei fest, dass es mit dieser in ihrer eigenen Heimat nicht weiter war“, berichtet Maria Höhn. Dieser Umgang kann erforscht Gebiet. Schwarze Soldaten waren auch innerhalb des Militärs extrem benachteiligt. Kaiserslautern Zeitungen berichten auch heute davon, wie Afroamerikaner meist von den US-Militärpolizei ausgesetzt und grundlos zusammengegriffen wurden.

„Viele schwarze GI schlossen sich erst nach ihren Erfahrungen in Deutschland bei der Rückkehr in die USA der schwarzen Bürgerrechtsbewegung ‚Black Panther Party‘ an, die Gewalt nicht ablehnte“, hat Maria Höhn recherchiert. Während die Schwarzen Panther“ wiederum in Deutschland aktiv wurden; unterstützt auch von linken Studenten ab Mitte der

1960er bis Anfang der 1970er Jahre. So gab es beispielsweise unter der Regie des Sozialistischen Deutschen Studentenbunds (SDS) ein Frankfurter Solidaritätskomitee für die „Panther“.

Dass Afroamerikaner in Deutschland weitaus weniger diskriminiert wurden als zu Hause – in Deutschland „dem Atom der Freiheit sparten“, wie es der frühere US-Außen-

minister Colin Powell einmal formuliert – stärkte ihr Selbstbewusstsein. Dass sich zudem der SDS mit dem „Panther“ solidarisch erklärte, gab dem Gatten der Maria Höhn einen besonderen Kick. Als direkte Folge habe die Regierung Nixon anlassend die Reformen gegen Rassismen innerhalb der Streitkräfte gestärkt.

Heute, so Höhn, sei das US-Militär die bestintegrierte Institution in den USA. In der Bundesrepublik habe die Regierung ähnlich Maßnahmen ergriffen, um der Diskriminierung schwarzer GI durch Lokalbehörden oder Vorgesetzten Rüstung zu gebieten. Zudem habe die Debatte über die GI die Deutschen dazu gezwungen, sich mit Ausländerfeindlichkeit und der eigenen zersplitterten Vergangenheit zu beschäftigen.

„Der Kampf um Bürgerrechte, afroamerikanische GI und Deutschland“ heißt denn auch ein deutsch-amerikanisches Gemeinschaftsprojekt von Höhn und dem Heidelberger Historiker Martin Klöckle, in dem Höhn einen Gleichnisraum gefunden hat. Um diesen Themengrund endlich näher zu erforschen, arbeitet die Van-Var College mit dem Deutschen Historischen Institut (DHI) in Washington unter dessen neuem Direktor Hartmut Bengeloff sowie mit dem Heidelberg Center for American Studies zusammen.

Unterstützt wird das Projekt in der afroamerikanischen Gemeinde durch das Humanities Council in Washington D.C. Erste Ergebnisse präsentiert auch im Ende Februar eine Ausstellung im Deutschen Historischen Institut, ergänzt durch originale Objekte und Berichte von Zeitzeugen können sie dann den Weg in die Pfalz finden. Gedacht ist an eine Kooperation mit dem in Karlsruhe ebenfalls getarnten Dokumentations- und Ausstellungenzentrum zur Geschichte der Afrikaner in Rheinland-Pfalz. Mit dessen Leiter Michael Gohl arbeitet Maria Höhn bereits seit Jahren zusammen.

INFO

Maria Höhn, „Atom, Caliban und ‚Niggerlecher‘“ – GI im Nachkriegsdeutschland“, Verlag dtb, ISBN: 978-3-86030-364-2

Paradoxe Freiheit

Der Zweite Weltkrieg und Amerikas Bürgerrechtler

Wenn Barack Obama am Dienstag verabschiedet wird, werden unter den Ehrengästen des neuen Präsidenten auch ehemalige Tuskegee-Piloten sein, schwarze Veteranen des Zweiten Weltkriegs, die sich in den segregierten amerikanischen Streitkräften unter härtesten Bedingungen zu den ersten farbigen Kampfpiloten ausbilden ließen und mit großem Erfolg Einsätze flogen.

