DEATH, DEPORTATION, VIOLENCE, SILENCE:

REFUGEE ACTIVISM AGAINST PRECARITY IN GERMANY

by

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Abstract

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Death, Deportation, Violence, Silence: Refugee Activism Against Precarity In Germany

Thesis directed by Associate Professor Beverly M. Weber

In this dissertation, I analyze contemporary activist projects as they are or have been undertaken by refugees in Germany. In so doing, I have begun to build an archive of examples of a particular kind of activism that I conceptualize as refugee activism. I argue that as precariously-situated individuals in German society, refugees have entered a discursive space in which they are viewed as the newest iteration of racialized, non-German "others," who live at the periphery of German society, and who are constructed as threats to the future of Germany and of Europe. As a result, refugee activists have used a variety of strategies to address the exclusionary means by which they and other "others" have been excluded from fully participating in German and European society in the 21st century. Through an analysis of refugee activist projects, including social media campaigns, public demonstrations, concerts, a tent action, a die-in, and more, I show how refugees expose the ways in which contemporary discourses, practices, and policies around race, immigration, and difference in Germany reify exclusionary understandings of who belongs and who does not, who is worthy of living, and even who can be considered human. Simultaneously, I argue, that through their activist projects, refugees in Germany have been able to build coalitions, declare new solidarities, and create communities, through which new ways of conceptualizing race, immigration, and difference in Germany and Europe have begun to take shape.

With gratitude,
this dissertation is dedicated
to Mom, Dad, Erica, and Sarah
for shaping who I am,
and to Shane and Natalie
for every day.

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Introduction

In 2016 Germany took in 745,545 refugees, more people than the country had accepted in the course of a year in the history of such recordkeeping, after the issuance of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (*Das Bundesamt in Zahlen 2016: Asyl, Migration und Integration*). Historically, refugees have travelled to Germany for a variety of social, economic and political reasons. The so-called 2015 "summer of migration" and the increasing numbers of refugees arriving in Europe and Germany during the ensuing year was only the most recent (and highly visible) example of mass migration to Germany. Refugees of the past, like their contemporary counterparts, fled their homes, endured injury and torture, lost loved ones, and witnessed the effects of war, environmental devastation, and disease. They uprooted their lives in ways that proved physically, emotionally, and psychologically damaging. Everything they knew, their ways of life, were forever changed. Unfortunately, and as we have been reminded by refugees themselves, refugees who survive a treacherous journey and who are able to apply for asylum in another region or country do not always find safety and security in the country of their arrival. Germany, for example, has some of the most liberal asylum policies in Europe, but because these policies are informed by a long history of racism, the relationship between the state and the refugees who seek asylum within its borders is a complicated one.

For these reasons, it is both important to avoid generalizing refugee experience, and to take seriously the fact that the refugee experience continues long after arrival in a "host" country. By centering refugee voices, it is possible to ask questions about their perceptions, their narratives, and their strategies for navigating not just their journeys, but their arrivals as well. In this dissertation, I analyze contemporary activist projects, as they are or have been undertaken by refugees in Germany and their allies, in order to gain an understanding of how refugees have

been articulating their present realities and envisioning (the possibility of) their futures in

Germany and in Europe. Refugee activisms in Germany serve as responses to forms of precarity

that emerge as a result of asylum practices founded upon the racialized exclusion of refugees

from the category of the "human." By employing a transnational feminist cultural studies

framework as I analyze such work, I argue that activists expose and intervene in discourses,

representations, and understandings of racialized difference in Germany informed by the

implementation of the Eurocentric and racialized category of the "liberal subject" (Lowe;

Weheliye; Piesche, "Der 'Forschritt'"). This category, though often lauded as a universal one,

has actually served to privilege European ideas of subjectivity and human rights, and to exclude

people who have been constructed as antithetical and even threatening to European ways of life.

In addition, the refugee activists whose work I engage claim space as participants in German

society in a variety of ways. In so doing, they expose how the determination of who belongs and

can belong to German society, a process informed by the assignment of distinguishing racial

signifiers to various groups of people over time, ultimately forms a hierarchical understanding of

whose lives matter, and whose lives do not. These exposures and interventions are most often

made possible through the construction of coalitions, the formation of new solidarities, and the

creation of communities, through which new ways of conceptualizing race, immigration, and

difference in Germany and Europe have begun to take shape.

Through an analysis of refugee activist projects, including social media campaigns,

public demonstrations, concerts, a tent action, a die-in, and more, I show how refugees expose

and co-create some contemporary discourses, practices, and policies around race, immigration,

and difference in Germany that tend to reify exclusionary understandings of belonging, who is

worthy of living, and even who can be considered human, while others have allowed for

different ways of thinking about refugee rights, the meaning of difference in Germany, sexualized violence, deportation, arrival, hospitality, and home. In order to expose the representational ramifications and societal effects of the important socio-political projects I address throughout this dissertation, I approach these "texts" from the perspective of somebody trained in literary and cultural analysis, particularly informed by the concerns of transnational feminist cultural studies. This framework, first articulated as such by Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, refuses to, in their words, "choose among economic, cultural, and political concerns [while simultaneously focusing on] the linkages and travels of forms of representation as they intersect with movements of labor and capital in a multinational world" (Grewal and Kaplan 350–57). Through its employment, I am able to analyze cultural objects as they exist in the everyday in the context of the power structures that inform them (Grossberg 9). In addition, the employment of feminist transnational cultural studies methodologies enable me to ask questions about how people – like refugee activists and allies – address, challenge, transform, or reify such power structures.

In this introductory chapter, I begin with a discussion of the perceived tensions between national sovereignty, and refugee needs and rights. I then engage with a thread of Black feminist thought developed by scholars who have been interested in interrogating the borders and boundaries of the human as a category of analysis and object of study, exposing the liberal subject, "Man," the Enlightenment subject, or simply the "human" in "human rights," as an exclusionary category, as opposed to the universal subject position it is often presented as being. This destabilization of the "universal" category of the human is particularly useful for examining how refugees' experiences after arrival in Germany are shaped in large part by historically-informed practices of exclusion on the basis of non-citizenship and constructions of race that

continue to influence the way Germany interacts with the "others" it has created. As a result of refugees' exclusion from the category of the human, and the consequent precarity of their lives in Germany, an examination of refugees' activism in this context must focus on their engagement with Germany's *Willkommenskultur* ("welcoming culture"), its construction of some refugees as integratable and others as perpetually foreign, and the dramatic rise in far-right populist movements in the wake of the "refugee crisis." In the section that follows, then, I describe some of these broader themes that appear throughout this dissertation. In doing so, I also highlight some important histories of activism in Germany as they relate to contemporary refugee activism, and some work in the field of German Studies produced by scholars who have begun to employ humanistic approaches to the study and analysis of activism. I then provide a brief outline of the chapters that follow.

Refugees and a Brief History of German Asylum Law

The United Nations (UN) Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, adopted in 1951, put into effect in 1954, and amended only once in 1967, laid out the international protections assured every refugee for the first time.[1] The Convention was grounded in Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which recognizes every person's "right to seek asylum from persecution in other countries" (*Convention and Protocol*; United Nations General Assembly, art.14).

According to the Convention, a refugee is someone who is "unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race,

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[1] At first, the Convention only applied to people who had been displaced as a result of the "events in Europe" prior to 1951. The 1967 Protocol, however, broadened the scope of the Convention, ridding it of these temporal and spatial restrictions, thereby making it applicable, at least in theory, to everyone in the world.

religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion" (*Convention and Protocol*, sec.1). A person claiming asylum in another country should be able to do so, according to the Convention, without facing discrimination, penalization, or refoulement (forced return to a place where a person feels threatened). The Convention also recommends "that Governments continue to receive refugees in their territories and that they act in concert in a true spirit of international cooperation in order that these refugees may find asylum and the possibility of resettlement" (*Convention and Protocol* 11), thereby placing the responsibility for taking in and protecting refugees in the hands of individual nation-states and signatories to the Convention. This gives rise to the first tension between individual countries and refugees: when human rights are determined by international governing bodies like the UN and when individual nations are expected to guarantee and protect these rights, national interests are centered in discourses about refugees' place in the "host" society, especially as they relate to issues of national security[2] and perceived threats to culture and a particular way of life.

Germany's asylum system has historically been one of Europe's most liberal, though it has become, in recent decades, more and more restrictive. (West) Germany's *Grundgesetz* (Constitution), which was signed into law in Bonn in 1949, has always recognized the right to asylum under Article 16 for people facing political persecution ("Grundgesetz"). Following the 1951 Refugee Convention, the term "refugee" was added to the law, thereby protecting people from deportation, should the government find their application for asylum in Germany warranted. Two years following the adoption of the Convention, the *Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge* (BAMF, Federal Office for Migration and Refugees) was founded in

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[2] Individual governments, for example, have the right to take provisional measures considered "essential to the national security in the case of a particular person, pending a determination by the Contracting State that that person is in fact a refugee and that the continuance of such measures is necessary in his case in the interests of national security" (Convention and Protocol, sec.9).

Nuremburg. BAMF continues to oversee all applications for asylum in Germany. After the official end to the *Gastarbeiterprogramm* (Guest Worker Program) in West Germany in 1973, applications for asylum sky-rocketed and the political debate about immigration intensified ("Vor zwanzig Jahren").

The first major amendment to national asylum law came in 1992, just a few years following reunification and after nearly 440,000 applications for asylum were received as more people began to flee what is now the Former Yugoslavia; this was double the amount of applications from the year before ("Vor zwanzig Jahren"). The following year, the *Bundestag* (lower house of German parliament) passed the so-called *Asylkompromiss* (Asylum Compromise), which amended Article 16 of the *Grundgesetz*, and significantly changed German asylum law ("Vor zwanzig Jahren"; "Grundgesetz"). As part of the "compromise," the government introduced the concepts of "safe country of origin" and "safe third countries" making claims to asylum in Germany extremely difficult. In addition, Article 18a was added to the *Asylverfahrensgesetz* (AsylVfG, Asylum Procedure Act) introducing the so-called *Flughafenverfahren* (airport procedure), thereby making it legal to decide on people's asylum cases and deport them before an asylum seeker even leaves the airport ("Asylgesetz"). Finally, the *Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz* (AsylbLG, Asylum-Seekers' Benefits Act) established a separate social security system for asylum seekers (Schneider and Engler; "Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz").

During this same time, as discussions of the politics and possibilities of dual citizenship were circulating, refugee rights organization Pro Asyl argued that Germany had a "special obligations…to prevent the recurrence of such humanitarian disasters as the failure to accept the expelled Jews in the 1930s" (Jarausch and Geyer 197). In general, the use of human rights

language in West Germany following World War II was ridden with mention of the historical obligation of Germans to learn about their past, particularly the Nazi past, and "thereby become more vigilant about present-day human rights violations worldwide" (Wildenthal 6). Even so, and as we will see in the case of the debates about immigration and integration following the Cologne attacks (see Chapter Four), liberal asylum policies in Germany were seen as the cause of the increasing violence and xenophobic attacks that took place in the 1990s against asylum seekers and People of Color, rather than the result of a larger problem with racism (Eley 118–19).

The second major change to German asylum law came in March 2016 in the form of *Asylpaket II* (Asylum Package II). *Asylpaket II*, which was put into effect in the midst of the so-called "refugee crisis," shortened the time asylum seekers would have to wait for a decision on their cases, and also restricted the conditions under which families are allowed to claim asylum and remain together ("Asylpaket II in Kraft"). These laws and amendments have significant impacts on how refugees live their lives in Germany. The drastic changes to the otherwise open and liberal German asylum policies over the past three decades or so indicate changes in the nation's relationships to outsiders, particularly refugees, and have helped to establish an hierarchical order that distinguishes the degree to which different groups of racialized "others" are deemed able to belong to the nation (Stephan Castle as cited in Gutiérrez Rodríguez 20) . Tellingly, the two biggest amendments in 1993 and 2016 were put into effect just after Germany saw large rises in the number of people trying to claim asylum there. I explore this complicated relationship between Germany, the rights it grants its refugees, and refugees themselves in the following section.

National Sovereignty, Human Rights, and the Refugee

Hannah Arendt describes how, as a result of the birth of the modern nation-state following the French Revolution, the demands for national sovereignty and for universal human rights coalesced, thereby giving rise to a paradox, the effects of which are still being felt. That is, at the same time that all human beings were said to be able to inherit the essential rights laid out in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789), the nation-state itself was said to be sovereign, "bound by no universal law and acknowledging nothing superior to itself" (Arendt 230). Consequently, according to Hannah Arendt in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*,

> The practical outcome of this contradiction was that from then on human rights were protected and enforced only as national rights and that the very institution of the state, whose supreme task was to protect and guarantee man his rights as man, as citizen and as national, lost its legal, rational appearance and could be interpreted by the romantics as the nebulous representative of a 'national soul' which through the very fact of its existence was supposed to be beyond or above the law. National sovereignty, accordingly, lost its original connotation of freedom of the people and was being surrounded by a pseudomystical aura of lawless arbitrariness. Nationalism is essentially the expression of this perversion of the state into an instrument of the nation and the identification of the citizen with the member of the nation. (Arendt 230).

Whereas the state apparatus within the nation-state structure would continue its function as protector of the people who lived within its geopolitical boundaries through legal institutions, for example, the nation-function, which was produced through people's "rising national consciousness" as it pertained to their religious or ethnic identities in particular, ended up using state structures for its own purposes (Arendt 229). The exclusionary idea of nation, and the desire to maintain its power, became the overriding principle guiding the ways in which the nation-state would be governed. National interests, akin to the interests held by the predominant cultural, ethnic, religious, or racial group within a given nation-state, determined the function of state apparatuses, thereby differentiating the modern nation-state from, say, the empire model

that preceded it, wherein different nations existed, perhaps in a hierarchy, but were governed by one state structure meant to maintain order.

Arendt, while invaluable when it comes to thinking about human rights as co-constitutive of the concept of the human itself, and as it relates to the emerging and evolving concepts of the nation and the law, does not fully think through the ways in which race factors into conceptions of the nation, and therefore into who is considered human and worthy of protection under a nation's laws, and who is not. Michel Foucault addresses this important omission, albeit very briefly, arguing that it is racialization that becomes the means through which "the death-function in the economy of biopower […justifies…] the death of others" as it makes "one biologically stronger insofar as one is a member of a race or population" (Foucault 77). That is, according to an understanding of power as functioning through a management of life in what we have come to call biopower, as nations seek to improve the productivity and pureness of the "species-body" belonging to and constitutive of it (Foucault 69), difference on the basis of race must be established if the killing and/or mistreatment of "the other" is to be justified. Race, as it is tied to various institutions, including but not limited to the state, functions as a determinate for whose lives are deemed valuable and worthy of protection, and whose lives are regarded as disposable. It is the exclusionary category of national citizenship that makes this racialized distinction especially visible, and it is the "categorization of refugees into different statuses attached to the process of application and recognition of asylum produces a hierarchical order, a nomenclature reminiscent of the orientalist and racialized practices of European colonialism and imperialism" (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 20)

Despite the fact that the concept of "race" emerged in Europe, there has been a real resistance to acknowledge the existence of racism in postwar Germany and on the European

continent altogether, or at least as an important societal force that exists outside of far-right, neo-

Nazi, and groups of "football hooligans" as well (Chin et al. 2–3). Fatima El-Tayeb characterizes

this resistance in this way:

> To reference race as native to contemporary European thought…violates
> the powerful narrative of Europe as a colorblind continent, largely
> untouched by the devastating ideology it exported all over the world.
> This narrative, framing the continent as a space free of "race" (and by
> implication, racism), is not only central to the way Europeans perceive
> themselves, but has also gained near-global acceptance. Despite the
> geographical and intellectual origin of the very concept of race in
> Europe, not to mention the explicitly race-based policies that
> characterized both its fascist regimes and its colonial empires, the
> continent often is marginal at best in discourses on race or racism, in
> particular with regard to contemporary configurations that are often
> closely identified with the United States as a center of both explicit race
> discourse and of resistance to it. (El-Tayeb, "Secular Submissions" xv).

The aversion to acknowledge the existence of race and racism in Europe plays a

particular political role, as it locates race and racism elsewhere and/or in the past, and as it

portrays Europe as having moved beyond race, or positioned as being "beyond" race altogether.

This makes political organization around anti-racism in Germany and in Europe a particularly

tricky project, as activists must first (re-)position race in Germany and Europe, and then explain

how the workings of race, and processes of racialization, shape racialized people's realities. In

Alexander Weheliye's words, racialization should be understood

> not as a biological or cultural descriptor but as a conglomerate of
> sociopolitical relations that discipline humanity into full humans, not-
> quite-humans, and nonhuman. I construe race, racialization, and racial
> identities as ongoing sets of political relations that require, through
> constant perpetuation via institutions, discourses, practices, desires,
> infrastructures, languages, technologies, sciences, economies, dreams,
> and cultural artifacts, the barring of nonwhite subjects from the category
> of the human as it is performed in the modern west. (Weheliye 3).

Locating race and racism in Germany and in Europe, then, requires an understanding of these sets of relations. Refugee activists and allies are able to shed a particular light on this process through their activist projects, which are often centered on the search and struggle for access to universal human rights, and sometimes for a rethinking or turning away from the concept of universal human rights altogether.

Significantly, moving away from, problematizing, or de-centering the discourse of human rights, as many (but not all) of the activists in my study do, also requires thinking about the human itself as an object of knowledge (Weheliye 8). I suggest that by addressing the category of the human and its non-universality, activists generate critiques that demonstrate how refugees do not have claim to human rights, thereby destabilizing the category of the human in ways that open up space for developing other, sometimes more communally constitutive, ways of thinking about whose lives matter, and what those lives look like. In other words, I am thinking of what refugee-activists in Germany create through their work as an answer to one of Weheliye's core questions: "what different modalities of the human come to light if we do not take the liberal humanist figure of Man as the master-subject but focus on how humanity has been imagined and lived by those subjects excluded from this domain" (Weheliye 8)?.

The refugee activists and their allies presented in this study have engaged with the public with the presupposition that race and racism has always already existed within Germany's national borders, and on the European continent. They highlight how race as operated as a category through which some, namely citizens, are designated as deserving of rights, and some, namely refugees, are not. When the concept of citizenship itself is racialized, the process of racialization dictates the terms by/through which citizenship is conceptualized and determined. While refugees themselves may not choose a path to citizenship, or are prohibited access to

citizenship in their host country, they still become susceptible to the ways in which the

racializing processes that define and support the asylum system, render them not-(quite-)human.

Destabilizing the Category of the Human

In a supplement to Agamben and Foucault's "considerations of racism vis-à-vis

biopolitics," Weheliye, moving from work done by Hortense Spillers and Sylvia Wynter in

particular (see, for example, Wynter; Spillers), suggests that it is not enough to consider the

workings of racialization in relationship to the nation, especially as understood through the

concepts of bare life and biopolitics. Instead, he argues for the use of the concept of *habeas*

viscus in order to make up for the shortcomings found in these other means of understanding the

"interconnectedness of political violence, racialization, and the human" (Weheliye 1). *Habeas*

viscus, he writes,

> is a particular assemblage of humanity…which, in contrast to bare life,
> insists on the importance of miniscule movements, glimmers of hope,
> scraps of food, the interrupted dreams of freedom found in those spaces
> deemed devoid of full human life (Guantanamo Bay, internment camps,
> maximum security prisons, Indian reservations, concentration camps,
> slave plantations, or colonial outposts, for instance). (Weheliye 12).

Furthermore, "habeas viscus networks bodies, forces, velocities, intensities, institutions,

interests, ideologies, and desires in racializing assemblages" which are, in turn,

> the conceptual tools of racialized minority discourse augment and
> reframe bare life and biopolitics discourse, because they focus on the
> nexus of differentiation, hierarchy, and the human, and ultimately on
> devising new forms of human life that are not constructed from the
> noxious concoction of racialization and/as political violence. (Weheliye
> 6).

When beginning with the concept of racializing assemblages, it is possible to interrogate the ways in which refugee activists engage with historically-informed discursive treatments of "differentiation, hierarchy, and the human," and to tease out the claims they are making about the potential for refugees to live in Germany and in Europe if the racialization and political violence they expose through they work did not exist. Moving away, then, from the vocabulary of resistance and agency with respect to anti-racist activism, this study asks about the alternatives, the "kinds of deformations of freedom [that] become possible in the absence of resistance and agency" (Weheliye 2). Indeed, some of the activists I present in this study are able to problematize the supposed universality of the category of human rights and its utility in their own lives precisely because they think of freedom – their own freedom – in terms that do not resonate with the language of nation, citizenship, and human rights.

For example, in Chapter Two, I discuss the ways in which Roma refugee activists in Germany build home as secure and sustainable imagined space in response to the precariousness produced by state displacement and deportation practices. This "home" takes the form of a transnational community, and additionally demonstrates need for a geographic space that can also *be* that home. In particular, I analyze the work of the Prizrenis, three Roma brothers whose activism takes the form of hip-hop performances, youth programming, and a distinct social media presence. In one activist endeavor, two of the brothers – Selamet and Kefeat – host a concert for their older brother Hikmet who was, at the time, in a detention center awaiting possible deportation. The concert and campaign tied to it, simply called Free Hikmet!, included hip-hop performances by the younger brothers and many other musician-allies throughout Germany. What is particularly significant here is Selamet and Kefeat's complete disregard for their own immigration statuses at the time of the concert: the two had just re-entered the country

after five years in exile in Kosovo, to which they were deported from Germany when the government had determined that they would no longer be allowed to live in Germany as Geduldete.

It is possible to view the brothers' activist work – here the concert – as Roma activists' attempt to work for the inclusion of former Roma refugees in German-European society, and to call for an articulation of Roma in Europe as participating citizens with a future on the continent by making legal and discursive adjustments; in other words, it is possible to ask questions here about the Prizrenis' response to their brother's situation. However, doing so eclipses the many other things at work at the concert and in the Prizrenis' work overall, which is to say that their activism – like all the activism I present in this study (and, dare I say, all activism) creates, rethinks, bends, and "deforms," to use Weheliye's term, ways of thinking about one's freedom in terms of its supposed universal applicability. The fact that the brothers want Hikmet to be "free" (or the fact that Iranian refugees in Chapter 1 want to be "free" from what they see as the inhumane conditions of their living quarters) taken together with their willful protest, or what Sara Ahmed says is "what we do when we are judged as being *not*, as not meeting the criteria for being human, for instance" (Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* 15, italics in the original), the Prizreni brothers are not simply resisting the state. Instead, insofar as their willful presence at the concert acts as a sort of "conversion point [where] potential is turned into a threat" (Ahmed 11), they are demanding another understanding of freedom, one that would not just free Hikmet from the detention center, but one that would also require the state to shift and reconsider its relationship with all Roma. This reconceptualization of freedom requires that the idea of the German nation and the make-up of its citizenry, as well as a mainstream but arguably exclusionary understanding of what Europe is and who Europeans are themselves is

problematized, as are the ways in which Roma have been made "different" in racialized terms, and susceptible to precarity in ways that those imagined to belong to Germany and Europe have not been.

Though the racialization of various groups in Germany has changed over time according to the availability of language, to "advancements" in scientific thought, to political and economic objectives, and to social trends, the principles by which groups are racialized have only shifted in form and intensity. According to many contemporary Black feminist investigations of posthumanism, the Enlightenment category of the "human," also referred to as the "modern liberal subject," or, by Sylvia Wynter's term "Man," has been racialized and mobilized to exclude some people from having access to human rights and participating in the building and imagining of the modern nation-state. Wynter herself proposes that

> the struggle of our new millennium will be one between the ongoing imperative of securing the well-being of our present ethnoclass (i.e., Western bourgeois) conception of the human, Man, which overrepresents itself as if it were the human itself, and that of securing the well-being, and therefore the full cognitive and behavioral autonomy of the human species itself/ourselves. (Wynter 260).

Recent scholarship on the histories and legacies of slavery (Alexander), colonialism and so-called neo-colonialism (Chakrabarty; Coulthard and Coulthard; Mcclintock; Spivak), genocides including the Holocaust (Bergen), the drug war and mass incarceration rates of particularly young Black men in the U.S. (Grant; Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*), surveillance, terrorism, and immigration (Weber, *Violence and Gender*; El-Tayeb, *European Others*) has established race as a powerful signifier that has a commanding influence in determining how people have been able to live their lives, move through space, and even imagine or enact alternative ways of being. Racialization shapes groups' lived realities in many

ways, but perhaps most articulable and relevant to the refugee experience is the fact that racialization is intricately connected with precarization, and that racialized "others" live particularly precarious lives. Considering the distinctiveness of refugees' positionality as both non-citizens and as racialized "others" in Germany and, in many cases, Europe, I ask what forms of activism can exist, and what kind of solidarities and coalitions can be created when human rights are not guaranteed? What limits to activists face when working toward change?

In *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, Lisa Lowe argues that our contemporary understanding of the liberal modern subject is built upon European colonialism, the transatlantic slave trade, and the trading that occurred between Europe and the East Indies and China in the late 18th and early 19th centuries (Lowe 1). Because modern liberalism is responsible for having ushered in the conditions for the free, rational, and equal modern liberal subject to exist, Lowe understands her study as an "unlikely or unsettling genealogy of modern liberalism" that considers how "[t]he social inequalities of our time are a legacy of [the] processes [colonialization, slavery, global trade and the rise of capitalism] through which 'the human' is 'freed' by liberal forms, while other subjects, practices, and geographies are placed at a distance from 'the human'" (Lowe 3). Modern liberalism and, as a result, the modern liberal subject, rely on forms of "human" that are understood to exist within a hierarchy; membership in a group is determined at birth and is deemed immutable. The process of racialization, as it was informed and necessitated by colonialism, the transatlantic slave trade, and the rise of global trade, became the most significant way in which this difference was produced and "projected onto the putatively biological human body" (Weheliye 5). Race as a marker of difference lingers on even today and has been central to modern liberal thought is race. Furthermore, "Even as it proposes inclusivity, liberal universalism effects principles of inclusion and exclusion; in the very claim to

define humanity, as a species or as a condition, its gestures of definition divide the human and the nonhuman, to classify the normative and pathologize deviance" (Weheliye 6). The German immigration debates, and the definitions of integration that exists within them, not only benefits from an exclusionary understanding of what it means to be human (and thus what it means to belong), they are shaped by it.

Refugees, *Willkommenskultur*, and Integration

Refugees enter into and exist in a discursive, political, and economic landscape shaped by a long history wherein processes of racialization have distinguished those who belong to Germany, and those who are seen as outsiders. The politics of nation-building, informed by histories of imperialism, colonialism, fascism, and genocide continue to inform public discourse about so-called "others" in Germany even in the 21st century. In addition, refugees inhabit particularly vulnerable positions vis-à-vis the German nation-state, as they enter and exist in a political context wherein the state has, at various times, used the granting, denial, and retraction of citizenship rights to shape and manage its population over time. The 1913 citizenship laws, for example, regulated who, and under what circumstances, could be considered German, which was solely understood in terms of progeny and race. In the 1930s, the Nazi Party stripped Jews and Roma of their citizenship rights first in Germany proper, and later in Germany's occupied lands in the East. After reunification in 1989, People of Color – Germans and refugees alike – faced increased violence as the newly configured country struggled to understand what it meant to be German, and what it meant to participate in the building of a new Germany. With the first major change to the Federal Republic's citizenship laws since 1913, the 2000 citizenship laws redefined what it meant to be German, for the first time, making it possible for some people born

in Germany to declare citizenship even if their parents were not German. Since 2008, the European economic crises have been accompanied by the rise in power of national groups across Europe, but particularly in Germany, Sweden, Italy, Austria, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. Populism and a rise in cultural nationalism led to the vote in the United Kingdom to leave the European Union in the now infamous "Brexit decision" as well as the establishment of the far-right grassroots group known as Pegida (see, for example, Coury), and its accompanying political party known as the AfD in Germany.

The problematic characterization of refugee presence in Germany as occurring in "waves" has contributed to a particular understanding of the postwar era that privileges the stories of "German" refugees over "non-German" refugees within larger narratives about German nation-building, reconstruction, reconciliation, and reunification. Displaced people, particularly so-called ethnic Germans, have appeared in the story of Germany after 1945, and East German expellees or escapees to West Germany during the Cold War Era are central characters in a larger story about geopolitics in the latter half of the 20th century. Refugees from the Balkans escaping war and turmoil in Eastern Europe following the fall of the Iron Curtain have entered mainstream discussions about refugees in Germany here and there (particularly as a result of the violence against refugee homes in places like Solingen and Mölln in the early 1990s, where the majority of residents were from the Balkans). Discussions about refugees from places like Eritrea, Cameroon, and Northern Africa that find their way into German mainstream culture often characterize these particular refugees as "economic migrants," escaping impoverished conditions and low to no job prospects in their home countries. Syrians, however, entered German public imagination around 2014, understood as the main beneficiaries of Germany's so-called *Willkommenskultur*, and Germany's benevolence and humanitarianism in light of the

European refugee crisis. Non-German refugees and migrants have often been excluded from prevailing narratives of Germany's national history and are often viewed in decontextualized ways, perhaps even as having arrived in Germany as individuals with no ties to the context into which they migrate. According to Gurminder Bhambra, "[t]his exclusion from the history of belonging is then used to justify their exclusion in the present from entry to those states and from sharing in its wealth and resources" (Bhambra).

More recently, the dichotomy between so-called "economic migrants" and "refugees" has intensified within political discourse. This distinction separates the former, who are understood in terms of their real or perceived economic needs, and the latter, understood in terms of how they have been persecuted according to their religious, political, ethnic, gendered, or sexual identities or affiliations, from each other. According to this thinking, migrants and refugees are considered in opposition to one another – migrants are what refugees are not, and vice versa – despite the arbitrariness and flexibility of these categories, particularly when considering people's decisions to migrate as at least partially informed by shared histories of (neo)colonialism (Bhambra). This distinction, however, has contributed to an understanding of migration to Germany and Europe in terms that represents refugees as victims who must be cared for, and migrants as more or less nuisances. Migrants are defined, more or less, as people who have travelled to Germany in order to profit from working in a wealthy and stable economy. According to this thinking, unlike refugees, migrants do not have any right to claim asylum, nor to the protections allotted others according to Germany's human rights laws. Within this framework, refugees are therefore considered "worthy" of human rights, whereas "migrants" are dehumanized. In August 2015, news company Al Jazeera even went so far as to declare that its journalists would no longer use the term "Mediterranean Migrant" because it had become "a tool

that dehumanizes and distances" (Malone), essentially shaping migrant life as less valuable as other lives.

Refugees have been the object of study in important inquiries about contemporary migration patterns, sovereign state politics, as well as in international human rights discourses. However, the predominant trend across the social sciences and humanities has been to situate refugees as objects in research studies, rather than to engage with refugee activism through knowledge production. Though not entirely absent from these intellectual endeavors, research that includes refugees' voices and perspectives, let alone their socio-political concerns, is not the norm. With this study, I expand upon some research already being done in the field of German Studies that engages with broader humanities discourses in an effort to both counter the notion of "refugee-as-object-of-study," and to demonstrate one methodological approach that can be employed in order to ensure refugees' own experiences and articulations of their realities remain central to research *about* them. In this dissertation, refugees, themselves socio-political actors, engage with human rights discourses, among other things, in ways that both expose the limitations of these discourses, and/or propose alternatives for thinking of refugees in ways not restrained by them.

Contemporary refugee activism is situated and therefore must also be understood within the context of refugee, anti-racist, and in some cases feminist and human rights activisms that have preceded them.[3] Refugees have a long history of resistance and creative engagement in the German context. German-specific groups like The Voice, Karawane, and ProAsyl, and international organizations like Amnesty International, have addressed issues pertaining to refugees in the German context for decades now, and their work informs contemporary

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[3] For an in-depth discussion of the vast number of civil society groups helping to address refugee issues, see (Funk; Ataç et al.).

endeavors both directly and indirectly. Other organizations have come and gone, and new groups have emerged in just the last few years including, but not limited to, Refugee Tent Action, Oplatz, and the International Women's Forum, not to mention a few others that appear throughout this dissertation. Refugees themselves have always been political players, and subjects in their own engagements with German and European state apparatuses, and have addressed things like the limitations of asylum laws, racist violence, refugee rights issues, sexual assault and rape, isolation, poor housing conditions, deportation practices, and much more. In 2012, for example, as I will elaborate on extensively in Chapter 1, protestors in the southern German city of Würzburg sewed their mouths shut and went on months-long hunger strikes to "politicize voicelessness that resulted from [the government's] violent refusals to listen" to refugees' demands for better living conditions (Aikins and Bendix); in that same year, these refugees were joined by hundreds of others across Germany on a march to Berlin, willfully disregarding and breaking so-called "movement restriction laws" or *Residenzpflicht*, which forbade any refugee to leave the specific designated area (a city or a region) where they first arrived in Germany for 6 months.

One of the longest-running critiques of the German asylum system as it has been yielded by refugees is against the idea of the German *Willkommenskultur*, or welcoming culture. For quite some time now, refugees have accused Germany of presenting itself as a welcoming place, even as it engages in what they see as unwelcoming practices. Scholars and refugees themselves, Joshua Kwesi Aikins and Daniel Bendix have argued that *Willkommenskultur* "often seems much more concerned with the capacity of Germans to 'welcome' and 'cope' with the 'influx' and attendant 'changes' rather than refugees' perspectives and harrowing experiences – not just in faraway places, but in Germany as well" (Aikins and Bendix). Others have written about how

while "neighbors and volunteers" came to the aide of refugees in need of basics like food, water,

and clothing refugees during the "refugee crisis," the 2014 rise of Pegida (Pätriotische Europäer

gegen der Islamisierung des Abendlandes/Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the

Occident) and the 2016 election of members of the far-right Alternative für Deutschland

(Alternative for Germany, AfD) party to state and federal parliaments indicated that Germany as

a whole was divided on the issue of refugees (Boulila and Carri 287).

Representing a portion of the public concerned about what an increase in the number of

immigrants and refugees in the country (or in Europe in general) would do to German culture

and the so-called German way of life, rose in popularity in January 2015 after its meager

beginnings in Dresden a few months before. Following the January 8 attacks on the satirical

magazine *Charlie Hebdo* headquartered in Paris, 25,000 Pegida members and supporters

gathered on Schlossplatz in Dresden and marched in silent protest, demonstrating their

opposition to what they perceived to be the "Islamization of Europe" (Dostal 524). While signs

pointed to Pegida's conflation of Islam and violence – for example, "Gegen religiösen

Fanatismus und jede Art von Radikalismus. Gemeinsam ohne Gewalt. Pegida" (Against religious

fanatiscism and every kind of radicalism. Together without violence. Pegida" (Müller), Pegida

leaders attempted to portray the movement's followers as victims. Co-founder Kathrin Oertel

characterized Germany as a country whose values were not compatible with Islam. In an

interview with *Newsweek* following the attacks she said that, "Every religion is welcome in

Germany. But you can't try to influence German culture and life" ("German PEGIDA Group

Says Paris Shooting Shows Islamist Threat").

In general, *Willkommenskultur* has become a divisive issue in Germany. For example,

whereas groups like Pegida have used the events in Cologne to "prove" how welcoming so many

people into the country at once had created a situation where sexualized violence against women was apparently inevitable ("German PEGIDA Group Says Paris Shooting Shows Islamist Threat"), others have focused on what they feel is the contradictory nature of a "culture of welcome" that covers up certain contradictory and hypocritical government practices with respect to refugees. Beverly Weber, Maria Stehle, and I have added that the enactment of *Willkommenskultur* was ridden with problematic notions of hospitality, whereby hosts are perceived as the more powerful and superior half in the guest-host relationship, and that by entering Germany, refugees had entered – invaded even – Germans' home, which they are unwilling to share or re-conceptualize in the wake of such a profound demographic change to the country (Weber and Frazier-Rath; Weber and Stehle).

Chapter Outlines

In my study, I focus on refugee activism in Germany that took place between 2010 and 2016 in particular, though some of these endeavors have extended into the present. The chapters that follow are ordered chronologically according to when various projects began or groups were founded, though there is a lot of spatial and temporal, not to mention thematic, overlap as activists and their projects pop up and fizzle out, as they appear in public space and then disappear when new priorities arise, and as they persist or abruptly finish up. Since the so-called refugee crisis peaked in the summer of 2015, much mainstream media and scholarly attention has been paid to the economic and political repercussions of the presence of refugees in Europe; the ensuing rise of populism and extreme right-wing rhetoric and political influence; and the experiences of Western Europeans and of refugees from Syria, Iran, and Afghanistan in particular. Some scholars in the humanities are now beginning to take up questions of refugee

self-representation and to center refugee activists' creative energies around conceptualizing and realizing alternative modes of thinking about their experiences and their lives in Europe as subjects of scholarly study,[4] but this work is just getting started. This is, however, the focus of this study.

In the years prior to 2015, people from the western Balkans, Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Russia, and Iran made up the vast majority of asylum seekers who entered Germany (*Das Bundesamt in Zahlen 2016: Asyl, Migration und Integration*). Driven in large part by the disputed victory of controversial conservative President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2009, many Iranians peacefully took to the streets in what became known as the Iranian Green Movement, but were violently suppressed by the state. Some were even arrested and tortured as a result of their participation in opposition protests, including several of the refugees whose work I take up in my first chapter. In Chapter One, I examine the ways in which refugee activists and allies in Germany responded to the suicide of Iranian refugee, and torture survivor, Mohammad Rahsepar in 2012 in a Würzburg refugee center. Friends of Rahsepar blamed the German state's treatment of refugees for his suicide, claiming that the poor conditions found in the refugee center had exacerbated Rahsepar's mental health issues that began with his time spent in an Iranian prison. In addition, activists claimed that the inhumane nature of the food and grocery voucher system, which specified what refugees could buy and in what quantities, as well as the *Residenzpflicht* (Movement Restriction Law) were unnecessary, paternalistic, and degrading measures taken up by the German state to prevent the integration of refugees into German society.

I then consider the activist implications of another refugee's death, this time the murder of Eritrean Khaled Idris Bahray in 2015. Making up one of the largest groups of refugees in the

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[4] See, for example, (El-Tayeb, *European Others*; El-Tayeb, *Undeutsch*; Landry; Çağlar; Bhimji).

world, Eritreans continue to leave their homeland both to escape the oppressive government regime, and to find some semblance of economic stability, ultimately leading many Eritreans, like Bahray, to flee to Europe. Just a few months after arriving in Germany and on the same night of one of Pegida's largest protests to date, Bahray's body was found outside of an apartment building in Dresden causing an enormous media and activist uproar about the effects of the rise in far-right violence in Germany. In both Rahsepar and Bahray's cases, I argue that the affective spaces that existed in the wake of these men's deaths enabled willful, angry, and ultimately politicized refugee responses to enter Germany's public discourse in ways that brought questions about racism together with questions around the presence of refugees in Germany, with varying results.

A look at the period between 2012 and 2015 that provides the backdrop for Chapter 1, reveals several years flecked with significant events that would spur both the rise of far-right groups like Pegida and the AfD, and the momentum and strength of activisms, manifesting themselves in new iterations of decades-old anti-racist feminist work as did Black Lives Matter, and its German sister organization, Black Lives Matter Berlin. After the shooting death of unarmed Black teenager Trayvon Martin in February 2012 and the subsequent acquittal of the boy's murderer George Zimmerman in July of that year, the hashtag #blacklivesmatter was founded. It would take almost exactly two more years, however, for the Black Lives Matter Movement to emerge. This time, when another unarmed Black man named Michael Brown was murdered by a policeman in Ferguson, Missouri, and his body left in the street for four hours, protests and demonstrations erupted in the city, and soon spread throughout the United States and, eventually, abroad. Solidarity marches like the one in Berlin that summer took place around

the world, and organizations like Black Lives Matter Berlin, founded officially on June 2, 2017, popped up across the globe.

In Chapter Three, I focus on Black Lives Matter Berlin, and their claim that racism exists in Germany today as it always has, despite characterizations of Germany as a "raceless" and therefore racism-free space. I argue that it is precisely this characterization of Germany that provides activists in Berlin with a unique challenge: to prove that a movement founded in the U.S., where the language of race is more widely used and problematized, and where racialized police violence is much more widespread and deadlier, has value and potential for addressing racism in Germany. It is, I argue, BLM activists' simultaneous dedication to forming and maintaining international solidarities, together with their commitment to addressing locally specific forms of racism, that make the BLM framework especially productive when talking about refugees' experiences and struggles in Germany, and when thinking through what futures are possible for refugees living in Germany and Europe.

In the summer of 2015, as Europe was dealing with its crisis resulting from the presence of millions of Syrian refugees, Germany was taking in record numbers of refugees. This was especially true after Chancellor Angela Merkel's decision in late summer 2015 to override the Schengen Agreement and open Germany's borders to all Syrian refugees. At the same time that Syrians were being "saved" in Germans' open arms, former refugees from the Balkans, many who had lived in Germany for decades, were being deported "back" to countries like Kosovo, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Following a 2010 Resettlement Agreement between Germany and Kosovo in particular, deportations to the small Balkan country had already increased dramatically. As mentioned above, families like the Prizrenis, including some members who had never actually lived in Kosovo, were finding that they were no longer being

"tolerated" ("geduldet") in Germany. When Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia were declared "safe countries of origin" (*sichere Herkunftsländer*) between November 2014 and October 2015, the idea was that there would be no imminent threat nor persecution of anyone "returning" to these countries. This decision, hotly contested in refugee and human rights circles, was of particular concern to members of Roma minority groups, who argued that their safety and well-being was absolutely no guarantee in these countries. Amid the "Syrian refugee crisis," many applications for asylum were also being submitted by people from northern and eastern Africa (particularly from Eritrea), elsewhere in the Middle East (particularly from Iraq and Afghanistan), and from the Balkans. There were 103,815 first-time applicants from Albania, Kosovo, Serbia, and Macedonia during this year (*Das Bundesamt in Zahlen 2016: Asyl, Migration und Integration* 21). Although numbers for all of the Balkan states are unavailable, of the over 27,000 applications for asylum made by Serbians in 2014, nearly 92% of them were made by Roma ("Asylanträge im Jahr 2014"); however, fewer than 1% of all applications from people coming from the Balkans were accepted that year (Brenner, "Roma Fear"; Koelbl et al.). Essentially what this means is at the same time that these countries were being placed on the list of safe countries of origin, thousands of people from these countries were claiming asylum, and most of them were Roma. Chapter Two, discussed in more detail above, considers how Roma activists address the German government's dislocation and deportation practices, and what communities and homes they create in spite of them.

