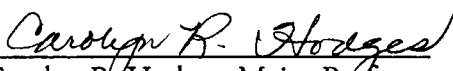


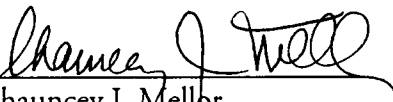
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Cedric Allen Cunningham entitled "The Images of Blacks and African Germans as Reflected in the Poetry of May Ayim and Two Contemporary German Films." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in German.

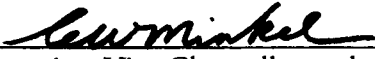

Carolyn R. Hodges, Major Professor

We have read this thesis
And recommend its acceptance:


David E. Lee


Chauncey J. Mellor

Accepted for the Council:


Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of the Graduate School

The Images of Blacks and African Germans as Reflected in the Poetry of May Ayim and Two
Contemporary German Films

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Cedric Allen Cunningham
December 1998

Dedication: I would like to dedicate this work in loving memory to May Ayim (1960, Hamburg-1996, Berlin) and to African Germans: my heart goes out to you.

Once I realized that there were blacks and African Germans who, even before the Second World War, had been born in Germany, are currently still living there, accept German as their mother language, and consider Germany to be their homeland, the more fascinated and interested I became and desired to write about their experiences. It was between 1994 and 1995 when I started researching this topic while I was studying in Germany and in Austria. The first African German I learned about was an author named May Ayim Opitz,¹ who had published a book of poems called Blues in schwarz-weiß and had co-authored a book called Farbe bekennen: Afro-deutsche Frauen auf den Spuren ihrer Geschichte, which recounts her life and the lives of other African-German women. While I was abroad, I tried to contact her because I wanted to learn more about her experiences and hoped that she could lead me on the path to learn about other African Germans. I discovered that she had spent some time in the United States giving lectures at conferences. Unfortunately, after I returned home to the States, I learned that the woman I had been so eager to meet had committed suicide. With the loss of May Ayim I only hope in some small way to help keep her dreams alive.

¹ In 1992 May Ayim Opitz dropped the name of her adoptive German parents and begin using her African father's surname, Ayim.

Acknowledgments

This thesis has been an enormous amount of work that I have thoroughly enjoyed writing. I am delighted and grateful that I had many professors help me accomplish this task. I would like to thank my major professor, Dr. Carolyn Hodges, for her guidance, help, and input on this project. I would also like to extend thanks to the other members of my committee, Dr. David E. Lee and Dr. Chauncey J. Mellor.

There are a number of other professors whom I would like to recognize for their contributions and support of my work before and during my years at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in particular, Dr. Margy Gerber (Professor of German) at Bowling Green State University and Dr. Samuel Wallace (Professor of Sociology) at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, who first helped me to get started. I would also like to give special thanks to Dr. Ronald K. Morgan and Dr. Paul Haberland of Western Carolina University for giving me a good background in German studies.

My deepest appreciation goes to my parents, Mr. Jimmy Cunningham, Sr. and Mrs. Cecelia Jacobs Cunningham, who encouraged, supported, and financed my education, and helped me realize my dreams. My parents are also the ones who actually got me prepared for this journey. After growing up listening to their life experiences in this country, some of which paralleled the experiences of African Germans, I gained the inspiration to write this thesis.

Abstract

This thesis deals with the themes of racism, marginality, and identity as they are reflected in contemporary German literature and film that focus on the experience of blacks and African Germans. The introduction provides background on how my personal experiences in Germany were related to the development of this topic and provides an outline of works discussed in relationship to the major themes. A brief historical overview of blacks and African Germans in Germany is given in chapter two. Chapter three deals with current issues faced by contemporary African Germans and their efforts to define themselves as a community. The discussion of literature in chapter four is centered on selected poetry of May Ayim, a celebrated African German poet who played a central role in unveiling the history and elevating the current social status of African Germans. Chapter five deals with images of blacks in modern German film. The two films specifically treated are Angst essen Seele auf (1973) and Schwarzfahrer (1993), both of which have black figures as major characters whose experiences of racism and xenophobia parallel the ideas expressed in Ayim's poetry, and the experience of many African Germans who have struggled with the question of identity. The concluding chapter reviews the major themes and offers suggestions for expanding the topic.

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“Trotzdem halte ich an [meinen schönen Erwartungen] fest, trotz allem, weil ich noch immer an das innere Gute im Menschen glaube.”