Die Beiträge schwarzer amerikanischer Soldaten zur Befreiung Europas von Nationalismus und Faschismus sind in der Geschichtsforschung lange vernachlässigt worden. Nach weniger Beachtung fand, welchen enormen Einfluss der Krieg gegen Hitler und seine Rassendeckelung auf die amerikanische Bürgerrechtsbewegung hatte. Harvard-Stilkoff, einer der Wegbereiter der Disziplin „African American Studies“, spricht von einem „Wendepunkt“, den der Zweite Weltkrieg für den Kampf gegen Rassismus in Amerika bedeutet habe. Auch wenn die Rassentrennung weiter bestanden habe, seien den Emmet-Crow-Gesetzen die entscheidenden Schläge versetzt worden, legte Stilkoff, der Geschichte an der University of New Hampshire lehrt, in einem Vortrag am Deutschen Historischen Institut in Washington dar – wo man sich gemeinsam mit dem Heidelberg Center for American Studies und dem Vassar College im Bundesstaat New York der Aufarbeitung transatlantischer Aspekte der Bürgerrechtsbewegung widmet.

In welchem Maß der Kampf gegen die Rassentrennung durch die demografischen, sozialen, ökonomischen, politischen und ideologischen Umstände während der Kriegsjahre und dem Einsatz schwarzer Soldaten in Europa befördert wurde, so Stilkoff, lasse sich schon an den Mitgliederzahlen der National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) ablesen. Von 1940 bis 1946 wuchs die Bürgerrechtsorganisation von 30.000 auf 400.000 Mitglieder. Stilkoff, selbst einer der Veteranen der Bewegung, schreibt diese Entwicklung maßgeblich der „Doppelstrategie“ der NAACP zu. Unterstützt durch schwarze Journalisten, Intellektuelle und Künstler, setzte die NAACP-Führung den Feldzug gegen den Faschismus in Europa, um Rassentrennung und Diskriminierung zu Hause anzuprangern.

Der Status der schwarzen Bevölkerung in Washington unterscheide sich „nur wenig“ von dem der Juden in Berlin, zitierte Stilkoff einen Kommentar aus dem Publikationsorgan der NAACP von Januar 1942, in dem es weiter heißt: „wenn die Ghettos in Polen schlimmer sind, dann gilt das auch für die Ghettos in Amerika“. Einen entscheidenden Schuss, sagt Stilkoff, habe die Kampagne an der Heimfront durch die paradoxe Erfahrung schwarzer Soldaten erhalten, in Deutschland mehr Rechte und Freiheiten zu genießen als im eigenen Land, welches doch als Verfechter von Menschenrechten und Demokratie auftrat. Zum Handeln habe sich Präsident Truman schließlich gezwungen gesehen, als zahllose schwarze Kriegsveteranen bei ihrer Rückkehr in die Südstaaten Opfer von Gewalt wurden. Es waren diese Übergriffe, die eine amerikanische Regierung 1948 erstmals serienlasten, Bürgerrechte mit Hilfe gerichtlicher Verfügungen durchzusetzen – also mit jenem Instrument, das später im Kampf gegen den Terrorismus in Misskredit geraten ist.

KATJA GELINSKY

Laura Stapane
(project coordinator)

c/o Adlerstr. 3
26121 Oldenburg
Germany

Phone: +49 441 9506797
Email: stapane@aacvr-germany.org

Maria Höhn
(project director)

Vassar College
History Department
124 Raymond Avenue
Poughkeepsie, New York 12604
USA

Phone: +1 (845) 437 5677
Email: hoehn@aacvr-germany.org

Martin Klimke
(project director)

German Historical Institute (GHI)
1607 New Hampshire Ave, NW
Washington, DC, 20009-2562
USA

Phone: +1 (202) 387-3355
Fax: +1 (202) 483-3430
Email: mail@maklimke.com

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