Throughout the short period of time considered in this dissertation, media coverage of refugees' presence in Germany and in Europe exposes the ways in which narratives about the "refugee crisis" were made to intersect with narratives of criminality, violence, and even

terrorism. Indeed, without any understanding of refugees' own experiences, or taking seriously their own voices and activist engagements, it is possible to read this period, as members of Pegida, for example, often do, as a period of European victimhood and fear. After the Charlie Hebdo attacks in January 2015, the murder of 12 people at a German Christmas Market in Berlin in December 2016, and the New Year's Eve attacks in Cologne a few weeks later, anti-refugee rhetoric fueled by the media's representation of the "refugee crisis" and of these horrific acts of violence side-by-side grew into a cacophony.

In the months that followed the attacks, public figures across Germany and Europe responded. Hungarian, Belgian, and Slovakian officials, for instance, called for a complete halt to migration to Europe (Huggler). Others advocated for the development of "respect for women" courses and called explicitly for people to acknowledge the "obvious" connection between refugees and violence against women in Europe. Still others promoted the idea of increasing the number of defense forces placed along the borders of the EU, specifically and particularly between Greece and Macedonia (the latter a candidate for admittance to the EU) (Faiola). In Germany, Pegida founder Lutz Bachmann designed a t-shirt that read (in English) "Rapefugees not welcome," while in France, the controversial magazine *Charlie Hebdo* published a cartoon that featured a drawing mimicking the famous picture of Kurdi (see Chapter 1 for a discussion of this image and the significance of its circulation in Germany (and around the world) in shaping public reaction to the refugee "crisis"). The caption to the cartoon read "Que serait devenu le petit Aylan s'il avait grandi?" ("What would have happened if little Aylan had grown up?"). Aside the picture of Aylan, two men with pig-like faces are depicted running with their hands reaching out as if they are trying to grab or grope the two terrified white women they are chasing

("Hebdo - 'What Would'"). According to the artist, Aylan would have grown up to be one of these men – a threat to white, German women.

The cartoon is representative of the larger discourse around gender-based violence in Germany that sees women as the only possible victims, and brown or black men as the only possible perpetrators. There is no room in this discourse for the experiences of or narratives about women of color nor of white men. In addition, the discourse erases LGBTQ-identifying people from the equation, thus it is also located in a broader heteronormalizing and historically situated narrative that represents men as perpetrators and women as victims. This presentation of Aylan as a potential threat to women is also another instantiation of the decades-long trope of the hypersexualized, ultra-patriarchal, sexist, and violent migrant man. These refugee or migrant men are presented as people who will always pose a threat to German women, the German nation, and Germanness itself. In German politics, this narrative is framed in terms of migrants' and refugees' perceived abilities to integrate into German society, as is exemplified by former Minster of the Interior Thomas de Maizière's suggestion in late 2016 at a public forum on integration following the publication of investigators' report about what happened in Cologne. De Maizière stated that people who live in Germany can still feel connected to their homelands, "but the priority should be the society and country in which they now live" ("De Maizière nennt").

As a result of the correlation made between the dramatic rise in the number of refugees entering Germany in 2015 and a perceived rise in violence against women, refugee activists were forced to make complicated decisions about how they would represent and align themselves after the so-called Cologne Attacks (New Year's Eve 2015-2016). The effects of these choices – which ranged from reifying the distinction between "good/integrated" and "bad/unable-to-

integrate" refugees to opening up new spaces for thinking about and fighting gender violence and racism simultaneously – illustrate the possibilities that refugees have to voice their concerns, opinions, and criticisms in light of events like the Cologne Attacks and the limited (and limiting) conversations about refugees' place in German society that (tend to) follow. In Chapter Four, I analyze the activist work of two refugee and ally groups: Syrer gegen Sexismus [Syrians against Sexism] and the #ausnahmslos [#without_exception] campaign, both of which, in the wake of Cologne, advocated for more nuanced approaches to topics like gender violence and immigration, albeit in very different ways.

Chapter One

Sticky Affects, Racialized Bodies: Pain, Anger, and Activism in the Wake of Refugees' Deaths

In September 2015, an image of three-year-old Aylan Kurdi in a red shirt and blue shorts, lying face-down in the sand, went viral on social media. Kurdi drowned in the Aegean Sea as he and his family fled Syria in hopes of reaching the Greek island of Kos. His boat, one of two carrying 23 people in total, capsized, and the toddler's body was found days later, washed up on a beach near Bodrom, Turkey. Abdullah Kurdi, Aylan's father, lost both of his sons and his wife on this journey ("That Little Syrian Boy"). This image of the three-year-old child "shocked and haunted the world" ("That Little Syrian Boy"). In *Der Spiegel* one reporter wrote of the photographer's perspective when taking the photo: "Practically every European has stood on some beach somewhere looking at the waves exactly like this. Each one of us, that's the message the image sends, could have a dead child wash up at their feet. This crisis concerns all of us" (Johnson).[5] At the height of the 2015 refugee "crisis," this photograph drew people in. It elicited expressions of horror and dismay, but also of compassion, empathy, and humanitarianism. It invited people to share in a global outrage about the conditions refugees faced on their way to Europe, about which something had to be done. The little boy's death moved people to act.[6]

Earlier that year, another sort of public outrage erupted on the international stage. Khaled Idris Bahray was a 20-year-old Eritrean refugee who was murdered outside of his apartment in Dresden in January 2015. His death sparked uproar across social media and (inter)national news

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[5] All translations from German to English are my own unless otherwise stated.

[6] The photograph surfaced just two days after Angela Merkel controversially stated that Germany would be opening its borders and allowing all Syrians to seek refuge in the country, even if they had already registered in another country. Merkel's overriding of the Dublin Agreement, which states that asylum seekers are required to register for asylum in the EU country they enter first, was met with stark criticism from anti-immigrant groups who feared the "influx" of asylum seekers to Germany would put irreversible strains on resources and the economy.

outlets about the increasing rates of far-right violence against refugees in Germany. As his death corresponded with the largest Pegida[7] protest in Dresden to date, many in the public were eager to pin the murder on this Islamophobic group. However, the angry public outcry around Bahray's death dissipated quickly when, eleven days after he was killed, police arrested Bahray's apartment-mate, also an Eritrean refugee, for second-degree murder. Bahray's death could no longer be publically mobilized to demonstrate how horrific right-wing violence was (becoming) in Germany.

Similarly, the affects that circulated around the suicide of 29-year-old Iranian asylum seeker Mohammad Rahsepar in January 2012 in Würzburg were not compassion, empathy, or humanitarianism. Rahsepar's death went largely unnoticed in the media beyond the local newspaper until, that is, activists began evoking the man's death in their increasingly visible protests. Aylan Kurdi's death was seen as tragic in ways that Bahray's and Rahsepar's deaths could not be. As a child, Kurdi was seen as innocent and undeserving of such a horrific fate. Compassion, as an affect, "stuck" to Aylan's body in ways that it did not attach itself to Bahray or Rahsepar (Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* 8). The response to Aylan's death, the loss of an innocent child, could in many ways only be an empathetic one. Rahsepar's suicide, on the other hand, was more ambiguous. His existence as a Brown man in Germany was not viewed in the straightforward way that Aylan's journey across the Aegean could be. The man could be blamed for his arrest in Iran, for *choosing* to seek refuge in Germany, and for ultimately taking his own life. He, as an adult, had agency that could not be read onto Aylan's body. As a racialized "other" in Germany, Rahsepar could be read as criminal, as undeserving, as a threat to German women, and as a threat to Germans' jobs, stereotypes about Black and Brown men that

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[7] Please see the introduction to this dissertation for a discussion of Pegida's roots, goals, and development.

have a long history in German culture.[8] In similar ways, Bahray, also an able-bodied adult, could be read as having had a certain amount of agency, which, when enacted, could have led to his death in some way. As a Brown refugee man in Germany, he could be (and was) read as a drug-dealer (though this is unfounded), a troublemaker (also unfounded), and so on. Compassion, empathy, and humanitarianism, as circulating affects, could not "stick" to Rahsepar and Bahray in the same ways as they "stuck" to the figure and photo of Aylan. Aylan's death was viewed as unambiguously tragic, whereas the workings of racialization and anti-immigrant discourse, as well as the affects that shape these forces and emanate from them, prevented many in the public from seeing Rahsepar and Bahray's deaths in the same way.

These men's deaths were still grieved, however, even if they did not spark the same circulation of empathy, compassion, and humanitarianism. In this chapter, I look at what affects did collect around these deaths in refugee communities. Specifically, I consider how refugee activists and allies' pain and anger around Rahsepar and Bahray's deaths informed activist projects that exposed the men's deaths as examples of the consequences of the workings of racialization in German society, particularly within the German asylum system. That is, the circulation of anger in the wake of these men's deaths among refugees in Würzburg and Dresden enabled willful and politicized refugee responses that entered Germany's public discourse in ways that brought questions about racism together with questions around the presence of refugees in Germany, with varying results.

"Sticking" Affects and Racialized Bodies

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[8] For more information on the ways in which Black and Brown men have been characterized throughout German cultural history, see, for example, (Weber, *Violence and Gender*; Ewing).

Sara Ahmed's discussion of the relationship between pain, anger, and feminism provides insight into the sort of politics involved in the circulation of affect present in the wake of Rahespar and Bahray's deaths. Ahmed reads feminism as emerging from pain, where pain is thought of as structural rather than the result of "incidental violence," and not as an object that can somehow be separated from women's bodies in a way that would suggest that feminism can be separated from the "site of subordination" (Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* 171–72). These structures of pain are informed by long histories of oppression and discrimination, and are caused by forces, institutions, and ideologies such as (neo)colonialism, slavery, segregation, capitalism, (neo)liberalism, war, genocide, lynching, the prison industrial complex, and more, that have formed and shaped racialized peoples' collective and individual experiences. Ahmed cautions that acknowledging feminism's relationship with pain is not to fetishize pain/wounds. Instead, she writes,

> Our respond (sic) to 'wound fetishism' should not be to forget the wounds that mark the place of historical injury. Such forgetting would simply repeat the forgetting that is already implicated in the fetishising of the wound. Rather, our task would be to learn to remember how embodied subjects come to be wounded in the first place, which requires that we learn to read that pain, as well as recognise how the pain is already read in the intensity of how it surfaces. The task would not only be to read and interpret pain as over-determined, but also to do the work of translation, whereby pain is moved into a public domain, and in moving, is transformed. In order to move away from attachments that are hurtful, we must act on them, an action which requires, at the same time, that we do not ontologise women's pain as the automatic ground of politics. (Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* 172).

I think about the collective efforts of the Würzburg protestors and the Eritrean refugee-led activism in Dresden as resulting from refugee-activists' acknowledgement of the pain in each other that was caused by the deaths of members of and friends in their communities. Through what Audre Lorde calls the "painful act of translat[ing]" feeling into action (Lorde, *The Uses of*

Anger),[9] the activists in this chapter have interpreted their feelings of pain as having emanated from the loss of men who died because of the racism embedded in the German asylum system, as well as in German society.

When 80 asylum seekers from a refugee camp in Nuremburg demonstrated "In Memory of Mohammad Rahsepar" in January 2012, they wore T-shirts with an image of Rahsepar printed on them and held signs that read "Für die Freiheit gestorben" ("Died for Freedom") ("Suizid in Flüchtlingsunterkunft"; *Nach Suizid*). According to activists, Rahsepar died to achieve freedom – his own freedom from the conditions in which he lived, and in order for others to mobilize their anger about his death in their own search for freedom. Rahsepar's death as it occurred "for freedom" is only articulable as such if the death itself points to the conditions from which one must be freed. In this way, Rahsepar's death is a sign of something that is not quite right, that causes unease, and that stirs up emotions. Avery Gordon proposes that this feeling can be the result of being haunted and that "the ghost [in this case Rahsepar's death] is just the sign, or the empirical evidence…, that tells you a haunting is taking place" (Gordon 8). I suggest that Rahsepar's and, later, Bahray's deaths are what reveal that a haunting is taking place in German society, and that their presence brings about certain affective structures, that make particular lines of thought and action possible: they produce a feeling of unease and pain, which is interpreted as emanating from the existence of something deeper that is at work. Activists' work, then, is already the politicalized results of the *process* of translation or interpretation of the feelings of pain and unease into anger. As we will see, this anger is targeted at the German asylum system and German society in general that activists argue are informed by processes of

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[9] See also (Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* 170).

racialization that are not just rooted in colonialism, but which are actually invested in the

perpetration and maintenance of (neo)colonialist thinking.

Mourning Mohammad Rahsepar

29-year-old policeman Mohammad Rahsepar fled his native Iran in May 2011. He had

been jailed and tortured for refusing orders to break up an anti-government demonstration, and

when he left for Germany, his wife and child stayed behind (Shahnaz; Jakob, "Kommentar

Räumung" 107; *Nach Suizid*; Jakob, *Die Bleibenden* 107).[10] Seven months later, on January 29,

2012 Rahsepar did not respond to friends' and fellow refugees' multiple attempts to have him

open the door to his room in Würzburg's Emery Barracks[11], a refugee community housing unit

(*Gemeinschaftsunterkunft*, GU) (Jakob, *Die Bleibenden* 107). Officials found that the door had

been barricaded from the inside ("Suizid in Flüchtlingsunterkunft"). After police finally gained

access to the room, they found Rahsepar dead; he had hanged himself with his bedsheets (Jakob,

Die Bleibenden 106–07).

Rahsepar's death was reported in the local newspaper, *Main Post*, and in only a few

regional papers.[12] Unlike Aylan Kurdi's death and, as I describe below, Khaled Bahray's murder,

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[10] An *Amnesty International* annual report on Iran for 2011 cites many instances in which torture, including mock executions, was used in Iranian prisons during that year.[10] In addition, prisoners were often detained for much longer than their sentences called for, and they were regularly denied access to necessary medical care and to legal counsel. The report found that all of these instances of torture were carried out with impunity ("Annual Report").

[11] The Emery Barracks served as an army barracks, mostly for the U.S. Air Force, from the 1930s until 1990. In 1992, it was transformed into a refugee center, which can hold 450 people. It is located in the part of the city of Würzburg known as Dürrbachau, which lies northwest of the city center, in an industrialized area and near one of the city's major highways and several sets of train tracks. In 1938, the barracks were named the Adolf-Hitler-Barracks and then renamed after the Americans took it over after World War II (Frühauf).

[12] In the month following Rahsepar's death, there is, as far as I can tell, only one mention of his suicide in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, a relatively popular and often-read national newspaper, and one mention in the *Südwest Presse*, a smaller, regionally-specific newspaper. To my knowledge, there are no mentions of his suicide in international mainstream media (in German, English, or French) in the month after his passing.

Rahsepar's suicide did not attract much public attention. Khaled Bahray's murder occurred just three months after the founding of Pegida, and amid increasing tensions between members of the anti-Islam group and refugees, immigrants, and their allies in Dresden. Aylan Kurdi's death took place at the height of the European refugee "crisis." In January 2012, when Rahsepar died, the German public's attention was, for the most part, not directed in the same way as it would be three years later toward the plight of asylum seekers, their living conditions in Germany, and the questions around refugee rights in Europe. When a group of asylum seekers from the Würzburg GU, many of whom had been close to Rahsepar, responded to the suicide, they did not do so in response to a large public uproar about the death.

Rahsepar's suicide provided refugees from the Würzburg GU an impetus to organize. Two weeks after Rahsepar's death, the group published two open letters within four days of one another. In the first one, the writers – "a group of Bayern Province's refugees" [13] – evoked Rahsepar's death saying that he "hanged himself from the window with his bed sheets and ended his struggle to find a way to be able to live with dignity in a human society" ("Invitation"). In the group's first public statement, activists draw an unambiguous link between Rahsepar and others' suicides and the conditions they face as asylum seekers – "confusion[;] lack of health, food, hygiene[;] and inhuman treatment and humiliation" – in Germany ("Invitation").[14] Right away, activists frame Rahsepar's suicide as a response to the impossibility of feeling human under the circumstances. The letter continues:

> How can we prevent that? Surely, the answer would not be to swallow
> our anger and accept the daily tyranny; neither acting as a victim could

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[13] "A group of Bavaria's refugees."

[14] Please note that when it does not inhibit understanding, I do not correct the use of English in the asylum seekers' messages. I may add words here or there for the purposes of flow, but the activists are non-native speakers of English, so there are mistakes and awkward wording. However, for the most part, what they are trying to say comes through without issue and I want to respect the ways they have decided to articulate their ideas.

> help us in any way in order to attract attention and/or sporadic humanitarian financial help. Against abuse, regardless of the time and place it occurs, we have to stand up for our rights and fight back. We have to denounce the tyranny hidden hypocritically in the so-called humanitarian authorities and do our best to bring change. The asylum seeker who has to leave his country and take refuge in the countries who are supposed to apply and endorse Human Rights and does not get his/her rightful place has to take certain steps to gain back his/her dignity. ("Invitation").

In their invitation to people to join them in protest in front of the Würzburg main train station four days later, the group of asylum seekers describes their motivation for taking action. The activists refuse to move beyond their anger, explaining that they are mobilizing their anger instead of permitting it to lay dormant or to fizzle out. The potential of taking up such a strategy is articulated by Lorde who says, "Focused with precision [anger] can become a powerful source of energy serving progress and change [;] I do not mean a simple switch of positions or a temporary lessening of tensions, nor the ability to smile or feel good. I am speaking of a basic and radical alteration of those assumptions underlining our lives" (Lorde, *Sister Outsider* 25). For the letter writers, human dignity, that which Rahsepar was supposed to be granted but which activists say he was denied, is the human right that guarantees a person is valued, respected, and treated ethically. Arguing that as refugees, they had been deprived of their right to human dignity, the activists' anger, amplified by Rahespar's death, drove them to take action in such a way that would challenge the idea that Germany was adequately protecting the universal human rights of refugees now residing within its borders.

One way that activists make visible the state's fraught relationship with its refugees is clear in their second letter, published in preparation for the demonstration in Würzburg that would ultimately take place on February 13. They wrote,

> Mohammad Rahsepar spent seven months of his life, holding out in an ambigous (sic) and doubtful situation full of complex and inhumane circumstances in Germany, a country [to] which he came to live in safety and under a normal situation, [something that] should be the right of any human being, from any origin or nationality. In the early hours of January 29th, in the [Bavarian] state's Würzburg refugee camp, the asylum seeker Mohammad Rahsepar hanged himself in his room…Today, 13th February 2012, we asylum seekers find ourselfs (sic) in the same situation in which Mohammad was, a situation that caused him to commit suicide. ("Appeal").

If safety should indeed "be the right of any human being, from any origin or nationality," as the letter writers say, then activists' characterization of Rahsepar's death as having resulted from his feeling unsafe indicates that activists see the German state's understanding of human rights and their own as being at odds with one another.

In their first act of protest following a short ceremony commemorating Rahsepar, a number of the asylum seekers at the GU refused their food packages and called for the food package system to be abolished ("Appeal"). At this time, every refugee in Bavaria received two packages of food per week. This practice was criticized by activists because it did not allow for refugees to determine for themselves what they would eat and when. By this point, every other German *Land* had done away with this system, instead offering refugees either cash or vouchers to purchase their own food ("Essenspakete").[15] Their list of requests, to which, activists said, the appropriate state officials should respond without delay, also included demands that their asylum application processing time be shortened; that GUs, refugee centers, and designated refugee housing units be closed so that asylum seekers could rent their own private accommodations; that asylum seekers be allowed to work; that they be granted access to regular German language

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[15] Bavaria's new Social Minister, Emilia Müller, ended this practice on October 30, 2013 ("Essenspakete").

courses; and, that the *Residenzpflicht* (Movement Restriction Law)[16] be eliminated, "because on

a continent with virtually no borders anymore, this limitation is senseless and a violation of

human rights" ("Appeal"). Each one of these demands makes reference to what activists identify

as a human right to which they do not have access in Germany as a result of their asylum status.

All of the activists involved in writing these letters had not been granted nor denied asylum at the

time. That is to say, all of the asylum seekers involved in this protest were living in the

Würzburg GU not knowing when their applications for asylum would be considered, and if,

when their applications were finally processed, they would be deported, tolerated (*geduldet*), or

granted the right to stay (*Bleiberecht*).

Finally, on February 13, between 150 and 200 asylum seekers from other Bavarian camps

and GUs in Aschaffenburg and Munich, for example, joined the Würzburg protestors and allies

in front of the Würzburg main train station to march to the town hall, where a demonstration

would follow. After a moment of silence "to commemorate all who had lost their lives due to the

hardship of asylum-seeking" and several speeches, the group handed over the list of demands to

a local government official (The Asylum-Seekers of Bayern).

Setting Up Camp

After it became clear, however, that Christine Haderthauer, the CSU[17] Social Minister for

Bavaria was not going to engage with the asylum seekers in Würzburg on behalf of the regional

government, the group decided that more drastic action had to be taken (Jakob, "Hungern für ein

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[16] See the Introduction to this dissertation for a brief discussion about the *Residenzpflicht*, which I'll also address in more detail below.

[17] Christlich Sozialistische Union/Christian Socialist Union, the Bavarian branch of the right-of-center national CDU party– Christlich Demokratische Union/Christian Democratic Union

Leben"; Böhm). On March 19, 10 Iranian asylum seekers set up two tents on the square in front

of the Würzburg town hall. They hung a photograph of Rahsepar next to pictures of stonings that

had taken place in Iran and a sign that read "We are political asylum seekers, who fled the hell

that is the 'Islamic Republic' of Iran" (Jakob, "Hungern für ein Leben"; Jakob, *Die Bleibenden*

108; Böhm). The group, members of which had been meeting fairly regularly even before

Rahsepar's death and sometimes together with Rahsepar when he was alive, decided to go on a

hunger strike (Beyss; Hirshbeck). With some support from the Red Cross, several physicians,

and some lawyers in the area, the men sat in protest of the long waiting-periods they and other

Iranians had to endure as they anticipated the German state's decision about their asylum

applications (Böhm). Christian Jakob, a reporter for the *Tageszeitung* who also wrote a book

called *Die Bleibenden: Wie Flüchtlinge Deutschland seit 20 Jahren verändern* (*Those Who

Stayed: How Refugees Have Changed Germany in the Last 20 Years*), states that,

> It is remarkable, but many asylum-seekers must wait a long time: in
> 2012, for every fourth application the BAMF [Bundesamt für Migration
> und Flüchtlinge (Office for Migration and Refugees)] needed more than
> 2 years [to reach a decision]. This is particularly true for those who come
> from countries with high numbers of applicants – like Iran. The BAMF
> concentrates its resources on fighting a losing battle: trying to process
> and reject the never-ending applications submitted by people from the
> Balkans,[18] which 'must be the first priority.' Iranians have to be patient.
> (Jakob, *Die Bleibenden* 108).

Other refugees living in Bamberg, Nuremburg, Passau, Regensburg, Aub, Düsseldorf,[19]

and Hesepe joined in the protest (United States Department of State; Jakob, "Hungern für ein

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[18] I expand upon this specific issue in Chapter 2.

[19] In Düsseldorf, protestors who set up camp in front of the Landtag were woken up every night by police, who, acting according to Police President Herbert Schenkelberg's orders, were not supposed to be sleeping, as sleeping was not protected under the constitution's right to assemble clause. He said, "Mahnwache kommt von Wachen und nicht von Schlafen" ("Protesting [or, in this context, Mahnwache can also mean standing vigil] is done when you are awake, not asleep.") (Jakob, "Hungern für ein Leben").

Leben"), demonstrating against the "torture of not knowing" ("Folter der Ungewissheit"), a direct psychological effect activists blamed on the German asylum system that, they believed, had claimed many victims, including Rahsepar (Jakob, *Die Bleibenden* 108).

In a letter to Haderthauer, the Würzburg refugees wrote, "This unknowing along with the fact that we are granted no autonomy in our daily lives, demoralizes us and propels us, gradually, to our deaths. [Rahsepar's suicide] is only one example of what such conditions can lead to" (Jakob, "Hungern für ein Leben"). This position was reinforced in a statement made by the International Federation of Iranian Refugees, whose representatives stated unequivocally that the reason for Rahsepar's suicide was "the inhumane conditions" in the GU ("Suizid in Flüchtlingsunterkunft"). Claudia Roth, the leader of the Green Party in Bavaria, wrote in her own statement that it had been proven that the environment in the GU had made people both physically and psychologically ill. She criticized the Bavarian government for not doing anything to change the conditions in the GU (*Nach Suizid*). Bavarian government spokesperson Johannes Hardenacke replied to these accusations by relaying Haderthauer's message that "there was no reason…to doubt the local government's finding that such a tragic suicide had nothing to do with the conditions in the GU" (*Nach Suizid*), and then said "that according to the information we have obtained up until now, there is no relationship between the suicide and the means of accommodating asylum seekers [in the Würzburg GU]" (Staffen-Quandt). He justified this statement by saying that there had been no "similar incidents" in Würzburg for years (Staffen-Quandt).

In reading the government's and activists' responses to Rahsepar's suicide alongside each other, it becomes clear that government officials and refugee-activists are concerned with two very different things. For example, the Green Party, though in agreement with activists that the

suicide could have been prevented if the conditions in the GU were more humane, were reacting

to the response of the CDU/CSU government, and not to Rahsepar's death itself. The CDU/CSU,

through Haderthauer and Hardenacke, when acknowledging the "tragic" nature of the death, was

responding to accusations that the camp's conditions were poor, and that they were at fault.

Hardenacke even went one step further, justifying the government's defensiveness by pointing to

the fact that no other such incidents had taken place in the GU in the years prior to Rahsepar's

death. This reply assumed two things: first, that camp conditions had remained the same over

time and that these conditions were humane and healthy for everyone; and, second, that someone

like Rahsepar, who had been suffering from mental illness which likely resulted from the torture

he experienced in Iran, was getting all of the help and support he needed in the GU, even if the

conditions were "humane."

Again, compassion and empathy did not circulate in the public sphere around Rahsepar's

death as it had around Aylan's. Instead, Rahsepar's death was viewed as a symbol of the

irresponsibility of local authorities, or as merely a fluke incident: the suicide of a troubled man.

In contrast, activists did not view Rahsepar's suicide as a symbol that *stood in* for something else

(e.g., incompetence, poor conditions in the GU); the death *pointed* to something else: to the

circumstances that caused it.

One notable difference between the Green Party's response – the conditions in the

refugee center must be improved – and the activists' response to Rahsepar's death is that the

latter was rooted in an anger founded upon activists' shared belief that their friend's death was

unjustifiable and that it was the result of negligence and injustice. The anger of activists in

comparison to that of the Green Party manifested not only in response to poor conditions in their

refugee center, but to the very system that had allowed for these conditions to exist in the first

place: an asylum system that had rendered asylum seekers so "other" as to leave them utterly unworthy of the protections of human rights.

As the hunger strike reached day 13, the first of the activists was sent to hospital. The media across Bavaria was now picking up on what was happening in Würzburg, and, still refusing to respond, Haderthauer said that if the government reacted, it would be showing the public that its officials were susceptible to blackmail (Jakob, *Die Bleibenden* 109); thus, the government continued to refuse to engage with the protesters. Despite this, on day 18, Vice President of the BAMF, Michael Griesbeck, visited the protestors in the local town hall (Böhm). He told the activists that because of the increased media attention on their group, it would now likely be even more dangerous for them if they were forced to return to Iran. According to Jakob, the journalist who covered the protest for the *TAZ*, Griesbeck then told the group to mention this to their BAMF contact, who could then subsequently help to expedite the asylum application process (Jakob, *Die Bleibenden* 109). As a result, six of the Iranians' applications were reconsidered and accepted, and one, 28-year-old Arash Dosthossein's, was officially rejected. The BAMF then released a statement saying that the hunger strike had not done anything to pressure the BAMF into expediting the decision process for these refugees' applications, though the refugees saw this differently: "For them it showed that protesting certainly could influence the state" (Jakob, *Die Bleibenden* 109). The protesters ended their hunger strike, but continued to occupy the area in front of the Würzburg Town Hall (Jakob, *Die Bleibenden* 109). Though activists interpreted their increased visibility as having positive effects, the reality was that only a few of them had actually been granted safety and stability at this point.

Activists Fight Their Exclusion from The Category of the 'Human'

Three months into their protest on May 12, 2012, Arash Dosthossein, the man whose asylum application had been denied, proclaimed,

> I am the voice of Mohammad Rahsepar…I am the voice of all asylum seekers who are too scared [to] join us [in our protests]. I am the voice of the isolated, who are forced to bear the inhumanity of our situation. But I am not killing myself. I'm demanding that the way asylum seekers are treated change. (Jakob, *Die Bleibenden* 109).

Articulating what they viewed as their societal isolation and segregation, as well as calling for change, turned these refugee-activists into willful subjects, who were openly defying the norms of a society that demanded, according to activists, that asylum seekers be isolated from the rest of society in order to ensure the continued security of Germany and its citizens. Ahmed characterizes this willfulness, or the ability to name refugee activists as willful to begin with, "as a judgment [that] tends to fall on those who are *not* compelled by the reasoning of others. Willfulness might be what we do when we are judged as being *not*, as not meeting the criteria for being human, for example" (Ahmed, *Willful Subjects* 15, italics in the original). Willful activists like Dosthossein are responding to what the state has willed, and which has "become background" (Ahmed, *Willful Subjects* 16), or so normalized as to no longer be noticed or named by the majority. Following Ahmed, willful acts, like Dosthossein's demanding change and the protesters continued occupation of part of Würzburg's center, are "striking" because they respond to "what has disappeared from view" (Ahmed, *Willful Subjects* 16). In other words, there is an unexpectedness to his actions, especially when considered within Germany's humanitarian narrative in which Germans are lauded for saving grateful refugees (see my discussion about refugee activists' responses to Germany's so-called *Wilkommenskultur* in the Introduction to this dissertation). Here I want to suggest that it is precisely the state's treatment of asylum seekers as not human enough to claim human rights that, though bubbling under the

surface, is not present or accessible in everyday narratives about the presence of refugees in Germany, and is thus shocking or "striking" when willful critiques of the system arise.

Asylum seekers like Dosthossein inhabit a precarious space in which, though they are visible and present in mainstream narratives – they must register with the state upon arrival, they live in GUs on the borders of German towns and communities, and their presence is often linked in the media to increased crime rates and threats to a European way of life – refugees' visibility is only possible because of the state's surveillance of their racialized bodies and because of the construction and proliferation of an image of refugees as threatening "others." It is from this precarious space that activists emerge as willful figures who then expose how Rahsepar's death, as it occurred in isolation, is incomprehensible and unimportant if considered only within the limited discourse around refugees in Germany that tends to prevail in the mainstream. Whereas the Green Party's criticism of the CDU/CSU's apparent failure to address the poor conditions in the GU had the potential to draw attention to refugees' experiences in refugee centers in Germany, it is the refugee activists' response that makes possible not only a critique of the state's treatment of refugees, but of a reason why the German government's relationship with the refugees within its borders is so fraught. The definition of refugee as a racialized "other" and as not belonging to the state has rendered refugees "not-quite-human," and therefore "not quite" requiring of state protections. In this way, Dosthossein's refusal to kill himself becomes a particularly willful act: He will remain visible and, consequently, surveilled. However, in this visible surveilled state, he will also demand changes to the system that only finds him and his fellow asylum seekers valuable when their lives are controllable, and therefore beneficial, to the state.

In the month that followed, several of the protesters began a new hunger strike, as the state failed to make any additional application decisions (Jakob, *Die Bleibenden* 109–10). Finally, in June, showing their dissatisfaction with and anger at the lack of governmental response to their protests, eight asylum seekers[20] released a statement in which they expanded upon their initial demands. The statement stipulated four things: the closure of all refugee centers, the discontinuation of all deportations, the abolishment of the *Residenzpflicht*, and the recognition of the protestors themselves as political refugees (Hosinzadeh and Morattab), which would increase the likelihood of being granted asylum (Jakob, "Hungern für ein Leben").[21] Simultaneously, several members of the small group sewed their lips together using needles and fishing wire (Godoy).

Sewn Mouths

In order to signal the "point of no return in their hunger strike" (Godoy), seven Iranian refugees sewed their mouths shut in June 2012. This iteration of protest drew the attention of the public in ways that the marches, tent actions, demonstrations, and hunger strikes had not. A reporter for the nationally-syndicated newspaper *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* covered the story, writing "Iranian asylum seekers have sewn their mouths shut. The city of Würzburg is horrified: too shocking for the city's population. The discussion, however, is only about the form; the demands of the protestors are forgotten" (Przybilla). The author of the article continues by saying that the city is concerned about what children will think when they inevitably see pictures of the

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[20] Arash Dosthossein, Mohammad Hassanzadeh Kalali, Reza Feizi, Payam Rahhoo (who had to be rushed to the hospital two days later, as he only had one remaining working kidney), Mandana Hemat Esfeh, Azhin Asadi, Mehdi Sajadi, and one other (Jakob, *Die Bleibenden* 110–11).

[21] This is because the "right to asylum" in Germany guaranteed in article 16 and, later, 16a in the German Constitution (*Grundgesetz*), has, since 1949, been reserved for people experiencing political persecution ("Grundgesetz").

protestors' sewn mouths. In an effort to draw attention to the fact that refugees in Würzburg and elsewhere in Germany were prohibited from working, were restricted to living in communal quarters, and were forced to rely on a package system to obtain food and other goods, the activists encouraged the circulation of photographs that depicted the thinning men, sitting in their tents in the middle of the city, with fishing line weaving in and out of their lips. These images of the refugees' sewn mouths made their silencing vis-à-vis the state visible, though this visibility was not met, for the most part, with public empathy for the refugees, nor did the public necessarily feel comfortable with these grotesque images.

Julia Kristeva describes the abject as what emerges when affects and thoughts combine to reveal something that is not in and of itself an object, and which is also

> not my correlative…providing me with someone or something else as support, [which] would allow me to be more or less detached and autonomous. The abject has only one quality of the object – that of being opposed to I…and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses. (Kristeva 1–2).

The image of Aylan Kurdi's body washed up on shore drew so many in, as the abject would, because death fascinates us, reminding us of "death's insistent materiality" and one's corporeal reality that then serves to breakdown the distinction between self and other (Schinina 103). However, Kurdi's body became an object, a concrete image that stood in for the idea of unacceptable death (Schinina 103), and therefore, in and of itself, could not be considered abject. On the other hand, the images of refugee men with lips sewn together, I want to suggest, enabled an interesting transformation from being able to experience images of suffering refugees as objects to seeing refugees as abjects. It is not, as Kristeva says, the "lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection [here] but what disturbs identity, system, and order" (Kristeva 4). The abject emerges from the idea that these refugees, with their mouths sewn shut, exist in Germany,

alive, and with their own subjectivities. "They" are members of "our" body politic, and therefore in some sense, "they" are "us." The distinction between Germans and these refugee "others" breaks down as the refugees refuse their own objectification. It is both "disturbing" that the refugees have done this to themselves, as news reports proclaimed, but also because the fact that they are abject implicates Germans in leading the refugees to decide to sew their mouths shut, as the boundaries between "self" and "Other" fall away and as "meaning [itself] collapses" (Kristeva 1–2).

When interpreted alongside the protestors' increased anger with what they saw as the lack of an adequate response from the state, the hunger strike and the sewn lips take on new meaning. Ultimately, resorting to an activist strategy that is meant to draw attention and produce a spectacle, refugees made central the role that death itself played in galvanizing activists. This hunger strike was a way of bringing Rahsepar's death back into the center of the protest. By refusing food, activists flirted with death, and in doing so threatened to die in what would ultimately be a very public way, considering the attention this new iteration of protest in particular had assured. When Dosthossein declared, then, that he would not commit suicide as Rahsepar had, but would instead refuse sustenance, he was consenting to allow the state to decide his, and his friends', fate. Any death that might occur as a result of the activists' choice not to sustain themselves would be the responsibility of the state. Activists rejected the state's theory that Rahsepar had in fact killed himself; instead, they embodied their claim that Rahsepar had died because of the state's inability to care for him in a humane way: they, like Rahsepar had been, were suffering because of the state's inability or refusal to act on their behalf. Sewing their mouths shut, then, can be read as their embodied attempts to replicate Rahsepar's sense of entrapment and powerlessness that the activists claim ultimately led to his death.

More than a response, though, I also read the act of sewing their mouths shut as opening up a new discursive line within their activism, despite the fact that some politicians like Simone Tolle, a member of the Bavarian parliament, believed that doing so had made "any further dialogue to improve their situation impossible" (Godoy). Tolle's very literal interpretation of the consequences of the refugees' actions fails to take into account how the act of sewing one's mouth shut is ultimately an expression of bodily autonomy: the refugees could make their own decision to live – if they chose to reverse the act – or die with their mouths sewn together. By sewing their lips together, activists displayed their refusal to partake in discussions in which the power dynamics were already predetermined, and they would be positioned as victims and the state as benevolent helper. The state, no longer comprehensible as the party that would extend its hand to aid the needy, is redefined as the agent of violence. As a result, the state is forced to defend itself in ways that reveal its participation in perpetuating violence. For example, when local officials attempted to ban this form of activist engagement, a court ruled that it was legal to protest as well as to sew one's mouth shut, and that these actions were protected under the German Constitution (*Grundgesetz*) as freedom of speech, despite the fact that "in many parts of the citizenry [sewing one's mouth shut] is seen as deeply disturbing" (Jakob, "Hungern für ein Leben"; Jakob, *Die Bleibenden* 111). According to this ruling, asylum seekers, despite their status as non-citizens, were protectable under the German constitutional clause guaranteeing all people freedom of speech and expression.

By July 6, ten out of the 13 remaining protesters had received word that they would be able to remain in Germany as refugees, and all of the protestors removed the stiches from their mouths and began to eat again (Jakob, *Die Bleibenden* 111). More relief came on July 18, 2012, when the Federal Constitutional Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*) decided that the "provisions

governing basic cash benefits according to the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act are incompatible

with the fundamental right to a minimum existence, protected as human dignity in Article 1 sec.

1 in conjunction with Article 20 sec. 1 of the Basic Law [*Grundgesetz*]" (*Urteil des Ersten*

Senats).[22] After two asylum seekers, one who would receive a temporary stay of deportation

(Duldung) and the other who would later be granted permanent residency, both sued for more

benefits, the Federal Constitutional Court ruled that the benefits granted asylum seekers in the

form of monthly stipends of only 224.97 Euro/month in the first case and 178.95 euros/month in

the second, were based on rates determined in 1993, and were unconstitutional as they had not

changed to reflect the increase in the cost of living in Germany over the course of nearly two

decades. These amounts were found to be around one-third of what was considered under

German law to be the minimum requirement for "securing a minimum existence" (*Urteil des*

Ersten Senats). The decision further states that residency status and possible or even probable

length of time in which a person is to remain in Germany (e.g., status as a future deportee, as

those living with a stay of deportation, or as an asylum seeker whose application has not yet been

considered) cannot justify providing such people with lower benefits (*Urteil des Ersten Senats*).

There were several things for which the Würzburg protests were credited. In August, for

example, Haderthauer decided to try a pilot program through which the state would give asylum

money to refugees directly instead of granting them vouchers and food packages; Bavaria was

one of the last German states to implement such a program (Jakob, "Hungern für ein Leben"). In

the coming months and years, the asylum seekers and refugee rights groups across Germany

would credit the Würzburg protests for stimulating change not just regionally, but nationally as

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[22] Five days later, on July 23, Iranian protestors and asylum seeker Farid Mirzaie, was rushed to the hospital after his kidneys failed. He hadn't eaten anything since June 2 (Jakob, "Hungern für ein Leben").

well.[23] Inspired by these protests, refugees from several refugee centers in Berlin soon set up camp on Heinrichplatz in the Kreuzberg neighborhood of Berlin saying, "Wir gehen nicht zurück ins Lager" ("We are not going back to the Lagers (camps)") (Jakob, "Hungern für ein Leben"). At the end of June, in the midst of the hunger strike and while many of the asylum seekers and refugees still had their mouths sewn shut, refugees across Germany traveled to Würzburg to join and learn from the refugee activists taking part in what is now known as the Refugee Tent Action. From June to October, similar Tent Actions, which were either started with the help of Würzburg protestors or which were independent from but still associated with them, began in Bamberg, Aub, Osnabrück, Regensburg, Düsseldorf, Berlin, Passau, Nürnberg, Schwäbisch Gmünd, and Frankfurt am Main (Jakob, *Die Bleibenden* 112). A nationwide refugee conference took place in Frankfurt in August, where leaders in the refugee activist community decided to end all hunger strikes, and to instead implement a nine-week camp called "Break Isolation," at the end of which, refugees from all over Germany would march from Würzburg, Bavaria to Berlin in a symbolic act during which they would cross multiple state and municipal borders and break the *Residenzpflicht* together (Jakob, "Hungern für ein Leben"). When Arash Dosthossein was arrested in Düsseldorf for breaking the Residenzpflicht in September, the asylum seeker and refugees' resolve to fight this law was strengthened even further, exemplified by a 400-person demonstration that took place in Würzburg soon thereafter (Schwarzer).

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[23] In this same month, for example, along with other members of the EU, the German government implemented a law that would enable refugees to work after 9 months instead of waiting an entire year (Jakob, "Hungern für ein Leben"). Though it's hard to say whether the Würzburg protests had a direct influence on the German government's decision to implement these changes, certainly they were part of the larger trend across Germany and Europe, that saw legislation changes at the same time that pressure from refugee rights groups and refugee activists themselves was being applied on local, state, national, and even transnational levels.

Supported by the relatively long-standing asylum seeker and refugee rights groups

ProAsyl and Karawane, Würzburg asylum seekers began their protest march to Berlin on

September 8, 2012. One group of around 70 refugees and asylum seekers marched nearly 600

kilometers from Würzburg through Thüringia to Berlin, while another group went on a bus tour

through Hessia.[24] Both groups stopped at refugee camps along the way, ultimately gathering

nearly 100 asylum seekers and refugees who then set up camp on Pariser Platz in Berlin

(Schwarzer; Jakob, "Hungern für ein Leben"). This same group moved to Oranienplatz in the

Kreuzberg neighborhood later that year, founding what is now known as the Oplatz Movement.

This march and the subsequent protests that took place from October 2012 to April 2014 in

Berlin's popular and centralized Kreuzberg neighborhood, were all in an effort to evoke real

change to the asylum laws in Germany, while making the statement, "If the German state is

willing to put up with such inhuman (sic) living conditions, then we prefer to go to our deaths in

a very public way" (Böhm).

The Death of Khaled Idris Bahray

In 2000, at the age of five, Khaled Idris Bahray left his native Eritrea for Sudan following

the devastation and population displacement caused by the Eritrean-Ethiopian War (1998-2000)

(Kampf).[25] However, a lack of resources and poor living conditions in the Sudanese refugee

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[24] A second bus tour called the "Refugee Revolution Demonstration Bus Tour" took place in the spring of 2013. It included stops in 22 cities across Germany, and drew 5000 participants (Hockenos).