Annelies Marie Frank
(Tagebuch, Samstag, den 15. Juli, 1944)

Chapter 1. Introduction

In the summer of 1989 when I first went to the Federal Republic of Germany as an exchange student with the organization Youth For Understanding for two months, I had no idea what I was getting myself involved with. Despite my fear of the unknown, my curiosity drove me far away from home to West Germany, where I spent two months living with a German family of nine members. This was an experience for me as well as for the German family and other Germans in the small rural northern town called Alfeld an der Leine. Being an African American and not knowing anything about contemporary Germany, German culture, and the language, I felt as if I were in a totally alien world, but the differences did not frighten me so much that I wanted to shorten my trip or return home immediately.

One of the most interesting encounters for me was seeing at least once a week someone of African descent or a mixed person who looked like me, but whose mother tongue was German. I had no idea and never knew that there were blacks other than American soldiers living in Germany. Since that first trip in 1989 to West Germany, I have been back on four other occasions to practice speaking the language I had just become interested in studying. Based on some of my personal experiences and interviews with some blacks and African Germans, I realized that they had a way of life similar to African Americans dealing with racism, in particular, in being marginalized in society and dealing with questions of identity. I found their experience to be an even more complicated situation than that of African Americans, perhaps because there was for a long time no African German community and their identity as Germans was often not recognized.

In this work I plan to focus on the selected themes of racism, marginality, and identity by examining how these themes in contemporary literature and film reflect the experiences of blacks and African Germans. The purpose of this thesis is to acknowledge the existence of African Germans and blacks and some of the social issues and problems that concern both of them, especially now, since African Germans have established themselves as a community and are addressing their concerns. The term blacks will be used to refer to those persons who trace their ancestry to members of the Negroid race in Africa, whose shades of skin color range from dark brown to ivory, nose shapes vary from aquiline to extremely broad and flat, hair color from medium brown to dark brown, and hair texture from tightly curled to wavy and straight.

Chapter two, "African Germans and Blacks in Contemporary Germany," discusses African Germans and blacks and offers some broad historical perspectives on their presence in Germany. It also looks at four black women who describe some of the pains and struggles that they experience in their daily lives, either because of their skin color or because of their intimate affiliation with Germans. Chapter three, "The Contemporary African German Experience," treats some of the issues that African Germans, blacks, and Germans who have relationships with them experience. The chapter examines the themes of racism, marginality, and identity as central to the contemporary African German experience. The last section of this chapter points out some of the contributions of African Germans, in particular, publications and some political organizations which they have established. Chapter four, "Perspectives in Literature," focuses on May Ayim, the well-known contemporary African German writer, and discusses selected examples of her poetry. Chapter five, "Blacks and African Germans in German Film," is concerned with racism and xenophobia and how these themes are portrayed in two contemporary German films, Angst essen Seele auf and Schwarzfahrer. The conclusion reviews the major themes and reflects on ways to expand research on this topic.

This thesis is one attempt to further expand through an examination of some current literature and film the awareness of the concerns and issues that African Germans and blacks deal with in their daily lives. Looking at these issues can broaden our understanding of how diverse German society is. German society is examining some of the contributions that African Germans are making as they redefine themselves and continue in their struggle against indifference and ignorance.

Chapter 2. African Germans and Blacks in Contemporary Germany: Historical Perspectives

It is often generally thought that the first contacts between blacks and Germans began with the German colonial period in Africa in the 1800s, but there is evidence from historical records and in literature that blacks have been in Germany since the time of the Roman Empire under Julius Caesar, as Audre Lorde writes in the foreword to Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out:

The presence of Africa in Europe goes back before the Roman Empire. A Neanderthal skull, discovered in Dusseldorf, Germany, dates back to the Old Stone Age and is the earliest African type found in Europe. Julius Caesar brought black legions to Germany, and many never returned. The historical presence of black Africans in the courts, universities, monasteries, and bedrooms of seventeenth-, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe comes as a surprise only to those scholars pseudoeducated in Europeanized bastions of institutional ethnocentricity. (x)

Following Lorde's statement May Opitz goes on to write: "There are no figures available as to how many blacks lived in Germany during the Middle Ages. In the mid-sixteenth century, one-tenth of the population in the Portuguese capital were black slaves, and, as in France and England, it was probably also true in Germany--albeit less common--that having such an exotic figure in one's livery, parlor, and stable was the thing to do" (3).