[25] According to the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, nearly 3000 people flee Eritrea every month, and in 2015, a quarter of all refugees landing in Italy were Eritrean (Laub). Nicknamed the "North Korea of Africa," Eritrea is one of the most severe dictatorships in the world (Halper). First used in an Israeli newspaper report about the country, this nickname emerged from the fact that in 2014, Eritrea was ranked even lower than North Korea in the *Reporters without Border's World Press Freedom Index*, which assigns a rank each year to countries based on their policies and practices around freedom of speech and the freedom of the press granted to its citizens; Eritrea has ranked last in these rankings for the last eight years ("Eritrea"). Furthermore, Eritreans are restricted when it comes to their ability to move around freely within the country, as the government often requires citizens to apply for

camps meant there were high levels of unemployment and a low quality of life in the country

where the majority of Eritrean asylum seekers would find refuge. This likely meant that Bahray

faced a future without much hope for finding a source of income, and possibly an entire life

spent in a refugee camp ("Egypt/Sudan"). In October 2014, when he was 19, Bahray fled Sudan

with his cousin, joining the nearly 37,000 Eritreans who had made the trip from Eritrea, Sudan,

and Ethiopia to Europe during the first 10 months of 2014 in search of a better life.[2627]

Three months after his arrival in Germany, on Monday, January 12 at around 8pm,

Bahray left his apartment in Dresden, which he shared with seven other asylum seekers, to buy

cigarettes at the supermarket across the street (Winter), leaving his cell phone behind. His

roommates assumed he had gone to stay with another group of friends across town, and therefore

did not inquire about his whereabouts when he did not return shortly thereafter. The following

morning, a resident of the building found the 20-year-old's body near the apartment's back door

covered in blood (Connolly, "Killing of Eritrean"; Winter).

Following this discovery, police investigators at first announced that there was no

evidence of a crime ("20-Year-Old Eritrean"). The German-Eritrean community (made up of

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permits to cross city limits (Halper). Finally, according to a law established in 1995, all Eritreans are conscripted to the military for at least 18 months once they have reached adulthood, though there are many instances when children are forced into military service. According to one finding, some conscripts were forced to stay in the military for decades (ages 18-55) (Halper), amounting to the vast majority of their lives considering the average life expectancy of Eritreans is approximately 65 years of age according to the World Health Organization (WHO) ("Eritrea"). In the military, many are exposed to extremely harsh conditions, manual labor, sexual assault and state-sanctioned rape ("World Report 2015").

[26] This number reflects the amount of Eritrean asylum seekers who travelled from Africa to Europe from January to October, 2014, which was up from 13,000 Eritrean people seeking refuge in Europe during the same period in 2013. 9,362 of Eritrean requests for asylum in Europe were made in Germany (Refugees (UNHCR)).

[27] According to the UNHCR, in that year, Eritreans were the second largest group seeking asylum in Europe, surpassed only by Syrians (Refugees (UNHCR)). In 2015, Germany received 10,990 out of the 17,810 applications for asylum filed in the EU from Eritreans alone, making it the EU country with the most Eritreans seeking refuge within its borders (Laub).[27] During their journey across the Mediterranean Sea from Libya to Sicily, Bahray's cousin drowned, sharing in a fate met by 3500 asylum seekers travelling to Europe from northern Africa and the Middle East in 2014 (Fleming).

about 35,000 people) in Dresden and across Germany, together with Bahray's roommates, took

to social media in order to challenge this finding. They pointed to the fact that Bahray had died

the same night as the latest iteration of the so-called "Monday Protests" organized by Pegida

(Panafricain; Connolly, "Police Investigate"); this was the largest demonstration since the group

was founded in October, just three months prior, drawing somewhere between 25,000 and

40,000 people (Malm; "20-Year-Old Eritrean"). Amid pressure placed on police by the Eritrean

community in Germany on Facebook and Twitter, a reporter from Dresden's *Morgen Post*

newspaper called the Dresden police department to inquire as to why the death was not being

investigated as a homicide ("20-jähriger"; Müller). Simultaneously, Elizabeth Chryum, the

Director of Human Rights Concern-Eritrea, published an open letter addressed to Germany's

Federal Minister of Justice, Heiko Maas, which was meant to

> …express…shock at the brutal killing of Khaled Idris Bahray…[and to]
> respectfully call on your government to: conduct an autopsy…, bring the
> perpetrators…to justice, arrange an appropriate burial of Mr. Bahray in
> the presence of his family and his friends, provide counselling to the
> friends with whom he lived, [and] provide the Eritrean refugee
> community in the area with adequate protection measures. (Chyrum)

Chyrum, who copied UNHCR-Germany, The UNHCR Head of the Sub-Office at

Nürnberg, The VOICE Refugee Forum, Amnesty International in Germany, as well as the larger

Human Rights Watch organization's office in Berlin on this letter, continued:

> It seems extraordinary that, according to news reports, the German police
> initially claimed they did not suspect foul play even though the body was
> covered in blood and wounds and [that] this happened in the wake of the
> anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim demonstrations in Dresden, and given
> the persistent threats refugees in the area have been experiencing, there
> seems to be little doubt that Mr. Bahray is a victim of these
> extremists…His friends, and the Eritrean refugee community in the area
> are reeling from this traumatic experience and the continuous threats
> they face from extremist and racist groups. (Chyrum).

This anger at what HRC-Eritrea interpreted as a failure of the state to respond justly to Bahray's murder was shared by many, and the theory that Bahray was a victim of xenophobic and racist violence was widely accepted. On Twitter in particular, the correlation between Bahray's death and the Pegida demonstration was central to the discussion about the murder. For example, one user tweeted,

> #KhaledBahray scheint mir doch ein Opfer mindestens des Geistes von #Pegida zu sein. #noPegida" ("At the very least, #KhaledBahray seems to me to be a victim of the spirit of #Pegida. #noPegida") (@HagarsBrother).

In these responses, Bahray becomes the exemplary victim of right-extremist violence. By extension, "[h]is friends…and the Eritrean refugee community in the area" are understood as victims, as the terms of trauma are evoked. While violence against refugees and people of color in Germany has not been solely perpetrated by neo-Nazis and those associated with the far-right, these responses exemplify the ease with which blame is placed on far-right extremists, who certainly have been responsible for a lot of xenophobic and racist violence in Germany, but who are also not the only perpetrators of it. Violence (thought to be) committed by the far-right is made hyper-visible, while everyday violence, racist micro-aggressions, as well as the structural violence effected by the state remains invisible in responses such as these. In this way, Bahray's death is most comprehensible to the public if he is understood to be a victim of far-right violence, and not if he is viewed as a victim of other forms of xenophobic and racist violence.

Approximately 30 hours after the discovery of his body, the police opened an investigation once it was ruled out that the man could not have died from an accident like a fall, suicide, or illness ("20-Year-Old Eritrean"; Jena). Bahray's autopsy was ordered on January 14, and the President of Dresden police, Dieter Kroll, announced that "We now have evidence to

confirm that a stab from a knife was the cause of his injuries. We can exclude the possibility that this was an accident. It is murder" ("20-Year-Old Eritrean"). A public prosecutor, Lorenz Haase confirmed Kroll's statement saying that at first the stab wounds in Bahray's chest and throat were difficult to identify as such (Winter; Connolly, "Police Investigate"; Schneider and Alexe). Police interviewed and collected DNA samples from Bahray's seven roommates as well as 16 others who had gathered to mourn (Connolly, "Killing of Eritrean").

At the same time, friends, family, journalists, and activists began to ask more questions: had no one heard what had happened? Were there any witnesses? Was the place where Bahray's body was found also where he was killed? Why was Bahray there, when entering or exiting through the back door of the apartment building was not the fastest way to get to the supermarket, which was a two-minute walk across the street from the front of the building? (Winter). Why were, or at least why did it seem like, only the mourners were interrogated (Mesghena, "#ToterFlüchtlingInDresden")? Was it as friend, fellow Eritrean refugee, and activist Mekonnen Mesghena asked,[28] because they were Eritreans? "Sounds more likely like racial profiling" he wrote (Mesghena, "#ToterFlüchtlingInDresden"). The question that appeared most often, though, was: was Bahray murdered by someone participating in or inspired by the Pegida demonstration? (Sutthoff).

In a post on his Facebook page, Mesghena wrote:

> #DeadRefugeeInDresden...After it was finally established that Khaled Idris was murdered, it took no time at all for 23 people to be interrogated (at Schießgasse 7 [the apartment building's address]) by the Dresden Murder Commission. It was only Eritrean refugees [who were asked questions]: 13 inhabitants of the house where Khaled Idris lived, as well as 10 mourners who happened to be there when the police came…Why

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[28] Mesghena is also an employee at the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung in Dresden as the Department Head of Migration and Diversity ("Mekonnen Mesghena: Referent Migration and Diversity").

are only Eritrean refugees (his roommates and friends) being interrogated? (Mesghena, "#ToterFlüchtlingInDresden").

In these and many more tweets and Facebook posts, friends and activists blame Germany for the state's perceived inadequate response to the death of a Black refugee man found in a pool of his own blood. In other posts to social media, Germany is also the root of shame for anti-racist German citizens who share disbelief that something so horrific could happen on German soil. For example, in a tweet, @jonasscheunig asked,

How am I supposed to be proud of a country in which people like Khaled Idris Bahray are murdered? #notmyGermany. (@jonasscheunig).[29]

The implications are both implicit and explicit in these posts: implicit in that violence against racial "others" is shown to be truly unthinkable in a country that has spent the last 70 years trying to come to terms with and move beyond the horrors of WWII and the Holocaust; explicit in that the German state "should have" learned how to respond more swiftly, fairly, and openly to violence against migrants and refugees especially following the NSU murder investigation that took place in the early 2000s. This is exemplified in another tweet that reads,

If it transpires that Khaled Idris Bahray was the victim of an Islamophobic murder, always remember the police were prepared to ignore it (@teambiscotti).

A statement released by the organization Black Community Activists Germany reads, "Khaled, an Eritrean asylum seeker was stabbed to death on January 12 2015 in the city of Dresden,

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[29] German original: "Wie soll ich stolz für ein Land sein, indem Menschen wie Khaled Idris Bahray ermordet werden? #nichtmeinDeutschland."

Germany…and once again the German police seem to be blindfolded about obvious violence in the death of another black person in White Old Germany…" (Jena).

Other responses placed Bahray's death and the violence and threats made against refugees in Dresden into a larger narrative that acknowledges the long history of violence against racialized others on German soil. For example, in a tweet, @teh_aSak writes,

> 1991("Samuel Kofi Yeboah, the murderer never found. #Saarlouis/2015: Khaled Idris Bahray. #Dresden/Germany hasn't changed") (@al-aSak).[30]

Yeboah was a Ghanaian refugee who was killed in an arson attack on a refugee home in the southwest German state of Saarland in 1991. Although neither the perpetrator nor the motive of the murder were ever discovered, it was largely thought to be a racially-motivated attack ("Ein Toter"). Referencing the 2005 death of Oury Jalloh, a refugee man who burned alive in his prison cell, one tweet reads,

> "20 stabs with a knife in the chest and throat. Obviously this was a suicide! Exactly as it was with Oury #Jalloh! #KhaledBahray." (@Alyama1).[31]

This sarcastic tweet calls into question the police's original statement that there was no crime involved in the death of Bahray, pointing to the absurdity of alluding to the idea that someone might not just choose to but be capable of committing suicide by stabbing themselves 20 times. The Twitter user does this by comparing this alleged finding to the death of Oury Jalloh: how could, as the police had said at that time, a man with no access to fire or fire-producing materials

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[30] German original: "1991: Samuel Kofi Yeboah, die Mörder nie gefasst. #Saarlouis/2015: Khaled Idris Bahray. #Dresden/Deutschland hat sich nicht verändert."

[31] German original: "20 Messerstiche in Brust und Hals. Klar war das ein Selbstmord! Wie bei Oury #Jalloh damals halt auch! #KhaledBahray."

simply burst into flames in his jail cell? Though there may be reasons why the police released

such statements, for example, in an attempt to prevent an already tense political situation from

escalating even further, it is the response to the police's investigative tactics that is of interest

here. The criticism of the state by refugees and refugee allies in Germany following the deaths of

these men points to a fraught relationship between Germany as host country, and the

communities it officially welcomes as part of its *Willkommenskultur*.[32]

In a later Facebook post on January 15, Mesghena summarized some of the main

questions that Bahray's friends and roommates had regarding the police investigation. Among

these questions were

> Why...1) after the discovery of the corpse did police officials
> immediately exclude the possibility of a stranger's influence, even
> though Khaled Idris was lying dead in front of the house door?...
> 2)…was the pool of blood washed away with water after the corpse was
> found, instead of sealing off the place of discovery?...3)…did it take 30
> hours until the evidence was properly secured? (Mesghena,
> "#KhaledIdrisBahray...Warum...").

In this post, which was retweeted at least 874 times on Twitter[33] and reposted at least 216

times on Facebook,[34] Mesghena also asked why Khaled's roommates and friends were

interrogated, but not the "skinheads und neonazis, who regularly mistreat their fellow residents

in the stairwell, [and] intentionally bump into as they attempt to go by, threaten them, and scrawl

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[32] Another name, Lama Alaye Conde, was evoked by Jena, author of the Black Community Activist Germany response to Bahray's death. Conde was killed when he was suffocated and ultimately drowned with some sort of emetic fluid in Bremen, Germany (Jena).

[33] It is difficult to know for certain. I use this number as it is the number of times the picture of Mesghena's original Facebook post was retweeted from Frederik Schindler (@Freddy2805), who seems to be, as far as I can tell, the person who initially posted the picture of the Facebook post on Twitter.

[34] Again, this is difficult to know for sure, but I use this number to denote how many people re-posted Mesghena's post directly from his page.

swastikas and threats like "We'll get you all" on their doors and the walls of the building"

(Mesghena, "#ToterFlüchtlingInDresden")? Mesghena's and others' anger about the (mis)handling

of Bahray's death indicates their reluctance to accept that police are capable or willing to treat

Bahray's death investigation with the same care afforded to investigating the circumstances around

German citizens' deaths. These statements and questions also reveal refugees' and refugee allies'

cynicism regarding the ability of the German state to see refugees as victims of criminal activity,

particularly as victims of crimes committed against refugees by German citizens.

In the following days, newspapers across Germany and even some international news

outlets picked up the story of the "young Muslim man…[who had] been stabbed to death in

Dresden…in an attack which is feared to be connected to recent 'anti-Islamization' marches in

the city" (Malm). In much of the news coverage of Bahray's death, members of Pegida are

compared, either explicitly or implicitly, with Nazis, and described as "waving German

flags…and chanting 'Luegenpresse' [lying press] (Malm), a term used by the Nazis, to the horror

of those who associate this language with WWII and the Holocaust. Another preferred Pegida

chant, 'Wir sind das Volk!' (We are the people!), is a repurposed saying, which was used by East

Germans during their own Monday Protests from 1989-1990. Though large, popular, and mostly

peaceful demonstrations against the government of the German Democratic Republic (GDR),

activists and scholars have pointed to the ways in which this phrase is also racializing in the

ways it, as well as its later iteration "Wir sind ein Volk" (We are one people) referenced an

understanding of Germany as comprised of the/one unified German people ("Volk"), coded as

white (See, for example, Fehrenbach 116). This tie between the idea of "das Volk" and whiteness

was not new ((See, for example, Harvey; Lentin), though it found new social currency as

reunification fueled a rise in nationalism across Germany. In fact, because some Pegida members

and supporters also self-identify as neo-Nazis, Football-Hooligans, and skinheads, the parallels between the Pegida protests where these phrases have been revived, and the anti-foreigner sentiment leading up to and following reunification, the phrase "Wir sind das Volk" is anxiety-producing for many refugees and refugee allies.[35]

The story of Bahray's death also made its way through left leaning news outlets, as the connection between the increasing popularity of Pegida as a result of the attacks on Charlie Hebdo, and increasing violence against refugees in Germany seemed to provide the only clear explanation for why a refugee was found dead the morning following Pegida's largest demonstration to date. The correlation made in activist circles as well as in the mainstream media between Bahray's death and the Pegida demonstration was not only difficult to miss, but was also understandable insofar as it spoke to and was made comprehensible through a larger narrative about violence against refugees and racialized "others" in Germany. In a statement, one of the founders of Pegida, Lutz Bachmann, said, "This [the murder of Bahray] is an internal row, it seems, and to shove the blame on to us is unbecoming. But there are lots of people out there trying to blame us for many things right now" (Connolly, "Killing of Eritrean"). In a tense and charged political climate in the midst of the refugee "crisis", news of Bahray's murder stood to prove either the range and rate of violence brought to Germany by immigrants and refugees, in

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[35] For many, the future of the newly reunified Germany could only be thought of in terms of how Germans could move forward from their pasts. Far from including histories of colonialization and economic migration to Germany, the imagination of the future of Germany was defined in large part instead by how Germans would move on from the Holocaust and reunification, and did not include a narrative describing how Germany would come to terms with their histories of, among many other things, German colonialization of parts of southwest Africa, the Turkish Guest Worker Program, and the historical persecution of members of the Roma and Sinti communities on German soil. In this way, both the conceptions of the past as they would go forward into the future through memory and historiography work, as well as the rise of nationalism accompanied by increased incidence of violence against people of color, made reunification a difficult time for many refugees. The memory of this tumultuous time period, then, was certainly one factor that informed refugee and refugee allies' anger and skepticism about the circumstances surrounding Bahray's murder and investigation.

the case of Bachmann and Pegida, or the level of vulnerability experienced by refugee and immigrant populations at the hands of the far-right and/or due to state violence.

On Saturday, January 17, the "Anti-Racist Demonstration in Memory of Khaled Idris Bahray" took place in Dresden drawing 3,500 people. The march began on Jorge-Gomondai-Platz (Jorge Gomondai Square). This square is named after a man from Mozambique, Jorge Gomondai, who was followed through the streets of Dresden by far-right extremists in 1991, and was killed after falling onto the tracks in front of an oncoming subway car (Winter). By evoking, once again, a name of a refugee victim of far-right violence, the demonstrators and mourners reinforced the idea that Bahray too had been killed by members of the far-right. After a moment of silence, demonstrators marched from the square, over the Elbe River, to police headquarters, past the Frauenkirche (Dresden's famous Church of Our Lady), and finally to the Sachsen state capitol ("'Who killed Khaled?'"). Members of the refugee community and their supporters held up signs that read "Pegida's erste Opfer" (Pegida's first victim) and "Khaled Bahray ermordet von Pegida-Anhängern! 12.1.2015, Dresden" (Khaled Bahray murded by members of Pegida! Janaury 12, 2015, Dresden), "Refugees welcome," "Tolerenz fördern, Angst stoppen" (Foster Tolerance, Stop Fear), "Khaled ist Dresdener," and "kein Platz für Rassismus" (no place for racism) (Dethleff). Other signs read "Ich bin Khaled" and "Je suis Khaled," making direct reference to the "Je suis Charlie" signs and Facebook images that appeared in the days following the Charlie Hebdo attacks. This is a particularly interesting move that challenges some of the underlying meanings of the "Je suis Charlie" signs that, in many contexts, meant an acknowledgement of and a solidarity with those who express their freedom of speech, but could also be read as "I am Western" and even possibly "I am anti-Islam." The "Je suis Khaled" signs, on the other hand, held by members of the refugee community and its allies, embodied (brought

body to) the deceased Khaled. These signs could be read, in the context of this protest, as "I am a refugee" and "I am a victim of far-right violence."

On the same day, a spontaneous demonstration in the city of Leipzig drew between 600 and 800 "Linksautonome" (anonymous members of the far-left, likely Antifa affiliates), Randalierer (hooligans), students, and others, who marched illegally having not registered with the city, many wearing masks to hide their identity and throwing smoke bombs ("Gewalt und Zerstörung"). They were there to march against "Pegida, LEGIDA [the Leipzig chapter of Pegida] and for police to solve Bahray's murder" (Weinhold). After the demonstration, between 150 and 200 people were in police custody (Weinhold), and found responsible for breaking 40 windows, vandalizing cars, and leaving behind graffiti on buildings like the Bundesverfassungsgericht (Federal Court) that read, "Das ist Deutschland/LEGIDA Pegida NORD/RIP Khaled" along with the Antifa symbol ("Gewalt und Zerstörung"). The damage would cost 10,000 euros to repair, according to police estimates (Weinhold). Fearing further violence, Pegida's next Monday Protest scheduled to take place on January 19 in Dresden was cancelled due to "the threat of terrorism" after the left-radical website *Linksunten* posted a call for protesters to "take the offensive against participants in this march" and "Come to Dresden on Monday to get revenge for Khaled" ("Gewalt und Zerstörung"; Antifa in die Offensive!).

Speculation about the motives for the murder continued to collect on social media, fueled by the news that three days prior to Bahray's death, two swastikas had been found on his and his apartment-mates' door (Connolly, "Killing of Eritrean"; Kirschbaum). The Twitter storm continued with the #ichbinKhaled, #jesuisKhaled, #KhaledBahray, and #KhaledIdrisBahray hashtags used frequently alongside #Pegida, or together with a mention of Pegida within the tweets' texts. Twitter users called for Chancellor Angela Merkel to make Bahray's death her "top priority"

("Chefsache") (@JOHNTHON), and for people to join in the upcoming "Dresden Nazifrei Protest" ("Dresden Nazi Free Protest") on January 25 in honor of "Khaled Idris Bahray [who was] stabbed by right wingers" (@stratosph3re). According to the tweets, Bahray was "killed for existing + surviving", and "brutally murdered by hate filled racists" or "the extreme right [who are] assassins" ("L'extrême droite…Ce sont des assasins…") (@betwixtandbtwn; @esseeeayeenn; @VanessaEunMi); some asked whether he was murdered "because he was a Muslim? A refugee? [or a]n African?" (@rahellothere).

Despite efforts by some politicians to discourage making assumptions about the motive or perpetrator, and to wait for the conclusions of the police investigation before taking to the streets, the uproar continued. Following the offering of his condolences to friends and family members, Valentin Lippmann, a state representative from the Green Party warned, "In the heated atmosphere in Dresden now have a great responsibility. There can be neither prejudices nor quick shots. We must wait for the outcome of the investigation" ("Asylbewerber starb").

Other politicians, however, fueled the flame. Juliane Nagel, *Die Linke's* (The Left, a far(ther)-left political party in Germany) Sachsen spokesperson for Refugees and Migration offered an explanation for why refugee activists and allies were already drawing conclusions about Bahray's murder, as she herself brought up the connection between the Pegida demonstration and his death. She said, "The regular Pegida marches in Dresden, but also the numerous local protests - that invite resentment - against the accommodation of asylum seekers have naturally had an effect on people who have fled to Saxon and sought asylum here. Refugees are often the targets of hate, and also violence" ("Asylbewerber starb"). In an even more radical move, German Green Party parliamentarian Volker Beck told his Twitter followers that he had filed a complaint against the city as well as a formal request to have the city of Dresden

investigated for obstructing justice when the death of Bahray had first been declared a suicide, despite the fact that the man had been stabbed nearly 20 times (@Volker_Beck). This message was retweeted 135 times, including by Cem Özdemir, perhaps one of Germany's most well-known members of parliament and the head of Germany's Green Party.

The discovery that the refugees living with Bahray did not normally go out on Monday nights during Pegida's demonstrations became another tool with which the connection between the far-right presence in the city and Bahray's death was made apparent. The swastika was drawn on the apartment door a few days before Bahray was murdered, and was accompanied by the words "Wir kriegen euch alle!" ("We will get you all!") (@Volker_Beck). Apartment-mate Tesfalem Negasi was quoted in *The Guardian* as saying, "When someone came and drew this [swastika] on our door one day we started to get wary of going out, particularly after we were spat on and given the finger so many times. We wish after his death, they will think of moving us to a safer part of Germany" (Connolly, "Killing of Eritrean").

Anger Still Remains

On Thursday, January 22, 11 days after Bahray's body was found, Dresden police arrested Saleh Hassan, and charged him with the murder of his roommate. According to police reports, Bahray and Hassan had fought outside of their apartment complex about the division of chores in their home, which had culminated in a physical altercation, ending when Hassan stabbed Bahray 20 times in what he said was an act of self-defense (Connolly, "Killing of Eritrean"; Kirschbaum; *Beschluss des 5. Strafsenats*). Bahray and Hassan's six remaining apartment-mates were moved to other refugee housing within Dresden city limits, though their

whereabouts were not released in compliance with German privacy laws.[36] Held in investigative custody until August 31, Hassan was formally charged with the murder of Bahray after six days of trial, and on November 6, he was formally convicted and sentenced to five years in prison ("Tod des Flüchtlings Khaled B.").

While members of the Eritrean community in Germany and friends and family members of Bahray continued to mourn their loss, burying Bahray on January 24 in the Landschaftsfriedhof Gatow, a Muslim cemetery in Berlin,[37] [38] a significant shift in the nature of the conversation around his death took place, particularly on Twitter. Most tweets expressing grief or asking questions about Bahray's death or the police investigation disappeared in the days following the revelation that he had been killed by his roommate. However, Pegida members and supporters began to criticize reactions from people on "the left", their phrasing that distinguished people who blamed Pegida in the days following Bahray's murder, despite a lack of evidence, from those who had not. One Twitter user drew attention to the way "the left" seemed to be avoiding any discussion of Bahray's murder after the publication of the most recent police report saying,

> The left's solidarity with Khaled Idris #Bahray has waned dramatically. (@williw01).[39]

One post read,

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[36] Despite laws protecting the privacy of refugees, journalists interested in finding out what happened the night Bahray was murdered, attempted to find the refugees, but to no avail (Roth).

[37] He was not interned in Dresden because it is illegal to bury the dead without a casket in the city, as is customary in Islamic death rituals (Heiser).

[38] Though some sources say that there were 100 mourners at Bahray's funeral, a contributor to Remembering-Khaled.org wrote that 300 people were in attendance (*Chronicle*).

[39] German original: "Die Solidarität der linken Szene mit Khaled Idris #Bahray hat stark abgenommen."

> ...Because with Khaled Bahray they thought that they finally had a right-extremist perpetrator. Shame! Came up short again. (@Titania0001).[40] [41]

These responses characterize "the left" as a group always reaching for, but never quite able to catch "the right" *in flagrante*. "The right" too is an umbrella term, used to refer to a wide-range of people from fiscal conservatives to neo-Nazis and white supremacists. This use of language exemplifies how a distinction between "right" and "left" is reified as these sides and what they stand for emerge through the use of this terminology used to differentiate between the two. Relying on this binary between one "right" point-of-view and one "left" point-of-view makes any nuanced discussion about, for example, how violence functions in Germany invisible. When thinking of Bahray as a victim of a non-racially-motivated attack by another refugee, any public anger that was formerly attached to his death falls away. The only anger still circulating in the mainstream is that which is directed at the responses to his death.

As the voices calling attention to the very real problem of violence against refugees in Germany became increasingly silent after the investigation around Bahray's death came to a close, and as members of Pegida and its sympathizers shared their anger at having been blamed by who they called "the left", Olga Wichmann, the founder the "Ich bin Khaled Idris" Facebook group wrote,

> In a city, in a district where people are afraid every hour of the day, are threatened and cursed, are in a state of permanent physical and psychological tension, it is almost a miracle that no other murders have occurred – the situation will not change – that allegedly a roommate has killed Khaled, is not the important thing – in a different atmosphere, in an environment free of repression and fear, this would not have happened so – in view of this, nothing has changed, Khaled is dead […]

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[40] German original: "…Weil man bei Khaled Bahray davon ausging, endlich mal einen rechtsextremen Täter zu haben. Schade! Wieder nix."

[41] Andrea B. was responding to PI News (@P_I) who asked "Warum kennt eigentlich jeder Khaled Bahray, aber niemand Dirk Wölke?" ("Why does everyone know Khaled Bahray, but no one knows Dirk Wölke?") (@Titania0001). Dirk Wölke was a man killed by an asylum seeker.

> – I'll be here on this page on Saturday– with a greeting, a memory, a
> promise, maybe from you as well. (Wichmann, "In a city, in a
> district...").[42]

Though public anger and outrage about Bahray's murder dissipated, activists' anger
remained. When activists' anger fails to disappear as the public's outrage had, his death is
necessarily reframed, challenging the idea that Bahray is no longer articulable as a victim of
racist and/or state violence. Here, Wichmann says that nothing has changed as a result of the
discovery that Saleh had murdered Bahray. In this "nothing," she includes the continued
"permanent physical and psychological tension" refugees feel in Dresden, as well as the fear-
producing and repressive environment. Wichmann's post declaring her intention to continue to
mourn Bahray, along with the fact that 250 people, not all of whom knew Bahray personally,
attended his funeral in Berlin (Heiser), are statements against the rendering invisible of Bahray's
death that had taken place up until that point. That is, Wichmann, and those who showed up in
person to bury Bahray, reframe his death in a way that reasserts the man's humanity; he is
someone to be mourned, his life is mournable. As this frame is revealed, so too are the conditions
– the discursive limitations – that made it possible to see Bahray as a victim of far-right violence
and/or police misconduct in the public eye.

Conditionally speaking, Bahray could not be conceptualized as a member of German
society if he was also to be seen as a victim of far-right violence. Here an underlying

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[42] German Original: „In einer Stadt, in einem Stadtteil, wo Menschen 24 Stunden Angst haben, bedroht, beschimpft
werden, in einem Zustand der permanenten körperlichen und seelischen Anspannung da ist es fast ein Wunder, daß
noch keine weiteren Morde passiert sind --- die Situation wird sich nicht ändern – daß angeblich ein Mitbewohner
Khaled tödlich verletzt hat, spielt dabei keine entscheidende Rolle -- in einer anderen Atmosphäre, in einer angst-
und repressionsfreieren Umgebung wäre dies so nicht passiert - von daher hat sich nichts geändert, khaled (sic) ist
tot und mögen viele bei seinem letzten weg dabei sein --- ich werde hier am samstag (sic) auf dieser seite (sic) dabei
sein - mit einem gruss (sic), einem gedenken, einem versprechen, vielleicht von auch euch."

differentiation in how "the right" and "the left" self-defined as they battled against each other in this case is exposed. First, although some members of Pegida identify as skinheads and neo-Nazis, most do not. To identify members of Pegida as Bahray's killers and then to blame far-right violence for the death in the same breath, is to conflate and villainize a subset of people because of their affiliation with a group that had not been responsible for any physical attacks on asylum seekers or refugees at that point. In addition, Bahray's death, had it been viewed as a death of someone who belonged to Germany, would have also located violence – far-right, racist, state, structural forms of violence – in Germany itself, which would have then required Germans to grapple with the idea that violence exists in many forms in Germany, and not just in far-right forms. To be even more specific, had Bahray been conceptualized as a German insider rather than a racialized, non-citizen outsider, then Germans would have had to face the fact that race, racism, and racist violence exists in Germany. Instead, while Lutz Bachmann explained that the violence had been brought to Germany by Eritrean outsiders – "it was an internal row" – the representative from UNHCR-Eritrea characterized Bahray and his fellow refugees as victims who Germany must protect from "extremist and racist groups."

Wichmann's post further exemplifies the way that anger as it emerged in response to Bahray's death was actually never interrupted like the public outcry was when Saleh was named as the killer. A contributor to the "Deutschland demobilisieren" Facebook page also echoed this sentiment writing,

> …for a super short moment the discourse about the 'taking seriously the
> concerns and fears' of the everyday German racists was interrupted, and
> for a super short moment the German mainstream also had to
> acknowledge that Pegida and other racist mobilizations are not just
> disrupting the cities and towns where they are active, but above all that
> they are creating a threatening atmosphere (deutschland demobilisieren).

The contributor first acknowledges the productive "use" of Bahray's death in raising public awareness about the prevalence of racism in Germany. They follow this comment with a warning that though the murder might be solved, racism has not been adequately addressed. They write, "If now all of Germany is breathing a sigh of relief that the murder of Khaled Idris Bahray was likely not racially motivated, then we are in stark opposition: There's no such thing as 'taking a breather!' Racism kills over and over again" (deutschland demobilisieren).

Conclusion

Wichmann opened the formerly private Facebook group "Ich bin Khaled" to the public on the day the public found out that his murder had not been racially motivated, meaning that anyone could now join the group without first being approved by the page administrator. After doing this, Wichmann wrote,

> This page 'Ich bin Khaled,' 'Je suis Khaled,' 'Yo soy Khaled' is a dedication to Khaled Idris Bahray, [and is also where you can find] information about his murder. This page is also for all migrants who have made it and want to make it in this country. This is a page against borders, nations, racism and classism, for the organization of aide for those who have fled, protection and solidarity with every refugee in the world. (Wichmann, "Diese Seite").

Wichmann does not shy away from evoking Khaled's name, nor his death as a continued symbol of the existence of racist violence in Germany, and, here too, the difficulties one might have with the asylum system upon arriving or deciding to remain in Germany. The mourning of Khaled becomes a political act, even a willful one, not because his death could be used as a case-in-point in political back-and-forth, but because activists render him human by mourning him and making his death matter. The fact that "Ich bin Khaled" is once again used here, points to the continued poignancy of the phrase for activists, despite the fact that his murder was not racially

motivated. Instead, activists evoke Bahray's name in remembrance of his humanness. The uproar around his death and how it was used is also framed as part of the ongoing struggle of being a refugee in Germany,[43] which includes having to navigate a system and a society, in the minds of activists, that continue to locate racialized violence on the "right," without reflecting on how this violence takes many other forms.

The movements that were galvanized around the deaths of Rahsepar and Bahray have disrupted the workings of the German asylum system. Politicians have been forced to make public statements positioning themselves in favor of or opposed to asylum law reform; increasing pressure has been placed on local, state, and national government agencies to improve refugee re-settlement policies, conditions in refugee centers, GUs, and homes; there have been calls to discontinue voucher and coupon programs, and replace them with programs that distribute stipends, and to decrease or abolish required waiting periods to obtain work permits; and, in the case of the *Residenzpflicht* (Movement Restriction Law), refugee and allied activisms have succeeded in dramatically changing the law.

The reverberations of both Rahsepar's and Bahray's deaths continue to resonate with refugee activists and allies alike in sustained ways. Bahray's death led to the creation of the "Ich bin Khaled Idris" open Facebook group, as I mentioned, and "Khaled Idris: Ermordet, Kriminalisiert, und Vernachlässigt" (Khaled Idris: Murdered, Criminalized, and Neglected), a closed Facebook group. There is also the "Remembering Khaled Idris Bahray" Facebook

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[43] The January 25 Dresden Nazifrei Protest as well as the January 30 Rally in Memory of Khaled Bahray implicitly and explicitly evoked Bahray's death as a means for uniting activists around the idea that there was still a man's death to mourn, and still racism in German society, despite the fact that Bahray's death itself was not a result of a racially-motivated attack. Several more demonstrations took place in the following month, which ultimately gave way to the February 28 establishment of the refugee camp protests on Theaterplatz in Dresden, a centrally located and popular square for locals and tourists alike. 1000 people joined in this protest, which lasted just a few days, until March 3, when protesters were evicted and, as a result, decided to go on a hunger strike (Heuer).

Community, as well as the website Remembering-Khaled.org, renamed in September 2016 as

black-rose.xyz. The Facebook community and open Facebook group were in active use until

January 2017, two years following Bahray's death and the discovery that his apartment-mate had

killed him. The website is no longer available, though contributors to the corresponding Twitter

account @Black_Rose_DD continued to tweet until January 2017 as well. Contributors used

these online spaces to share information about Hassan's trial and conviction, about violence

against refugees across Germany, Europe, and the world, and about other activist projects taking

place around Germany. Rahsepar's death led to the founding of two separate but interconnecting

Refugee Tent Actions, first in Würzburg, which I discussed at length above, and later in Berlin,

the latter of which finally manifested itself into the Oplatz Movement, one of Europe's largest

and most influential refugee movements.[44]

Activists say it is the poor conditions of the GU that caused Rahsepar's death. In

Bahray's case, activists interpreted their pain as emitting from the fact that a man had died a

tragic death, and then that death had been used as a tool in political discourse. It both cases, the

deaths "haunted" the activists, causing unease which, when understood aside the feelings of pain,

pointed to long histories of racism and racialization and how they continue to inform the

treatment of refugees in Germany today. The fact that refugee activists, who engage in hunger

strikes, who evoke the names of the dead, who sew their mouths shut, and who refuse to let their

own anger fizzle out even as the public's does, can be called willful, can interpret their pain in

such a way that evokes anger, and can feel uneasy about the deaths of friends and fellow

refugees in ways that then allow the reading of the deaths as indicative of something "beneath

the surface," reveals the presence of exclusionary understandings of whose lives count, and

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[44] See, for example, (Landry) and (Jakob, *Die Bleibenden*) for important scholarly and journalistic discussions about the Oplatz Movement.

whose do not. This, in turn, represents one way that refugees, apparently protected by universal human rights, are actually excluded from the category of the human, attachment to which is required to claim rights in the first place.

Chapter Two

Roma Refugee Activisms against Deportation, Dislocation, and Disruption: The Prizreni Brothers' Projects in Kosovo and Germany

The Prizreni brothers' experience as Roma[45] deportees to Kosovo is depicted in the

documentary *Trapped by Law* (2015), directed by Sami Mustafa. The film follows Kefaet and

Selamet Prizreni for two years after their deportation to Kosovo from Germany in 2010.

Convicted of minor drug charges, Kefaet, who had had permanent residency status in Germany

until just before his unexpected deportation to his former homeland, and Selamet, who was born

in Germany soon after his family's arrival there, were taken from their home in the middle of the

night during a police raid, and put on a plane to Pristina the next day (Greimel 176). A telling

scene in the film portrays the day the brothers walked to a German company's call center in

Kosovo's capital expecting to begin work just like any other day, and the door is locked. With no

warning, and after six weeks of work that had not been paid, the job had dissolved. This jarring

experience speaks to the precarity of the Prizrenis' existence in Kosovo, where finding stable

work is difficult because of a severe shortage of job opportunities, a general reluctance to hire

Roma, and the stigmatization of recent deportees from Germany.[46] As a consequence, the

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[45] Throughout this chapter, I refer to the population as Roma, and use either Roma (for a person or people) or Romani (for the language or culture) as adjectives.

[46] Upon deportation to Kosovo, deportees receive 6 months of government-paid housing, with the option to use an additional 6 months of this service at another time if needed (Mappes-Niediek). Unfortunately, however, this housing is often inadequate. One reporter from *Die Zeit* found the housing for repatriated citizens in the small town of Plemetina, just outside of Pristina, "in ruins, charred [from previous fires], without roofs, the brick walls cracked and perforated…Aid organizations [had] haphazardly built new buildings without plaster, and houses here and there [did] not yet have windows" (Sorge). Upon inquiring further, the reporter found that the houses mostly did not have toilets, the water access was unpredictable, and power outages happened daily (Sorge). Returnees receive food and hygiene packages for up to one year following their deportation to Kosovo, and they have the option to participate in language and job trainings provided through the Ura 2 ("Ura" is the Albanian word for "bridge") Reintegration Project. According to officials, few "take advantage of [the program]", for one because there are limited job prospects even for those who complete these programs (Mappes-Niediek), but also because the success of the program is questionable. In 2009, for example, out of 800 deportees who took part in URA 2, only 120 found a job, and half of those people were unemployed again the following year (Sorge). In addition, the program is only

brothers were living in Kosovo with no benefits or access to health care, and they were spending much of their time homeless – not only because of the lack of work, but because adequate housing is hard to find in Pristina, especially for Roma (Tmava and Beha 15–16; Prizreni; "Deutschland/Kosovo").

Kefeat and Selamet, together with their oldest brother Hikmet, are former refugees from Kosovo who have resided in Germany for decades. They are also hip-hop artists, well-known and respected in the German music scene, especially in their home city of Essen. In this chapter, I examine some of the brothers' activist texts – songs, performances, videos, Facebook posts, letters, websites, and more – which they produced in Germany and in Kosovo between January 2010 and May 2016. These activist engagements were created following the youngest brothers' deportation, during their exile, upon their return, as the oldest brother sat in a detention center awaiting his own deportation, and as the youngest, Selamet, was deported yet again.

I argue that activists and former Roma refugees, like the Prizreni brothers, build their own version of "home" in response to and in order to reveal the violence of Germany, Kosovo, and the EU's displacement and deportation practices, which have otherwise prevented them from doing so. The brothers' work centers on creating this home – understood here as secure and sustainable space, where a person feels a sense of belonging and where they can participate in the continuous co-creation of that space – that has been made otherwise unattainable. This home is not tied to any one physical location, but instead exists at a trans-European level via online social networks, and through relationships founded upon a shared interest in hip-hop, and works

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available for people who had lived in and were deported by the German states of Baden-Württemberg, Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia, or Saxony-Anhalt, as these states are the ones who give money to support Ura 2 (Sorge). The program receives little funding from international sources like the UN because, as UN Development Program (UNDP) Migration spokesperson Alex Standish said, "[due to the fact that] we oppose forced deportations, we have distanced ourselves from this particular subject…so that we will neither condone deportations nor support them" (Sorge).

to make the European Roma community (more) visible. In addition to building an alternative space, however, the brothers' activism also demonstrates the goal of and need for an actual geographic space to call home, and the necessity of being able to claim human rights as a prerequisite to ensure its sustainability, as it exposes the material and discursive limitations of "inhabiting" an imagined space. Especially germane in the Roma context, present-day forced deportations and residency restrictions prevent populations that have been historically susceptible to displacement and deportation practices from tying their communities to a particular place. Yet, as is made visible through the Prizrenis' activism, such restrictions have not prevented people from creating alternative and productive communities, within which creative forms of political engagement are made possible.

European Roma and Claiming Home

Despite EU efforts to improve the political, social, and economic lives of Roma people throughout what was known as the Decade for Roma Inclusion (2005-2015), little was actually done to improve housing conditions, access to quality education, and issues around employment and labor standards in Roma communities. Roma remain the largest[47] and poorest minority population in all of Europe (*Roma: A Decade On*). The Council of Europe (CoE) has embraced Roma as the "true European minority" since 1993 ("Roma"), but some scholars believe that this very framing has made Roma – a group with its own culture, language, and history according to the CoE – into its own sort of "nation without a territory of its own." That is, the effort to raise

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[47] Due to the vast differences amongst Roma, the lack of a singular recognizable central body of Roma in Europe (Castañeda 88), and because many Roma refuse to register their ethnic identity with governments for fear of discrimination (Benz 11), it is difficult to collect exact statistics on the number of Roma in any given country. The general consensus, however, is that there are between 12 and 15 million Roma people living in Europe today ("Sinti und Roma").

awareness about and address issues involving the unequal and discriminatory treatment of Roma across Europe has also reified the dividing line between Roma and non-Roma, re-producing many of the same structures that have been used to hold prejudice against Roma in the past. Roma's existence in any nation, when framed in these terms, is perceived as a threat to the way of life in that country (Castañeda 89–90).[48] Roma, while visible and identifiable as citizens of Europe, are not necessarily recognizable as belonging to the individual nations of Europe in which they reside.[49]

The Prizreni brothers' work and activism must be understood in the context of the experiences of Roma who fled the Balkan states, or what is now known as the former Yugoslavia, in the late 1980s to the mid-1990s, and who settled in Germany. The Prizrenis left Kosovo in 1988 amidst rising tensions and increasing incidence of violence, particularly against Roma communities. Together with their parents, 7-year-old Hikmet and 4-year-old Kefaet arrived in Essen, Germany, where they were ultimately granted permanent residency. Just a few months later, the youngest Prizreni brother, Selamet, was born while the family was living in a temporary refugee housing unit in Essen.