Although a number of the Africans were brought to Europe as slaves, some of them returned home while others stayed in Europe. There is some evidence of blacks living in what is now the Federal Republic of Germany during the Middle Ages because of paintings that have been preserved. Carol Aisha Blackshire-Belay writes:

And from the twelfth century onward, many portraits were painted of African men and women living in Germany at that time. Many scholars have studied the several paintings that have survived, and such evidence could reveal interesting details about these early contacts. The Early Renaissance was indeed a formative period in the development of European relations with and attitudes toward the continent of Africa and its peoples, and these attitudes are reflected in the paintings of this period. ("Historical Revelations: The International Scope of African Germans Today and Beyond" 92)

Some portraits of blacks can be found in museums or in books. Farbe bekennen: Afro-deutsche Frauen auf den Spuren ihrer Geschichte, for example, contains a portrait by Albrecht Dürer of an Ethiopian man, an employee in one of the large trading firms in Augsburg (2), and in Art Treasures in Germany there is a portrait of a black man dressed in armor standing before St. Erasmus (Marguerite 99). Since the Middle Ages some blacks lived at German courts and others taught at some of the leading universities of the time. Reginald Bess writes an interesting article about life of the eighteenth-century Ghanaian professor, Dr. A.W. Amo. He states that Amo taught as a lecturer at the universities of Halle, Wittenberg, and Jena. Amo was brought to Germany in 1703 as a gift to Count Anton Ulrich von Wolfenbüttel and studied at the University of Halle, where he received a doctorate degree in philosophy on April 17, 1734 (182-91). Bess goes on to say: "In the first half of the 1700s he was one of the leading intellectuals in the Enlightenment in Europe. . . . Finally, when racial prejudice, intellectual backwardness, and nationalistic arrogance reared their ugly heads in the mid-1700s, Dr. Amo was forced to return to his native Africa" (182-91).

There have been accounts of blacks or Africans who were brought up, lived, and worked in Germany during the post-World War I era. Some of their stories have been

collected and presented in Farbe bekennen. In this work I shall focus more on blacks who have grown up in Germany since the end of World War II and who are currently living there. Interesting examples are contained in Gisela Fremgen's book ... und wenn du dazu noch schwarz bist: Berichte schwarzer Frauen in der Bundesrepublik, a work which features the experiences of eight African and African American women, one African German woman, and one German woman, all of whom are living in the Federal Republic of Germany. Included here are four examples that look at the struggles and torment of innocent victims of racism and at the resulting marginalization. These four, in particular, reveal some very heart-breaking or troublesome personal experiences that these women faced as they coped with racism in their daily lives.

Audrey, a 28-year-old teacher from South Africa, who has a child, writes that she had to leave her homeland and from there went to Sweden, Finland, Norway, England, and finally Germany. She writes: "Ausländer und dazu noch schwarz! Mein Gott. . . Ich müßte aus Südafrika weg, weil ich in diesem rassistischen System, das jedliche Menschen rechte mit Füßen tritt, nicht mehr leben wollte und konnte. . . ich finde das Leben hier in der Bundesrepublik schlimm, . . . eigentlich eher schwer. Ich finde mich oft nicht zurecht, habe Schwierigkeiten mit der Bevölkerung und den Behörden . . . (12)." In all of these countries she felt rejected or alienated because of her skin color. She stayed in Germany the first time for three months, left, and then returned to Germany.

A second woman is Madame V, a 55-year-old from Guadeloupe who had an intimate relationship with a Frenchman; they had children, but never married. She discusses the troubles and problems she and her children faced. The father's mother accepted the children but did not accept Madame V, and, as a result, she allowed the father of her children to raise the children in Europe because she thought that the children would have a better up-bringing there. However, the father of the children re-married and his new wife did not accept the children. Madame V writes: "Die Kinder hat [die Großmutter]

akzeptiert, aber nicht die schwarze Frau, die sie geboren hatte. Ich habe die Kinder mit ihm gehen lassen. . . . Es wurde dann aber etwas schwierig für sie, weil ihr Vater eine weiße Frau heiratete, und sie wollte die Kinder nicht. Es war schon kompliziert. . . . Die Schwarzen werden immer von der Gesellschaft abgelehnt, so ist das” (23).

A third woman named Regina, a 28-year-old nurse from West-Cameroon, married a German and gave birth to two girls. She explains how frustrating it was living and trying to adapt to a culture where everything was so foreign to her. Her husband found her a job working in a factory for a short time: “Und nun stand ich allein da, und das in einer fremden Kultur. . . . Das war sehr anstrengend. . . . Ich habe dort im Monat 500 Mark verdient für acht Stunden Arbeit pro Tag, und das an fünf Tagen in der Woche . . . Das war ziemlich wenig. Aber ich hatte ja auch keine Ansprüche . . . (33).” Then she goes on to explain how she tried to work in other places but was never hired. She went back to school to learn a trade and, at the same time, German. Eventually she and her husband separated briefly and she had several problems trying to find a place to live. Whenever people discovered that she was black, she was turned down. She writes about one experience where she found housing, but was only allowed to use the bath once a week, and she was not allowed to use the kitchen. She writes: “Bevor ich das Zimmer nahm, hatten mir meine Wirtsleute gesagt, daß sie keinen Besuch duldeten. . . . Und als ich mich eines Abends mein ehemaliger Verlobter besuchte, da flog ich raus” (33).

Erika, a 37 year-old African German, discusses some of her childhood memories. Unfortunately, Erika did not have the opportunity to know her father. Her mother married a German and Erika had a half sister. One of the painful childhood memories that she relates is about how her immediate family would go shopping, but her step-father did not allow her to go along, fearing that Erika’s presence would cause problems. She writes:

Als Kind spürte ich nur, daß es zu Hause immer wieder Schwierigkeiten gab. . . Ich merkte aber, daß es um mich ging. Bei Familieneinkäufen

wollte mein Stiefvater nicht, daß ich mit einkaufen ging. Wenn also
Freitags der Einkauf fürs Wochenende getätigt wurde, dann gingen meine
Schwester, meine Mutter und mein Stiefvater einkaufen. Ich mußte zu
Hause bleiben. (101)

Fremgen's book focuses attention not only on blacks but also on whites who share intimate relationships with blacks or African Germans. She offers evidence that racism exists in contemporary Germany and that not only blacks and African Germans are the targets, but also Germans who have some kind of a bond or close friendship with them. African Germans are of mixed black and white heritage and are also German citizens, yet they often are regarded as foreigners. Therefore, even though African Germans are German citizens, speak German as their mother language, and accept the German culture as their way of life, they too face some of the same problems as blacks because of their skin color. In "Introduction: Critical Essays on the African-German Experience," Blackshire-Belay, speaking about the African-German experience, sends a message to people of African descent by expressing the outlook of many African Germans who adopted this term to define themselves:

We have learned that as a black people we must take it on ourselves to
redefine what it is to be African in a world of racism, discrimination, and
rejection by people from other cultural backgrounds. Even today we find
images of people of African ancestry, both in film and television are
negative and stereotypical. It is our duty and obligation to change these
images into positive ones, for us and for the future of our children. (xiii)

No one knows precisely when African Germans came into existence. Although the term "African German" (originally Afro-German) was coined less than two decades ago, the term generally refers to a generation of people dating back to the turn of the century and beyond. Carolyn Hodges refers to this fact in an unpublished paper titled "Crossing

(4). What we know about African Germans, however, technically dates back to German colonization in Africa. In “Rassismus, Sexismus und vorkoloniales Afrikabild in Deutschland” Ayim notes that one can trace the existence of African Germans back to the 1800s, when Germany colonized various parts of the African continent, such as Togo, Cameroon, Southwest Africa, and East Africa (Farbe bekennen 29-33). During Germany’s short era of colonization in Africa, some German men became sexually active with African women and, as a result, children of mixed heritage were produced. Blackshire-Belay refers to this fact: “Despite the fact that in 1905 the Governor of South-West Africa (present-day “Namibia”) published a decree banning marriages and sexual relations between whites and Africans, a whole generation of African Germans was born in these territories” (“Historical Revelations” 106). She goes on to report the comments of Hans Gruner, an eighty-year old retired African German schoolteacher, in Lomé, Togo, whom she interviewed in 1991: “My mother belonged to the ethnic group of the Ewe. She was the daughter of a village chief. She was a beautiful woman. On the same evening that the German troops arrived, my father sent an adjunct to the village chief to inform him that he wanted to become acquainted with his daughter, and to marry her” (107). Blackshire-Belay goes on to say: “There are few survivors of this generation today, and those who are still alive are in their mid- to late eighties” (107). Most of the African Germans like Hans Gruner, i.e., the ones who were born in Africa as a result of German colonization, have spent most of their lives there, as Blackshire-Belay indicates, or have visited Germany at some point in their lives (“Historical Revelations” 106-08).

This paper focuses not on those African Germans born and raised in Africa but, instead, on a new generation of African Germans who were born after World War II and have lived most of their lives in the Federal Republic of Germany. Molefi Kete Asante explains in an article titled “African Germans and the Problems of Cultural Location”:

During the American occupation after World War II, an entirely new group of mixed children came into the society. Actually Farbe bekennen. Afro-deutsche Frauen auf den Spuren ihrer Geschichte, edited by May Opitz, Katherina Oguntoye, and Dagmar Schultz and translated as Showing our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out by Anne Adams, provides telling portraits of the lives and experiences of African Germans after the World War II. During the past forty years the population of African Germans has been expanded much more by the intermarriages of African students with Germans than African Americans with Germans. (4)