Between 1998, when the Kosovan War first broke out, and March 1999, when NATO forces began their air assaults in Serbia, 55,000 Kosovans,[50] the most of whom were Roma, escaped to Germany where most submitted applications for asylum (Grimmer).[51] During the

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[48] Also see (Vermeersch) for a robust discussion.

[49] Following reunification, Roma became "one of the main targets of…racism and the main victims of the tightening of state asylum and migration politics that have in turn legitimated and fomented societal racism" in the German context (El-Tayeb, *Undeutsch* 113).

[50] Throughout this chapter, I use the neutral term "Kosovan" to refer to people with Kosovo citizenship instead of the contested Kosovo-Albanian term "Kosovar" or the Kosovo-Serbian term "Kosovac."

[51] Approximately 5,000 of this group left Germany for Kosovo by 2004 (Grimmer).

1980s, when the Prizrenis fled the region now known as Kosovo, net migration in West Germany

was negative, but migration from Yugoslavia had nearly tripled from the previous decade (from

56,583 to 176, 565 people yearly) (Seifert). I refer to this specific subset of the Roma community

in Germany as "Roma refugees" or "former Roma refugees" in what follows, even though some,

like Selamet for example, were born in Germany. These terms are meant to distinguish this

group from several other populations of Roma in Germany, who have different relationships with

the German state and the EU depending on their histories, identities, and affiliations (see

Castañeda for a more in-depth discussion). Briefly, this includes the German Roma population,

whose ancestors have lived in German-speaking lands since the Middle Ages;[52] Roma who came

to West Germany from Spain, Greece, and the Balkans during the 1960s and 1970s as part of

guest worker programs; those who have immigrated from Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, or other

EU member nations, mostly since 2007 (Brenner, "Over 70 Years Ago"; French 12 n5;

Castañeda 90)[53]; and, finally, Roma and Sinti people who live in Germany without

documentation (French 12 n5). Even considering the diversity of the population in regard to

citizenship or residency status and access, not to mention other forms of diversity, all Roma,

approximately 120,000 people ("Geschätzte Anzahl"), in Germany are susceptible to societal

discrimination and unequal treatment (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees).

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[52] Nearly 70,000 Roma are considered "native" Germans. Many people in this population are Holocaust/Porajmos survivors or children of survivors. This group is officially recognized as one of Germany's four minority populations – also the Danes, Sorbians, and Frisians – and are represented by the *Zentralrat Deutscher Sinti und Roma* [Central Council of German Sinti and Roma]. As a result, they are protected by some federal and state anti-discrimination laws (Castañeda 90).

[53] It was in this year that the Accession Treaty of 2005 finally was put into effect, meaning that Roma communities in the now-expanded European Union, specifically in Romania and Bulgaria, would have the same freedom of movement granted to Roma populations in countries like Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, and Poland (Fekete 61). Liz Fekete argues that it is, in part, the establishment of a market economy in countries formerly part of the Eastern bloc that has brought about a new wave of anti-Roma sentiment in the region. For her discussion, please see (Fekete).

On the national level, especially as the presence and power of nationalist politics across Europe is intensifying, Roma are often excluded from nation-building projects, collective or national memory work, and future-making.[54] The Prizrenis, as former refugees and *Geduldete* in Germany, face another layer of exclusion and marginalization, however, that German-Roma citizens do not. Informed by their precarious situation in Germany as perpetual potential deportees and, simultaneously, their designation as EU citizens that complicates their relationships with Germany as a nation, the Prizreni brothers' activism utilizes strategies that enable them to make claims to and build their own home that exists beyond the confines of the nation-state, and beyond the limits of ethnic and racial identity.

The relationships of Communities of Color like the Black diaspora, Indigenous communities, and Roma to "home" continue to be informed by the long histories of slavery, colonialism, genocide, and discrimination that have been fueled by uprooting people from their homes, or by denying the ability of People of Color to claim home in the first place. As a result, these groups and others have embraced the notion of diaspora as a particular claim to home that, does not link to a specific geographic space, but instead "transcend[s] geographical, national, and cultural borders" (Kathöfer and Weber, "Introduction" 412). Filmmaker and scholar Karina Griffith has described this idea of building home in the places where one can as *homefulness*. She states that *homefulness* refers to "[t]he idea of living fully everywhere, and that, because of our situation [living in the world as Black people], it becomes necessary to make a home for ourselves in many different places, to have more than one home, and also to be able to have that

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[54] In *Undeutsch*, Fatima-El-Tayeb argues that Black people, Roma, and Muslims in Germany have been limited in the ways they have been able to evoke and mobilize around Germany's fascist past, thereby erasing any connections that could potentially be made between Germany's past and present in terms of racism. In this way, she argues, "So können sich regelmäßig wiederholende Zyklen von verbalen und physischen rassistischen Gewaltausbrüchen ebenso ignoriert werden wie die Widerstandsbewegungen derjenigen, gegen die sich diese Ausbrüche richten...indem sie nie zusammen gedacht werden" (El-Tayeb, *Undeutsch* 15).

sense to recognize when you're not at home" (Kathöfer and Weber, "Heimat, Sustainability, Community" 421).

Diaspora has become a way for People of Color, particularly young activists trying to find a way to resist and rethink the tension between how their ethnic and racialized identities have been ascribed to them, and how they see themselves, move in the world, and experience daily life. Activist networks built with the idea of diaspora "dra[w] on and transfor[m] modes of resistance originating outside of Europe and [which are] circulated in transnational discourses of diaspora, [including] hip-hop culture" (El-Tayeb, *European Others* xii). Peggy Piesche, though acknowledging the power of a diasporic identity and politics, warns that not all People of Color have access to such an identity (Kathöfer and Weber, "Heimat, Sustainability, Community" 420). A possible solution, she argues, in order to both acknowledge the essentializing and oversimplification of equating "home" (or *Heimat*) to the idea of national belonging, and to account for the limitations of claiming a diaspora identity, is to think about "home" in terms of sustainability (Kathöfer and Weber, "Heimat, Sustainability, Community" 419). This notion resists the reliance on temporal associations with a place – how long a person is in a space as that which determines whether someone belongs – or on a notion of diaspora – which, in Griffith's opinion has some negative connotations that imply that people in a diaspora are "still searching" for a place to call home.[55] Instead, Piesche and Griffith call for an understanding of "home" as a place where people can co-create a place that can last, can ensure that they have a place to build

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[55] The rejection of one's home, another strategy suggested during the interview in which this conversation unfolded, however, is a privilege that some, namely People of Color, cannot afford, because *Heimatslosigkeit* is something that has already been inscribed on the bodies of People of Color, and so often they are already not "at home, at home…" (Kathöfer and Weber, "Heimat, Sustainability, Community" 424).

and invest in a future, and to which they can belong (Kathöfer and Weber, "Heimat, Sustainability, Community" 419).

Because the German state has prevented the Prizrenis from establishing a home in Germany as a result of its deportation practices, the brothers have laid claim to the Council of Europe's narrative that positions Roma as the "true European minority," and have continued to build their own trans-European communities that transcend national borders utilizing this narrative. In the face of policies that do little to challenge the prejudicial treatment of Roma within national contexts, and considering the disproportional effects of deportation practices on Roma in Germany, the Prizrenis' activism explicitly ties deportation practices to the idea of *Heimatslosigkeit* (the loss of one's home). The 2015 campaign for Hikmet's Right to Stay in Germany, for example, shows how the German state's practice of deporting long-time residents of Germany does more than disrupt expellees' lives ("Bleiberecht für Hikmet, Kefaet und Selami"), showing too how it prevents former Roma refugees from establishing a permanent home anywhere: in Germany, in Kosovo, or even in Europe.

On April 2, 2015, nearly three years into his probationary period and just months after his brothers finally returned home from their exile in Kosovo (to which I return below), Hikmet received a letter from the city of Essen saying that he should prepare himself for deportation to Kosovo on April 9, just one week later (Greimel 179). On April 8, although he was supposed to report for deportation the following day which he did not end up doing, Hikmet, together with his brothers whose new applications for asylum had just been submitted, performed in front of the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin as part of a celebration held in celebration of International Roma

Day 2015. It was not until October 9, nearly six months later, that Hikmet was arrested and taken to a deportation detention center.[56]

In a petition that circulated online beginning in December 2015, which accrued 1,962 signatures in the month it was open ("Bleiberecht für Hikmet, Kefaet und Selami"), the circumstances surrounding Hikmet's detention and threatened deportation in 2015 are outlined alongside the story of Kefaet and Selamet's deportation in 2010 as well as their struggles in Kosovo during their exile from 2010-2014. The petition documents the central narrative of the Prizrenis' activism by tracing the brothers' experiences with (looming) deportation from 2010-2015. It establishes their reasons for wanting to remain in Germany, and asks the public for support as they seek to challenge the government's decisions regarding the brothers' residency and asylum applications

Hikmet and his brothers characterized his impending deportation as particularly inhumane because Hikmet had lived in Germany for 27 years (since the age of 8) (Nowak). In the petition, Hikmet states,

> [I] have in the past and [still] continue to campaign for youth, civil courage,[57] and human rights. I have appeared at charity and human rights events. I do this out of conviction, because I'm a foreigner in my own country of origin [Kosovo] and would not be welcomed there. I am home in Germany, but I'm also not welcome because people want to deport me after 27 years of residing here. ("Bleiberecht für Hikmet, Kefaet und Selami").

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[56] He remained there until January 2016 when he was released for reasons that remain unclear. Unfortunately, I have been unable to find documentation to clarify what happened.

[57] The *Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung* (Federal Center for Political Education) defines civil courage as "a specific kind of social behavior that is carried out in different social contexts and public arenas, in which a person (rarely a group) volunteers for legitimate, primarily non-material interests and the personal integrity of other people, but also of the actor himself, and orients himself according to humane and democratic principles" (Meyer et al.).

Hikmet describes the possibility of being deported from Germany to Kosovo as a denial, on the part of the state, of his right to a home. In turn, this prompts Hikmet and his brothers to make the claim that the German state has essentially made them homeless, and that the loss of their home means that they are not welcome, and do not belong, anywhere. That is, by framing his imminent deportation as a forced removal from his home, Hikmet and his brothers also indicate how this practice manifests from the belief that Balkan Roma are not supposed to "belong" to German society, revealing the ways in which they have been marked as precarious "by racism, state violence, and economic and social insecurity" (Kathöfer and Weber, "Introduction" 412–13). Furthermore, in his statement, Hikmet ties together his own precariousness which exists as a result of not having a place to call home, with his work for human rights, thereby saying that the claim to home can be made possible by making a claim to human rights.[58]

In the following section, I analyze the campaign for Hikmet's right to stay in Germany. This includes a concert in December 2015 that raised money for his lawyer fees, and the brothers' participation in Roma Day 2016 in April 2016 when all three brothers participated in events in Berlin, with the purpose of raising awareness about Roma refugees' struggle for *Bleiberecht* (the right to stay) in Germany. The centrality of the deportation experiences of Kefaet and Selamet, who had returned illegally to Germany in December 2014, brings the 2010 bilateral agreement between Kosovo and Germany, which prompted their deportations, together with the 2014 and 2015 declarations of the former Yugoslavian states as safe countries of origin, which was used to justify Hikmet's expected deportation, into the public eye.

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[58] In another part of the petition, Hikmet was described again as someone who "thrilled audiences with his energy and musical talent and [who] often performed at cultural events and concerts for human rights… [He is known] as a creative, humorous, non-conformist who put his art in the service of living peacefully together, without discrimination or exclusion of other cultures" ("Free Hikmet").

In 2012, two years after his brothers were deported to Kosovo, Hikmet was arrested for marijuana possession. He was put on probation and, soon after, a judge revoked his residence permit (Aufenthaltsbestätigung). Although he had lived in Germany as a permanent resident for decades, Hikmet would now be required to renew his *Duldung* on a monthly basis. Going forward, he would be "tolerated" as a person who could live in Germany for the moment, but would also be under the threat of deportation for the foreseeable future. Usually, *Duldung* is granted when it is expected that conditions in the person's home country will soon improve, and the person will be able to return safely; following this logic, the asylum seeker is, in the opinion of the state, in no need of permanent asylum. In 2012, a bilateral agreement between Kosovo and Germany (2010) that sought to repatriate a large majority of the 130,000 Kosovans, together with their families, who had fled Kosovo in the 1990s ("Deutschland/Kosovo")[59] had already been in effect for two years. This, combined with the fact that Hikmet had committed a crime, was used as de facto justification for the forced forfeiture of Hikmet's status as a permanent resident.

Deportation and *Heimatslosigkeit*, *Bleiberecht* and Freedom

As the Prizreni case highlights, it is not only new applicants for asylum that have been affected by the 2010 bilateral agreement. Indeed, these policies have affected former Roma refugees like the Prizrenis, whose permanent residency status has been revoked, or others who had never been granted permanent residency to begin with and who had been living with a temporary stay of deportation, some for over 20 years. By September 2015, just before Hikmet's

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[59] After the war 114,000 returned to Kosovo ("Deutschland/Kosovo"). Seven months after this decision, in December 2010, Germany's Conference of State-Level Interior Ministers agreed that only a minimum amount of people would be deported as a result of this agreement, though, as with most asylum cases, it is up to each individual state to decide what this number will be. The remainder of the families would be given permanent residency on humanitarian grounds (Lukáš Houdek and Zdenka Kainarová).

arrest, two other decisions made by the German government had officially designated all six of the Balkan countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Albania, Kosovo, the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia, and Montenegro) as safe countries of origin ("Sind Kosovo und Albanien").[60] This classification means, in effect, that claims to political asylum from these countries' citizens are rendered *de facto*, if not *de jure*, impossible. The assumption underlying this policy is that people immigrating from these countries are likely not victims of persecution. For example, according to the President of the *Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge* (BAMF) (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees), Manfred Schmidt, in Kosovo there is "no systematic persecution and as a result no reason for [claiming] asylum" in Germany or elsewhere ("Sind Kosovo und Albanien"), and therefore deportation is justifiable.

For anti-deportation activists like the Prizrenis, however, the argument has been that Roma populations coming from the Balkans are indeed victims of persecution (Brenner, "Roma Fear"). Pro-refugee groups like ProAsyl been critical of both the bilateral agreement and the designation of Kosovo in particular as "safe" because, as they point out, Roma in Kosovo experience disproportionately high rates of unemployment and poverty (Meaker, "Unemployment"). In addition, the ubiquity of segregated communities and school systems, as well as regular incidences of stereotyping, discrimination, and violence against Roma in Kosovo and the other Balkan countries are reasons, again according to activists, to challenge these state decisions.[61]

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[60] Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia were added to the list of safe countries of origin in September 2014, followed by the addition of Kosovo, Montenegro, and Albania one year later. By the end of 2015, 17,000 people from these countries who were living in Germany were there without *Duldung* or permission for permanent residency and at risk of being deported (*Unsichere Staaten*).

[61] During the first 6 months of 2015, Kosovo, the third poorest country in Europe in terms of per capita income and GDP ("Kosovo Overview"), as well as a small nation of approximately 1.8 million was forced to "take back" 16,000 people, many of whom had fled the region during the Yugoslavian Wars in the 1990s. Kosovo ranks 197 out of 208

Roma have to endure poor economic conditions in the Balkan countries, the systemic and structural discriminatory practices against Roma, including the existence of so-called "special schools" where Roma children are segregated from non-Roma children, and the brutal and inhumane treatment of Roma during the Yugoslavian Wars, the effects of which still resonate across the region today (Meaker, "Unemployment"; Meaker, "Roma in Kosovo"; Sorge; Knaus, *Abgeschoben und vergessen*). Although the federal government considered "the security situation for returnees in Kosovo, including for members of the Roma minority, to be stable" (*Germany 2015 Human Rights Report*), human rights organizations have argued that agreements between the two countries regarding the treatment of deportees have not done much in the way of improving conditions for returnees. For example, Amnesty International offers significant evidence to support Roma concerns about being deported to the Balkans. The organization states that Roma remain the targets of "institutional discrimination…including access to social and economic rights" ("Serbia 2015/2016") in Kosovo, and several of their reports since 2009 have linked poor conditions in Roma refugee and returnee camps in Kosovo to, among other things, lead poisoning in children (Troszczynska-van Genderen). The general societal attitude that persists in framing Roma as not belonging, and as pests, problems, and undeserving of the rights to which most citizens have access is all too prevalent in Kosovo and elsewhere in Europe. Consequently, efforts by the German government to "repatriate" (former) Roma refugees to the Balkans remain central to activists and allies' critical engagement with issues around deportation and displacement.

Activists understand the 2010 bilateral agreement between Germany and Kosovo as well as the designation of the Balkan states as "safe" as contributing to the exclusion of Roma from

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countries in the world for the percentage of the population that is employed. 32.0% of all Kosovans are actively searching for, but unable to find steady work in the formal sector ("About Kosovo").

German society. Although these policies target all Kosovan refugees and their families, Roma are disproportionally affected, making up approximately one-third of all deportees from Germany to Kosovo in 2010 (Knaus, *Abgeschoben und vergessen* 16). With a new wave of deportations on the horizon, the campaign for Hikmet's right to stay became a galvanizing point around which Roma in Germany could call attention to the history of policies that have led to Roma deportation from Germany to Kosovo, where they are subject to intense discrimination, poor housing conditions, exclusion from the work-force, and school segregation.

During his time in detention, Hikmet's brothers and friends initiated a petition demanding Hikmet, Kefaet, and Selamet be granted permanent residency status in Germany.[62] Simultaneously, and with the 2015 refugee "crisis" still ongoing, on December 22, 2015, members of the German hip-hop community[63] organized a solidarity concert they called Freiheit für Hikmet! (Freedom for Hikmet!) at Berlin's SO36 Club, to help raise money his family could use to pay for a lawyer in their suit against the city of Essen to free Hikmet from state custody. SO36, named after the neighborhood in which it is located, the southeastern part of Kreuzberg, has an international reputation for its role it played in establishing the Berlin punk scene. The event was co-sponsored by Alle Bleiben!, a Roma rights organization founded to fight for Roma people's right to stay in Germany whose slogan is "Bleiberecht für alle" (The Right to Stay for All); Roma-Art-Action, a group started by the Prizreni brothers to help bring art as activism to Roma and other minority populations in Germany (which includes Hip-Hop Hurray, the project I address in detail below); and, My Right is Your Right, a network made up of activist, artistic,

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[62] According to the BAMF, in October 2015, the same time that Hikmet was in detention, nearly 86% of all deportees in October 2015 from Germany were sent (back) to the Balkans (*Asylgeschäftsstatistik*).

[63] The lineup included MC Josh and Nash, Dirty Gommora, Berliner Big-Boy Szene, Cigir, and K.A.G.E. (the group created by Kefaet and Selamet during their time in Kosovo).

religious, and legally-minded people trying to establish an infrastructure that will ensure a future in which refugees and migrants in Germany will be treated humanely ("Soli Konzert"). From the videos of the concert available on YouTube and some cosponsors' websites, it is clear that the concert was not just about freeing Hikmet from detention and all the brothers from the threat of deportation; it was also an effort to raise awareness about all Roma refugees' difficulty acquiring the long-term right to stay in Germany, and the precarious lives these practices produce. This is apparent when, in one video, Selamet and Kefaet are seen leading the crowd in a cheer, chanting, "Eins, zwei, drei, vier! Alle Roma bleiben hier" ("One, two, three, four! All Roma stay here." (In German, "vier" and "hier" rhyme)) (Roma-Art-Action).

Two of the narratives present at the concert – "freeing" Hikmet and advocating for all Roma's right to stay in Germany – when read together, characterizes freedom as the ability to be able to choose where one lives, and to "stay" if one so choses. Whereas some refugee activists in the German context, like the group of protestors from Würzburg who ultimately marched to Berlin in defiance of the *Residenzpflicht*, have conceptualized freedom in terms of movement – the freedom to move through space, or the claim to the right of mobility – the Prizrenis are advocating for the freedom to remain in place. Thought in the context of a long history of Roma exclusion in Europe, this claim to place is especially significant. Hikmet's relationship with Germany can be read as the result of a continuation of this history, in which Roma have been denied a place to belong. Hikmet's freedom, then, is a freedom to call Germany his home and to belong there.

The Prizrenis and Human Rights

In the lead-up to the 2016 International Roma Day celebration, which takes place every year on April 8, the Stiftung Erinnerung, Verantwortung, Zukunft (EVZ) (The Foundation for Remembrance, Responsibility, and Future) together with the Stiftung Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas (The Foundation for the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europa), and Alle Bleiben! released eight short films on YouTube under the series title "Was ist Antiziganismus?" ("What is anti-Gypsyism?") as part of their observance of the day. One of the films entitled "Brüder Prizreni" (The Prizreni Brothers) features Hikmet, Kefaet, and Selamet reacting to the fact that Hikmet was now in imminent danger of being deported to Kosovo, as his brothers had been (Bytyci).

In the video, Hikmet is driving a car as he addresses the camera held by someone in the passenger seat. He yells into the camera, pointing to his audience, saying, "Angela Merkel says, 'human dignity is inviolable.' But then why do you do this…why do you keep on chasing us?" (Bytyci).[64] The fact that Hikmet is driving as he says this is not lost on the viewer: he is in motion, unable to stop for fear of being caught by the state in pursuit. Hikmet, now out of detention, is still in danger of being deported because the new declaration of Kosovo as "safe," just as his brothers had been deported soon after the 2010 bilateral agreement to "repatriate" Kosovans was signed. These policies are framed here as violating Roma's human dignity, the foundational prerequisite that should be, according to the Universal Declaration of Human

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[64] In another part of the video, Kefaet says, "They've kept him in check all this time," because he is *geduldet*, which means he can be deported at any time; he is required to work a job recognized by the German government as a part of the official labor force, which means he "can't self-actualize" (Bytyci). In addition to the fact that Hikmet, like all three of the Prizreni brothers, did not (and still do not) know if or when their lives will be disrupted through deportation (again), Kefaet also points to the fact that one's existence in Germany is shaped by the requirement to work, to prove you are working, and to pay taxes. Considering the brothers' history of working odd jobs to both make ends meet and to fulfill this requirement of their residency in Germany, as well as their work as musicians, even if they are working, their work as artists and activists is not acknowledged as such by the German government.

Rights and the German Constitution, understood as inherent to each and every human being before human rights are even thinkable.

The brothers' challenge the idea that the German government is doing the job of protecting its refugees' human rights, but call for the protections of human rights nonetheless. Interestingly, citizenship does not and cannot provide the same protections, in the brothers' minds, as human rights guaranteed in other ways. In this view, the state as presumed arbiter of human rights is deemed irresponsible and unable to protect those who live under its power when it also renders a distinction between citizen and non-citizen. Non-citizens are considered deportable and their lives are deemed disrupt-able. If the brothers were granted Kosovan passports (they had defunct Yugoslavian passports when Selamet and Kefaet were first deported to Kosovo), not only would they "belong" to a nation they do not consider home, their "belonging" would still be a contested and precarious one. First of all, because of their Roma identities, they face extreme forms of discrimination in Kosovo, and second of all, considering the fact that 23 out of 28 EU member nations officially recognize Kosovo as an independent and sovereign country (and not belonging to Serbia), Kosovans must apply for a visa in order to travel to any EU member state. In this way, the structure of the EU and its own visa policies serve to further complicate the convoluted relationship between former Roma refugees from the Balkans and the German nation, and serve to put "returnees" to Kosovo in an even more precarious position vis-à-vis the EU. The campaign for Hikmet's right to stay highlights the violence that results from Kosovo's precarious positionality in Europe, and also challenges the idea that human rights are best protected and fought for on the level of the nation.

What becomes clear through the Prizrenis' activism is that the German state does not act as arbiter and protector of the human rights of former Roma refugees (from non-EU member

nations) and their families, nor do supranational organizations like the EU. Human rights as a construct, however, continues to play a central role in the Prizrenis' various campaigns. Their forms of activism are explicitly aimed at securing human rights, and the rights of other Roma and Roma refugees in Germany. The employment of human rights is still a universal one – human rights apply to everyone – but the chance to secure and protect Roma's human rights is placed with, it seems, Roma communities themselves, and not with any state or governing body. The notion of human rights is not lost; the location – where they are found and fought for, namely from a "home" they have constructed and defined – is shifted.

International Roma Day and the Right to Stay

The other videos in the series published for Roma Day included other voices from members of the European Roma community in Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, Germany, and elsewhere, therefore broadening the scope of Roma experience, but also of discrimination against Roma, to the European level.[65] In Hungary, a Roma woman talks about her outrage when the Hungarian president said "We don't want refugees. We have enough Roma" in response to criticisms of his country for not taking in enough refugees during the 2015 refugee "crisis" (*"Was ist Antiziganismus?" - Ágnes*). The woman, Ágnes, shares her disbelief that the president could say such a thing about a population that has lived in the country for over 600 years. She says that he has labeled them as a foreign population, one that does not belong (*"Was ist Antiziganismus?" - Ágnes*), and that is always seen, like refugees, as just arriving. In the Roma

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[65] In another contribution, a man shares his experiences with what he calls intersectional discrimination as a gay Roma man in Germany (*"Was ist Antiziganismus?" - Gianni*), while another discusses how he reacts when people approach him and ask him where he is from. He replies "'I am Sinto.' And they ask, 'what is that?'" and he answers that it is a group of people who have lived in Germany for 600 years, without interruption (*"Was ist Antiziganismus?" - Janko*). Another video about a Roma German lawyer focuses on everyday racism (Alltagsrassismus) (*"Was ist Antiziganismus?" -Nizaqete*).

Day "Aufruf zur Solidarität mit den Roma und Sinti Europas" ("Call for Solidarity with the Sinti and Roma of Europe"), organizers invite people to sign in the name of resisting constructions of Roma as "scapegoats for the excessive demands made of European society" (*Solidarität*), particularly within the so-called *Flüchtlingsdebatte* (refugee debate).

Two other videos in the series refer explicitly to the Porajmos, the Nazi genocide against the Roma and Sinti people that took place in conjunction with the Holocaust. In one of these, a man describes why he protests in front of a pig farm in his native Slovakia. He replies, that the communists made this site into a pig farm in the 1970s, but before and during WWII, it was a Nazi extermination camp, where thousands of Roma were tortured, raped, and murdered. There is no memorial on the grounds here, indicating the erasure of a horrific but important Roma past. The segment ends as the camera focuses in on a sign attached to the gate of the farm which reads "Excrement tank financed by the EU," an indication that along with the Slovakian government, it is also the EU who participates in this erasure (*"Was ist Antiziganismus?" - Jozef*).

Finally, Mano Höllenreiner, a Sinti survivor of the Porajmos, explains how he and his family planned and initiated acts of resistance in Auschwitz-Birkenau, where one of the so-called Roma family camps was located. Reacting explicitly to the deportations of Roma people from Germany as a result of the 2010 bilateral agreement and the 2014-2015 declarations of all six Balkan countries as safe countries of origin, Höllenreiner says, "Now they've been deported again because they are Roma" (*"Was ist Antiziganismus?" - Mano*). He thereby makes an unambiguous link between recent deportations of Roma to the Balkans and the long history of policies of Roma displacement and dislocation across Europe. Importantly, this includes the deportations that took place during the Nazi era.[66]

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[66] In the years following the end of WWII and the Holocaust and Porajmos, Roma victims of the Nazi regime faced extreme resistance when trying to receive the same kinds of retributions allotted to other persecuted communities

In addition to the online videos, the observance of Roma Day also included a formal ceremony and presentation during which a series of speakers from the Roma community, Germany's Jewish leadership, and various government organizations addressed the position of Roma in German and European society at an outdoor venue in Berlin. In a particularly troubling speech, the Chairperson for the Roma Trial, a transnational organization dedicated to addressing anti-Gypsyism through cultural and political engagement ("Über uns"), Hamze Bytyci, spoke about why he had once wished that his father was unhealthy. Due to a heart condition, his father would need to remain on dialysis. After having lived in The Netherlands for nearly 20 years, Bytyci and his family were deported to Macedonia, where they could not find the medical care his father required. They then travelled back to The Netherlands and then ultimately to Germany, where they were denied the ability to apply for asylum because of the new establishment of Kosovo as a safe country of origin. Even if families, or a member of a family, had already applied for asylum before the law was instated, they no longer had the right to do so again. One of Bytyci's sons was born in Schweinfurt in 1990 but was not considered a citizen (due to the citizenship laws I talk about in detail below), but rather an asylum seeker who needed to register as such. Bytyci argued that to obtain any legal status, in Germany, his father would need to prove that the treatment he required was unavailable in his home country or any other country he had travelled through prior to his arrival in Germany, or else be deported (*RomaDay 2016 Berlin*;

(French 16–17). The West German government "determined that all measures taken against Roma before 1943 were legitimate official measures against persons committing criminal acts, not the result of policy driven by racial prejudice" ("Genocide"). This effectively shifted the blame for Roma suffering during the Porajmos from the Nazi perpetrators to the Roma people themselves, as it was not "Rassenhass" but criminal prevention that was seen as underlying the Nazi decision to imprison and ultimately enact a policy of extermination on the Roma (Benz 11). By 1979 when the West German government finally acknowledged that crimes against the Roma people before 1943 (as well as after) were racially motivated, many who were eligible to receive compensation had already died ("Genocide").

"Asylpaket II in Kraft").[67] The policies which led to Bytici's declaration that he would rather his father not recover from his illness so that he and his family would not be deported, centers the policies that make such a statement even possible.[68]

After several more speeches, Kefaet and Selamet performed as K.A.G.E., and acronym that stands for K-Flo and Gypsy-Evidence, Kefaet and Selamet's respective stage names. The duo sang *Alles verbrannt* (*Everything Burned*), the song they wrote and first performed while in exile in Kosovo. The song begins with spoken word, as the brothers shout "Welcome/Alle bleiben/We on the run (run, run)/Vierzehnte dritte 2012/Alle meine Jungs vor Gerichtsgebäude hört mir zu" ("Welcome/Everyone stays/We are on the run (run, run)/Fourteenth of March 2012/All my boys in front of the court building listen up") (Every Day is Romaday). Before the song even gets started, the brothers have invoked a sense of movement in much the same way that the shot of Hikmet driving in the Roma Day video did: they are on the run, and are speaking to their "boys" presumably waiting on a court decision. A sense of movement together with a reference to the law frame the narrative of the piece in which "everything [ultimately] burns."

The song is full of expressions of pain. Towards the beginning, Selamet sings "Ich bin am überleben/Ohne zu überlegen/Gibt mir ein Nagelbett/Und ich werd' mich drüberlegen" ("I'm surviving/Without thinking/Give me a nailbed/And I'll lay on it"), and later on Kefaet adds, "Und nehm' mir weg was mir gehört/Mein Leben läuft jetzt wie gestört" ("And take away what

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[67] Following the adoption of Asylverfahren Paket II (Asylum Package II) in February 2016, even this would no longer be considered a legitimate reason to stay in Germany. Instead, a person now has to prove that the very act of being deported would be life-threatening in order to remain in Germany ("Asylpaket II in Kraft").

[68] Aydan Özoğuz, Berlin's Staatsministerin bei der Bundeskanzlerin und Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, Flüchtlinge und Integration (Minister of State to the Chancellor and Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees, and Integration); Mark Dainow, the Vizepräsident des Zentralrates der Juden in Deutschland (Vice President of the Central Office of Jews in Germany); and, among others, celebrated director Rosa von Praunheim as well as Arne Friedrich, a former soccer player for Germany's national team rounded out the series of speeches.

belongs to me/My life is running now as if disturbed") (Every Day is Romaday). The brothers are describing their lives in Kosovo following their deportation there, and the anguish they felt during this time is palpable throughout the song. They are surviving, but their lives have been disturbed, or disrupted, and they're feeling what it's like to lose something that belongs to them ("Und nehm' mir weg was mir gehört"). At some points in the song, they are speaking to their "boys," using commands formulated in the informal second-person plural ("Gibt"); at other points, they are speaking to one person, using the informal second-person singular form, such as when Selamet proclaims "Sag ich dir jetzt in die Fresse/Gypsy führt ein gutes Leben" ("I'll tell you now to your face/Gypsy's living a good life") (Every Day is Romaday). This grammatical shift suggests that the brothers are addressing people they know, and throughout, are trying to convince them that although their lives are rough now, they are also surviving, and even living good lives. They have not, in other words, given up even as "Es sitzt tief und es brennt und es ist alles verbrannt" ("It sits deep and it burns and it's all burned") (Every Day is Romaday). It is their situation, precarious and painful, that is sitting deeply in their bodies and burning in one minute, and has burned in the next, leaving them feeling as if their very identities have gone up in smoke.

Following the first performance, Kefaet and Hikmet then took the stage as the group Rollin Hopp, and performed a song entitled *Heimweh* (Homesickness), after which Kefeat addressed the crowd. He asks them to watch *Trapped by Law*, a documentary about his brother and his experiences living with what he calls the inhumane conditions in Kosovo that Roma must endure despite the fact that the country is "safe." Then, with Hikmet still on stage beside him, Kefaet says that he and his brothers' purpose as artists and activists is to help improve relationships and understanding between people, and to challenge the ways in which people

submit to borders (they use the word "Mauern" or walls here) that are in their heads. Finally, referring to Europe's Roma, he shouts, "We are Europeans!", and is met with enthusiastic applause (*Kundgebung*).

The campaign for Hikmet to stay, when read within the larger context of the Prizrenis' activism, is the point from which the conceptualization of human rights as localized and as existing in and through relationships and interactions amongst everyday people is most clear: when the brothers are home. By bringing together all three brothers' experiences with deportation or the threat of deportation, a chronology of recent German policies, understood within the realm of EU bureaucracy, that target Roma refugees and their families in Germany is centered and characterized as inhumane. By placing the campaign in multiple contexts – the petition, concert, and Roma Day celebration being just three examples – Roma refugee plight in Germany is understood in terms of disruption, forced deportation, and discrimination. This is met by strategies that seek to form solidarities in order to realize spaces where universal human rights are enacted and protected in ways that the government – Germany's nor the EU's – can guarantee.

Selamet's Second Deportation

In this section, I focus on the #FreeSelametNow Facebook campaign circulating in May 2017, after Selamet, the youngest Prizreni brother and the only one to be born in Germany, is deported for a second time to Kosovo. An analysis of the #FreeSelametNow social media campaign illuminates yet another strategy employed by the brothers that exposes the impossibility of protecting Roma refugees' human rights when relying on state protections. Instead, the campaign represents an attempt to construct a community and a "home" that

transcends national borders, while also making the argument that a shared physical space to call "home" is ultimately required if the effects of living precarious lives are to be avoided. This ongoing campaign has also helped to call attention to the enduring impacts of Germany's pre-2000 citizenship laws,[69] which continue to determine the fate of those who arrived before that time as well as the generations that have been born in Germany subsequently. #SelametBleibt names deportation as an inhumane practice while also bringing the fraught relationship of Roma with both Germany and the EU into focus, as Selamet's claim to home is undermined by his ambiguous citizenship status.

In the petition published in December 2015 demanding Hikmet's right to stay, Kefeat, refers to himself as a "proud father of two children, who were also [like his brother Selamet] born in Essen" ("Bleiberecht für Hikmet, Kefaet und Selami"). Selamet had been born in Germany during the 1980s, when he would never be recognized as a German citizen. However, Kefeat's children were born in Essen after 2000, would have the opportunity to declare German citizenship, and would have to do so before they turned 23. It is at this age that all children born in Germany to foreign-born parents must decide to officially retain or give up their right to German citizenship. Kefeat, well aware of these important changes to German citizenship laws, which went into effect on January 1, 2000, makes the comparison between his brother's and children's situations nonetheless. In effect, the distinction between these two generations' experiences with citizenship laws is understood as somewhat arbitrary, as the only thing that differentiates Selamet from his nephews is a little more than two decades: they are all Roma;

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[69] The 1999 reform of the German State Citizenship Law states that "a child born on German soil to a foreign parent can be a German citizen if the parent has lived legally in Germany for 8 years and has a residence permit"; it also states that children have until age 23 to make a claim to German citizenship ("Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz," sec.Art. 4).

they all have two parents from the Balkans; they all, at least at one point, had permanent residency status in Germany; and they were all born in Germany.

Kefaet also uses the petition to consider questions about children's rights. Kefeat wanted to remain with his children, especially having been separated from them for 5 years already: "I have a very close relationship with them and I would really like to stay by their sides as a father. I was separated from them for long enough after I was deported" ("Bleiberecht für Hikmet, Kefaet und Selami"). Further on in the petition's narrative, Kefeat asks whether or not there is such a thing as the Kinderrecht Konvention (Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)) in Germany ("Bleiberecht für Hikmet, Kefaet und Selami"). Here, Kefaet is referring to the November 1989 UNHRC treaty in which the human rights of children are explicitly laid out, and which begins with a consideration of the family as "the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, [and which] should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community" (OHCHR General Assembly).

Selamet, again the youngest of the three Prizreni brothers, was deported for the second time on May 16, 2017. According to the family's various Facebook and Twitter accounts, Selamet was not warned of his impending deportation, nor was he allowed adequate time to prepare for it.[70] Activists were quick to point out how the timing of these deportations was in particularly bad taste. May 16, known as Roma Resistance Day, is remembered as the day in 1944 when Roma prisoners successfully fought against the liquidation of the *Zigeunerlager* (Gypsy Camp) in Auschwitz-Birkenau, the Nazi concentration camp located in present-day

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[70] Unfortunately, I don't know why he was deported this time, as I have not been able to locate documentation confirming what exactly happened.

Poland that housed the most Roma during the Porajmos ("Sinti und Roma - Widerstand").[71] The

day is meant to commemorate the bravery of a group of Roma in some of the direst

circumstances, and to bring a piece of Roma history, specifically a history of Roma suffering,

into the public's minds. Activists, like the Prizreni's, see deportation as inhumane, antithetical

one of the state's primary purposes which is to protect people's universal human rights, and

especially cruel when the countries to which Roma are being deported have problematic human

rights records with respect to Roma communities. It is for these reasons that they characterize

these deportations scheduled to take place on this day of remembrance as representative of the

German government's overall treatment of Roma. That is, while a certain amount of lip service

is paid to issues of Roma equality by national and EU government factions, the reality on the

ground is that Roma are still systematically excluded from partaking in educational, economic,

political, and social institutions in Germany and across Europe, often as a direct result of state

deportation and displacement practices.

Whereas officially Roma suffering as it relates to the horrors of the Porajmos has been

recognized by the (West) German state since 1981, present-day agreements, laws, and polices

that disproportionately affect Roma are not conceptualized by the state as part of a long, violent,

and tragic historical relationship between the German state and Roma, but as somehow separate

and disconnected from exclusionary and even murderous past practices. In this way, Roma

experiences of marginalization and exclusion have been relegated to the past, and discrimination

against Roma today, especially as Roma communities are affected by the deportation practices of

the German government, is viewed anachronistically or rendered altogether invisible.

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[71] Those who survived until August, however, were then sent to the gas chambers. For more information, see ("Sinti und Roma - Widerstand"); for a short and harrowing account of this fateful night from the perspective of other prisoners, see (Browning 237–38).

Furthermore, Selamet was deported two days before he was scheduled to speak at the NSU-Tribunal, a citizen-organized meeting of scholars, activists, law professionals, race experts, criminologists, and so on, to discuss the German government's failure to promptly and adequately address the connections between the 11 murders of primarily people with Turkish and Greek heritage (and one German police officer) over the course of ten years. These murders became known as the NSU Murders, which were carried out by three members of the so-called National Socialist Underground (NSU) in the early 2000s. Only after it was discovered that the same weapon was used in two of the murders, did investigators finally begin to draw connections between what they had previously determined were unrelated crimes. This failure to address a persistent and dangerous threat to communities of color suggests the German police and government's perception of violence as that which is carried out by so-called "outsiders" and non-Germans against Germans, rather than perpetuated by Germans, and in this case far-right German neo-Nazis, against Germany's minority communities. It is through the shift in tense from past to present when speaking about Roma experience that the #Selametbleibt campaign is able to speak to the enduring impacts of pre-2000 German citizenship laws, to name deportation as inhumane, and to once again address the fraught relationship between Roma and Germany, this time from a transnational perspective.

The #Selametbleibt campaign is run by his brothers from Germany. As a digital campaign, Selamet is able to continue to "appear" in Germany (and elsewhere transnationally), though he is physically situated in Kosovo. By producing videos that appear nearly instantly across borders, Selamet continues to interact with his family, friends, and fan base in Germany speaking German, while inserting himself into the digital sphere in a way that highlights the fact that he is indeed missing from everyday life in Germany. This transnational activist project is

largely an online campaign hosted on Facebook (via two pages: SelametBleibt and FreeSelametNow). Occasionally Twitter is also used; contributors post under the Twitter handle @selamibleibt and use the hashtag #FreeSelametNow. The most frequent posts are videos Selamet has created since his second deportation featuring him walking through the streets of Pristina, or playing music in his friends' apartments. These videos often appear alongside a petition aimed at the German government demanding his prompt return to the country he calls home, and that highlights the fact that he had never been to Kosovo before his first deportation, and is more foreign in Kosovo than he is in Germany. Two refugee organizations – Alle Bleiben (Everyone Stays or Everyone Is Staying) and My Right is Your Right – publish the petitions, advertise the campaign, and sometimes issue statements on his behalf.

This particular way of framing Roma experience in Germany and in Europe as rooted in past injustice as opposed to being influenced by present and diverse forms of violence committed against Roma, is also applied in order to categorize some Roma as worthy of Germany's help, and others as unworthy. The Prizreni brothers' parents, for example, were refugees from Kosovo, who were fleeing the country as tensions were mounting in Yugoslavia. They were granted refugee status and permanent residency in Germany in 1988, the same year that Selamet, after his parents' arrival in Germany, was born. Though born on German soil, Selamet was not granted citizenship as *could* have been the case today ("Grundgesetz"). The German government's reliance on the principle of *jus sanguinis,* or the idea that one's national belonging is tied to their bloodline, their descent, rather than to the place where they were born has been a point of contention.

According to Article 8 of the same law, again in effect for the first 12 years of Selamet's life, a foreigner can be naturalized under the conditions that they have "led a blameless life," are

able to support themselves, and have found a dwelling on their own ("Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz"). Article 9 states, "The objections may be based only on facts such as justify the fear that the naturalization of the applicant would imperil the welfare of the Empire or of a state" and, in paragraph 2, that those foreigners born in the German Empire and who have continuously lived there "up to the end of the twenty-first year of their lives and apply for naturalization within two years after that time" may, too, qualify for German citizenship ("Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz"). Only after the 1999 reform to the Citizenship Law, can a child born to foreign nationals in Germany take German citizenship if one of their parents has lived legally in Germany for 8 years prior to their birth, and has an unlimited right to residency ("Grundgesetz") In this case, children must take affirmative action by the age of 23 to prove their ties to Germany and express their desire to maintain their German citizenship ("Grundgesetz").

Selamet's deportation is reflective of the experience of many Roma who fled the Balkans in the 1990s and are therefore subject to Germany's pre-2000 citizenship laws. In addition, his experience living his entire life in Germany as a non-citizen mirrors the realities of many children of former Turkish guest workers, whose parents were invited to West Germany after the construction of the Berlin Wall caused labor shortages; many of the so-called "guests" remained in Germany to raise their families even after the *Anwerbestopp* (recruitment ban) in 1973 (Mandel 5–7).[72] Furthermore, Selamet's deportation as it is considered within the context of his designation as a sort of "eternal refugee" who has overstayed his welcome, exposes how ideas

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[72] Although 900,000 Turks were entitled to apply for "discretionary naturalization" in 1989 after residing in Germany for at least 10 years, fewer than 1% (8,166) did between 1973 (the end of the Turkish Guest Worker Program) and 1986 (Göktürk et al. 160–61). According to an article published in *Die Zeit* in 1989, man Turks decided against officially applying for German citizenship because they had strong ties to Turkey, which they feared would be severed if they were forced to give up their Turkish citizenship for German citizenship. In addition, many argued that they already enjoyed "overall parity" in legal status with native Germans as foreigners in Germany (Göktürk et al. 153–56).

about race and racial difference have shaped Roma peoples' lived experiences in Germany and elsewhere in Europe.

The campaign highlights the protections against deportation ensured through citizenship, and the failure of the EU or Germany to issue such protections to former refugees from the Balkans and their families. In one video shot in a park in Pristina, Selamet talks directly to Germany, personifying the country in a way that indicates how he perceives his relationship with the place he calls home, but which has rejected him twice. He says, "Deutschland, ich habe Identitätsstörung wegen dir. Ich bin hier geboren und bin hier Zuhause ("Germany, I am having an identity crisis because of you. I was born here and am at home here") #SelametBleibt. Selamet's own sense of self has, according to him, been disrupted as his connection to his home has not only been severed, but deemed altogether irrelevant by the state. Significantly, although the law itself changed officially in 2000 to ensure that children born within Germany to noncitizen parents would at least have a more direct route to citizenship, the law only applies to children born on or after January 1, 2000.

The #Selametbleibt campaign, like the campaign for Hikmet's Right to Stay, names deportation as an inherently inhumane practice. Friends and other contributors to the campaign's social media pages explicitly call out what they consider to be the hypocrisy of the German nation-state regarding its (perceived) characterization of Selamet as a bad or immoral person who deserves to be deported. Selamet's work as an activist for human rights is called upon here as a defense against his own inhumane treatment.

Hip-Hop Hooray

Sami Mustafa, the director of the documentary about the men, invited Selamet and Kefeat to sing the opening song for the Pristina Rolling Film Festival. The brothers are shown writing and practicing their song ultimately called *Alles Verbrannt* (Everything Burned) throughout the course of the film, and finally performing it at the festival. Following the successful performance, the brothers received offers to play all over Kosovo, which they did for about two months, saying that it was their opportunity to "leave a message before they left Kosovo" (Mustafa). For this short period of time, they had enough money to pay for food and rent, and to start the Hip-Hop Hurray program, through which they introduced Kosovan youth to the political power of hip-hop (Mustafa).

Despite several attempts to return to Germany in the months and years following their deportation, Kefeat and Selamet Prizreni found themselves living their lives in Kosovo. Based in Pristina, the brothers had contacts living in a small town nearby known as Plemetina, a former internally-displaced people (IDP) camp built next to Kosovo's two largest power plants that has served as peoples' permanent home since 1999. The town is extremely poor; there is a scarcity of social benefits and resources there[73], houses are falling apart, and the unemployment rate among the Roma population is roughly 99% (Houdek).[74] It was here that the brothers decided to

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[73] Social assistance for families is also difficult to attain, and what resources do exist are allocated only to families with at least one person who is unable to work and/or to families with children under five years old. Furthermore, there are only two types of families that can benefit from social assistance in Kosovo. Category 1 families consist of only dependents, and no adult who is capable of working due to age, disability, or because they are a full-time caretaker for another family member and in need of childcare for a child under five years old. Category 2 families have one adult who is capable of working, who is actively seeking work, and who is registered with the Employment Office and which has at least one child under the age of five are eligible to collect social assistance (Feher et al. 23–30). This means that for families with two or more adults who are capable of working (and who are registered with the Employment Office), and/or for families with no children under the age of five years old, no social assistance is available.

[74] Despite many registered complaints over the years regarding the poor and inhumane conditions in the camps run by the United Nations (Ramzy), the organization has done very little to change anything. In fact, it is arguable that the UN has, on various occasions, made matters worse for people living in the former IDP camps. In 2017, for example, news broke that hundreds of Roma people were poisoned by lead that had seeped into the water in former

implement a program called Hip-Hop Hurray with the aim of empowering youth in Roma-majority communities by teaching them how to write lyrics specific to their everyday lives, how to put these texts to music, and then how to perform their songs through dance and other forms of bodily movement.

Hip-Hop Hurray was funded by UNICEF's Kosovo Innovation Lab, [75] which, since 2010, has funded projects that focus on empowering youth and adolescents who are precariously situated in Kosovo. According to their website, the Lab's purpose is to help children build skills, and to establish spaces where youth and young adults between 14-24 years old can apply these skills ("Kosovo Innovations Lab"). The focus on marginalized communities, children with disabilities, and socially-excluded groups such as Roma, who find themselves in particularly vulnerable social positions, is, in the organization's terms, an "investment in human capital," which is by extension an investment in the "social and economic prosperity of the country" ("Kosovo Innovations Lab"). Hip-Hop Hurray is one of a handful of such programs in Kosovo and was developed in order to supplement children's school-learning with activities that help them find their voice and build a sense of community. "This project strives to give youth an escape from their daily routine and provide them with knowledge and skills to allow them to find an artistic way to utilize their own creativity and voice – through the power of words or body language" ("About Da Project"). This is a particularly powerful idea in a place like Plemetina, where the idea of living in a "temporary settlement" has made constructing a sense of belonging,

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IDP camps run by the UN causing fetal deaths, chronic illnesses, babies born with disabilities, and an overall poor quality of life for the camp inhabitants (Ramzy).

[75] It was co-sponsored by Gaia Kosovo, Romawood (Sami Mustafa's film production company), Romaroad, Balkan Sunflowers, and the RAD-center. Kosovo Innovations Lab, a unit of UNICEF Kosovo, however, provided most of the financial support for the project.

and a feeling of ownership, difficult. Hip-Hop Hurray works against the impacts of dislocation decades-on by building up new forms of communal security through youth empowerment.

Establishing Community and Building Home Through Youth-Programming

Children in Plemetina and Prilujze suffer from an education system that continues to fail them. According to a 2011 UNICEF CHILD (Children's Integrated Learning and Development) Project report that focused on the repatriation of Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian children from Germany to Kosovo, 75% of (re)patriated children do not return to school once in Kosovo (Knaus, *No Place to Call Home* 25). The report found that parents who have tried to register their children for school in Kosovo are commonly turned away because they do not have school certificates from the children's schools in Germany, and even when they do have them, some have been told that they are not valid until they are certified by the Ministry of Education in Pristina, which poses another problem for those who cannot travel to Pristina because of the expense (Knaus, *No Place to Call Home* 25).

The first implementation of the Hip-Hop Hurray workshop took place over the course of three weeks in two separate towns: Plemetina and nearby Fushe Kosova. Families register their children for the program, which was open to anyone. The program was highly anticipated, which indicated to the brothers that although there is "great interest for such [a] workshop and the need for cultural activities [in these communities]" ("Da Workshop (Steps & Feelings)"). In Fushe Kosova, for example, Kefaet and Selamet had 29 children in their class, ranging from 8 to 21 years old. They reported that there were 35 children in front of the building where they were holding their classes, "screaming our names and begging us to let them in" ("Da Workshop (Steps & Feelings)"). The brothers began by "breaking the ice" by encouraging the children to

simply speak about their daily lives. Soon, they were asked to write their own songs, not about

"bitches and hos," as Kefeat put it, but about their own experiences, concerns, and thoughts.

They practiced rhyming, worked on their stage presence, and learned how to beat box, before

learning how to put their newly-written music with movements ("Da Workshop (Steps &

Feelings)"). Kefeat wrote about the process in a reflection piece published on the projects

website saying,

> It was difficult to handle the kids because they are super active and
> wanted to do so many things [in] this short time. They had great ideas,
> but we could not do all ideas, only one song per group. We spent a lot of
> time working on behaviors, discipline, listening [to] each other and
> respect (among girls and boys for example). And also they kept calling
> me 'teacher' while we are not supposed to be at school, so we were
> working on that too. ("Da Workshop (Steps & Feelings)").

In Plemetina, Kefaet and Selamet brought together Roma and non-Roma youth from the

local village of Prilujze ("About Da Project"). Kefeat writes that he intentionally put the youth

from Priluzje and Plemetina together "because they were fighting with each other." After the

workshop, he says that "they [the children from various backgrounds] are a crew and [have]

buil[t] up a team spirit too. They call each other brother now" ("Da Workshop (Steps &

Feelings)"). In this way, the Prizreni's have called attention to and disrupted prejudices and hate

between Albanian-Kosovans and Roma that have been passed down from generation to

generation, and which were particularly prevalent during and after the war. They were also able

to help foster positive relationships between Roma and non-Roma that are embedded in an

experience of healing from the effects that decades of living in segregated communities, where

discrimination against Roma and economic disparity is common-place, have had on people.

The brothers' choice to work with children and teenagers suggests their desire to

implement farther-reaching change in a community that will ultimately be shaped by this

younger generation. These children's parents and grandparents were forced into living in what were supposed to be temporary camps, but which have, because it is not a government priority and because there is no other place for its people to go, become permanent communities where people live their daily lives. Following the war, Roma who returned to their communities often found their homes destroyed or taken over primarily by Serbs, whose own homes had been destroyed (Houdek and Kainarová). Plemetina, as is the case with many IDP camps, was never supposed to be a permanent arrangement, and as such, the people living there have not been able to establish a claim to the land because the promise of returning home – to their prewar homes – looms large. When the Prizreni's decided, then, to work with the youth in the town, they were aiming to teach the children the skills to put words and movement to their experiences growing up in such a precariously-situated place and the inhumane conditions that exist there, helping them to articulate how the effects of these displacement practices had continued to reverberate through their generation. However, the youngest of the children, though living in this precarious state their entire lives, also knew nothing else, and so any articulation of how they experienced their daily lives would not reference another space or time when things were different – the space where they should be allowed to build a home is, and always has been, in Plemetina.

Conclusion

Hip-Hop Hurray was relaunched in July 2016, this time in Germany, referring to this new iteration of the program as the EU Version. Hikmet, Kefaet, and Selamet, together in Germany initiated the North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) school program at the Adelkamp School on September 12 in Essen, the city the brothers had known best as children. The Hip-Hop Hurray Facebook profile picture as of September 2017 features the child participants at this school

sporting Hip-Hop Hurray shirts. In July 2017, the Prizrenis spent two weeks with around 10 boys from a Roma neighborhood in Munich, where Selamet led the boys as they learned how to (break)dance and move to the rhythm of the music, and Kefaet worked with them as they practiced rapping, and eventually as they each wrote their own lyrics. The group rapped in English and Romani.

The German state envisions deportation, as it pertains to (former) Balkan refugees, as the practice through which people, often Roma, are returned to their home. Through their activism, the Prizreni brothers challenge this definition of deportation, claiming instead that this inhumane practice contradicts the state's responsibility to protect people's human rights. As a result of building an imagine home through their activism, the Prizrenis have pushed back against the Germany, Kosovo, and Europe's long-standing practice of displacing Roma and disrupting their lives.

Chapter Three

Black Lives Matter Berlin: A Translocal Take on a Transnational Movement

On February 26, 2012, George Zimmerman shot and killed Trayvon Martin on the street in their Florida neighborhood. Officially charged with 2nd-degree murder on April 11 of that year, Zimmerman was acquitted on July 13, 2013 and set free. That day, queer Black feminist activist Alicia Garza posted to Facebook saying, "Black people. I love you. I love us. Our lives matter" (Lowery). The failure to indict another (passing) white man for the shooting death of another Black person exasperated members of racialized communities, many of whom felt that another injustice had been done. Garza's response to how Trayvon Martin was, in her words, "posthumously placed on trial for his own murder and [how] the killer, George Zimmerman, was not held accountable for the crime he committed" (Garza 1), was what she would later call a love letter to Black people everywhere. Soon thereafter, Patrisse Cullors, Garza's friend and Facebook follower, reposted the message, adding the hashtag "#BlackLivesMatter." It would be another year and another moment of highly publicized injustice that would make the now well-known hashtag - #BlackLivesMatter – go viral, but the seed had been planted and the beginnings of an international movement against anti-Black racism and for the affirmation of Black lives began to take shape.

The shooting death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri on August 9, 2014 awoke the hashtag after just over year of relative dormancy.[76] Brown, who had been a suspect in a petty theft case, was shot by officer Darren Wilson in the middle of a residential street, and left there

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[76] At the same time that national attention was being drawn to the deaths of Eric Garner (strangled to death on July 17, 2014 on Staten Island) and Michael Brown, John Crawford was shot by police in Beavercreek, Ohio after being seen with a toy gun (August 5); Ezell Ford was killed while walking in the street in Los Angeles (August 11); and Michelle Cusseaux was shot to death by police in Phoenix (August 13). These are, unfortunately, just a few more examples of Black people who had been killed at the hands of police in the U.S. during this time period.

for 4 hours before police finally came to take his body away. In the month that followed, #BlackLivesMatter was used over 52,000 times (Demby), and corresponded with what became known as the Ferguson uprising.[77] Hundreds of activists from around the country gathered in Ferguson, outside of St. Louis, Missouri, in the days and weeks that followed, demanding justice for another death of an unarmed Black man. The Governor of Missouri soon called a state of emergency and local authorities implemented a curfew in the city. Soon the police treatment of not only Michael Brown, but also of Eric Garner who had been strangled to death on Staten Island earlier that summer and so many others became the center of protests across the country. As demonstrations continued in places like Ferguson, Oakland, Washington, D.C., Minneapolis, and Chicago, the police treatment of protestors themselves, the vast majority of whom were also Black, also took center stage. As people came together and organized, police called in the National Guard to Ferguson, who used teargas, tanks, and bazookas to try to gain control of the hundreds of people who had come out to protest (Grant).

The day that the grand jury decided not to indict Warren for the death of Brown, November 25, #BlackLivesMatter erupted on Twitter. Before the verdict was announced, the hashtag had been used 10,000 times that day, according to a Pew Research Center report; after the verdict was handed down, #BlackLivesMatter was used 92,784 times across Twitter (Demby). Significantly, the prolific use of this particular hashtag to accompany reactions about the failure to indict Warren, conceptualized his death and police involvement in it with unambiguous language that framed the death (and Trayvon Martin's two years earlier) as

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[77] For excellent coverage of the ensuing events in Ferguson, activists' undertakings, and the results and implications of what occurred there in August 2014 and thereafter, see the documentary films *Stay Woke: Black Lives Matter* (Grant) and (Sabaah Folayan et al.). For the story of what happened in the coming weeks at the University of Missouri in Mizzou, see (Lee) and (Dietrich et al.)

consequences of racism and the ways in which race circulates in the United States. It is in this political moment that the Black Lives Matter (BLM) Movement was born.[78]

The dedication to sustaining a movement that resonates with many members of what organizers call the "global Black family" ("What We Believe"; McGrory), speaks to refugee experience and struggle in ways that promote solidarity amongst diverse groups of people, including people with and without the (minimal) safety of citizenship. However, the global vision of the movement provides some unique obstacles for activists who are simultaneously trying to claim solidarity across national borders, and trying to enact social change on the local level and with regard to particular national contexts. Though in this chapter I am concerned with how BLM Berlin works through refugees' experiences in Germany in ways that (again) return race, and an understanding of the existence of racism, and racialization to Europe, and with the struggles and potentials the BLM framework provides anti-racist activists, it is also important to consider that Germany is often regarded as a prime example of how an industrialized and wealthy country can exist without police violence. When Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor is describing the absurdly high incidence of police killings of people, primarily Black people, in the U.S. in a TED talk she bases on her book *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*, she simultaneously mentions how German police killed no one in the years 2013 and 2014 (Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*). While true, this does not mean that police violence, particularly violence that exists in instances that involve people of color, and that

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[78] It is important to note that although this is the most widely-accepted version of the founding of the Black Lives Matter movement, some activists, especially those associated with the Ferguson uprising, believe that it was the events of Ferguson that actually propelled the movement into existence. This is one way that the Black Lives Matter organization, founded by Garza, Tometi, and Cullors, is sometimes thought of as separate from the Black Lives Matter movement, which some see as emerging a year after the hashtag took form. In this chapter, I am less concerned with organizational structures and definitions of what BLM entails and is, and am instead focused on what sort of conversations and activisms are made possible by the existence of BLM as an interconnected organization and movement.

racialized violence that take other forms do not exist in Germany. This chapter embraces as fact

Black Lives Matter Berlin activists' claims that racism exists in Germany today as it always has,

and that it is precisely this characterization of Germany from the outside that provides activists in

Berlin with a unique challenge: to prove that a movement founded in the U.S., where the

language of race and an understanding of its divisiveness are much more common, and where

racialized police violence is much more widespread and deadlier, has value and potential for

addressing racism in Germany. In fact, I argue that it is as a result of the simultaneous dedication

of BLM activists to forming and maintaining international solidarities, and the activist

commitment to addressing locally specific forms of racism, that makes the BLM framework

especially productive as a tool for addressing refugees' experiences and struggles, and for

thinking through what futures are possible for refugees living in Germany and Europe.

At the center of this chapter, and at the center of how activists articulate their motives and

goals as part of the international Black Lives Matter movement, is race – both as it emerges from

precarity, and as precarity perpetuates it. Race appears throughout this dissertation in the ways it

affects and emerges from the other precarious nodes around which I have organized my chapters

– death, dislocation, and violence. In this chapter, I consider race and its circulation in German

and European contexts in its own right and as its own precarious node. At the heart of the global

BLM Movement is the idea that race itself deserves society's attention, as categorizing people by

race and using race as one of society's most pernicious organizing structures are not phenomena

confined to our collective histories of slavery and colonialism, but continues to be present and

powerful today. In more concrete terms, BLM calls for everyone to fight for Black lives in a

world where Black people are so disproportionately subject to violence and death.

The Intersections of Refugees and Blackness

BLM is committed to understanding the present through the lens of the past. According to Alicia Garza, it is only in "paying attention to what…it look[s] like to reconcile this country's [the U.S.'s] violent past [and] its violent present so that we can transform our future into something that is built on care, that is built on connection and interdependence" ("Black Lives Matter Founders"). BLM began as a response to police brutality and and police killings of Black people in the United States. It has always been situated and understood within a long history of violence and discrimination against Black people. As Michelle Alexander argues in *The New Jim Crow*, the high incidence of police violence against Black people in the U.S. is simply part of the newest way that systemic racism and white supremacy in the country has manifested (Alexander 25). What began as a means of ensuring the preservation of economies built with slave labor that benefited wealthy white landowners (Alexander 23–25), morphed into the Jim Crow Laws and, later, legally justified segregation after the end of slavery. In turn, these forms of racism transformed into the so-called "War on Drugs" in the 1960s lasting until the mid-1990s, which was based on criminalizing drug use in ways that disproportionally targeted young Black men (Alexander 48).[79]

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[79] As the Civil Rights Movement gained traction in the early 1960s, segregation was abolished, soon to be displaced by the so-called "War on Drugs" which emerged out of bipartisan politics as democrats and republicans struggled for control in Washington (Alexander 48). In a startling interview for the film *13th* (2016) directed by Ava DuVernay, long-time and well-known republican politician Newt Gingrich responds to the idea that lawmakers in the 1980s and 1990s – both republican and democratic – used the criminal justice system as a means of ensuring their respective party would remain in or gain power. Beginning with Ronald Reagan, republicans found that by criminalizing crack, a drug found primarily in Black communities, in ways that its close cousin cocaine, a drug found primarily in white communities, was not, the largely democratic-voting Black community would be served a severe blow as more and more Black people were imprisoned and disenfranchised according to stricter punishments. These laws could only serve to benefit republicans whose voting population would remain the same or even increase as the Republican party was perceived more and more as that which would put an end to the so-called toleration of criminals and criminal behavior. Gingrich says, "We should have treated crack and cocaine as the same thing. I think it was an enormous burden on the Black community, but it also fundamentally violated a sense of core fairness" (DuVernay).

Black people's experiences of discrimination and exclusion in the U.S. intersect with

immigrant and refugee experiences of otherness, as racialized people are exposed to historically-

informed racist structures via the legal system, which has in some respects become synonymous

with the criminal justice system, giving rise to what is now known as the prison industrial

complex. Cultural representations of immigrants as well as Black people continue to characterize

these two intersecting (and certainly not distinctly defined) groups as criminal, as apparent

threats to traditional American ways of life, and as undeserving of achieving or even having the

possibility of working towards the American dream. Today, immigrants (and people who are

presumed to be immigrants) and Black people are criminalized, surveilled, and imprisoned at

exponentially higher rates than their white peers. In the U.S., Black people are incarcerated at 5

times the rate than their white counterparts ("Criminal Justice"), and laws like SB1070 in

Arizona have removed obstacles for law enforcement officials to racially profile and then lock up

undocumented immigrants in Arizona facilities (Soler). The mass incarceration of members of

these groups only serves to perpetuate the image that these "racialized others" are to be feared,

and the increasing privatization of prisons and the continuation of laws that disenfranchise large

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With the election of Bill Clinton in 1992 came the democratic version of the crackdown on crime, the war on drugs, and the continued criminalization of the country's Black population. The 1994 Crime Bill (officially, the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act) is the largest crime bill in the history of the United States. It put billions of dollars into increasing the robustness and capabilities of federal and state law enforcement, expanded the federal death penalty, banned certain populations from possessing firearms, and defined a number of new crimes related to immigration, hate crimes, gang activity, and sex crimes (Alexander 54–58). The power of law enforcement expanded into areas of society, like immigration, where it had not yet been especially present. Black youth were characterized as "super-predators", the familiar and long-standing trope of Black men as potential rapists of white women circulated widely, and Black families were increasingly divided and split apart as more and more men, in particular, were convicted and sent to prison. The fatherless Black family stereotype gave way to the stereotype of the Black welfare queen, a Black woman who lived on governmental welfare support long-term, and who were characterized as feeling especially entitled to this support, and unwilling to give back to a society that supported her (Alexander 48). The Clinton administration responded by passing restrictions on the length of time people could collect welfare, meeting stereotypical representations of an already marginalized community with legislation that was supposed to motivate people into getting jobs and contributing to a society that cared for them. The problems with this justification for such legislation are many.

segments of the American population, paint a less-than-optimistic picture of the potentials for change and the abolishment of a "racial caste system" in the future (Alexander 12).

Though there is dramatically less incidence of police violence in Germany than in the United States, there are still aspects of the U.S.-American context that resonate with the German one. This includes the fact that when there is violence against people perpetuated by the state, it disproportionately targets People of Color. State violence is framed differently in Germany, which makes a direct comparison with the U.S. impossible, but thinking these countries' regimes of violence together does allow for certain things to come to light. For example, in the German context, unlike in the U.S., there is a refusal to acknowledge when violence, especially state-perpetuated violence, is racialized violence (see, for example, my discussion in Chapter Two about the NSU crimes in the late 1990s and early 2000s and the state's (non)response to them). Crimes committed against People of Color tend to be named as "politically motivated," thereby obscuring the role that racism and enforcement of border regimes plays in their perpetration. The UN has also raised concerns about the high prevalence of racial profiling practices in Germany that tend to target "people of African descent," as authors of the report put it. The Head of the Expert Panel on People of African Descent put together in 2001, stated "There is a serious lack of ethnicity-based disaggregated data, and an incomplete understanding of history, which obscure the magnitude of structural and institutional racism people of African descent face" ("Germany").

Explicitly not a civil rights movement, BLM is able to respond to institutionalized racism, exemplified by, for instance, the laws that are to blame for the mass incarceration of American Black people, in ways that do not limit activist strategies to the ways they criticize and respond to questions of human rights, in so far as rights are determined by national judicial

institutions. As Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor puts it in *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*, Black Lives Matter is not primarily concerned with declaring or demanding formal equality before the law. Instead it is a movement about the ability of Black people in the world to self-determine and self-possess, two inherent prerequisites to achieving actual freedom (Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* 192). The movement is about freedom, and equality is only a piece of what freedom means.

Structural Racism and Transnational Solidarities

Activists' responses and calls to action around the ongoing workings of racism in the U.S. created the Black Lives Matter Movement, but it has been the ways in which the messages of the movement have resonated with Black groups abroad that has ensured its expansion globally. Race itself plays the role of uniting critiques of violence, deportation, immigration, poverty, slavery, (neo-)colonialism, capitalism, and its partner gentrification, interweaving these global forces into narratives that become more comprehensible, or perhaps comprehensible in new ways, as attention is paid to racial politics, histories of racism, and the construction of race. In short, "[a]lthough there are various specific problems in different countries, "Black Lives Matter" is an assertion that makes racist social structures visible worldwide." ("Press Statement: Black Lives Matter Berlin").

In solidarity with the U.S. in both the summers of 2016 (in the midst of a string of police-involved shootings in the U.S.) and 2017 (as the events in Charlottesville, Virginia unfolded), Black Lives Matter Berlin took action through hosting demonstrations and a die-in, founding the official BLM-Berlin autonomous organization, petitioning, engaging in Facebook "post"ivism and "click"tivism, and more. In the fall of 2017, news of slave auctions taking place in Libya,

Black Lives Matter Berlin directed its attention at Africa, opening up new possibilities for transnational solidarities to emerge. Through an analysis of all three of these cases, what becomes clear is not only how a focus on structural racism and the workings of multiple and intersecting systems of oppression shape the very basis of understanding from which BLM activists act, but also how refugee experiences and concern with the ways refugees are implicated in these systems are central to BLM-Berlin.

Solidarity with the U.S.

On June 2, 2017, Black Lives Matter Berlin was officially founded. The international and intersectional scope of the Black Lives Matter Movement in the U.S. has proved appealing and useful to activists across the globe. From the beginning, BLM Month 2017 organizer Josephine Apraku conceptualized the Berlin Movement as part of a larger international response to violence against Black people. She explains, „Ich werde...nicht müde, das zu sagen: Rassismus gegen Schwarze Menschen ist international, also müssen wir Bewegungen wie Black Lives Matter (BLM) international denken" (Rößner). In Germany, where the number of police killings is exponentially lower than in the U.S., though they still happen and disproportionately to people of color (see, for example, Benček and Strasheim), the violence at the center of activists' critique in Germany is the psychological violence that leads to an overall feeling of depression amongst Black people (Rößner). Fighting while feeling both fatigue and depression about the problem of racism in Germany, activists "came together not only to protest AGAINST racism and all kinds of oppression that intersect with [their] lives, not only against state violence and police brutality, not only against the violation of [their] human dignity and rights – but FOR BLACK LIVES,

FOR SOLIDARITY, FOR RESPECT and to celebrate [their] EXISTENCE" (Black Lives Matter Berlin, "Shout out to Olad Aden", emphases in original).

In working both within and for transnational solidarities in the international Black Lives Matter Movement, race and anti-Black racism are what brings experiences rooted in different localities together under the narratives of Black suffering and white privilege in the West. In the following sections, I analyze the exchange of the concepts of race and racism at two moments of intersection between Black Lives Matter in the U.S. and Black Lives Matter Berlin. In so doing, I explore how the presence of Black Lives Matter Berlin caused a great deal of confusion that played out online, which in turn reveals both the difficulty and necessity of transnational organizing around race. Focusing in on Black Lives Matter Berlin's responses to the events in Charlottesville, Virginia in August 2017, I show one way that this specific transnational moment between activists in the U.S. and in Germany both preserved the local specificity of the presence of racism in both countries, while it also tied together far-right extremism in the U.S. to anti-refugee sentiment and xenophobia in Germany under a broader understanding of the international circulation of white privilege. In both of these examples, these transnational solidarities are made possible as activists engage with each other and others on social media.

2016 March

On July 10, 2016, three years after Black Lives Matter was founded in the U.S., the first Black Lives Matter demonstration took place in Germany. Protestors marched through the center of Berlin. Later that day, hundreds participated in a die-in on Potsdamer Platz, performing their own deaths in the square as they demonstrated in solidarity with the U.S. Black Lives Matter Movement.

It seemed that Black Lives Matter was being talked about everywhere, across national international media outlets by the summer of 2016. For example, at the end of June, just two weeks before the Berlin march, American actor Jesse Williams was awarded BET's Humanitarian Award for executive producing the film *Stay Woke: The Black Lives Matter Movement.* His acceptance speech was met with a standing ovation at the ceremony, hundreds of expressions of gratitude on Twitter, and overwhelming praise amongst activists. The film traces the founding of the Black Lives Matter Movement beginning with Patrisse Cullors and Alicia Garza's tweets in response to the decision of the court not to indict George Zimmerman for the murder of Trayvon Martin on July 14, 2013 to the uprisings in Ferguson, Missouri in the summer of 2014 after the fatal police shooting of Michael Brown. The film ends with a short exploration of just some of the effects of these important moments: riots broke out after Freddie Gray was arrested and beaten by Baltimore police, dying a week later from his injuries[80]; star basketball players Lebron James and Coby Bryant wore T-shirts during a pre-game warm-up that read "I can't breathe", referring to what Eric Garner said as he was being strangled to death by police on Staten Island; players for the Rams, an American football team, put their arms up in protest, saying "don't shoot"; Fox News accused Black Lives Matter of being a hate group for the way they perceived the Movement had characterized police; 39 chapters of Black Lives Matter opened up not only in the United States, but worldwide; and Attorney General Loretta Lynch sued the city of Ferguson, Missouri for unjust police practices that violated the U.S. Constitution.

A little more than a week after Williams accepted his award saying, among many other things, that "yesterday would have been young Tamir Rice's 14 birthday so I don't want to hear

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[80] As Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor said in a Tedx Talk, this was 150 years to the day – April 12, 2015 – after the confederate army surrendered to the union army, ending the Civil War, and, ultimately, slavery (Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*).

how far we've come when paid public servants can pull a drive-by on a 12-year-old playing alone in the park in broad daylight, killing him on television, and then going home to make a sandwich" (Lasher), came a series of more killings. In Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Alton Sterling was killed by police on July 5, 2016; Philando Castle's death the following day in Minnesota was live-streamed by his girlfriend Diamond Reynolds; and, in Dallas on July 7, during a protest against police brutality, a sniper opened fire killing five police officers.

The march and subsequent die-in in Berlin were performed in solidarity with protestors in Minnesota, who had been demonstrating for "Justice for Philando" in front of the Governor's Residence for several days, and with activists in Chicago, who staged their own die-in and protest in front of President Obama's home in the upscale neighborhood of Hyde Park. It was one of several international protests held in places like Vancouver, Canada, London, and Amsterdam. However, this international act of solidarity with U.S. Black Lives Matter activists was met with some confusion on social media and in local media coverage of the event. In an article published on the official tourist site for the city of Berlin, Berlin.de, the plausible motive for the killing of police officers in Dallas a few days before the march as well as Black Lives Matter itself was decidedly "Hass auf Weiße" (hate of white people) ("Demonstration gegen"). One activist responding to this characterization of the protest in disgust saying,

> Not once could they mention the opposite motive = 'hate for
> blacks'/'foreigners'/'strangers' but for whites this kind of reasoning just
> goes? (@carridwen).[81]

In other words, when people of color protest against violence perpetuated on them by (primarily white) law enforcement, it is an act of anti-white hatred; however, when white people express

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[81] German original: "Nicht mal die Umkehr Motiv = ‚Hass auf Schwarze/'Ausländer'/'Fremde' 'konnten sie aussprechen und bei weißen geht das plötzlich? O.o."

their fears and anger about violence committed by people of color, even in violent ways, it is a

justified act, done with concern for the greater society in mind.

In addition to this somewhat delayed response to coverage of the march, communication

between activists involved in the Black Lives Matter Berlin march – more specifically, those

who were engaged with the march online, even if they were not there in person – and skeptics

played out in real-time on Twitter.[82] Though some of what was said can be dismissed as the work

of internet trolls, some of the messages expose real misgivings and misunderstandings about why

Black Lives Matter was now appearing in Berlin. In response to one tweet that read,

> I thought the Germans would be too smart for this. Guess I was
> wrong. They must think its (sic) cool or something. (@gnomehole).

Twitter user "really good player" wrote,

> im (sic) sure it's more likely that they think that they have to do this
> because nazi (sic) Germany was so horrible. (@Nlhilio).

These Twitter users paint a picture of Germany as a place that has, since the end of the Nazi era,

supporting minority communities in whatever they want or need in a response or corrective to

Germany's racist past. The only reason that the government allowed the demonstration (and they

did allow it to some extent because all demonstrations have to be registered with and approved

by the local government), again according to "really good player" is to make amends for their

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[82] One additional example of the kind of exchange that was taking place appeared as follows:
DJ: "Vonderitt Myers was a gangbanger shot by St. Louis police in 2014 after he fired 3 shots..."(DJ Rubiconski)
Kind2know1: "this guy shot 5 cops and four civilians - 1 cop DIED and 2 civ DIED, he walked out UNTOUCHED"
(referring to Robert Lewis Dear, Jr., the man who stormed a Planned Parenthood in Colorado Springs in 2015)
(@conscious_sis, "This Guy Shot")…Dylann Roof was armed and dangerous after shooting 9 people IN CHURCH
and cops took him to Burger King before prison (@conscious_sis, "Dylann Roof Was Armed")

DJ: "One time deal...gangbangers are 24/7 365" (@Rubiconski).

past wrongdoings.[83] Racism is a remnant of the past; it existed in the Nazi era and not since, and thus is characterized as something Germans need not worry about anymore, which renders the march totally superfluous to anything that is happening in Germany presently. Problems with race and racism continue to be relegated to the U.S. in other Tweets as well. For example, one Twitter user, presumably from the U.S., writes,

> Go home, Berlin. America will self-destruct on its own. We don't need
> your help"(@andjustsaywhen),

while another tweeted,

> …what a joke, what the hell has it go to do with them, get over it & think
> of the 5 police officers that died" (@PackmanScouse),

following the familiar narrative that was circulating at this time that if Black lives matter, police officers' lives do not, as if human dignity and people's right to life are part of a zero-sum game.[84]

The fact that there was confusion about the presence of Black Lives Matter Berlin indicated the prevalence and power of white privilege and perspective not just in Germany, but also globally, as is evident in the international expressions about what Germany is "supposed to look like as a nation. In response to some of the images posted of the demonstration, one Twitter user asked (albeit without a question mark),

> where's (sic) the real Germans!" (@dogwaste261782),

and, another noted,

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[83] Another example: The white guilt is strong in this one (@DSABoomer).

[84] The same idea that if some lives matter, others do not, played a role in an exchange which began with the familiar retaliatory phrase "…all lives matter" (@EugenGohn), was met with, "Then why aren't the murderers of #AltonSterling and #PhilandoCastile awaiting trial in a cell?..." (@ZemaPromos). Reply: "Are you really trying to say that all lives don't matter?" (@EugenGohn).

> They [the demonstrators] are all FUCKING WHITE PEOPLE. LoL
> (@shadowlurker177).

These may seem to be contradictory comments upon first glance: the first asks where the "real" Germans are, presumably the white Germans, and, the second one sees only white people at the march. However, both comments reflect a particularly contradictory politics of visibility when it comes to the presence of race in Germany. The first commenter refuses to see the People of Color shown in the photos as "real" Germans, while the second comment, which is entirely incorrect, begs the question: what makes the People of Color in the photos invisible to you? Why can't you see them? Or why do you refuse to see them? I suggest that by doing so, these people would have to acknowledge that Germany is not as racially homogenous as they may think, and, second, that they themselves are actively participating in constructing a national imagery rooted in racism and racializing discourses and structures.

Though painted almost exclusively as an act of solidarity with the U.S. Black Lives Movement on Twitter, the reasons behind the march taking place in Berlin were made much clearer at the march itself. What is omitted from the few brief reports about the demonstration (see, for example, ("Black Lives Matter"; "500 Berliner")) is the attention protestors paid to the police violence against Black people and to the prevalence of racism in Germany. In an article published on the website for feminist periodical *Missy Magazine* in response to what contributors felt was inadequate coverage of the protest, Maryam Qasim writes,

> But what is happening here and elsewhere in the discussion of last week's racist murders is the fact that the issue of racism and racist police violence in Germany is not mentioned. Therefore, racism is something that only takes place in the U.S., and racist police violence does not occur in Europe. Black people also live in Germany and they too experience racism and racist police violence, which can also be fatal:

> [the cases of] Oury Jalloh, Christy Schwundeck, Laye Condé, Jaja Diabi
> and many others prove this. (Qasim).[85]

In images of the demonstration, it is clear, argues Qasim, that protestors were not only responding to police violence and racism in the U.S., but also in Germany. Signs read "Deutschland – du hast ein Rassismusproblem" ("Germany – you have a racism problem") and "In Ferguson. In Berlin. In Palestine. Black Lives Matter" and "Kein Faschismus 2.0 – Nicht in Trumpland – Nicht in Deutschland" ("No fascism 2.0 – not in Trump Land – not in Germany"). These signs indicate protestors' understanding of race and racism as a global problem. In addition, they outline the dangers of denying or ignoring the effects of race and racism in a German context through references to prior forms of fascism and the potentiality of their reemergence, as well as in naming Germany and Berlin as (potential) locations for racial injustice.

Charlottesville

On the evening of August 11, 2017 in Charlottesville, Virginia, a group of white nationalists met at the University of Virginia to hold a candlelight vigil. Holding Tiki-torches, a group of about 400 people marched through the campus shouting things like "You will not replace us! Jews shall not replace us!" and "white lives matter." The event was designed to bring together members of far-right groups from across the country both to protest the taking down of

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[85] German original: "Was aber hier und auch sonst in der Diskussion der rassistischen Morde aus der letzten Woche vorkommt, ist die Tatsache, dass das Thema Rassismus und rassistische Polizeigewalt in Deutschland nicht erwähnt wird...Rassismus ist demnach etwas, das nur in den USA stattfindet, rassistische Polizeigewalt kommt somit nicht in Europa vor. Auch in Deutschland leben Schwarze Menschen und auch sie erleben Rassismus und rassistische Polizeigewalt, die auch tödlich enden kann: Oury Jalloh, Christy Schwundeck, Laye Condé, Jaja Diabi und viele andere beweisen das" (Qasim).

statues and monuments that honor Confederate soldiers such as Robert E. Lee, but also to

reevaluate the status of white people, particularly white men, in the United States. The following

day, on August 12, a white nationalist rally took place in Charlottesville's Lee Park, which is

also referred to as and whose name will soon officially be changed to Emancipation Park, which

was met by enormous resistance. Members of ANTIFA groups as well as regular citizens and

students lined up along the rally's route to demonstrate against racism, bigotry, and hate. Not

long after the start of the rally, James Field, an Ohio man there to support the white nationalist

cause, drove his car into a group of counter-protestors, killing 31-year-old Heather Hyre and

injuring 19 others. Just 45 minutes into the demonstration, the governor of Virginia, Terry

McAuliffe, declared a state of emergency, and the demonstration was shut down.

Black Lives Matter and other anti-racist activists from around the world would react to

the events in Charlottesville in the weeks and months to come. In Berlin, a demonstration in

solidarity with counter-protesters and people concerned about the violence and hate in

Charlottesville took place on August 16 on Pariser Platz, the square located right in front of the

Brandenburger Tor in the German capital. The demonstration was co-organized by Black Lives

Matter Berlin, The Coalition Berlin, Soul Sisters Berlin[86], The Left Berlin (the working group for

Die Linke, Germany's Left Party), and American Voices Abroad.

In their official statement in solidarity with Black Lives Matter, The Coalition Berlin, a

collective of organizations and individuals including Black Lives Matter Berlin "who have come

together in the spirit of solidarity to push back against the rising tide of far-right politics and

extremism around the world" ("Home")[87], wrote,

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[86] Soul Sisters Berlin is a group that works to empower, celebrate, and decolonize the Black female consciousness.

[87] The group formed after the inauguration of Donald Trump in January 2017 as a response to the increasing visibility and power of far-right groups across the world. They have organized and taken part in demonstrations

Under the guise of 'free speech', these groups [far-right extremist organizations] seek to recruit others to their cause, with the intent of intimidating and harming people of color, Muslims, Jews, immigrants, women, and LGBTQ people. Yesterday this became reality when a white supremacist intentionally drove into counter-demonstrators, killing one activist and injuring 19 more. This attack demonstrates the deadly consequences of the right's organizing, and is a direct extension of their dehumanizing ideology. It is the result of a sympathetic American president who encourages racist scapegoating and feelings of white victimhood…As activists in Berlin, Germany, we are reminded daily of the murderous consequences of fascism. For this reason, fascists must be countered and confronted, not ignored. This task is especially urgent as we witness the growth of the far-right across Europe and the United States, accompanied by attacks on vulnerable populations. ("Berlin Statement of Solidarity")**.**

This statement provides insight into how activists view the rise of the far-right in the west as threatening to a large, diverse group of people – "people of color, Muslims, Jews, immigrants, women, and LGBTQ people" for example – who are understood as being (differentially) exposed to the effects of the far-right's "dehumanizing ideology." In the opinions of those who took part in the United the Right rally in Charlottesville, white people are being threatened by the effects of leftist politics such as feminism, gay and trans* rights, as well as pro-immigration reform. White people, in this line of thought, are victims who are now facing the erasure of their pasts through, for example, the removal of statues that honor white Confederate soldiers. The white supremacist reaction to social reform and progressive politics must be understood within a broader understanding of the workings of whiteness in the U.S., Germany, and the west in general. According to activists, the candlelight vigil, the march, and the murder of Heyer are "a direct extension of their [white supremacists'] dehumanizing ideology" that not only

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against Ivanka Trump's form of feminism, the G-20 Summit that took place in Hamburg in summer 2017, the events in Charlottesville, Nigel Farage and the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), Trump's Muslim Ban, and Trump's refusal to sign the Paris Accord.

conceptualizes white people as superior to people of color, but the U.S. and Europe as places that have always been white and are now being infiltrated or invaded by People of Color. By calling attention to the connections between German fascism and its effects, and the potential futures that could emerge from allowing such an ideology to exist in the U.S. context, activists appeal to a collective understanding of the horrors of the Holocaust and Porajmos to help solidify the connection between white supremacy in the U.S. and Nazism in past and present Germany. The dehumanization effected by the ideology that drives Unite the Right is to be understood as the same ideology that led to Nazism and the Holocaust/Porajmos, which is rooted in ideas about ethno-national purity, and a differentiated and hierarchized understanding of human beings based on their race.