There is no source that gives an exact figure of the number of African Germans living in the Federal Republic of Germany. Tina M. Campt is one of many who offer an estimate. She points out:

Afro-Germans are German-born individuals of African descent. Estimates vary as to the size of the present Afro-German population. May Opitz estimates that out of 100,000 blacks currently residing in Germany, 30,000 are Afro-Germans, whereas others estimate the total number of Afro-Germans anywhere from 50 to 300 thousand. The contemporary Afro-German population traces its twentieth-century origin to African immigrants to Germany throughout this century, as well as to the African and African-American troops used in the occupation of Germany following the First and Second World Wars. Some Afro-Germans trace their roots back to the nineteenth century. (110)

There are also sources that attempt to define the term African German. With the help of the late African American writer Audre Lorde, some members of the African German community adopted the term "Afro-German" to define themselves. In 1984 Lorde spent three months at the Free University in Berlin teaching a course on black American women

poets and offering a poetry workshop in English for German students. She writes: "One of my goals on this trip was to meet black German women, for I had been told there were quite a few in Berlin" (vii). Lorde discusses her encounter with women such as Katharina Oguntoye and the late May Ayim, who later, with the help of Dagmar Schultz, published and edited Farbe bekennen, a collection of historical and autobiographical essays, interviews, and poems by African German women. In that same year, as a result of Lorde's seminar, the term "Afro-German," modeled on "Afro-American," was coined. These black German women developed the term as an expression of the African German cultural heritage, because they saw similarities between themselves and African Americans. In this thesis I shall use the term African German throughout to mean black German or Afro-German, because in many recent sources the authors seem to prefer African German.

African Germans are German citizens who are of mixed African and German heritage, usually of a German mother and a father of African descent, and they have lived all of their lives in the Federal Republic of Germany and accept the German language as their language and the German culture as their own culture. Many of them have very little or no actual connection with their African cultural heritage, as Marilyn Sephogle writes:

Most African Germans were born and raised in Germany and often do not know the language and culture of their black parent or black relatives. In a smaller number of cases both of their parents are African-German. A very small percentage of African Germans were adopted by white German couples. New generations of African Germans are also born of union between African-Germans and Africans or other people of African descent.

(15)

As Sephogle points out, there are some African Germans who do not know their African heritage, and because they have lived most of their lives in Germany, the German culture is what they accept, and they identify themselves as Germans.

In "Historical Revelations" Blackshire-Belay defines African German as follows:

The use of the term "African Germans" extends beyond the recognition that one parent is black and the other white. The commonest among African Germans is that they are blacks born, raised and socialized in Germany. African Germans have spent the majority of their lives in a white-European environment with very limited or no contact at all with other blacks. Important to the African German is not to separate themselves from others according to their skin color or nationality. They band together as African Germans as a sign of self-determination, as a resistance to the racist and stereotypical foreign expression, and as a choice of power of a national group demanding their space in a society that refuses to acknowledge their presence. (95-96)

Blackshire-Belay notes that, because Germany historically has been perceived as a homogeneous white society, the historical presence of blacks and other minorities of color in German society has been deliberately neglected ("Historical Revelations" 89). She goes on to mention that the majority of Germans have little knowledge of or are unaware that African Germans live in their society, are a part of their daily lives, are in history books, the political arena, and the media because many discussions or issues concerning blacks or African Germans are held in the context of hostility and hatred towards foreigners. ("Historical Revelations" 95)

Although African Germans are technically citizens by virtue of parentage, many Germans have not regarded these children as Germans, but as "war babies," "brown babies," or "half-breeds" (Hodges, "Crossing Borders" 4). African German serves as a more positive term for identification than these derogatory words. Many in this new generation of children have faced serious problems with racism, marginality, and identity and they still face these problems today.

Chapter 3. The Contemporary African German Experience: Themes of Racism, Marginality, and Identity

Between the end of World War I and World War II there were cases of African German children who had been born and were living in Germany and were discriminated against because of their skin color. In Robert W. Kesting's "Forgotten Victims: Blacks in the Holocaust," he writes: "Collectively, the Rhineland mulattos were the first to suffer under the sterilization program of 1933" (33). Sterilization was used to prevent them from increasing the African German population, as Asante notes (4). But fortunately, even Nazi terrorism in Germany's "race war" did not wipe out all of the African Germans who resided in Germany. The African Germans who survived World War II have shared some stories about their experiences and survival with a later and new generation of African Germans who were born after the end of War World II. Some of their stories are related in Farbe bekennen.