This is not the first time, however, that these complex coalitions between people of various backgrounds, ethnicities, and relationships to the harmful effects of whiteness. In the 1980s in Germany, for example, there was an explicit effort among Jewish, immigrant, and Black women in particular to unite against the effects of antisemitism, Islamophobia, and anti-Black racism, just as was present in Charlottesville. The Afro-German feminist movement, members of which were brought together after U.S.-American Black feminist activist, scholar, and writer Audre Lorde visited Berlin in 1984 (see, Piesche, *"Euer Schweigen schützt Euch nicht" Audre Lorde und die Schwarze Frauenbewegung in Deutschland*), began as a transnational practice in solidarity built around fighting against racism. The group was vocal about the presence and increase in violence against refugees and People of Color in Germany, particularly after the fall of the wall, and published the first book to outline the history of Black people in Germany called *Farbe bekennen* (the English title is *Showing Our Colors*). In the forward to the English version of this book, Audre Lorde wrote:

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

Lorde and the Afro-German activists she brought together – Katharina Oguntoye, May (Opitz) Ayim, Ika Hügel-Marshall, and others – advocated from the beginning that their movement be an intersectional and a transnational one, which laid the groundwork for anti-racist feminist activists, including BLM Berlin.

The parallels made between the ideologies of the far-right in the U.S. and the Nazi party were not just drawn by counter-protestors and anti-racist activists, but most explicitly by the United the Right demonstrators themselves. For example, the imagery on the poster advertising the rally in Charlottesville included the Roman Eagle, which although it was used as a coat of arms during the Second Reich and the Weimar Republic, is mostly associated with the Nazi time period. The Reichsadler, as it is known, was combined with a Swastika and used by the Nazi party as the national coat of arms from 1935-1945. Juxtaposed with this symbol are statues of confederate soldiers situated next to confederate flags.

For those many demonstrators, Unite the Right was about the fight against what they perceive as being "white erasure." Many demonstrators believe that the removal of monuments dedicated to U.S. confederates is an example of how white people's history (one monolithic homogenous history) is being displaced by what they see as being minority histories. For example, the renaming of Robert E. Lee Park to Emancipation Park turns commemoration of a white man into a reference to freeing Black men and women from slavery.

The struggle for many in the anti-racist activist communities in the U.S. to not only remove figures that represent the United States' racist and violent pasts from public spaces, but to replace them with monuments to the country's human and civil rights heroes, particularly figures of color, is also something facing activists of color and allies in Germany. Most recently, activists have been protesting the existence of cultural objects that celebrate people who were involved – directly or indirectly – with the mass murder and dehumanization of people in, for example, former German colonies. For example, Carl-Peters-Straße (Street) and Otto von Bismarck Platz (Square) are not uncommon names of public places in Germany. Carl Peters was the founder of the former German-East Africa and one of many to blame for the racist genocide of hundreds of thousands of Herero and Nama people between 1902-1904, and von Bismarck, though widely lauded for uniting Germany and for his politics during the first years of the German Republic, was also the host for the Africa Congress held in Berlin in 1884, during which European leaders divided up the continent of Africa amongst themselves ("vollig unkommentiert"). A spokesperson for the Initiative Schwarze Deutsche (Initiative for Black Germans (ISD)) says that leaving these monuments and street names enables "hardcore racism" to exist in particular in the right's discourse, and to give space to revisionist histories (e.g., history that refuses to acknowledge minority, People of Color, and women's perspectives) (Starzmann).

U.S. and German activist struggles against the far-right continued in Germany in the days following the events in Charlottesville. On August 19, between 500 and 800 neo-Nazis marched through Berlin-Spandau (a neighborhood of Berlin located on the west side of Berlin). The march, officially called the Heß-March, was held in remembrance of the Nazi war criminal Rudolph Heß who committed suicide in a Spandau prison in August 1987 after nearly 40 years in prison. It began at the Spandau main train station, passed the former prison (now replaced by a

supermarket, as the prison was destroyed after Heß's suicide to prevent the prison from becoming a shrine) where war criminals were held, and then ended back at the main train station. The demonstration drew nearly 1000 neo-Nazis from Germany, Hungary, and the Czech Republic (Oltermann). Neo-Nazis held up a banner that read "Ich bereue nichts" ("I regret nothing") (Jansen et al.).

Carsten Müller, Spandau police spokesperson, cited the "recent events in Charlottesville, Barcelona, London and Berlin" as reason for the tightening of police security at the Spandau March (Oltermann). The march was allowed despite laws established in 1949 that outlaw the use of Nazi insignia and paraphernalia and despite paragraph 140 of the German Penal Code which prohibits the "glorification" of the National Socialist (Nazi) Party. Organizers of the march officially declared it to be about finding out the real circumstances around Heß's death, which they believe not to have been suicide, as was officially reported and documented, but murder. A protest against such a decision was, according to police, not a reason to shut down the demonstration. The group held signs that read "Mord verjährt nicht! Gebt die Akten frei! Recht statt Rache!" (No statute of limitations on murder! Make the records public! Law not revenge!) (Jansen et al.). Presumably, the revenge here is reference to what the neo-Nazi demonstrators consider to be the revenge of the German people (or government?) against former Nazis.

The demonstrators were met and outnumbered when 1500 counter demonstrators arrived at the event, among them members of Black Lives Matter Berlin, who also advertised extensively for the event on their Facebook page. Others, like 64-year-old Jossa Berntje came from the western German city of Koblenz, cited both her parents' experience living under National Socialism and the events at Charlottesville as her reason for attending the event. She told the Associated Press in an interview that "The rats are coming out of the sewers" and that

"Trump has made it socially acceptable" (Associated Press). One Black Lives Matter Berlin

contributor, Kofi Shakur, said that his participation in the event was based on the idea that the

fight against fascism cannot take place only within state institutions or by the police in particular

because these institutions are involved in the very politics that allow for fascism to exist. He does

not just blame Trump and the AfD, but also the SPD, CDU, Grün, and Linke, Germany's main

political parties representing both right and left ideologies, who promote deportation, enact and

enforce racist laws, and participate in a capitalist system that relies on the exploitation of the

world's poor and marginalized (Shakur).

     The official statement and call to action for the counter demonstration also tied together

concerns about the increased visibility of fascism and the presence of neo-Nazis in Germany

with the experiences of people of color and refugees in the last few years. The statement reads,

> We, the undersigned, reject any kind of 'hero remembrance'
> [Heldengedenken] for old and new Nazis…We do not want to put up
> with the racist propaganda [Stimmungsmache], that has been deliberately
> used in recent years to incite fears about the future and make migrants
> and refugees out to be threats. In this climate, the proponents of
> nationalist mindsets as well as historical revisionists feel very
> comfortable again. In the meantime, in recent years the more than a
> thousand assaults and arson attacks on refugees and their homes and the
> racist murders of the "NSU" ["National Socialist Underground"] have
> shown that there is real danger for many people, and it is with this in
> mind that we declare our solidarity. Together we stand in the way of
> racism, misanthropy, and the neo-Nazis! (Antifa Kampfausbildung).[88]

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[88] German original: „Wir, die Unterzeichnenden, lehnen jede Art von Heldengedenken für alte und neue Nazis
ab...Die rassistische Stimmungsmache, die gezielt in den letzten Jahren betrieben wurde, um Zukunftsängste zu
schüren und eine Drohkulisse gegen Menschem (sic) mit Migrationshintergrund und Geflüchtete aufzubauen, wollen
wir nicht weiter hinnehmen. In diesem Klima fühlen sich die Verfechter nationalistischer Denkweisen und
Geschichtsfälscher wieder sehr wohl. Die mittlerweile mehr als tausend Übergriffe und Brandanschläge auf
Geflüchtete und deren Unterkünfte in den letzten Jahren sowie die rassistischen Morde des ‚NSU' zeigen, dass es
sich um eine reale Gefahr für viele Menschen und damit unser solidarisches Miteinander handelt. Gemeinsam
stellen wir uns Rassismus, Menschenfeindlichkeit und den Neonazis in den Weg!" (Antifa Kampfausbildung).

It is both the intersectional approach and the transnational scope of the Black Lives Matter Movement that makes this larger understanding of the ways in which the existence of neo-Nazis in the U.S. and Germany affect a large and diverse population of people of multiple races and citizenship statuses. It is through folding the events in Charlottesville into the politics Black Lives Matter Berlin that both intensified the anti-racist response to the events in Spandau, and which also deepened its significance. Black Lives Matter Berlin, in its simultaneous solidarity with activists in Charlottesville and in its participation in the Spandau counter-protests, brings together two forms of racism – anti-Semitism and anti-Black racisms – that, in the post-War German context, are often not thought together, and are often not seen for how both anti-Semitism and anti-Black racism are made possible through the perpetuation of the idea of white supremacy. In the statement above, it is also clear that, because of their intersectional approach, Black Lives Matter Berlin and other anti-racist activists in Germany are able to think anti-Semitism and anti-Black racism together with the past and present effects of (neo-)colonialism, particularly for refugees, migrants, those with migrant backgrounds, and immigrants. A certain imagination of the German nation, or more specifically those who engage in nationalist modes of thinking – "Verfechten nationalistischer Denkweisen" – is to blame for the violence faced by minorities in Germany here. A similar vision/version of or nostalgia for what the U.S. once was – a slave state – is what is seen as driving white nationalists in the United States as well. It is the very fact that white nationalism had to be protested in 2017, and the very need for Black Lives Matter in the U.S. and in Germany, that indicates the continued presence of conceptions of whiteness and of white supremacy in both countries, with historical roots and nostalgia for "what once was" and contemporary roots, named by activists as struggles over removing monuments and markers of white supremacy, as the Trump administration, and as continued police violence.

The incorporation of the Charlottesville story into the Spandau story represents one way that transnational solidarities around anti-racist politics can take form: as local racisms are called out and resisted, transnational solidarities emerge through amplification, relating to them, and by illuminating those structures that have led to the need for resistance in the first place.

Modern-Day Slavery in Libya

A video attached to a CNN report entitled "People for sale: where lives are auctioned for $400" was published on November 14, 2017; this was three months following the events in Charlottesville and in Spandau. The video shows blurred images of Black men lined up against a building in an undisclosed city in Libya.[89] Though the images are difficult to see considering the fact that it was the middle of the night and that the video was shot with a hidden camera, what the auctioneer is shouting is perfectly clear. Starting the bids at $200 and ending with $450, indicating the amount for which one of the men had just been sold, the auctioneer then moves onto the next man, selling another man to some person off-camera (Elbagir et al.). The fact that slavery exists in the 21st century shocked and horrified people around the world. Some of the reasons for its existence came into focus in the days following the release of the video. The men being sold were mostly migrants from Nigeria, Senegal, and the Gambia who had been trying to make it to Europe in hopes of getting jobs which would allow them to send much needed money back to their families in their homelands. In the wake of the so-called refugee "crisis", which had

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[89] The Libyan government opened an investigation into the allegations on November 17 On November 20, African Union President Conde as well as the EU pledged to fight the incidence of illegal trafficking of peoples in Libya. There is also word that an alliance between the UN-backed Government of National Unity in Tripoli and the EU was established in the weeks following the release of the disturbing video and the accompanying report (Elbagir et al.). Angela Merkel hosted a meeting at the chancellery with Fayez al-Sarraj, Prime Minister of Libya on December 7, 2017 ("Merkel Demands"). Merkel pledged help from the EU, saying that "from Europe, we will provide support so that many can go home" to their countries of origin, and notably not onto Europe as many of the asylum seekers wanted (Ruptly).

reached its peak in the summer of 2015, European nations like Germany were cracking down on the number of people allowed to enter the EU. Extreme and obvious forms of border control on the part of EU-member states stranded many in countries like Libya and Turkey, countries which the EU was supporting in order to slow the "flow of refugees" from entering the EU.[90] Many people were left with no option but to wait for Libyan authorities to deport them back to their home countries, which left many vulnerable to gang violence and susceptible to threats made by members of local militias. Some were being held for ransom, unable to escape slavery unless they paid for their freedom, something many could not afford to do (Elbagir et al.; Jolaoso, "Libya's Slave Market").[91]

Protests erupted across Europe and Africa in the weeks that followed. The earliest demonstration, and one of the largest, took place on November 19 in Paris drawing 1000 people. At the center of the protest in France was outrage that President Macron had blamed Africans for the slave markets in Libya during his visit to that country, without acknowledging France's own role in the war against Gaddafi (2011) which had left Libya, once one of the wealthiest countries in Africa, in ruins and vulnerable to traffickers and gangs (Jolaoso, "Libya's Slave Market").[92]

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[90] In March 2016, the EU and Turkey signed a migration deal, which stipulated that Turkey would take back all of the people who had illegally left Turkey for the Greek islands (thereby entering the EU). In exchange, the EU would provide financial assistance to Turkey to help with the influx of refugees there from Syria, and would promise that for every refugee brought back to Turkey from Greece, a Syrian refugee would be re-settled in the EU. The EU would also enable visa-free travel to the EU for Turkish citizens and expedite Turkey's application to become a member of the EU. The thought was that this would deter refugees from leaving Turkey for Greece. The concern in 2017 was that most people travelling to Europe from northern Africa in search of asylum were considered to be so-called "economic migrants," whose applications for asylum would more than likely be denied considering they come from countries dubbed safe countries of origin. Indeed, in 2017, most migrants landing in Italy were from Nigeria, followed by Bangladesh, Guinea, and Ivory Coast (*IOM DTM*). Just as had been the case for Turkey, Libya is referred to by many activists as the so-called "watchdog for Europe" (Wachhunde für Europa).

[91] There have also been reports of several people who have been killed for their organs, sold then in illegal underground markets, and many, particularly women and children, who have been sold into sex slavery (Jolaoso, "Libya's Slave Market").

[92] They also alleged that many Black people were lynched and driven out of Libya for being apparent Gaddafi loyalists in the days and weeks following Gaddafi's fall

Other protests in the weeks that followed occurred in Lagos, Nigeria; Vienna, Austria; and

Reutlingen, Germany (on December 2). There were demonstrations in Bremen (e.g.,

Demonstration für ein Ende der Versklavung, Folter/Demonstration for an End to Slavery,

Torture) on December 9, in Hamburg (also on December 9), and in Cologne (earlier, on

November 27), as well as in London, Brussels, Amsterdam, and Berlin.

The demonstration in Berlin – Stopp mit der Versklavung, Vergewaltigung und

Ermordung von Afrikaner*innen! (the name in English given to the event was the

"Demonstration to End the Enslavement, Rape, Torture and Killings of Blacks in Libya"

(Awoniyi)) – took place on November 25, 2017 in front of the Libyan embassy, and drew around

500 people. The organization of the event was a collaborative effort amongst many refugee

rights organizations and anti-racist activist groups including Lampedusa in Hamburg (who

travelled to the march from Hamburg by train to the event), Zentralrat der afrikanischen

Gemeinde in Deutschland, Black Struggle, Africa United Sports Club, The Voice Refugee

Forum, Ujamaa Culture Center, and Black Lives Matter Berlin ("Stopp mit der Versklavung").

The organizers, unified under the name the "Black Community in Germany" which they used to

sign a petition later sent to embassy officials, wrote, "Due to the inability and unwillingness of

African states to protect Black people worldwide from foreign racist enslavers and oppressors,

imperialist exploiters and perverse rapists, Black communities need to ensure their own

protection, survival and freedom" (Jolaoso, "Protests in Berlin"). As African presidents were

demanding the return of their citizens, instead of calling for these national leaders to protect their

citizens and as they blamed both African leaders and European leaders for "forcing citizens to

search for 'greener pastures' outside the continent" in the wake of colonialism (and in the midst

of neo-colonialism) (Jolaoso, "Libya's Slave Market"), this statement reveals a deep mistrust of

any nation to protect any Black community, no matter where they are located in the world. Just as activists had criticized law enforcement for their inability to prevent the murder of Heather Hyer in Charlottesville, and to allow the white nationalist protests in both Charlottesville and Spandau to occur, so too did the Libyan government state come under attack for the slave trade. In addition, protestors tied the fact that the slave tried had almost exclusively targeted Black bodies and labelled them as commodities, to, what one sign at the protest read, the "war against migrants" in the West (@telesurenglish). It is not only Libyan authorities who are scrutinized as part of the activist critique, but the EU as well; and, it is not only Black Africans whose lives are vulnerably situated within the narrative of slavery in the 21st century, but all Black people no matter their citizenship status.

When the attention of activists focused in on the events in Charlottesville and, a few days later, in Spandau, they were calling attention to the local specificity of each instance of white supremacy that emerged in these two moments. Solidarity among activists in or affiliated with Black Lives Matter Berlin with counter-protestors in Charlottesville was made possible, however, through an understanding of race, and specifically how Blackness has been assigned to bodies, as a metric by which human value is determined, despite national context. The national contexts in both the Charlottesville and Spandau cases speak to the means through which whiteness is galvanized and how it functions. In the U.S. case, whiteness makes mourning the erasure (or perceived erasure) of certain histories possible; it makes the language as well as the material tangibility of loss (or perceived loss) of recognition and representation possible, and it makes the concerns of certain people, white people, articulable, understandable, and even justifiable. In the German context, a large neo-Nazi demonstration was particularly jarring, considering the attention and public space that been dedicated to mourning victims of the

Holocaust, to histories of Jewish, Roma, and other persecuted groups' experiences, and to

rendering certain discourses and symbols (i.e. those sympathetic to or representative of Nazi

ideology) not just taboo, but illegal. The ways in which Black Lives Matter Berlin were able to

tie together the events in Charlottesville with the events in Spandau by addressing both in their

public statements and on their Facebook page, reveals a connection between two kinds of racism

that are often separated from one another: anti-Black racism and anti-Semitism. This is possible

because of the centrality of race to the discourse of Black Lives Matter Berlin, and because of an

understanding of the ways in which race functions as a means by which people are dehumanized.

When several protestors in Berlin's anti-slavery march wore shackles on their wrists, and

others held up signs that said "we are not for sale" and "Je suis noir et pas à vendre" ("I am

Black and not for sale") (Jolaoso, "Protests in Berlin"), they were protesting slavery specifically

and dehumanization more broadly. In this case, the solidarities built between Black Lives Matter

Berlin and the Black Community in Germany in general with those who were sold as slaves in

Libya extended beyond the need for local reference. That is, both because the exact location of

many of the places where people were traded as slaves was not known and because slavery is

understood as a consequence of economic need/greed in a globalized world, no specific location

was tied together with the need for solidarity in this case. "Black lives matter" as a maxim was

taken seriously in the face of one of – if not the – prime example(s) of the ways in which people

have been and are dehumanized. Transnational solidarities around abolishing slavery and

addressing the factors that have led to the emergence of slavery in this form[93] result from a

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[93] To be clear, slavery has existed since its abolishment in the 19th century, and continues to take on many forms including human trafficking, sex slavery, and labor slavery in many parts of the world (see, for example, the report about slavery in the waters around Indonesia entitled "Seafood from Slaves" from 2016 ("AP Explore"). The Libyan case is one example that emerged during the time I was researching Black Lives Matter Berlin and their activisms, and it plays an important role in their activism in 2017.

shared sense of disgust that such a practice could exist in the 21st century. Unity around this issue also exists within a larger, transnational, and intersectional conversation about the position of Black people in contemporary society, shaped in large part by the Black Lives Matter global movement. #Blacklivesmatter appeared on signs throughout the protest, literally linking the anti-slavery protests with the larger aims of Black Lives Matter (Berlin). Slaves' lives, refugees' lives, and would-be refugees' lives (i.e. those who would sit in detention centers in Libya for months, only to be forcibly returned to their home countries) come to matter within and because of the BLM framework by reclaiming again and again the humanity of all Black people, and, in so doing, reinforcing and reminding us of how humanity matters.

Do All Lives Matter? Yes, and So Does Race[94]

Importantly, to say that humanity matters – or, as it appeared on a sign at the 2016 march in Berlin, #humanitymatters – is not another way of aligning oneself with the #alllivesmatter counter-protest; instead, it points to precisely why, in this case, activists take issue with the existence of slavery. This particular hashtag – #humanitymatters – may seem redundant on the surface in the sense that one could respond to it with something like "of course it does; of course, humanity matters." In the context of protesting slavery, however, the idea that "humanity matters" both, most obviously, associates slavery with dehumanization (e.g., slavery makes it so these lives are not supposed to matter), and helps make the connection between the issue of dehumanization as it is addressed by Black Lives Matter: Black lives are human lives, and both matter.

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[94] This title was inspired by (Carney).

#AllLivesMatter, on the other hand, emerged as a criticism of the perceived exclusivity of the Black Lives Matter message around the time that Beyoncé performed at the Super Bowl Halftime Show in early 2016. During the concert, Beyoncé explicitly referenced and paid tribute to the Black Panthers as she performed her song "Formation," which she had dropped the day before. The imagery of the associated music video, as well as the knowledge that the Black Panthers were extremely critical of the police, left some with the feeling the performance and video, and by extension Beyoncé herself, were anti-police. Black Lives Matter also appears prominently in the video as a young Black boy in a hoodie dances in front of police officers, and the words "Stop Shooting Us" appear in graffiti on a wall. Black Lives Matter was, as a result of the entanglement of perceived anti-police imagery and messages with the goals of Black Lives Matter, pit against #AllLivesMatter and, more specifically, #BlueLivesMatter, which refers to the lives of police officers. The emergence of these problematic binaries between police and Black people, and between Black people and everyone else, reveals one particular way that race functions as a powerful force that produces difference in the service of power.

Black Lives Matter…in Europe?

In the previous section, I addressed several ways in which the Black Lives Matter framework, and the employment of BLM's strategies in Berlin by BLM-Berlin and other anti-racist activist groups address issues that are not tied to one particular national context, and which in fact have transnational consequences. Slavery and the simultaneous and interrelated circulation of white supremacy and privilege as well as anti-Black racism involve and require processes of racialization that are not confined to national context, and which exist outside of legal or other kinds of governmental structures, as much as they may be perpetuated by these

structures. In this section, I consider the ways in which Black Lives Matter Berlin, through a focus on refugee experience in Germany, locates some of these processes of racialization on the European continent and within Germany.

The significance of this form of strategizing is perhaps best outlined by several European Black Lives Matter activists who gathered for a conversation about the need for Black Lives Matter to exist in Europe in 2016. The activists, from Belgium, the UK, the Netherlands, and Germany, shared over and over again the necessity for the Movement to exist in Europe precisely because of the reaction they have gotten from the public. Modi Ntambwe, chapter leader in Belgium, said,

> Yes, you can see that from the media in Belgium, that talks about race and racism only in the context of Black Lives Matter. They completely forget that this problem exists in their immediate environment. (Shaheen).[95]

While the Black Lives Matter framework has awakened, and made issues of race and racism across western Europe more mainstream, it is also tied to its mother organization – Black Lives Matter in the U.S. – and, therefore, also to its context. It both brings the language of race and racism to the surface of public discourse in Europe, while also maintaining this problematic relationship between race and the U.S., which is the idea that race can only be spoken about in the terms that BLM allows in an American context. It is both an extremely important tie, as we saw in the previous section, and one that continues to force activists in Europe to rearticulate the need for this language of race to exist in European contexts as well. In what follows, this tension between necessity and usefulness and specificity and universality play out in complicated ways,

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[95] German original: "Ja, das sieht man schon allein daran wie die Medien in Belgien dafür sorgen, das über race und Rassismus ausschließlich im Kontext von *Black Lives Matter* gesprochen wird. Sie vergessen dabei total, dass dieses Problem direkt in ihrem unmittelbaren Umfeld existiert."

that both pay tribute to a larger international/transnational solidarity, and to the local need for action.

But sharing US-related content of any kind on a regular basis, would not only bypass the focus of our initiative, by pushing the issues of racism and Anti-Blackness far away from Germany or an Afro-European context to America – it would also work in favor of the ignorance and denial that we are fighting here. That doesn't mean we are not sharing US or any other country related content at all. It means we want to pursue what our name claims: Focussing (sic) on racism and Black Lives in Berlin (Germany). (Black Lives Matter Berlin, "Dear Friends, Followers and Supporters...")

Locating Race and Racism in Germany

In the German context, racism against Black people and people of color has taken many different forms that have roots in Enlightenment thinking and colonialism. In order to justify colonialism, myths about Black inferiority to white colonizers were propagated in pseudo-scientific studies that sought to explain alleged biological differences between Black and white people that would justify white rule over Black populations in German East Africa and other German colonies. These practices gave way to so-called Völkerschauen during which Black people from the colonies were brought to Europe and put on display as exotic objects in the effort to make a profit. After WWI, stories about Black French occupying soldiers in the Rhineland region of Germany raping white German women circulated as laws forbidding miscegenation made their ways from colonial Africa to Germany itself. So-called "Mischlingskinder" – the biracial children of Black soldiers and white German women – were never considered fully German in accordance with the 1913 Citizenship Laws that required one's

parents and grandparents to have been of full German blood to be considered German themselves. The idea of Germanness as determined by one's bloodline was, therefore, already firmly established in the German ethos when Hitler and the Nazi Party came to power in 1933. Following the horrors of the Holocaust and the devastation of WWII, Germany was divided amongst American, French, British, and Russian occupiers. As American presence in particular normalized in West Germany, soldiers and civilians had relationships that gave birth to a generation of children, many of whom were biracial, known as the Besatzungskinder ("occupation children"). In a country that was now trying to move on from its past, the rhetoric of race so often tied to the ideology of the Nazis fell out of mainstream rhetoric, thereby leaving Black and Brown children, particularly the Besatzungskinder, without language that could adequately describe their experiences of racism. Race as a concept was either associated solely with the Nazis and how they had viewed the world (e.g. through a lens that established racial hierarchies) (Fehrenbach 3), or which only existed outside of Europe (e.g. in former colonies and in the U.S., for example, where the Civil Rights Movement was gearing up). Collective amnesia regarding Germany's colonialist history played an important role, then, in helping Germans move past the Nazi period and onwards through the Cold War.

With the invitation of Greek, Italian, and Turkish guest workers, among others, to West Germany in the 1960s and early 1970s came an opportunity for Germans to address the racialized and racializing ways they perceived non-citizens and/or those perceived as non-citizens, often because of their skin color (though, importantly, many Black people in Germany at this time were indeed citizens, having at least one German parent). However, the (often Orientalizing) rhetoric of national difference (e.g. Turks vs. Germans) quickly turned into a debate not just about cultural difference, but about cultural superiority as well. Any person who

was not-German or who was perceived as not being German could now, as "carriers of their culture", be seen as potential threats to a European or German way of life. The apparent racelessness of the European continent and of Germany in particular, while rendering any discussion of racism taboo, also permitted processes of racialization to occur, just under the auspices of cultural or, later, religious difference instead. Germany was not threatened because of the potentiality that its citizenry might not be "fully German" in this language; it was threatened because non-Europeans brought culture and religion with them that would prove fatal to European values and ways of life.

And so, amid a cultural landscape strewn with landmines when it came to discussing race and examining its societal implications, Black Germans and members of the Black diaspora were often rendered invisible. It is in this context that Black American feminist activist and scholar Audre Lorde appears in Berlin during the 1980s as a transformative figure, whose presence brings together a group of Black German women who had not yet met each other. Activists wrote and published the first book dedicated to the history of Black Germans that documented the lived experiences of Black Germans throughout history. The publishing of *Farbe Bekennen* also accompanied the founding of the Initiative Schwarze Deutsche (ISD), an organizer dedicated to preserving Afro-German history, and in fighting for racial justice and equality in contemporary Germany.

In the 1990s, people of color in Germany experienced a new wave of violence as Germans struggled to reunite East and West. Arson attacks on refugee centers and homes such as Mölln and Solingen, increased street harassment of people of color, and other forms of violence swept through Germany in the months and years following reunification. As so-called ethnic Germans from the East were welcomed "back" to Germany after their time living in the German

Democratic Republic under communist rule, people perceived as being non-German, such as people of color, were seen as outsiders to a nation working to rebuild a unified and German identity. Race became the means through which difference could be constructed once again, differentiating people between Germans and non-Germans on the basis of the color of their skin, the culture they were thought to have "brought with them", and their religion.

As Black Germans continued to come together and share their lived experiences through the language of race, new coalitions between Black Germans and other minorities began to emerge. "Since the 1990s, invoking 'race' and attending to instances of 'racism' has allowed Black Germans to join with other minorities – of Turkish, African, Arabic, Asian, Latin American, and Jewish heritage – to compare shared experiences of discrimination, violence, and social marginality and to cooperate to pursue social equality and justice within Germany" (Fehrenbach 54). The effects of these alliances can be seen in the activism of Black Lives Matter Berlin in both the infrastructure of support and in the vast differences between people that emerge united under the umbrella organization Black Lives Matter. In an interview with *Missy Magazine*, Black Lives Matter Berlin organizer Nela Biedermann outlines the importance of viewing all racialized groups' experiences of racism and oppression with respect to the ways in which whiteness functions in a German context. She says,

> Also interesting is that my political commitment – a bit like in a hit
> parade – is being judged: 'I just cannot understand your problems in
> comparison with the refugee problem.' It also amazes me that in 2017
> people still underestimate and repress the origins and connections
> between (German) colonialism and our capitalist economy. Yes, we live
> here in Germany with a majority *white* population, but there have always
> been black and non-*white* people here, more or less visible. It astonishes
> me that the perception of many Germans is quite different. The world

was never *white*, nor was Germany. It is not and never will be. (Apraku et al., italics in the original).[96]

Whiteness itself appears here as a category that, while invisible for many Germans in Biedermann's view, is in fact the object that warrants analysis if the effects and causes of racism are truly to be understood. A critical engagement with whiteness as well as how Blackness has been constructed exposes the effects of colonialism and capitalism as well as the functioning of race outside of the structures produced by these forces. In this way, the experiences of refugees in Germany can be understood alongside the experiences of (other) people of color, Germans and non-citizens alike. The functioning of race here, in the form of whiteness as well as in the production of racialized "others", emerges as its own precarity-producing category, rendering Black people and other people of color precariously situated in a German context.

In the same interview conducted by and with members of Black Lives Matter Berlin, Shaheen Wacker shares her conceptualization of Black Lives Matter:

> [...I see] in this constellation many more complex positionings and identities than only those of being Black, being *white*, being cis, being a woman, and I wish that Black Lives Matter Berlin will also become even more complex. As complex as the realities in our community are. I see intersectional collectives within which people with any number of experiences of discrimination can develop new, power-critical (machtkritische) methods, as the driving force of an alternative society. For me personally, BLM is a first, concrete step in this direction. (Apraku et al.).[97]

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[96] German original: "Auch interessant ist, dass mein politischer Einsatz – ein bisschen wie in einer Hitparade – beurteilt wird: 'Ich kann deine Probleme im Vergleich mit der Flüchtlingsproblematik gerade gar nicht verstehen.' Es erstaunt mich auch, dass man 2017 immer noch die Ursprünge und Zusammenhänge zwischen (deutschem) Kolonialismus und unserer kapitalistischen Ökonomie unterschätzt und verdrängt. Ja, wir leben hier in Deutschland mit einer mehrheitlich *weißen* Bevölkerung, dennoch gab es hier schon immer Schwarze oder nicht-*weiße* Menschen, mehr oder weniger sichtbar. Es erstaunt mich, dass die Wahrnehmung vieler Deutscher eine ganz andere ist. Die Welt war nie *weiß*, genauso wenig wie Deutschland. Sie ist es nicht und wird es nie sein.

[97] German original "[...ich sehe] in dieser Konstellation viel komplexere Positionierungen und Identitäten als nur die von Schwarzsein, *weiß*sein, Cissein, Frausein und ich wünsche mir, dass Black Lives Matter Berlin auch noch viel komplexer wird. So komplex wie die Realitäten in unserer Community eben sind. Ich sehe intersektionale Kollektive, in denen Menschen aus den Schnittmengen ihrer Diskriminierungserfahrungen neue, machtkritische

Solidarity after Death: The 2016 Die-In

In an area of the city that is increasingly gentrified, commercial, and especially representative of capitalism at its most visible, what was normally a busy area came, for a time, to a stand-still. Between 500-1200 people representing many different racial groups laid head-to-toe and side-by-side across the square, making it impossible to walk across Potsdamer Platz ("Black Lives Matter"; *#BlackLivesMatter Und Die Leerstellen in Der Berichterstattung*). The hustle and bustle of this part of the city was replaced by a tableau of still bodies of all shapes and sizes. The die-in was an act of solidarity between Black communities and organizations in Berlin, and the then already nearly 3-year-old Black Lives Matter organization in the United States. It would be another year until Black Lives Matter Berlin would be founded, but the seeds for the German iteration of the Movement were planted on this day.

The die-in began after protesters marched from Zoo Bahnhof to Potsdamer Platz on July 10, 2016. Just days earlier, on July 5 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Alton Sterling was killed by police. The following day, Philando Castile was killed by a cop during a routine traffic stop, and the whole event was live-streamed on Facebook by his girlfriend Diamond Reynolds. On July 7, a sniper shot and killed five police officers during a protest against police brutality in Dallas, Texas, setting off what would come to be known as the Blue Lives Matter Movement, and which, in the years that followed, would be the counterpoint to Black Lives Matter in a dichotomy that would pit the lives of police officers – the "boys in blue" – against Black lives. In the days following the celebration of Independence Day in the U.S. during the summer of 2016,

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Methoden entwickeln, als die treibende Kraft einer alternativen Gesellschaft. BLM ist für mich persönlich ein erster konkreter Schritt in diese Richtung."

these events are what again sparked a national conversation about police violence, policing, racism, and the value of Black lives in the U.S., (a conversation that Black Lives Matter and many other activist groups around the country and the world had already been having).

This time, years after the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the shooting death of unarmed Black teenager Trayvon Martin, the police-involved-shootings of numerous other Black individuals in the U.S., and, eventually, the uprisings in Ferguson, MO and across the country, something resonated a bit differently with people living across the globe. Perhaps it was the worldwide attention being paid to the 2016 United States' Presidential Election, the field of which had by this time narrowed to include Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, that drew global attention to other events happening in the U.S., particularly to those things about race, a hot topic in the election. Perhaps it was the effects of the 2016 refugee "crisis" which were resonating across the European continent even as Western European countries were taking in more refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq in 2016. Coinciding with the refugee "crisis" were conversations about race and racism in Germany, its rootedness in colonialism and Orientalism, and its effects on not only refugees, but on other racialized minorities in Germany already. Whatever the triggers, this particular show of solidarity was not limited to Berlin; there were marches, demonstrations, and protests in London and Amsterdam ("500 Berliner").

Though the exact number of protestors at the July 2016 demonstration is contested (police say there were 500 protestors, while organizers say upwards of 1200 (Qasim)), pictures show hundreds of people lying in solidarity across Potsdamer Platz as the names of the dead were read aloud. Organizers called it a die-in, the idea being that the scene would be a representation of the many Black people who have died as a result of police violence not just in the U.S. or Germany, but globally as well. Originally, the demonstration was to take place in

front of the United States Embassy, but was not permitted, thus organizers decided to move it to Potsdamer Platz, an even more centralized location and one with particular historical and political significance.[98]

From the 17th century onwards, the area now known as Potsdamer Platz has been known for the businesses that have surrounded it, and its ability to attract patrons. The Platz also played central role in some of the most heated parts of the Cold War. On June 17, 1953, hundreds of workers tired of the deteriorating conditions brought about under communist rule in East Germany, took to the streets in protest. They were quickly and violently suppressed, and at least 55 people were killed by the Volkspartei and the ensuing violence ("Tote des 17. Juni 1953"). Beginning in August 1961, when the Berlin Wall was built, Potsdamer Platz was physically divided into two sections. The remnants of war-bombed buildings were now almost entirely cleared away, leaving a desolate landscape where a bustling city center used to be. After the fall of the wall in November 1989, part of what would be called the "death zone" or "no man's land" would be crossed for the first time in 28 years without fear of being killed by patrolling officers on the East side of the wall. In the 1990s, the area around Potsdamer Platz would become Europe's most sought-after real estate for businesses including malls, cinemas, and company headquarters.

When hundreds of people gathered for a die-in and laid their bodies down side-by-side across Potsdamer Platz, the typical busyness of the square was replaced by a stillness that recalled the history of the space, particularly the times it has played witness to protest, death, and

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[98] Unfortunately, I cannot find anything on why it was not allowed to protest in front of the U.S. Embassy on this particular day. It is possible that activists could not obtain a permit in time, or that the embassy was under increased security due to the events in the U.S. in the days prior to the protest. There was also a large demonstration turned violent the day before the Black Lives Matter demonstration, where many were injured and nearly 90 activists were arrested in a radical left-wing protest against gentrification. It is possible that there were increased fears that another protest would turn violent in the same weekend.

(re)unification. The space stands as a symbol of state violence, and protestors' choice to stage a die-in in this high-traffic area would bring the past and present together in acknowledgement of that fact through a simulation of death.

The die-in as an activist strategy has its roots in the 1960s in the U.S., though its close relative, the sit-in, dates back even further (Koren).[99] In Germany, the first die-in took place during the 1968 demonstrations (Koren). Die-ins have been staged in protest of war, nuclear weapons testing, AIDS, segregation, among many other causes. During a die-in, the everydayness of busy sites like Potsdamer Platz is turned into a cemetery scene, meant to elicit emotions like grief and shock, and to raise awareness about a particular issue. The Black Lives Matter Movement has utilized this strategy on multiple occasions, most notably on November 16, 2014 when a jury failed to indict the man responsible for shooting and killing Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. Protestors outlined their bodies in chalk so that even when they left the spot where they laid, the effects of their presence would be seen (Eligon et al.). This action held particular significance in the protests following the Michal Brown verdict, because Brown himself had been left to lie dead in the street for four and a half hours, according to activists, after he was shot.

Subsequent die-ins were staged in Oakland and San Francisco, California in protest of the death of Eric Garner on December 3, 2014 (Ho et al.), and just two days before the Berlin die-in, one was staged in front of President Obama's home in Hyde Park, just outside of Chicago on July 8, 2016 (Wall). These die-ins are a form of performance activism that gives protestors the ability to assert their right to inhabit a particular space ("The Die-In"), while implicating the

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[99] The first die-in is thought to have taken place in Boston for Earth Day in April 1970. Activists held a funeral procession to Logan Airport (Koren), where they eventually staged the "mass extinction" of humanity in front of the TWA and Pan Am terminals, according to an article published about the event in the Harvard student newspaper *The Crimson* ("Ecology Action").

space itself in not just the figurative deaths, but in the real deaths that inspired the protest in the

first place. When

> Staging a solidarity protest in Berlin both tied the experiences of Black
> people in Germany to an international network of Black experience
> through Black Lives Matter, but was also shaped by local politics and
> histories. Although police violence and specifically police violence
> against Black and brown people exists in Germany, the deaths
> symbolized by protestors on Potsdamer Platz have other systemic causes.
> The intersectional approach as well as the global focus of the Black
> Lives Matter Movement enables the centering of refugee lives in this
> protest in particular, considering both its location in Germany, the
> country that took in the most refugees during the 2015 refugee "crisis",
> and the fact that it took place in summer 2016 as the country was taking
> in more refugees, and coming to terms with the massive influx of people
> to the country in 2015. Activists in the Berlin protest noted how both
> Black Germans and people from the African diaspora were "united
> through our blackness" ("Call to Action").

The Names of the Dead: Oury Jalloh

Among the most poignant aesthetic strategies taken up by protestors during the march

and subsequent die-in were signs that included the names of people of color who had died in one

way or another at the hands of police. Some signs had a singular name – John Amadi (a Nigerian

refugee killed by police in Düsseldorf in January 2001) – while one side featured in images of

the march listed several along with the German city where they were killed:

> #OuryJalloh (Dessau)
> #Christy Schwandeck (Frankfurt)
> #Aduidi John (Hamburg)
> #Laye-Alama Conde (Bremen)
> #Jaja Diabi (Hahnöfersand)
> …
> #Blacklivesmatter
> #NoJusticeNoPeace"[100]

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[100] Achid…,John Amadi, Neesha Michaels, Steve Taylor, Marcos Parier, Paul Gas…, Dyzon Perkins, Kaylynn Rockamore, Ali-Aba , Kelvin Smith, Ridgewayl

Another sign read „Meine Geschwister sterben im Mittelmeer"; another said: "Meine

Menschlichkeit sollte nicht zur Debatte stehen!" (Qasim). Christy Schwandeck was a Nigerian

woman shot by a worker at a job center in Frankfurt in 2012 (Jüttner); Aduidi John died in

Hamburg in 2001and Laya-Alama Condé, a man from Sierra Leone, in Bremen in 2005 after

being arrested during drug raids and while in police custody. Jaja Diabi died under similar

circumstances in Hamburg in 2016. It is Oury Jalloh, however, who appears over and over again

in activist discourse about police violence against both refugees and people of color in the

German context.

Oury Jalloh was an asylum-seeker from Sierra Leone who, in 2005, was found burned to

death in his cell in a Dessau police station. His was the third death in a sequence of suspicious

deaths at the jail with the first in 1997 and the second in 2002. The first man, Hans-Jürgen R.,

was found soon after his release from the jail with severe internal bleeding and died in a nearby

hospital soon thereafter. The second man, Mario B., died of a fatal skull fracture. Activists and

lawyers pressured the state to investigate the cause of Oury Jalloh's death, which, unlike the

other two cases which were opened and closed quite soon after the deaths, took twelve years

(Vu). The official position of the state is that Jalloh killed himself by lighting himself on fire, but

activists see Jalloh's death as a racially-motivated attack against a man who was in jail in the

first place because of a stroke of bad luck and, perhaps, as a victim of racial-profiling. On the

evening before his death, Jalloh had approached two women and asked to borrow one of their

cell phones. The women called the police shortly thereafter, saying that they had felt threatened

during the interaction. He was taken to the Dessau police station, where he was handcuffed to a

mattress in cell number 5 and locked inside. Activists and supporters of the theory that he died

because he was burnt alive have argued that even if Jalloh wanted to burn the mattress on which he laid, he would not have been able to because he was essentially unable to move because of the chains on all of his limbs.

Oury Jalloh's death appears over and over again in activist discourse about the role of violence, racism, and negligence in the deaths of many refugees and/or people of color in Germany. His death represents a struggle between the state, which activists say refuses to take responsibility or to acknowledge the way it, through institutions, policies, and poor policing, perpetuates a system that not only fails to protect people of color, but which continuously renders them as perpetrators (e.g., Jalloh was viewed as a threat to the white German women with whom he was speaking) and not as victims. Jalloh's particularly precarious position as an asylum-seeker, already marginalized as a non-citizen, was compounded by the fact that he was Black.

Conclusion

The ubiquitous appearance of refugees' names on signs during the Black Lives Matter Berlin march and die-in are two examples of how refugees and their experiences are highlighted and mobilized around in the Berlin Black Lives Matter Movement. In addition, it exemplifies the extent to which race and racism are embedded in Germany's government institutions in the 21st century, particularly institutions tasked with protecting German citizenry (and especially at the expense of restricting and surveilling the lives of non-citizens or perceived non-Germans).

Chapter Four

Sexualized Violence and Racialized Others: Refugee Activisms and Constructions of Difference in Post-Cologne Germany

On New Year's Eve 2016, hundreds of people were celebrating the holiday on the streets and squares of Cologne, Germany. The first national newspaper to pick up the story of what happened that night was the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. In a short article published on January 2, they reported that 30 women had been victims of theft and sexual attacks[101] carried out by 20 perpetrators in Cologne on New Year's Eve ("Etliche Übergriffe"). By January 9, there were nearly 400 reports of theft and sexualized violence ("Fast 400 Anzeigen"). By this time, the perpetrators were being identified by nationality – Algerians, Moroccans, Iranians, Syrians, Iraqis, Serbians, and a handful of Americans and Germans. As 2016 came to a close, 1020 verified reports of sexual assault and theft had been filed (Landtag Nordrhein-Westfalen 1233). Witnesses, including victims, of the attacks described the perpetrators as men "appearing like they came predominantly from North African or Arab countries" (Landtag Nordrhein-Westfalen 15).

In this chapter, I consider how refugees themselves responded to the Cologne attacks in the ensuing months. In particular, I focus on two refugee (and ally) activist groups located in Germany – Syrer gegen Sexismus (Syrians against Sexism) and #ausnahmslos (#without_exception) – and their very different strategies. Courageous and willing to put their bodies on the street at a political moment that intensified their precarity, Syrer gegen Sexismus claimed solidarity with the city of Cologne and with the women of Germany immediately

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[101] Throughout this chapter, I use the term "attacks" to refer to the events that took place in Cologne on New Year's Eve 2016, though I understand that the term "attacks" itself is contested and problematic. However, as is evident on January 2 already, the media used the term Übergriffe – attacks – from the very beginning.

following the attacks. Unfortunately, because of the discursive limitations they face as racialized "others" and refugees in Germany, it was difficult for the group to claim a space as activists that would allow them to address the events in Cologne, while also speaking to the racializing ways in which refugees were represented in its wake. The media representation of the perpetrators as "others" defined by their nationalities limited the frameworks available to understand and fight sexualized violence in the German context, especially when it intersects with issues of immigration and integration. Instead, Syrer gegen Sexismus distinguished between refugees who they say are willing and able to uphold German law, and those who are not. In so doing, I argue that they reified the distinction between integratable refugees, who are seen as educated and sharing in the same value system as Germans, and "uncivilized" refugees, who are represented as never being able to integrate into German society. This rendering of the refugee community in Germany as consisting of discrete subgroups results in a vision of a European future that is not so unlike the racialized exclusionary vision that defines and attributes the ability to belong to Europe to some people while withholding it from others, that is so prevalent today. However, Syrer gegen Sexismus did propose a way of thinking about sexualized violence in the German context through the lens of consent that, within a national discourse otherwise fixated on the identity of the perpetrators, provided a much-needed focus on survivors.

Alternatively, the multi-ethnic and otherwise diverse feminist activists behind the #ausnahmslos campaign opened up new spaces for thinking about and fighting gender violence and racism simultaneously, thereby moving away from the idea that integration is the only means through which refugees can ensure they have a future in Europe. Instead, the #ausnahmslos campaign enabled a vision of a European future that would be far more inclusive and diverse, albeit by advocating for deep changes in German society through what some have

unenthusiastically called "hashtag activism" or "slacktivism." In addition, in one reading of their activism, it is possible to argue that the people behind #ausnahmslos ultimately dissolved their much more complicated call for broader societal changes into a much less nuanced call for legal action, which though extremely important, exposed a dependency and reliance on state structures to address and solve issues related to sexualized violence, and exposed another barrier involved in doing so.

Though it is not possible to know precisely what occurred the night of the "attacks," I will briefly outline what we do know before moving to a discussion of the representational politics of race and gender as they relate to sexualized violence in the German context.

From around 8pm on New Year's Eve 2015 to around 6am on New Year's Day 2016, hundreds of people, mostly women (approximately 72% of victims identified as women (Landtag Nordrhein-Westfalen 1242)), had been sexually assaulted, harassed, robbed, and, as reports indicated in 27 instances, raped, in and around Cologne's main train station. Survivors of the attacks described the perpetrators as men "appearing like they came predominantly from North African or Arab countries" (Landtag Nordrhein-Westfalen 15). Since media coverage erupted around January 4, 2016,[102] scholars and activists have emphasized the importance of talking about and addressing how the attacks were framed and represented by media, government, and the public (see, for example: Attia and Popal; Weber, "The German Refugee 'Crisis'"; Weber, "'We Must Talk about Cologne'"; Bytyçi; Boulila and Carri).

According to the North Rhine-Westphalia Parliament's report published approximately a year following the attacks, by September 21, 2016, 299 people had been identified as possible perpetrators. Of these men, "81 came from Algeria, 83 from Morocco, 33 from Iraq, 25 from

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[102] The Cologne police, the North-Rhine-Westphalian government, and the mainstream national media outlets were relentlessly criticized for the slow speed with which they alerted the public about the attacks.

Syria, 21 from Germany, and the remaining 10 people…from other countries. Of these [299 people], 98 were in Germany illegally, 96 were asylum seekers, 46 had other forms of legal status [e.g. Duldung], and a small number were still living in Germany following the rejection of their asylum application" (Landtag Nordrhein-Westfalen 364–65). Neither the nationalities of the remaining alleged perpetrators[103], nor the means by which perpetrators had been identified in the first place, can be inferred from these numbers. What they do convey, however, is that the group responsible for the attacks was not a homogenous one, despite how the attacks were talked about in the ensuing days and months.

Representations of Racialized Others and Sexualized Violence

The so-called "refugee crisis" had just reached its peak in the fall of 2015, and support for the far-right populist group Pegida as well as the political party Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany, AfD) was on the rise. In addition to concerns among some Germans about increased migration to Germany and the presence of over 1 million refugees in the country, the discursive aftermath of Cologne was shaped by long-standing and deeply embedded tropes around immigration, national identity, and gender violence. In February 2016, just a few weeks following the Cologne attacks, then German Vice Konsul Stefan Biedermann spoke at the University of Colorado Boulder about current events in Germany. In particular, he talked about the effects of the so-called "refugee crisis" on Germany and Europe. After he uncritically linked the events in Cologne to the dramatic rise in the number of refugees seeking asylum in Germany, I asked him to explain what he meant by his statement "we [Germans/Europeans] need to teach them [refugees] how to behave." He told me that there was a "new quality" to the violence taking

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[103] Initial reports claimed that nearly 1000 men had been involved (see, for example, "Gruppe von 1000 Männern"; "1000 Männer bedrängen Frauen an Silvester").

place in Germany since the influx of refugees to the European continent had begun the summer before.[104] Biedermann also told me to "go read about the Cologne attacks, and please not just [from] the feminist papers." In a tone that implied that the question was ignorant, he also said that I should look at the media coverage of the attacks for an answer. "Don't you see how *they* behave? It has been all over the news" (Biedermann).

I bring up this anecdote because despite the fact that there was a genuinely conscious effort among some parliamentarians and members of the media to talk about Cologne in non-racialized (and non-racializing) terms (Weber, "The German Refugee 'Crisis'" 77), statements such as this, and images disseminated in magazines like *Focus* and newspapers like the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* in the weeks following the attacks "demonstrate the racialized imagination of the perpetrators of this violence, alternatively described as immigrants, migrants, refugees, or 'North Africans'" (Weber, "'We Must Talk about Cologne'" 69).[105] The interchangeability of such terms in public discourse itself speaks to the reductionist means through which the "other" has been conceptualized in German society. In addition, the media representations of the attacks prove problematic in that they were not, as Biedermann suggested, objective, unbiased portrayals of what happened in Cologne, but rather representations informed by a long history of the racialized "othering" of people as threats to European values and way of life.

For instance, in a familiar framing of victimhood in relation to immigration, "[t]he adherents of Pegida portray themselves as victims of the growing number of refugees entering Germany. In their anti-Muslim rhetoric, 'refugees' and 'Muslims' are spoken of in the same

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[104] Notably, this was also precisely how Heiko Maas, then Germany's Minister of Justice (now the Minister of Foreign Affairs) had characterized the attacks ("Gewalt in Silvesternacht").

[105] For an excellent analysis of these and other images that circulated in the days and weeks following the attacks, see (de Hart).

breath" (Machtans 92). This is, according to Beverly Weber, "fueled by an insistence that refugees are undermining European values" ("'We Must Talk about Cologne'" 73), as they are simultaneously and reductively understood as being Muslim. The use of "Muslim" and of Islam as designations of difference in Germany and in Europe is nothing new. Between 1961-1973, West Germany invited millions of workers from countries in the south of Europe such as Greece and Italy, and a large majority from Turkey after the building of the Berlin Wall further exacerbated the postwar labor shortage problem in the rapidly reconstructing and industrializing country. The so-called "Guest Worker Program" was built around the assumption that the millions of laborers who came to work in Germany's factories would return home when the economy had improved not just in their home countries, like Turkey, but in Germany as well. The reality of the situation, however, was far different. Turks in particular brought their families and made their lives in Germany's cities, a pattern that continued into the 1980s and even after the wall fell.

Leslie Adelson, Rita Chin, Ruth Mandel, and Deniz Göktürk, and others, have written extensively about the ubiquity of anti-immigrant and xenophobic rhetoric during and after the Guest Worker Program (see, for example, Adelson; Chin; Mandel; Göktürk et al.; Weber, *Violence and Gender*; El-Tayeb, "Secular Submissions"). "'Turk' [became] a signifier of instability and anxiety, in national, subnational, and transnational narrations" (Mandel 3). These scholars and others have also shown how this discrimination based on ethnic and cultural difference at first, later shifted in the early 1980s to make up a newer form of prejudice that was more directed at Turks' real or perceived Muslim identities (see, in addition, Yildiz). Islam became a new signifier of difference that was not only immutable (i.e. anyone raised Muslim could not ever adequately integrate into European society), but dangerous. In particular, it was

the presence of Turkish men in Germany that exacerbated such Islamophobic fears. These men, hypersexualized and vilified in the media, were said to pose a threat to (white) German women, whom, it was alleged, they would harass, assault, and rape. As had been the case in racist and anti-Semitic as well as colonialist discourse for centuries (for discussion, see (Mcclintock))[106], white women became stand-ins for the nation, here the German nation, which was being threatened by the presence of outsiders.

The violent and sexualized nature of this analogy emerges again as debates about refugees' existence in Germany are conflated with discussions around sexualized "others" and violence. Refugee men, coded as Muslim, are construed as the carriers of violence against women, bringing such violent practices as those enacted during the Cologne attacks to Germany and to Europe. The "refugee man," just like the "Turkish man" and the "Muslim man" before him (but also conflated with the latter), becomes the figure on which the blame for sexualized violence is easily cast. Also, much like the strawmen that came before him, the "refugee man" is not a composite or aggregate figure, comprised of characteristics of the diverse group of refugee men that have come before him; he is constructed out of historically-informed and/or -imagined, and presently-situated articulations of otherness in Germany. The figure of the refugee in Europe has become the newest iterations of the imagined racialized "other" who has always existed at the fringes of European society, and the most recent version of "the racialized Other against whom the 'modern human' [considered both European and universal] has been articulated" (Weber, "'We Must Talk about Cologne'" 69–70). In other words, refugees are the new "floating

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[106] Mcclintock goes even further to say that "imperialism and the invention of race were fundamental aspects of Western, industrial modernity" (5), and that "gender dynamics were, from the outset, fundamental to the securing and maintenance of the imperial enterprise)" (7). In her study, Mcclintock shows how it is not possible to understand imperial power without attention to gender power (6).

signifiers" for white European's fears about the shifting demographics in their perceived homogenous (i.e. apparently white) countries. It is this figure of the threatening and hypersexualized male refugee that has been culturally employed in order "to support increased border force and surveillance policies" (Weber, "'We Must Talk about Cologne'" 19). Considering all of this, what options do refugee activists and their allies have to both address the complexity of the Cologne attacks and their socio-political reverberations, and simultaneously contribute to a vision of what refugees' futures in Germany and in Europe can look like?

It is within this context, that I examine the activist work of Syrer gegen Sexismus and the #ausnahmslos campaign. While the Cologne attacks renewed and intensified German interest in the refugee crisis and in issues like immigration, national identity, and gender violence, refugee activists made choices about how they would represent and align themselves, to what issues they would highlight and allocate resources, and with whom they would ultimately claim solidarity. The effects of these choices resonated throughout the groups' subsequent projects, and had consequences that illustrate the kinds of opportunities and possibilities refugees have to voice their concerns, opinions, and criticisms in light of events like the Cologne attacks and the limited (and limiting) conversations about refugees' place in German society that (tend to) follow.

Germany's "Others" and Racializing Sexualized Violence

Due to the fact that, in public discourse, blame for the Cologne attacks was tied to refugee presence in Germany, the immediate response of the German government on local, state, and national levels was to call for increased police presence and changes to asylum procedures in the wake of the attacks (Weber, "The German Refugee 'Crisis'" 77). This is a result of what Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez calls a "moral panic," developing from the ways in which

"contemporary debates on the need to control the entry and settlement of 'refugees' are not substantiated by facts…[but rather] fabricated on the basis of racist fantasies about a constructed inferior, animalistic, racialized Other" (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 18). The construction of this imagined dangerous "other" has necessitated the homogenization of the extremely diverse refugee population in the German imaginary, a process that also relies on a monolithic understanding of Islam. One strategy used by refugee groups like Syrer gegen Sexismus and #ausnahmslos, which I will discuss at length below, has been to advocate for a conception of refugees as a diverse group of people, though each group operates with very different understandings of what this difference ultimately means.

Just as the term "Turkish" became a repository of many forms of otherness associated with people immigrating to Germany from Turkey despite the diversity among the population, so too the term "refugee" holds within it all of what this category "'represents' to Germans," in Ruth Mandel's words (2). "At stake in [such a] stigmatization of Turkishness is a contest over prevailing visions of the moral self, trapping the Turkish other into an atemporal history, eclipsing internal differentiation within this population" (Mandel 11–12). That is, there is a sort of reliance in German discourse on these all-encompassing terms of difference – "Turkish," "Muslim," and "Refugee," for example – to represent an "other" who is "stuck in the past" and who, therefore, has not progressed to the more advanced, modern, democratic, and, as is clear in Vice Consul Biedermann's statement I mentioned above, is not as civilized as the Germans. The national, cultural, linguistic, religious, political, social, geographic, and economic differences found in the refugee community in Germany today, as was also the case with the Turkish, Jewish, Muslim, and East German communities before it, fall away, leaving refugee activists with a dilemma, also found within Muslim communities in Germany following the Cologne

attacks: on one hand, refugees and Muslims want to appear as a homogenous group "unified by religious and ethnic difference" in order to address xenophobia and Islamophobia together (Machtans 87–88); and on the other hand, they want to address acts of violence and other issues within refugee and Muslim communities themselves. The strategy of unification, or what Lamya Kaddor, co-founder of the Liberal Islamic Association in Germany, calls "unity…that presupposes a cultural consensus…which is precisely the model of movement politics to which Pegida subscribes" (Machtans 97), risks the lapse into essentialism or simply "exchange[s] one static, monolithic view of Islam and Muslims for another" (Machtans 95). In other words,

> the external pressure exerted by German populists and sensationalist media that foment Islamophobia creates a need to stand up against these attacks as a homogeneous group, thus creating the risk of inadvertently reinforcing what one seeks to combat: namely, the stereotype of a monolithic and static entity that Muslims in Germany do not in fact represent. Moreover, the perceived need to speak with one voice might silence necessary debates among the different Islamic associations in Germany. (Machtans 95).

Just as these politics affect Muslim communities in Germany, refugees have found themselves fighting a similar fight, as refugees are constructed as one monolithic, threatening group. In either case, the consensus among Islamic groups in Germany is that anti-Muslim racism has become socially acceptable, that Pegida has been motivated by religious and racist Islamophobia, and that mass Pegida protests have put further strain on refugee communities (Machtans 94–95).

The fact that the specific manifestation of violence against women in the form of theft and sexualized threat had not presented itself exactly as such in Germany prior to the so-called refugee crisis, provided anti-immigrant politicians and movement leaders with an easy way to explain away the Cologne attacks as something that was inherently not German, and as

something that could be blamed on the extremely large number of people who had entered

Germany during the preceding year. This perspective, however, largely ignores the long history

of framing violence against women as a problem with immigration or, more accurately, with who

immigrates to Germany. In a discourse analysis of incidences that triggered national decision-

making and the implementation of surveillance tactics in Germany, Betty de Hart explores the

effects that German public discourse about difference as well as gender and sexuality have had

on the politics of migration and border control in the German context both historically and in the

present (de Hart 27). In her study, she presents three important findings that pertain directly to

the post-Cologne era, but which are part of a larger pattern whereby the masculinity of racialized

others has been perceived as a threat to European culture and to white European women. First,

there is no correlation between the discourse circulating about sexual assault and the actual

reality (as it is understood through police reports, statistics, and victim narratives) (de Hart 27).

In other words, representations of sexualized violence in Germany rely on racializing tropes that

do not accurately reflect who perpetrates sexualized violence against whom and in what

contexts; the discourse is saying one thing, and reality another. Second, rape laws in Germany

have historically been race-specific; and, finally, the circulation of these racializing discourses

about difference has historically increased surveillance of colonized people, particularly men, as

well as of white women (de Hart 41–43). De Hart's findings highlight the fact that migration and

integration policies are never gender-neutral, and that the contemporary discourse around these

issues is, in many ways, a reproduction of earlier discourses in German culture (de Hart 47–48).

In other words, "Gender plays a significant role in the interplay of racialization and global

capitalism, fundamentally shaping the coloniality of power within asylum and migration

policies" (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 20).

These discourses are similar in many ways to depictions of African men threatening white women during the French occupation of the Rhineland[107] and to representations of non-Jewish German victimhood at the hands of Jews before and during the Holocaust (Weber, "'We Must Talk about Cologne'" 69). These racialized images of Black and Brown men as perpetrators also relies on their hypersexualization, a process that emphasizes how, in Alexander Weheliye's words,

> black subjects' genders and sexualities operate differently from those found in the mainstream of the world of Man [always coded as white and European].[108] Namely, in the same way that black people appear as either nonhuman or magically hyperhuman within the universe of Man, black subjects are imbued with either a surplus…[hypermasculinity]…of gender and sexuality or a complete lack thereof (desexualization)…it is [thus] imperative to consider how the translation of sexual difference to de facto nonnormative genders and sexualities within black communities…[is used in the] barring of black people from the category of the human-as-Man. (Weheliye 41–42).[109]

The dissonance that arises because Black and Brown refugees cannot be understood within the racialized and Europeanized category of the "human," this time as a result of their gender and sexuality perceived as premodern and uncivilized, appears once again as a means of excluding refugees from participation in the nation.

Pegida and its supporters used the Cologne attacks to strengthen, perpetuate, and "reactivate the dichotomy of civilization and barbarity, constructing Black and Brown racialized

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[107] For more information, see (Chin et al.; Roos).

[108] It's important to note that Weheliye is summarizing previous arguments made by scholars like Patricia Hill Collins and Angela Davis here.

[109] Priscilla Layne has discussed the representation of Black men in postwar West German film, in an article titled "'Schwarz ist in': Racial Fetishism, Sexuality, and Black Masculinity in Lothar Lambert's 1 Berlin-Harlem" that serves as a convincing example of how these hypersexualized images persist in Germany's postwar era. The article explores the film 1 Berlin-Harlem which is about a Black man whose very choice in expressing his sexuality in non-normative terms complicates the racist and stereotypical representations of Black men in both German and Hollywood films.

masculinities as 'premodern,' lacking control over their sexuality and [as] having a patriarchal, misogynist mindset" (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 17).[110] This perspective was reiterated in radio broadcasts as well, where the men involved in the attacks were characterized as having difficulty with adjusting to a normative German "gender order," and were consequently labelled as uncivilized and a threat to German civility (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 17). Such uncritical and stereotypical perceptions of gender relations within the communities and cultures of Germany's "others" became, yet again, the yardstick against which perceived difference and the immutability of this difference was determined.[111]

In an important shift, Pegida's discourse about the sexual threat within refugee and Muslim communities changed after the Cologne attacks to emphasize the ways in which white women had become the newest victims of Islam, brought to Germany by these "outsiders" (Weber, "'We Must Talk about Cologne'" 74). Both versions of these Islamophobic perspectives, argues Weber, operate as "racializing discourses of Islam [that] work within a regime of gender violence, a discursive apparatus that mobilizes old Orientalisms and new racisms while relying on assumptions that Muslim men are inherently violent, and that Islam is responsible for producing that violence" (Weber, "'We Must Talk about Cologne'" 74). The discourse around sexualized violence in Germany becomes the means through which Black and

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[110] Interestingly, the head of the Central Council of Muslims in Germany (ZMD), which represents a minority of Muslims in Germany, but is also the most ethnically diverse Islamic association as it is comprised of mostly non-Turkish Muslims (89), took the opposite view. In an open letter posted to the organization's website in the days following the Attacks, Kreusch said that the "events in Cologne resulted from 'liberal western Macho society' turning women into objects of sexual desire" (Machtans 96).

[111] Historically, this is especially clear in that an understanding of Islam as misogynistic has relied on an understanding of the headscarf as a symbol the oppression of Muslim women. The politically "overdetermined symbol of the headscarf," the implications of which have been explored in several important scholarly works (Weber, Violence and Gender; Mahmood), is often interpreted by those who oppose it as "inhabiting an illegitimate moral space beyond the limits of the German nation" (Mandel 11).

Brown men are labelled as predators, white women (representing the nation) are presented as

victims, women of color and their experiences remain invisible, and white men can be left to

play the role of the savior, tasked with defending the German nation (and German women) from

outsiders.

In German immigration discourse, the dichotomy constructed between those who are

perceived as capable of integrating and those who are not relies upon a racialized and binary

understanding of the modern liberal subject that many scholars have traced back to the

Enlightenment (See, for example, Lowe; Weber, "'We Must Talk about Cologne'"; Wynter;

Weheliye; El-Tayeb, *European Others*, as well as the introductory chapter to this dissertation, for

discussion.). Through the process of racialization, by which certain characteristics are assigned

to each raced group that are then deemed essential to that group's identity, certain "others" are

labelled as "integratable" and some are labelled too "other" to ever belong in Germany and in

Europe. Historically, colonizers, slave traders, and imperialists constructed "myths about the

'capacity for liberty' and narratives about the need for 'civilization' [to] serve to subjugate

enslaved, indigenous, and colonized peoples, and to obscure the violence of both their

separations and their mixtures" (Lowe 8). The "uncivilized" or those "incapable of experiencing

or enjoying liberty" of the past are now the "too different to integrate or assimilate" of today's

immigration discourses, revealing how similar processes of racialization are used in government

efforts to manage national populations. In other words, integration is the gauge that determines

the degree to which immigration has been successful in Germany. As a result, the German

government uses integration to justify the granting of asylum, refuge, permanent residency, or

citizenship to some, while offering *Duldung* to or deporting others. The discourse around

integration in Germany produces populations that are recognized and protected, and populations that are forced into (even more) precarious societal positions.

In Germany, what Johanna Schuster-Craig calls the "integrative apparatus," that which is "constituted by the movement of power *between* the institutions, networks, discourses, laws, and philosophical or moral statements" having to do with integration (Schuster-Craig 608–09, emphasis in the original), is both informed by the racialized hierarchization of migrants and refugees, and reveals the German state's reliance on racialized understandings of groups that "belong" and "do not belong" to the German populace (Schuster-Craig 608). Indeed, although Germany's 2016 Integration Law came into effect after the Cologne attacks, Schuster-Craig shows how this "'new' integration law [was] hardly new, but rather an expansion of an integrative apparatus that emerged in its present form after 1990" (Schuster-Craig 608), and which relied upon an integrative apparatus already in effect during the 1960s-1970s as primarily Turkish Guest Workers were travelling to and then staying in Germany. The citizenship law of the 1990s that changed the requirements for being or becoming a German citizen from the ability to prove one's German heritage or "blood," to a (albeit limited) birthright law, the 2005 Immigration Law and its 2007 amendments, together with the 2016 Integration Law form the official legal foundation for an integration policy that Schuster-Craig argues is based on a group's perceived ability to integrate (608). In this way, the integrative apparatus "also reproduces an epistemological order in which white/ethnic Germans are seen as both benevolent gatekeepers who offer opportunities for immigrants to integrate, as well as stern sentinels tasked with guarding a national cultural (sic) threatened by ethnic, racial, and religious diversity" (Schuster-Craig 611-612).

In other words, because within the 2016 *Integrationsgesetz* (Integration Act)[112] integration is understood as the necessary prerequisite to civic and societal participation, the integrative apparatus requires that a refugee or migrant acquire certain skills (e.g., concrete German language skills and the more arbitrary, essentialist, and racialized sense of what counts as "German behavior") (see especially the conversation about the necessity of the Act as proposed in the Große Koalition bill (May 31, 2016), CDU/CSU und SPD 23), and perform Germanness in a way that proves both orderly (i.e. in line with normative understandings of what Germanness entails) and economically beneficial to the nation. However, although integration is supposed to be a two-way process whereby the German government assists refugees and migrants in integrating by offering German language and integration courses, providing opportunities for these groups to achieve gainful employment, helping refugees and migrants find places to live that prevent the formation of so-called "ghettos…[and to] prevent ethnic colonies from forming" (610), several scholars (including Schuster-Craig) and refugee rights organizations have pointed to the many ways the German government has failed to uphold its end of the bargain (See, for example, Schuster-Craig 615–16; Schneider; "Nach dem Integrationsgesetz"; *Stellungnahme zum Referentenentwurf*). "These obstacles work against 'integration' by promoting the development of a racialized economic underclass—at the same time they keep the apparatus of integration firmly in place" (Schuster-Craig 623). Gutiérrez Rodríguez puts it this way:

> The categorization of refugees into different statuses attached to the
> process of application and recognition of asylum produces a hierarchical
> order, a nomenclature reminiscent of the orientalist and racialized
> practices of European colonialism and imperialism. Asylum is ruled by

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[112] The August 6, 2016 *Integrationsgesetz* (again, the Integration Law) has been sharply criticized and vehemently opposed by pro-immigration and refugee ally groups in Germany, including the Refugee Council of North-Rhine-Westphalia (Flüchtlingsrat Nordrhein-Westphalen), who refers to the law as the I*ntegrationsverhinderungsgesetz* (the Integration Hindrance Law) (Deutscher Bundestag).

the governance of migration based on a range of economic interests and
cultural dynamics rooted in the history of the production of the racialized
Other. ("The Coloniality" EGR 21).

Considering the power and influence that labelling some refugees as "worthy of asylum"
and others as "unworthy" has, and considering the deep embeddedness and historical
significance of the forms of "othering" that shape these categories, what are the possibilities and
limitations faced by refugee activists and allies as they articulate their struggles against
sexualized violence in Germany, and try to do so in non-racializing terms? I now turn to a
discussion of the strategies taken up by Syrer gegen Sexismus and #ausnahmslos, as they grapple
with these and other questions.

Syrer gegen Sexismus

The Facebook campaign Syrer gegen Sexismus (Syrians against Sexism) was first
launched on January 9, 2016 by Sakher Al-Mohammad, at the time a 27-year-old refugee who
fled his home in Syria in 2014. What started as an online campaign set up to address the issue of
sexism in Germany after the Cologne attacks became, for a brief time, a refugee-led social
justice movement that called for "solidarity with the victims of sexual assault" and that
condemned "every kind of harassment, racism, violence, and hate" (Syrer gegen Sexismus,
"#SyrerGegenSexismus"). Two weeks following the attacks on January 16, Syrer gegen
Sexismus hosted a demonstration in front of the Cologne Cathedral, during which participants
passed out roses and flyers to passers-by, according to the activists, thereby representing the
activists' appreciation of the women of Cologne (Trimborn). Overall, Syrer gegen Sexismus
designed and implemented three main activist actions over the course of the nearly four months
they were active: a social media project, a brief engagement with the German public during the

aforementioned demonstration, and the publication of a series of videos on YouTube that resemble public service announcements.

Syrian "cultures, values, and communities"

Refugees in the German context are often not distinguished from one another by national origin, which has a particularly important impact especially within integration discourses, where characteristics already attributed to particular national-cultural groups through various cultural practices serve to justify asylum decisions depending on various groups' perceived ability or inability to integrate into German society. The homogenization of the nation's refugees, then, serves to uncritically combine presuppositions and stereotypes about various national groups represented in the refugee community, thereby constructing a figure onto which the fears of the "other" can stick.[113] Following this logic, then, refugees are left with trying to prove their integratability, which is particularly difficult when "refugees" as a monolithic group are blamed for things like the Cologne attacks.

Amid the responses on Twitter to the January-16 demonstration hosted by Syrer gegen Sexismus in front of the Cologne Cathedral, was the popular idea – repeated over and over again – that if it had been German men who had perpetrated the attacks, they would not have felt the need to apologize for other Germans.[114] This sentiment provides insight into the predicament

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[113] Here, as in Chapter One, I'm using Sara Ahmed's idea about the "stickiness" of certain affects to certain bodies.

[114] Interestingly, yet another tied the "left's" reaction to New Year's Eve to the "left's" reaction to the murder of Khaled Bahray (See Chapter 1 for an extensive discussion about this). The read: "Lasst mich raten, die Täter vom Silvester waren wie im Fall 'Khaled Bahray' wieder mal an vorderster Front am mitdemonstrieren...Links = Lachnummer" ("Let me guess, the perpetrators from New Year's Eve were, just like they were for [the protests after] 'Khaled Bahray' [referring to his death], at the front of the demonstration…left = laughingstock") (@swires86). (Note: This Twitter account is now suspended (last checked March 19, 2019).) Because it was later discovered that Bahray's roommate had murdered him, and that this man had also shown up at demonstrations against right-wing violence in the wake of Bahray's death, the person who posted this is implying that the men protesting against sexism were the same men who were involved in the violence of New Year's Eve.

faced by Syrer gegen Sexismus: Within the discourse around the attacks, the perpetrators had already been conflated with all refugees, so that the members of Syrer gegen Sexismus were, in the public eye, part of the homogenized group of refugees responsible. Syrer gegen Sexismus expressed their solidarity with Germans, thereby attempting to remove themselves from the homogenized group of refugees being blamed for the attacks in public discussions. They also employed the language of national origin, which is, for them, synonymous with cultural heritage, and which accounts for differences between refugees. According to this understanding, the term "refugee" must be used together with a national qualifier, for example "Syrian refugees" or "Iranian refugees." What unites refugees, according to Syrer gegen Sexismus, is the fact that these are people who left their home countries as a result of conflict; once in Germany, however, any claim to unity can really only be made on the basis of a shared nationality, not as a result of refugees' shared relationship with the state, for example.

In an attempt to both prove their own ability to integrate into German society and to distance themselves from refugees who committed the crimes on New Year's Eve, Syrer gegen Sexismus differentiated themselves from the perpetrators of the attacks by advocating for an understanding of refugees as a diverse group, made up of sub-groups who share a national and cultural identity. In doing so, the group was able to argue that refugees from Syria share in the same value system as Germans, without making claims about refugees from other areas of the world. Although this thinking relies upon the idea that culture and, by extension, mentality and values are immutable, ahistorical, and essential, it also makes solidarity with Germans and survivors of the attacks possible. In one of their first statements posted on their Facebook page, they wrote:

> …[w]e agree, that these criminal behaviors are not [a part of] our
> mentality and culture…These criminal offenders only represent

themselves, detached from their nationality and religion, [and their] political affiliation. And they do not represent our values and culture that we hold dear. And, above all else, we want to help the police to find out the identities of these criminals. As Syrian people, we came to Germany in order to find peaceful and quiet lives, and to protect our children and families from the atrocities of war that have killed us through hunger, expulsion, and bombings. What happened on New Year's Eve against women around Germany brought us more pain. ("Syrer gegen Sexismus").

Calling upon a shared history and collective memory of the experience of violence in Syria, activists characterize Syrians as a people who are incapable of committing sexualized violence because their culture is not conducive to this form of criminality. The strategy of employing an identity-based expression of solidarity allowed Syrer gegen Sexismus to construct the perpetrators of the attacks in opposition to the way they presented their own national cohort. Interestingly, in this statement, perpetrators are identified as individuals responsible for their own actions, but Syrians are constructed as a homogenous group. Syrians are described as people who came to Germany to live calmly and peacefully, and to take care of their families. The perpetrators of the Cologne attacks, on the other hand, were not understood through any particular cultural, religious, economic, or political lens during the group's first engagements with the public. In these first articulations of the group's positioning with respect to the Cologne attacks, the perpetrators "are only representative of themselves." Syrer gegen Sexismus claimed solidarity with the survivors of the attacks and even offered their help to police in locating the perpetrators, while characterizing Syrians as a group whose values would not have made it possible for them to have taken part.

This strategy required that Syrians both convince the public that their culture is compatible with German culture, and address the homogenization of refugees in the German mainstream. The Syrer gegen Sexismus Facebook page quickly became a virtual collection of

photographs of people, mainly men, holding up signs that read: "Wir suchen den Frieden" ("We're looking for peace"); "Wir respektieren Frauen" ("We respect women") (Yakni); and, "We respect German values" (Ebdulqadir). These statements do the work of both supporting the group's claim that their values are in line with German values, and exposing what these values are. In other words, in claims to compatibility with German society, the Syrians in these pictures characterize Germany as an inherently peaceful (i.e. non-violent) place, where women are respected. The attacks are again framed as having disrupted German society to the extent that they rocked its very core.

In an interview on the one-year anniversary of the attacks, Al-Mohammad said, "The media generalized by saying 'all of the refugees, all of the Arabs'…[b]ut what happened is against our values, against our cultures and against our communities, too" ("'I Speak out Because I'm Part of German Society Now'"). In an attempt to disrupt the overgeneralization of refugees and Arabs as perpetrators, the founder of Syrer gegen Sexismus uses the plurals "values…cultures…communities" to account for the fact that there are many different kinds of people who make up the groups known as "refugees" and "Arabs." He does so, however, without problematizing the assignment of certain specific values to a culture or community – the sentiment that something can be "for or against" a culture – and simultaneously setting up a distinct boundary between the cultures he's speaking about, and the cultures that somehow belong to the people who perpetrated the attacks.

In addition, the Syrian national identity plays a vital role in shaping the aims and priorities of the group, and the representation of Syrian culture, lauded as morally-grounded and non-violent throughout the group's work, serves as evidence of how Syrians differ from other refugees. Any attempt, therefore, to speak against the media's generalizations about refugees and

Arabs, as Al-Mohammad did, is shaped by the fact that the criticisms are emanating from one specific group of people – namely Syrians – and not from a group of refugees originating from different parts of the world, for example. It is not convincing, then, that Al-Mohammad is speaking on behalf of all refugees or Arabs here: the name of his group – *Syrians* against Sexism, not Refugees or Arabs against Sexism – indicates that any mention of the word "our" refers only to Syrian values, cultures, and communities, and not to a broader group's values, cultures, and communities.

Syrian-German Solidarities

In addition to easing Germans' fears about Syrian "others" in Germany by evoking the language of shared values, as one activist did on a sign at the demonstration that read "we respect the values of German socity (sic)" (*SyrerGegenSexismus Demo*), Syrer gegen Sexismus also attempted to make an affective connection with Germans by appealing to what the group describes as Germans' and Syrians' shared pain in the wake of the attacks. On their Facebook page, the group draws a parallel between how Germans were feeling about the "suffering of women in Germany" at the hands of the refugee-perpetrators, to how they were feeling after their lives had been turned upside down as a result of the war in Syria ("Syrer gegen Sexismus"). The group indicates that their newly-developing affective connection to Germany exacerbated Syrians' own emotional responses to the attacks, saying how affected and pained they were by the events that occurred on New Year's Eve ("Syrer gegen Sexismus").

Refugees and allies from Kiel, cities in North-Rhine-Westphalia, Berlin, Eckenhagen, Wettringen, Leipzig, and internationally in countries like Sweden, expressed their own solidarity with Al-Mohammad, his team of activists in Cologne, and to the city of Cologne and the German

nation through their contributions to the photo montage on the group's website (Syrer gegen

Sexismus, "#SyrerGegenSexismus"), which included a version of a popular phrase recited in the

wake of disasters, large-scale acts of violence, and national tragedies: "We are all Cologne"

(Leue).[115]

For members of Syrer gegen Sexismus to declare "We are all Cologne" was to claim

solidarity with the people of Cologne. In this case, the adherence to the narrative of German

victimhood in the face of a drastic increase of immigration to Germany would benefit group

members only insofar as they would be able to prove the extent to which they were "just like"

Germans, or at least that their culture – again, problematically understood as something that

travels with Syrians and that is inscribed on their bodies – is compatible with German culture.

Therefore, their claims to solidarity in this case reify the distinction between refugees who could

belong in Germany, like Syrians, and refugees who were blamed for the attacks, who could not.

On a placard placed near their demonstration, Syrer gegen Sexismus additionally

expressed their solidarity with the victims of the theft, sexual assault, and rape that occurred on

New Year's Eve. They wrote, "In the name of humanity, which unites us all, and the right for all

human beings to live in freedom and peace, we are here today: To stand in solidarity with the

victims of sexual assault and to condemn any kind of harassment, racism, violence, and hatred!"

(Syrer gegen Sexismus, "#SyrerGegenSexismus"). The ability to both claim solidarity with the

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[115] This particular statement of solidarity – "We are all Cologne" – is reminiscent of similar strategies taken up by activists after the Charlie Hebdo attacks in January 2015 – "We are Charlie" – and after the killing of Khaled Bahray in Dresden around the same time – "We are Khaled." In each case, activists claimed solidarity with the organization, person, or, in the case of Syrer gegen Sexismus, the city, that had been harmed and/or that had experienced loss. After the Charlie Hebdo attacks, for activists to claim that they were Charlie Hebdo, was to say that the shootings of employees at the controversial magazine had been a direct attack on their own values and even on their way of life. Because, for many, Charlie Hebdo is the embodiment of what the guarantee to freedom of speech in the West means and an example of how it can be enacted, the Charlie Hebdo shooting became an attack on Western values themselves.

city and with the actual victims relies on a narrative of integration. In Al-Mohammad's view, his activism is a necessary consequence of living in Germany. In another interview, he is quoted as saying, "I consider myself as part of the Germany (sic) society. That is why I speak out" ("'I Speak out Because I'm Part of German Society Now'"). Al-Mohammad is both affectively connected and socially well-integrated into German society, though the exact metrics by which he has measured the extent of his integration and what exactly being a part of German society looks like remain unclear. He stakes a claim to German society through a claim of a shared humanity based on Syrians' successful integration, according to Al-Mohammad. Consequently, those who apparently do not share in the same value system, also do not share in nor have access to the same humanity.

Constructing the Other (as North African)

In an interview a year following the attacks, the interviewer prompted Al-Mohammed to discuss the fact that it was mainly refugees who had committed the crimes on New Year's Eve. Al-Mohammad replied, "Refugees are people who want to live in peace, and so those who committed these acts [are] not refugees" ("Ein Jahr nach"). He continued by saying that "they" know that if they "make problems" with others, "they will be arrested for one hour, released, and then won't be deported or anything because it will take the German government another year to make any decision regarding their asylum cases" ("Ein Jahr nach"). Al-Mohammad then identified the perpetrators explicitly as a group of North Africans ("Ein Jahr nach"). This stereotypical framing of certain refugees' circumstances in Germany, and involvement in the attacks, was informed by the ongoing national discussion about the responsibility of Germans to take in refugees from safe countries of origin. Although Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria have still

not been officially declared "safe", the *Bundesregierung* was, at the time, holding deliberations

regarding *Asylpaket II* (Asylum Package II), which, alongside sections that would ensure

speedier deportations and make it more difficult for families to join a relative who had

successfully been offered asylum, would also name these specific countries as "safe"

("Asylpaket II in Kraft"). However, this proposed part of the newest set of asylum laws was,

after some discussion, taken out of the package before the *Bundesrat*, the other chamber of

German parliament, approved the remaining sections in March 2016 ("Ausgewählte").

The fact that the majority of perpetrators of the attacks had been identified as Algerian,

Moroccan, and Tunisian as media coverage continued into the month of February, Al-

Mohammad's comment was not a new allegation against a group that had otherwise not been in

the spotlight. Quite the contrary, the "breaking off" of Syrians from a broader group of refugees

by explicitly naming the perpetrators as North African, reified both the narrative that it was only

North Africans involved (which is not true – see the statistics above), as well as a particular

narrative circulating in the mainstream and in parliament at the time that characterized North

Africans in Germany as "non-integratable," "underserving of asylum," and as "economic

migrants" who did not actually require asylum to escape persecution. (See my discussion in the

Introduction to this dissertation for an in-depth explanation of the political impact the

designation between "refugee" and "migrant" has had on asylum seekers in Germany).[116] In

other words, Al-Mohammad's comment relies upon the public's prejudice against asylum

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[116] Some scholars and activists have advocated for an abolishment of the term "migrant" altogether, instead
expressing a preference for the singular use of the term "refugee," which they say better signifies the relationship the
person moving from their homeland has with the state to which they come no matter the reason for leaving their
country of origin. The term also better "recognizes our obligations to people coming to these shores, whether as
refugees or migrants (Bhambra). See also (Malone) for a journalistic perspective. However, there is a long history of
feminist "migrant" activists claiming and redefining the term migrant in Germany, even among activists who are
second and third generation residents of Germany. This may be because of the association with the term "with
migration history" ("mit Migrationshintergrund"), a commonly used term in Germany.

seekers from North Africa, as well as on the deep embeddedness of the trope of the dangerous Black man who has no regard for German law and authority throughout German cultural history. In this way, Syrer gegen Sexismus used their platform to both demonstrate Syrians' willingness and ability to integrate into German society, but did so primarily by arguing that the Cologne attacks had corroborated the belief that North Africans in particular did not belong in Germany.