Today, some of the issues that African Germans experience in their daily lives center on racism, marginality, and identity. When one looks at blacks and African Germans and the problems with racism they face on a daily basis, one might believe that there is not a big difference between blacks and African Germans whenever the issue is racism. However, it must be remembered that African Germans are often not immediately regarded as German citizens. In this case, African Germans face double-jeopardy, because they do not just suffer and struggle only because of their skin color, but also they have to fight for their national identity in a place where they were born, grew up, and which they consider to be home. Ayim writes:

Als ich geboren wurde, war ich nicht schwarz und nicht weiß. Vor allen Namen, die ich bekam, hieß ich "Mischlingskind." Es ist schwer, ein Kind mit Liebe zu umgeben, wenn die Großeltern der Mutter sagen, daß das Kind

fehl am Platze sei. Es ist schwer, wenn das Kind nicht in die Pläne der Mutter paßt und wenn kein Geld da ist. Es wird alles noch schwerer, wenn die weiße Mutter nicht möchte, daß ihr Kind in eine schwarze Welt entführt wird. Auch die Gesetze erlauben nicht, daß der afrikanische Vater das deutsche Töchterchen zu einer afrikanischen Mutter bringt. (Farbe bekennen 202)

Traditionally in German society, the blood notion defines the German concept of Germanness. By law, one parent must be a German citizen in order for the child to be also German (Fulbrook 88-89), and this fact insures that African Germans are in fact German. But popular understanding of what makes a German is another thing entirely, as Asante points out:

White German people have expressed their sense of nationality in racial and biological terms for centuries, and this has meant that to be German or at least to be considered a German citizen one had to be German, not German and African, or German and Chinese, but German and German. In a cultural sense this translates to the participation in German myths of racial superiority and purity. The African German cannot successfully participate in this myth and often struggles against marginalization by white Germans. To be not quite German because of the African mixture means that the African German is outside the cultural center considered to be German by the Germans themselves . . . However, in German society and in German literature it is the fact of the presence of African blood that makes the African German not German. How can a person who is not "totally German" be German? This becomes the issue with the majority of German people. . . To be African and German, in the German mind, is not to be German. (5-6)

Asante's statement explains the reaction--recounted by several African Germans--toward an African German who identifies him- or herself as German. In such cases a German sometimes is confused and finds it hard to accept, because the German associates idea of Germanness with whiteness. Because of their physical appearance, the African Germans often feel like foreigners or outsiders in their own country. African Germans are easily recognized by the color of their complexion, and as a result of being easy to identify, they are often discriminated against and marginalized. One example of this is mentioned by Ellen Wiedenroth in "What makes me so different in the eyes of others?" She writes:

Ich bin Deutsche, und ich bin dunkel. So dunkel nun auch wieder nicht. Oft habe ich in den Spiegel geschaut und mich gefragt, was mich nun eigentlich unterscheidet, was mich so anders macht in den Augen der anderen. Innerlich bin ich deutsch durch meine deutsche Umgebung, die Schule, mein Zuhause – deutsch eben. Und trotzdem wurde mir immer wider nahegelegt, daß ich genau das nicht wäre. Aber warum? Es hängt eben alles an Äußerlichkeiten. (Farbe bekennen 165)

Asante also gives an example. He tells the story of an African German who asked the German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, how the German government was dealing with immigrants. The Chancellor's response revealed that he thought that the African German was an immigrant. Asante writes: "Having internalized the racist conception of German, a sort of tribal understanding, the Chancellor had not moved to the level of understanding Germany in the context of pluralistic, multicultural democracies where allegiance to nationality is not a matter of blood purity" (1). While it is the responsibility for all Germans to settle this issue properly, it appears as if it has until now been largely up to African Germans to take the leading role to speak up, to address this issue and to find recognition of their German identity.

Since Germany's reunification in 1991, the question of the German identity has become an increasingly bigger issue. Asante writes that during German's reunification Neo-Nazis also came together and joined forces to continue spreading their anti-Semitic and xenophobic rhetoric. He states: "They were supported by the underlying belief among the masses that all Germans, wherever they were, belonged to the German nation. . . . All of this has further marginalized the African German, making some feel threatened in the land of their birth" (2).