The danger of supporting and perpetuating this narrative is evident in arguments made by some following the attacks. Several tweets, for example, argued that the violence that took place in Cologne was of a particular sort, imported from places like Egypt, where it was given the name *taharrush gamea*, a transliterated phrase from the Arabic meaning "group harassment" that circulated throughout international media following the Arab Spring. In this way, violence, and particularly violence against women, was characterized as having come from outside of Germany. The threat present on New Year's Eve in Cologne was, then, not a problem with toxic masculinity, excessive alcohol use, group pressure, patriarchy, or with violence against women in general, but a problem with the people who had arrived in Germany from nations with cultures that are framed as not being amenable with German culture. This argument redirects focus away from the victims of sexualized violence that night, and to victims – Cologne and, by extension, Germany – constructed as such through racializing narratives that have perpetrated ideas about the threat and danger of immigration to German citizens, a view that is often rehearsed by members of Pegida and the AfD.

Through the process, then, of differentiating themselves from other refugees on the basis of national and cultural difference, Syrer gegen Sexismus reifies a narrative that suggests that Western societies are far more "civilized" than those found in the East. It also reproduces the same imperialist knowledge that was used to justify Western nations' colonialization of people

who Westerners perceived as being far less "advanced" than their own. While this narrative might have served to benefit Syrians in the short-term, ultimately it strengthens the logic used by the German government that justifies the need for increased border security, larger police presence, broadened surveillance practices, and narrower immigration and asylum laws that will ultimately negatively affect them as well. The effects of the group's reliance on such a narrative can be seen in the three-videos series developed by members of the group in the months following the attacks, to which I now turn.

Smiling, Appearances, and Relationships

In one of their final activist endeavors, Syrer gegen Sexismus published three short videos on YouTube on February 6, 2016. The video campaign is comprised of a series of public service announcements designed to evoke conversation about how women (and in one instance gay men) in Germany are perceived, to inform viewers about the appropriate ways to treat women, and how to avoid sexist behavior in the German context. The themes of each video – smiling, appearances, and relationships – represent three different things that could manifest in anyone's day-to-day routine, and could either be directed at a person (e.g. smiling), or could be something that is passively noticed by an observer (e.g. someone's appearance or someone's relationship with another person). All three videos were filmed against a simple white background at various locations throughout Cologne. The videos are each one minute long, and feature normal, everyday people posing, smiling, flirting, kissing, hugging, or just standing and looking into the camera as they appear in front of the white backdrop. There is no dialogue or voiceover, just extra-diegetic music playing throughout, and text that appears on the screen at various intervals. At the end of each video, the camera zooms out so that the viewer can see the

artificial background, lighting equipment, and the different parts of the city of Cologne where the actors were filmed.

The first video begins with a light-skinned woman with long, brown hair smiling at the camera. She wears dark red, almost black lipstick and gauges in her ears. The woman is replaced on the screen by the words "Ein Flirt?" ("A flirt?"), and then a new person, this time an olive-skinned woman in a dark blue headscarf and a light grey blazer appears. She stands stoically at first and then, after a few seconds, her face relaxes as she slowly moves her lips into a full-fledged smile. The text that follows reads "Ein Angebot?" ("An invitation?). The next woman is also light-skinned, and appears wearing a bright orange vest with reflectors, indicating that she likely works outside and perhaps in the dark. The sentence that follows this woman's appearance on screen asks if she is "[d]ie zukunftige Mutter deiner Kinder?" ("the future mother of your [informal/familiar] children"). After this, a series of women, all light-skinned, appear on the screen in turn, smiling into the camera. The text that follows reads simply, "Manchmal ist ein Lächeln auch nur ein Lächeln" ("Sometimes a smile is just a smile."), and then "#SyrerGegenSexismus" (Tsui, *Lächeln*).

The second video entitled "Erscheinungsbild" ("Appearance") begins with a shot of a white woman's feet that then cuts to, presumably, the same woman's bare shoulder. The text reads: "Ein leichtes Mädchen?" ("A promiscuous girl?"). The next woman is the same woman who appeared in the first video in a headscarf, here featured wearing the exact same outfit, but facing away from the camera. The viewer is asked "Eine Extremistin?" ("An extremist?"). Another white woman follows. The camera focuses in on the woman's waist, and the viewer is shown a thin torso. She is wearing black shorts over black tights, a red shirt that reveals a small part of her stomach, and, as the camera pans upward, the viewer follows the woman's arms as

she twists a black leather jacket before putting it on. The camera pans out once again, this time down the woman's other leg where her stocking is torn revealing a small amount of skin on her thigh. The text that fades in next reads: "Eine Schlampe?" ("A slut?") and the video then shows each of the three women in turn, and this time each of them have their eyes on the camera. It's also the first time the viewer sees the women's faces during the course of the short video. The message here is that "Niemand sollte aufgrund des Erscheinungsbildes beurteilt werden" ("No one should be judged on the basis of how they look"). Again, the viewer sees each woman in her larger context at the end of the video, this time revealing that the first woman we saw was actually wearing a two-piece bathing suit, that the second woman was standing in front of the Cologne Cathedral, and that the third was posing in the middle of a street somewhere in Cologne (Tsui, *Erscheinungsbild*).

Taken together, the first two videos can be read as Syrer gegen Sexismus's attempt to intervene into problematic understandings of women that turn them into objects, and which sexualize them even in scenarios – e.g., when someone smiles at someone else, or when someone is wearing something some might consider promiscuous – that are utterly banal, plutonic, neutral, or that simply do not concern the onlooker. Given the intensity of attention the German public was paying to issues around sexualized crime, women's rights, and immigration in the months following the Cologne attacks, the videos contribute an important argument about women's ability to move unencumbered through public space: unjudged, unharmed, with their own subjectivity and agency intact. The spatial element of the videos – the panning out at the end of each video to reveal various places in Cologne – positions these women as active participants in Cologne's landscape. The women in these videos look directly into the camera, portraying confident, self-assured women, who are neither passive nor victimized. However, all of the

women depicted are light-, olive-, or fair-skinned, suggesting that the women to whom this subject position belongs are white, or perhaps Brown, but certainly not Black, in turn erasing Black women from the German landscape completely.

Finally, the third video called "Beziehungen" ("Relationships") concludes the series with a look at several different pairs of people. The first pair, a heterosexual couple, appears smiling with their arms around each other. The viewer is asked "Eine Ausnahme?" ("An exception"), but it is not entirely clear what we might consider to be exceptional (or not) about this couple. Then another young heterosexual couple are filmed as the man, a tall blonde man with glasses, stands behind and hugs a woman with long black hair, until the text replaces them with the question "Ein kleines Abenteuer?" ("A little adventure?"). A woman in a black headscarf is then filmed as she picks up her daughter, who's wearing a red dress and pigtails. No text appears as they disappear from the screen. Instead, two men are filmed holding hands and laughing with each other until the text takes over asking whether this relationship is the symptom of "Eine unheilbare Krankheit?" ("An incurable illness?"). Following the precedent set in the first two videos, the pairs are shown again in sequence and the text follows, this time reading: "Jede legale Beziehung sollte respektiert werden" ("Every legal relationship should be respected"). The video concludes, just like the others, with longshots that reveal how the filming took place in front of various locations throughout Cologne (Tsui, *Beziehungen*).

While the first two videos featured only women, this final one focused on relationships between men and women, a woman and her daughter, and gay men. Notably, there are no gender non-conforming people, nor lesbian or non-traditional relationships (e.g., polyamorous) represented at all. It is not entirely clear, then, what this particular video is adding to post-Cologne public discourse, especially because the primary concern was how a group of men

assaulted a group of women in public space, not how a handful of relationship configurations are perceived by onlookers. The question remains, then: to whom are these lessons directed? Who, according to Syrer gegen Sexismus, needs to be educated about the respectful treatment of women, and about relationships, in the wake of Cologne?

The videos' descriptions reveal one possible answer. The captions posted under all three videos read, "The campaign is still active producing educational videos aiming at creating an atmosphere where people respect each others (sic) values and ways of life" (Tsui, *Lächeln*). Considering the videos exist with German subtitles in one version, English text in another, and Arabic script in a third, the message is possibly meant to be a relatively universal one, considering the ubiquity of these languages in Germany in particular. The idea of a universal message of respect could very well be a sincere one that has the potential of speaking to people across any real or imagined national-cultural borders.

In a more pessimistic reading, however, the message of gender equality and acceptance of some kinds of relationships could indicate that Syrer gegen Sexismus has slipped into rhetoric that has been used to distinguish so-called Western values from (a lack of) values "brought into" Germany by refugees thought to be not accustomed to nor, importantly, not able to acclimate themselves toward a society built on German and European values. Egalitarian gender relations have become one of the signifiers of whether a nation or culture has "achieved civility" in Western discourse. That is to say, that liberal feminism has become normalized in political discourse in the West, and is used as a means of differentiating between populations deemed modern, and those that have not yet achieved modernity. What often appears as stark differences between the egalitarian West and the premodern "rest," however, is the result of a kind of discursive acrobatics, that ultimately paints some forms of real or perceived sexualized violence

(e.g. "*tarrrush gamea,*" honor killings, the obligation for women to wear the headscarf or burka) as inherently belonging to non-Western cultures, and as much more prevalent, dangerous, and essential to these cultures than more "Western forms of sexualized violence." If Syrer gegen Sexismus had again fallen into the discursive trap that forced them to differentiate themselves from North Africans in Germany in ways that helped to define who belongs to Germany and who does not, then the videos were produced from a positionality ultimately aligned with normative notions of Germanness and belonging. These powerful signifiers are rooted in exclusionary understandings of what it means to be able to belong to Europe, and, as a result, to the category of the human. Therefore, these videos would continue the practice of characterizing Syrians as integratable and thus as having access to human rights via their access to the "human," and North Africans neither integratable, nor, ultimately, as human.

In the next section, I turn to #ausnahmslos. The #ausnahmslos campaign framed sexualized violence in more intersectional terms, using the Cologne attacks as an opportunity to address how the discourse around Cologne had been a racialized one from the start.[117] As a result, the campaign represents one possible option for addressing the complex issue of sexualized violence in Germany from a position that explicitly calls out racism.

#Ausnahmslos

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[117] By April 30, nearly all of the posts on the Syrer gegen Sexismus Facebook page were related to the #MakeFacebookRed campaign meant to shed light on the bloodshed in Syria, especially in Aleppo. The Cologne Demo for Aleppo attracted 550 participants and took place, again, near Cologne's main train station. People were called to #Save_Aleppo and to #StoptheHolocaust. The hashtag #Aleppo_is_burning, or in German #Alleppobrennt, replaced #syrergegensexismus on Facebook and Twitter, and films with activists talking about the war in Syria, the attacks on Aleppo, and the horrors faced by Syrians still in their homeland appeared on YouTube. The April 30 demonstration was carried out mostly in silence as activists in red shirts stood next to images of a Syria completely shattered by war.

The #ausnahmslos (#without_exception) social media campaign began on January 11, 2016 in response to the discourse that had been developing around the Cologne attacks. Feminist activists behind the campaign were concerned about the limited way that the mainstream media, populist organizations, and some recognizably "feminist" individuals like Alice Schwarzer had been shaping the conversation about the Cologne attacks. They argued that these high-profile commentators had been over-simplifying and/or not critically engaging with the complicated relationships between violence, gender, race, and sexuality that were at play both during the attacks and throughout its aftermath. For example, contributor Jasna Strick wrote, "Instead of looking at unjust gender structures, structural power, and problematic images of masculinity in a differentiated way, along with the associated cultural and ideological backgrounds, the problem since Cologne has too often been linked to different cultures and specific religions or countries of origin of the perpetrators" (ausnahmslos).[118] In particular, the group of people behind the #ausnahmslos campaign targeted Pegida for "instrumentaliz[ing] feminist agendas in order to stir up hatred against certain groups of people" (ausnahmslos). This is reminiscent of what Angela Robbie has pointed out, namely that "neoliberalism is characterized by a 'double movement' that makes the ideas of feminism (as well as gay rights and antiracist movements) seem like second nature or common sense, while the movement themselves are dismissed, even reviled" (Baer 87).

Central to the group's concern was that violence against women is only considered a problem in German society when it can be explained as a problem with the racialized "other." Instead, the people behind the #ausnahmslos campaign insisted that the events on New Year's Eve in Cologne had not transpired because of the increased number of refugees in Germany, as

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[118] The German original reads, "Statt ungerechte Geschlechterstrukturen, strukturelle Macht und problematische Männlichkeitsbilder differenziert, auch mit den verbundenen kulturellen und weltanschaulichen Hintergründen, in den Blick zu nehmen, wird das Problem seit Köln allzu oft pauschal mit bestimmten Religionen oder Herkunftsländern von Tätern in Verbindung gebracht."

some in the mainstream had suggested, but because violence against women is a pervasive problem everywhere. Whereas some people had promoted the deportation of refugees and asylum-seekers following the attacks presuming that doing so would end violence against women in Germany, the #ausnahmslos campaign argued that this was a racist solution that would not do anything to address the existence of sexism, misogyny, and sexualized violence in Germany. In fact, they contended, it was only the public nature of this particular incident and the fact that men of color had been involved in its perpetration, that the Cologne attacks had gained the attention that it had. #ausnahmslos was a call for all instances and forms of sexism and sexualized violence to draw attention, to become causes for concern, and to instigate outrage and action on the part of the public. Whereas the claim in the mainstream had been, "Violence against German women by criminal non-entities cannot be tolerated," #ausnahmslos creators and supporters were making the claim that, "Violence against women by criminals cannot be tolerated" (Mack, in response to a tweet by Werner Beumelberg). In other words, all forms of violence against women, no matter who perpetuates them, should be considered insupportable.

The group of 22 people responsible for creating the petition that would circulate around the world was nominated for the Clara-Zetkin-Frauenpreis für politische Intervention (Clara Zetkin Women's Prize for Political Intervention) on February 10, 2016, and won this award on March 4 of the same year. Among the original authors were activists who had founded or been involved in the 2013 #aufschrei (#shoutout) campaign that documented everyday instances of sexism, archiving them on Twitter; the subsequent #schauhin (#look(at_that)/#look_that_way)) campaign that did the same thing by collecting people's experiences with everyday racism and micro-aggressions in Germany; and the #StopBildSexism campaign that explicitly called for *Die Bild-Zeitung* (the most-circulated magazine in Europe) to end their use of sexist advertisements.

In addition, members included contributors to kleinerdrei.org, a feminist and queer online forum where people wrote about "whatever is in [their] hearts" ("kleinerdrei.org")[119], and *Missy Magazine*, one of Germany's most popular online anti-racist feminist websites and publications. Among the most well-known creators of the campaign was co-founder of #schauhin, Muslim feminist hijabi, newspaper columnist, social media consultant, and blogger[120], Kübra Gümüşay.[121]

By January 20, a petition created and circulated by the people behind the #ausnahmslos campaign had garnered 11,000 signatures. Hundreds of people from all walks of life and all parts of the globe had signed the petition in a statement of solidarity. "All of the undersigned," the document read, were "distancing [them]selves from sexist, racist, classist, ableist, homo- or transphobic, cis-sexist, anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim racist und far-right positions" (#ausnahmslos, *Mitzeichner_innen*). In what follows, I examine the way that the people behind #ausnahmslos represented themselves and their project, how they formed solidarities and coalitions, and what strategies they employed to do so. Ultimately, I argue that the campaign was able to avoid repeating the process of difference-making that has historically rendered some as belonging while excluding others. They did this by de-centering the figures of "the white German female victim" and "the Black or Brown male perpetrator," and thereby challenged the underlying construction of the "other" that enables these racializing signifiers to exist in the first place, and

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[119] The blogger officially closed the blog on December 21, 2018 (Kleinerdrei).

[120] Though this blog no longer exists, at least as of when I last checked on December 23, 2018.

[121] In 2018, Gümüşay successfully sued the German "feminist" magazine Emma, maintaining that certain claims made in an article originally published on January 3, 2018 entitled "Die Schwestern" were false. In April, a court ordered Emma to delete three of these statements. One of the claims made was that Gümüşay has called "'integration highly discriminatory as it is equivalent to a 'self-abandonment' of one's own identity" and that she then says that Salafists have "'done a lot of good' too" ("Die Schwestern"). Among other things, the unidentified article's author also accused Gümüşay of being two-faced: in one breath, talking about her feminist vision, and in the next remaining "silent about the wave of arrests in Turkey" ("Die Schwestern").

which ultimately exclude the "other" from accessing the Westernized category of the human. As a result of recognizing the racism that had infiltrated the discourse around the Cologne attacks, in Weber's words, they were able to "demonstrate an alternative imagination of the human, one that decouples the human from Europeanness" (Weber, "'We Must Talk about Cologne'" 70). Importantly, #ausnahmslos was not meant to be read as a reaction to the Cologne attacks themselves, as some critics of the campaign alleged. Instead, it was intended it to be read as a response to a society that allows for such events to occur, and that then only pays attention to them when it serves to help differentiate between "us" and "them."

Claiming Solidarity, Building Coalitions

The #ausnahmslos campaign, from its inception, emerged out of collaboration between people from many different areas of society, each of whom came to the project with different agendas, focuses, experiences, identities, and opinions. Co-organizer Kübra Gümüşay said of this, "Never before have so many feminists from so many different areas of society come out with such a list of demands/policy statement [Stellungnahme] together" (Vorsamer).[122] In the span of just a few days, the co-organizers were joined by thousands of people around the world, all of whom, by the signing the petition, had declared both their solidarity with the victims/survivors of the Cologne attacks and all manifestations of sexual violence, and had simultaneously refused to place blame for such violence on any one racial, ethnic, or national group of people. Among the first signatories were Simone Peter and Katja Dörner, the former National Chair and the Interim Chair of the Grünen respectively; Claudia Roth, the Vice President of the German Parliament; Renate Künast, Chair of the Legal Affairs Committee for the German Parliament; Ulle Schauws

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[122] German original: "Das gab es noch nie, dass sich so viele Feministinnen aus den unterschiedlichsten Bereichen zusammengetan und gemeinsam eine Stellungnahme veröffentlicht haben"

and Franziska Brantner, German Parliamentarians, and EU Parliament members Terry Reintke,

and Ska Keller (*Gegen sexualisierte*). The immediate support of people both inside and directly

connected to the German government, as well as outside the borders of Germany and, as is the

case with the EU government officials, tied to supranational organizations, signified the

transnational power of the #ausnahmslos message.

      Solidarity in this instance meant that feminist agenda items such as refusing to blame

survivors/victims of sexual violence; ensuring that survivors/victims get the help and access to

resources that they need; working for gender equality and societal empathy; and naming sexual

assault, misconduct, violence, and rape as illegal, were combined with a complete disregard for

geopolitical divisions. Standing in transnational solidarity allowed for government officials,

refugees and other people who suffer from their precarious relationships with state apparatuses,

citizens, and people regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, or sexuality to own equal

parts in the same message. Fatima El-Tayeb has argued that in queering ethnicities by organizing

across ethnic divisions, in particular, it is possible to construct what ultimately becomes

diaspora-producing, cross-ethnic articulations of processes of racialization, and simultaneously

to expose the implications of these processes (El-Tayeb, "Secular Submissions" 55–56). In a

similar way, the #ausnahmslos campaign allowed for a sort of cross-ethnic, -national, and -racial

diaspora to emerge in ways that extended feminist solidarities in very different ways than the

ideas of "global sisterhood" had in the past.[123] Instead, as a part of #ausnahmslos, people from

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[123] In my opinion, one of the most seething indictments of the global sisterhood trope belongs to Gayatri Spivak who, in her book A Critique of Postcolonial Reason writes "…even as we feminist critics discover the troping error of the masculinist truth-claim to universality or academic objectivity, we perform the lie of constituting a truth of global sisterhood where the mesmerizing model remains male and female sparring partners of generalizable or universalizable sexuality who are the chief protagonists in that European contest. In order to claim sexual difference where it makes a difference, global sisterhood must receive this articulation even if the sisters in question are Asian, African, Arab. Or so some of us had thought. In today's atmosphere of triumphalist globalization, where the old slogan of 'Women in Development' has been blithely changed into 'Gender and Development,' and a hard-hatted

across the world could speak about the preconditions – the existence of patriarchy, and the failures of states to name and legislate against sexual misconduct, assault, and violence, racism and xenophobia – that gave space for the Cologne attacks to take place in the first place. By avoiding the assignment of nationalities to the victims/survivors as well as to the perpetrators of the attacks, the Cologne attacks were consequently re-conceptualized so that they were no longer framed as only a German problem, but one that is replicated around the world. As a result, the divisionary language of "us" and "the other" that I explored above disappeared.

This discursive shift also exposed the ways in which women of color and Muslim women had been excluded from the public conversation about sexualized violence in Germany. Because the discourse around Cologne had constructed white German women as the victims of the attacks perpetrated by men of color, the familiar trope of the Muslim woman, oppressed by her overly controlling father and abusive husband, could fall away. When white women were understood as having been victimized by Black and Brown men, the role of female victims within the narrative about the dangerous "other" was filled by white women, and any consideration for how sexualized violence affects women of color was, therefore, superfluous to this story.

Another way to think about the absence of women of color within the public discourse around Cologne is to consider the ways in which women of color and Muslim women have inhabited a culturally-inflected position in German society, resulting from what Weber has termed "the culture trap" (see Weber, "Beyond the Culture Trap"). This is the tendency found in the scholarly framing of women of color and Muslim women to conflate the many contexts that inform their lives, distilling any nuance down until all that is left are women who are victims of an essentialized culture, with no agency or "way out." This one-dimensional framing of Women

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white woman points the way to a smiling Arab woman in ethnic dress upon a World Bank publicity pamphlet, such utopianism is consigned to the future anterior" (Spivak 148).

of Color and Muslim women's lives prevents any discursive understanding of such women's

lives in societal, political, historical, economic, and/or institutional terms (Weber, *Violence and*

Gender 67). As a result, women of color and Muslim women are only visible when they are

viewed as creations of their own culture, and then only when that culture – i.e. a culture that is

always represented as "non-Western" – can be read as victimizing. Muslim women and women

of color, then, are only seen when their gender can be used to justify racist immigration and

integration politics, which was not necessary in the wake of Cologne because the victims of the

"misogynistic, male-dominated, aggressive, and dangerous non-Western male subject" were

white women and, by extension, the German nation.

The transnational focus of the #ausnahmslos campaign allowed for the contexts that

surround the global experiences of sexualized violence to become visible, and for the

perpetration of sexualized violence itself to be pulled from its use in racializing discourses.

Instead, the transnational scope of the project opened up space to think about the discursive

possibilities for anti-racist activism having to do with sexualized violence in general, and activist

works like #ausnahmslos in the wake of the Cologne attacks in particular. To do this,

#ausnahmslos rooted its critique of sexualized violence in a larger conversation about the effects

of existing (global) power structures.

Tackling the Widespread and Multifaceted Issue of Sexualized Violence

#ausnahmslos aimed its critiques at the ways in which sexism and its symptoms are

rooted in unjust gender structures, structural power, and problematic expectations of men paired

with a culture that produces toxic masculinity, naming sexism as a precondition for sexualized

violence. (ausnahmslos). #ausnahmslos replaced the blaming of the "other" so prevalent in

German public discourse following the attacks with a focus on how various facets of society – governments, societal attitudes, and media representations – could change, ultimately calling for a much more intersectional approach to handling sexualized violence than members of Syrer gegen Sexismus were able to employ.

However, despite the comprehensive nature of the list of demands produced by contributors to the #ausnahmslos campaign and agreed upon by members of many different social and political groups, from many different ethnicized, racialized, gendered, and nationalized backgrounds, few actual solutions are proposed. Each of 14 demands was a call for some political, societal, or media-related solution to "comba[t] sexualized violence…because it is omnipresent" (ausnahmslos). While the group's list includes demands that called for social and cultural changes, such as Demand 6, which stresses the importance of having more open discussions about sexualized violence, or Demand 12, which calls for ending the portrayal of sexism and sexualized violence as "a problem solely existent amongst certain ethnicities" (ausnahmslos), the agents who might provoke these changes remain unclear, and concrete solutions are not presented. Other items, such as Demands 3 and 8, do use the language of "we," thereby implicating the group and, presumably, all of society in "sensitiz[ing] society to the fact that sexism and sexualized violence is most likely to occur in close social environment (sic) and across all sectors of society" and participating in and perpetuating "structural discrimination" respectively (#ausnahmslos, *Against Sexualised Violence and Racism. Always. Anywhere. #ausnahmslos ("noexcuses")*). However, again, the group does not propose any strategies for taking concrete action in carrying out these demands.

#ausnahmslos explicitly calls out the ways in which racism was being mobilized in both the rendering of Muslim and/or refugee men as perpetrators, and white German women as

victims. The people behind the campaign argued that women of color, and especially Muslim women of color, enter national discourse only when their victimization and visibility can be used to ultimately serve a racist political agenda. Additionally, just as members and supporters of #ausnahmslos expose the faulty assumptions that constructed a false binary built between "perpetrators" and "victims" of sexualized violence in Germany, so too did they unravel the distinction between the gendered effects of public and visible sexualized violence, and private sexualized violence that is, partially as a result of the racialized thinking at work within mainstream discourse about violence against women, often rendered invisible or even non-existent.

Perhaps indicative of the limitations of broad-scale organizing and coalition-building, or perhaps of so-called "hashtag-activism," is that most of the group's focus and engagement on social media, particularly in the last few months in which the hashtag was used for the group's initial purposes, was on reforming Germany's so-called *Sexualstrafrecht,* also known as the "Nein-heißt-nein" ("No means no") law. In Germany, up until November 10, 2016 (the bill was passed in July), in order for sexual assault or rape to be tried as such in the court of law, evidence that the survivor/victim had resisted had to be present (*Bundestag entscheidet*). The people behind #ausnahmslos, among many others, had pushed for a legal definition of sexualized violence that did not have this requirement for many years, but it was the Cologne attacks that finally pushed the discussion into the mainstream. Having a definition of sexualized violence in the German legal code that did not rely upon a victim/survivor's behavior is a necessity, something that has been a long time coming. However, the fact that the conversation around and ultimate addition of the *Sexualstrafrecht* amendments to the law was made possible because of

the increased attention the issue of sexualized violence received as a result of the Cologne

attacks is problematic.

Considering the existence of sexualized violence everywhere, all the time, the fact that

there was an uproar when Black and Brown men perpetrators stole from, assaulted, and raped a

group of women represented primarily as white German women, begs the question why? Why

the focus on this manifestation of sexualized violence, but so little focus on sexualized violence

against People of Color, especially Women of Color, and LGBTQ+ people? On the side of

perpetration, why the lack of focus in the mainstream on the prevalence of sexual assault and

rape at events like Oktoberfest or Karneval? And, as #ausnahmslos initially asked, why the focus

on sexualized violence in public, when most incidences take place in domestic or intimate

spaces?

Though #ausnahmslos contributed a lot to the discussion around Cologne in a way that

asked the public to think about sexualized violence in all cases and "without exception," as the

name suggests, I want to suggest that their narrow focus on changes to the law toward the end of

their activist engagements, specifically the change to the *Sexualstrafrecht*,[124] highlights a

limitation to transnational feminist organizing, particularly around sexualized violence. What

would the campaign have looked like if it hadn't fizzled out just a few months after the

attacks?[125] Certainly, the racist rhetoric in the media around sexualized violence needed to be

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[124] On July 7, 2016, the so-called "Nein heißt nein" law (literally translated to "no means no," known in English as the "Just Say No" Law) was amended so that the definition of any sexual offence was reframed as that which occurs when a woman's consent is not respected, and not necessarily an act that had an element of coercion, as the law had previously required (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 17). The amendment to Germany's criminal code made groping and "group actions" criminally punishable for the first time (de Hart 47-48). In addition, although previously the law had required victims to defend themselves in order for the act to be constituted as rape, the new law does not.

[125] After around March 2016, the #ausnahmslos hashtag and accompanying message were overtaken by internet trolls, who tweeted sexual images, some of them portraying violent and misogynistic scenes, and attaching them to the hashtag. There were also messages linked to #ausnahmslos like "recommend to the dummies from #ausnahmslos that they visit a demonstration on Tahrir Square or simply google it – then they'd understand" (@nabucco56)

addressed, but did the fact that #ausnahmslos exist when it did, and did the fact that their only

concrete solution to the issue was to push for changes to the law, also reify the patterns in public

discourse that construct Black and Brown men as perpetrators, white women as victims, Women

of Color as invisible, and white men as saviors? How can transnational feminist solidarities be

sustained, and what power do they have to evoke real societal change?

Several more visible supporters of #ausnahmslos like Manuela Schwesig, then the Federal Minister of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, and Women and Youth (now she is the Minister-President of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern), received messages like "I would rape you. Text me0157873893984" (@ManuelaSchwesig). The campaign, extremely provoking and short-lived, had come to an end in a disturbing and perhaps even telling way.

Conclusion

In a picture taken in June 2012 in Würzburg, Germany and published in the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung,* two Iranian refugees in the midst of their months-long protests in the center of this small Bavarian city are shown looking into the camera, their lips sewn together with fishing wire. They had refused food for weeks, but as government officials continued to ignore their demands over time, their protest escalated. Following the suicide death of their friend and fellow refugee Mohammad Rahsepar in January, these activists moved from the peripheries of Würzburg, where they lived in a refugee center, to claim a space for themselves in front of the Würzburg town hall in *Stadtzentrum*. Their claim to this space was paired with their claim to the category of the human, from which, they argued, they had been excluded. Rahsepar, according to protestors, killed himself because he had been living in Germany for seven months in "inhumane circumstances" ("Appeal"), and essentially in limbo as he waited for a decision regarding his asylum application to be made. Würzburg protestors demanded that, among other things, they be allowed to work, to live outside of communal quarters and in the places of their choice, to be allowed to move around Germany without restriction, and to be treated with dignity.

This is just one example of the refugee activisms I have considered throughout my dissertation. I have thought about groups of refugees who have decided to come to and stay in Germany for different reasons – former Roma refugees from the Balkans, Syrians fleeing from a war-torn country, Eritreans trying to escape extreme poverty, and more. In each case, it is their precarious relationships to the German state as both refugees and as racialized others that has informed their activist endeavors, which is why I have conceptualized these groups' work as making up the beginnings of an archive of refugee activisms. Using tools available to scholars in the humanities, I have read these activisms as I might a piece of literature or a film, always

locating the text in the context of the ways in which race, immigration, gender, violence, sexuality, nation, and difference in general are thought about and acted upon in the contemporary German context. My goal has been to gain an understanding of how refugees articulate their present realities and envision (the possibility of) their future existence in Germany and in Europe. Following Judith Butler, I understand precarity as the "politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death" (Butler ii). I have been interested in how refugees in the German context navigate this precarity. Overall, I argue that refugee-activists expose and intervene into the complicated, historically-informed, and powerful discursive constructions that continue to shape representations, perceptions, and understandings of difference in Germany. These discourses rely upon racialized understandings of who counts as human, whose lives are mournable, who is worthy of protection, and who belongs to Germany and Europe. Activists' exposures and interventions are most often made possible through the construction of coalitions, the formation of new solidarities, and the creation of communities, through which new ways of conceptualizing race, immigration, and difference in Germany and Europe have begun to take shape.

Drawing on theories of precarity, Black feminist theories of the human, as well as theories rooted in critical race studies and transnational feminist thought, I argue that this precariousness experienced by refugees in Germany is partially the consequence of a long history of racialization that has determined that certain populations belong to Germany and to Europe, and certain people – namely racialized others – do not. As Brown men, as Middle Easterners, and as real or imagined Muslims, the Iranian refugees in Würzburg, for example, enter Germany already "othered" because of various discourses, many of which have woven

their way through this dissertation, and affected the groups whose work I have considered in different ways. "Othering" on the basis of race have historically constructed Black and Brown men as threats to white German/European women; constructed people from the Middle East and beyond as exotic, uncivilized, and as the antitheses to the Western "human;" and, that have constructed Muslim men, in particular, as hypersexualized, as misogynistic, and as threats to the German nation.

We saw this, for example, in how the media covered the Würzburg men's protests. For example, an article published in the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* at the time emphasized the horrific, shocking, grotesque, and even utterly unhuman decision made by the protestors to sew their mouths shut. The headline read: "Iranian asylum seekers have sewn their mouths shut. The city of Würzburg is horrified: too shocking for the city's population. The discussion, however, is only about the form; the demands of the protestors are forgotten" (Przybilla). But that's thing: in reading these forms of activism as they appear on the streets and squares of Germany's cities, across social media like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, and in refugees' other cultural productions, the demands of protestors and the discourses and contexts in which they are embedded come to light. Refugees are both limited in how they are able to engage with the German public, and also as subjects within the German context that have the potential to challenge and change these discourses.

Würzburg protestors argued that Rahespar's death was a direct result of living precariously. The men's sewn mouths rendered visible and represented their silencing vis-à-vis the state in a particularly grotesque way. Their proximity to death as a precariously-situated population is defined and determined in part by the state, which has the ability to make a decision – whether to grant asylum or not –that can literally be the difference between life and

death for refugees. By refusing food, activists flirted with death, and in so doing threatened to die in what would ultimately be a very public way, considering the attention this new iteration of protest in particular had assured. Any death that might occur as a result of the activists' choice not to sustain themselves would be the responsibility of the state. Activists reject the characterization of Rahsepar's death as suicide; instead, they embody their claim that Rahsepar had died because of the state's inability to care for him in a humane way: they, like Rahsepar had, suffer because of their rejection by the state, and exclusion from participation in the state. Sewing their mouths shut, then, can be read as their embodied attempts to replicate Rahsepar's sense of entrapment and powerlessness that the activists claim ultimately led to his death.

Activists in my study expose and intervene in these discourses, representations, and understandings of racialized difference in Germany in many creative ways. The act of activists sewing their mouths shut, for example, opens up a new discursive line within the men's activism: it is ultimately an expression of bodily autonomy. The refugees could make their own decision to live – if they chose to reverse the act – or die with their mouths sewn shut. By sewing their lips together, activists refused the power dynamics that would position them as victims and would view the state as benevolent helper, welcoming to and caring of its refugees. The state, no longer comprehensible as the party that would extend its hand to aid the needy, was redefined as the agent of violence. As a result, the German government was forced to defend itself in ways that reveal its participation in perpetuating that violence. For example, when local officials attempted to ban this form of activist engagement, a court ruled that it was legal to protest as well as to sew one's mouth shut, and that these actions were protected under the German Constitution as freedom of speech, despite the fact that "in many parts of the citizenry [sewing one's mouth shut was] seen as deeply disturbing" (Jakob, "Hungern für ein Leben"; Jakob, *Die Bleibenden* 111).

Forced to rule in favor of the protestors' right to the freedom of speech, the state acknowledges the men's humanity, even in a moment when activists point out how their humanity has been called into question, by reminding Germany and Europe how close to death the refugees have been situated.

The questions that have motivated me throughout my research process have revolved around the relationship between refugees and the category of the "human" or, what we might call the liberal or Enlightenment subject, or, simply, as Sylvia Wynter does, "Man." Following Black feminist theorists like Wynter, Hortense Spillers, Fatima-El-Tayeb, and Alexander Weheliye, I have concentrated on how refugee-activists have privileged European ideas of subjectivity and human rights, excluding people who have been constructed as antithetical and even threatening to European ways of life. What claims do refugee activists make to the category of the human? How do these claims insist upon the conceptual rethinking of "the human," human rights, and belonging? And, in the German context, what are the discursive and structural limitations refugees face in achieving their aims and claiming a relationship to the category of the human? What are the intended and non-intentional impacts of their activism? What does refugee activism do?

In Chapter One, I examined the ways in which refugee activists and allies in Würzburg and Dresden responded to the suicide of Iranian refugee Mohammad Rahsepar in 2012, and to the murder of Eritrean refugee Khaled Idris Bahray in 2015. The affective spaces that existed in the wake of these men's deaths enabled interpretations of pain that then evoked anger, which gave rise to political engagements that brought questions about racism together with questions around the presence of refugees in Germany. What the Würzburg protestors exposed about the racism embedded in the asylum system, the Dresden activists exposed about German society's

ability to have conversations about racism as it relates to violence as its perpetrated against People of Color not just by neo-Nazis, members of Pegida, or hooligans, but by many other more "liberal" parties as well.

In Chapter Two, I introduced the Prizreni brothers, Roma refugee activists who call Germany their home, but who have been threatened with or actually deported multiple times to Kosovo. Through their extensive use of social media, and through their engagement with the hip-hop community in Germany and transnationally, the brothers have built a home as secure and sustainable imagined space in response to their precariousness. This "home" crosses borders and provides a sense of community, but their activism also demonstrates the need for a geographic space to which they can tie this home. The brothers upset the notion that the nation or, when the nation fails, the EU or other supranational organizations, are able to protect refugees' human rights, because their exclusion from the category of the human renders their lives disposable.

I focused on Black Lives Matter Berlin and the intersections between this translocal organization and refugee activisms in Chapter Three. It is, I argued, BLM Berlin activists' simultaneous dedication to forming and maintaining international solidarities, together with their commitment to addressing locally specific forms of racism, that make the BLM framework especially productive when talking about refugees' experiences and struggles in Germany, and when thinking through what futures are possible for refugees living in Germany and Europe. BLM Berlin, informed especially by Afro-German feminisms and movements for migrant rights that came before it, refocuses attention on the fact that Germany is not a racism-free space, and that Europe is not, nor has it ever been, a "raceless" continent. Ultimately, BLM Berlin proves that a movement founded in the U.S., where the language of race is more widely used and problematized, and where racialized police violence is much more widespread and deadlier, has

value and potential for addressing racism in Germany, particularly as it exposes the limitations and violence of accepting that the Eurocentric version of "the human," the liberal Enlightenment subject, as universal.

Finally, as a result of the correlation made between the dramatic rise in the number of refugees entering Germany in 2015 and a perceived rise in violence against women, refugee activists were forced to make complicated decisions about how they would represent and align themselves after the so-called Cologne attacks on New Year's Eve 2015-2016. The effects of these choices – which ranged from reifying the distinction between "integrated" and "unintegrateable" refugees to opening up new spaces for thinking about and fighting gender violence and racism simultaneously – illustrate the possibilities that refugees have to voice their concerns, opinions, and criticisms in light of events like the Cologne Attacks and the limited (and limiting) conversations about refugees' place in German society that (tend to) follow. In this chapter, I analyzed the activist work of two refugee and ally groups: Syrer gegen Sexismus (Syrians against Sexism) and the #ausnahmslos (#without_exception) campaign, both of which, in the wake of Cologne, advocated for more nuanced approaches to topics like gender violence and immigration, albeit in very different ways.

Overall, I have argued that refugee activists in Germany lay claim to the racialized category of the human, from which they have been excluded. In so doing, they have created ways of thinking about refugees as participants in German society, and responsible agents in co-creating Germany and Europe's future where the reliance on and investment in racializing discourses of the "other" gives way to some new, perhaps even more inclusive, vision. My aim throughout this study has been to center refugee voices and perspectives, and to consider their own strategies for navigating life in Germany and in Europe once they have "arrived" in an

attempt to counteract the tendency to use refugees as objects in the media, in politics, and in some scholarship in order to prove one point or another. In broadening my corpus to include or, rather, to center activism as text, I have begun to interrogate the methodological implications of thinking about activism's multimodal engagements with the world through lenses available to those of us situated in the humanities. Furthermore, as I expand this project into the future, and as I begin to interact with the activists in my study themselves, another layer of questions is sure to arise around questions of ethnography, agency, and the possibilities, pitfalls, and problems that come with doing the work of reading peoples' projects, which are sometimes quite literally the result of their fight for the right to live, beside and with the participants themselves.

After concluding my dissertation, I have begun to think of my work in terms of how it relates to scholars' work in German Studies that has been concerned with the ways in which activism, particularly refugee activism, as an object of study can be thought about using the theories and methodologies available to us in the humanities. German Studies scholars Maria Stehle and Carrie Smith, for example, have exposed the "messy" relationships between Popfeminism and neoliberalism in their investigations of what they call "awkward activism" (Smith-Prei and Stehle) and, Fatima El-Tayeb in her books *Undeutsch* and *Queering Ethnicities* (El-Tayeb, *European Others*; El-Tayeb, *Undeutsch*) has investigated the powerful coalitions that can and have been built by activists who claim solidarities on the basis of their shared precarious relationships with Europe and the European nation-state. This is where I've situated my work, which has also informed how I've begun to think about the implications of my present study for the field of German Studies, and for my future research.

In the years since I began my dissertation, the number of refugee cultural productions in Germany has increased dramatically. There is much potential in exploring such cultural

engagements as the web-based archive *Alphabet des Ankommens* (Alphabet of Arriving), the graphic novel *Im Land der Frühaufsteher* (*In the Land of the Early-Risers)* illustrated by refugees, and the Migrant Image Collective produced by a group called Lampedusa. In addition, it is important to continue to think about how the destination country/host country has been constructed as a place of non-arrival, but also of how refugees have claimed home in these spaces nonetheless.

My interest in activism – what it entails, what it does, what it can and cannot do – drives how I am thinking about the possibilities and potentials for extending the present study into the future. I am interested, for example, in investigating more extensively the role that affect plays in shaping activism in its various forms, as I began to do in Chapter One. On the other hand, how does affect play a role in the reception of activism, as activists speak out, in the words of Sara Ahmed, "against established 'truths'…[and are thereby] often constructed as emotional, as failing the very standards of reason and impartiality that are assumed to form the basis of 'good judgement'" (Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* 170). Beyond the "stickiness" of affects, I am interested in understanding what limitations or possibilities *affect* allows for in the enactment of activism, including its ability to *effect* positive change.

The historical scope of this work should also be broadened. What, for example, did anti-racist activism look like in the postwar years? What sorts of coalitions were built around remembering the Holocaust or the Porajmos, that simultaneously addressed the presence of racism and the effects of racialization on the present? Additionally, I contend that the refugee activists and allies' work presented throughout this thesis is instructive in the ways it challenges the modern notion of the "human," ultimately undoing it, reimagining it, and showing how it is not a universal, but an exclusionary category. In what ways can these engagements with the

"human" push our understandings of the implications of human rights discourses, of deportation and displacement practices, of how we "welcome" and regulate refugees, of how we talk about and address violence in our communities, of how we think of home, and of how we construct difference?

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