Not only do African Germans have to deal with the lack of acceptance and ignorance from their compatriots, but they also have to fear the safety of their lives, which are threatened by Neo-Nazi terrorism. It should be mentioned that many Germans disagree and protest against Neo-Nazism and see these Neo-Nazis or skin-heads as young drop-outs or outcasts of society. On January 18, 1993, the Los Angeles Times published a copy of an article by J (Jens Mueller), a young former East German rock star who writes about the "timely inspiration acquired from his American hero's [Martin Luther King, Jr.'s] reflection on racism" (B7). He charges that the German government does not do its job when it comes to violent racial attacks. J, who no longer lives in Germany, maintains:

It is precisely this intellectual clarity and moral courage [referring to a quote by Martin Luther King, Jr.] that is missing in Germany. Yes, the government has organized several anti-fascist rallies during the past couple of months, but the skeptic in me notes that these rallies didn't occur until after 1,800 violent attacks against foreigners in 1992, which in turn moved a number of foreign business concerns. . . . I'm convinced that the government, because it didn't move to squash rightist violence until forced to, is complicit in those 1,800 attacks. As Gunter Grass recently pointed out: "The most dangerous thing is, we have [skinheads] in government. They are nicely dressed with beautiful hair. . . . They speak well. But they

think the same way as the young kids who shave their heads and carry swastikas and demonstrate. They encourage these ideas and these brutal actions.” (Los Angeles Times B7)

There are, however, other Germans who feel the same and support these Neo-Nazis, which Sephocle points out in a discussion of her experiences with African Germans and how they seem to be perceived by German institutions and by other German citizens. She refers to a young female African German named Natalie, who said:

The problem . . . is that some of the Neo-Nazi groups do not ask to see your passport before they start hitting. Furthermore black Germans do not receive any kind of protection as German citizens in case of racist attacks since even at the governmental level it seems difficult to reconcile being black with being German. When they are attacked, the police usually advise them to contact the Ausländerbeauftragte (sic) [the officer of foreign affairs], which in turn cannot help them further since they are Germans.

(14)

Since Lorde held her seminar on African American women, literature, and poetry, many African Germans have taken the initiative to form their own groups and organizations, and many of them have published stories, essays, and poetry. The groups and the literature focus attention on African Germans and their current situation as they deal with issues of racism, marginality, and identity. Farbe bekennen, first of all, acknowledges the existence of African Germans and presents the stories of thirteen African German women who share and express their experiences in a collection of historical and autobiographical essays, interviews, and poems. This is one of the first books to be published in the Federal Republic of Germany that primarily deals with African German women speaking out about their national identity.

Lorde writes: “Farbe bekennen resulted in the formation of the Initiative Schwarze Deutsche (Initiative of Black Germans), the first national organization of black Germans” (xvi). The ISD started when thirty African Germans met in Berlin in 1986. Septhocle indicates that at the first meeting of the ISD, African Germans realized that they had three common denominators: the German language, the German culture, and their physical appearance that distinguished them from their white compatriots who often did not look at them as one of their own (15). The purpose of the ISD is to promote black awareness in the Federal Republic of Germany for those people who are interested in blacks or African Germans. There are now several ISD groups in several German cities, both East and West. The ISD began meeting in 1985 and formally established itself in Berlin in 1986 (mostly made up of young African Germans) and now has branches in major urban centers such as Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Frankfurt am Main, and Stuttgart (Hopkins 533). The group publishes the magazine afro-Look: eine Zeitschrift von schwarzen Menschen in Deutschland, which contains a definition of how the members of ISD identify themselves: “Wir sind Schwarze Deutsche/Afro-Deutsche, die in der BRD (oder in der ehemaligen DDR) geboren sind bzw. oft einen wesentlichen Teil unseres Lebens hier verbracht haben. Bisher waren wir für die meisten weissen Deutschen lediglich: ‘Neger’, ‘Farbige’, ‘Mischlinge’, ‘Mulatten’, ‘Bimbos’, ‘Besatzungskinder’, oder andere exotische Attraktionen” (2). Afro-Look is a seasonal magazine that focuses on black people in Germany and contains reports, documents, interviews, comments, news, biographies, and poetry for people who have a interest in blacks in Germany. The editors of afro-Look state:

Sie ist ein Produkt der Zusammenarbeit von verschiedenen Menschen. Die Beiträge in dieser Zeitschrift dokumentieren unsere Arbeit, liefern Diskussionsgrundlagen und eröffnen oder vertiefen den Zugang zu unseren Schwarzen Kulturen und unserer Schwarzen Geschichte. Mit unserer

Arbeit leisten wir einen Beitrag zu einer Schwarzen Gemeinschaft und schaffen damit realistische Bilder von Schwarzer Kultur, Schwarzer Präsenz, und Schwarzer Geschichte in Deutschland über die Grenzen hinaus. In diesem Sinne fördern wir den Austausch und die Kommunikation untereinander und tragen dazu bei, alte und neue Vorurteile abzubauen. (2)

Another nationally-based organization, primarily made up of African German women is ADEFRA (Afro-Deutsche Frauen/African German Women). ADEFRA is a nation-wide forum for black German and black women, specifically founded, among other objectives, to enable black women to explore and learn about themselves. In a paper entitled "ADEFRA: Schwarze Frauen mit Mut" published in 1998 by the group on the internet, the group defines itself as follows:

ADEFRA ist eine Initiative Schwarzer Frauen, die vor 10 Jahren von Afro-deutschen Frauen gegründet wurde. Sie entstand im Zusammenhang zu den Arbeiten an dem Buch Farbe bekennen: Afro-deutsche Frauen auf den Spuren ihrer Geschichte. Parallel zu ADEFRA entwickelte sich die ISD (Initiative Schwarze Deutsche/Schwarze in Deutschland), in der Frauen und Männer engagiert sind. Wir arbeiten mit der ISD sowohl auf lokaler als auch auf bundesweiter Ebene sehr eng zusammen. Der Name ADEFRA wurde von den Gründerinnen ursprünglich als Abkürzung für Afro-deutsche Frauen geprägt. Im Zuge der Entwicklung der letzten Jahre engagierten sich heute bei ADEFRA Schwarze Frauen unterschiedlichster Herkunft und Nationalität. Als Ausdruck unserer Entwicklung und wachsenden Vielfalt haben wir eine andere Bedeutung gewählt, die zudem die Kraft und Stärke Schwarzer Frauen verdeutlicht. Im Amharischen, einer äthiopischen Sprache, bedeutet ADEFRA: DIE FRAU DIE MUT

ZEIGT. Uns Frauen bei ADEFRA verbindet auf die eine oder andere Weise, unabhängig von politischen Anschauungen, Glaubenseinstellungen, Nationalität und Sozialisation, die Erfahrung von Rassismus/Sexismus in der weißen deutschen Gesellschaft. Ziel von ADEFRA ist es Impulse zu geben und Aktivitäten zu unterstützen und zu initiieren, die auf ein tatsächliches gleichberechtigtes Miteinander gerichtet sind, unabhängig von Herkunft, Aussehen, sexueller Orientierung, Lebensform, Geschlecht, Sprache u.a.m. (<http://www.woman.de/frauimnetz/adefra.html>)

Like ISD, ADEFRA also established a magazine, Afrekete, a publication for African German and black women which first appeared in 1988. ADEFRA and the ISD are very strong and are presently still active in their work, and they are growing. Since the publication of Farbe bekennen, other books on African Germans have been published and others are planned.

Both groups, ISD and ADEFRA, and the book Farbe bekennen are some positive steps that African Germans are making in order to assert their existence and to further promote African German awareness not only in the Federal Republic of Germany, but also around the world. Asante writes that African Germans have moved to express themselves in networks, organizations, and support groups because they have defied those who wish to marginalize them by asserting their own historical reality and agency (3).

Apart from these groups, there are also a number of very well known African Germans in Germany. Some of them have done very well in the entertainment industry, such as the thirty-two year-old television moderator Cherno Jobatey of ZDF and the thirty-four year-old television moderator Mo Asumang of Liebe Sünde, two members of the trio German rap group Tic Tac Toe, a thirty-five year-old assistant producer, a thirty-one year-old journalist, and the late Rob Pilatus of the 80s rock group Milli Vanilli.

Although African Germans are relatively small in number, they have accomplished many of their goals since they first defined themselves as a group in 1984. Since that time many positive results have been accomplished by them. As a result of their group meeting and organization they have discussed issues of racism, marginality, and identity which affect all of them in some way. As a people of dual heritage African Germans are coming together to overcome the obstacles which still exist in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Chapter 4. Perspectives in Literature: Selected Poetry of May Ayim

As mentioned in chapter one, after the defeat of the Nazi regime and during the fifties and the sixties there arose in Germany a generation of children of dual heritage, that is, a generation of children who have one German parent and one of African descent. Their presence, along with second-generation immigrants and other mixed heritage citizens, e.g., Turkish-Germans, has not only changed the social and political atmosphere in Germany but has also had an impact on literary and cultural studies of German society. Leroy T.

Hopkins writes:

the presence of diverse cultural, racial, and ethnic groups has created opportunities for literary perspectives that can diversify and enrich German culture. One such new perspective is that of race. . . . To discuss the perspective of race in contemporary German literature, it is worthwhile to focus on those writers associated with the programmatic efforts of the Afro-Germans, a heterogeneous, biracial group of individuals usually of German and African or African American heritage and born since 1945. . . . Perhaps the most interesting aspect in the evolution of Afro-German literature is the reception of the African American experience. (533)

Because the term "Afro-German" was only coined in 1984, there has not emerged a large amount of literature based on or written by African Germans. Hodges explains:

German research in African culture and African studies since just before the turn of the century owes a great deal to the ethnographic research of Leo Frobenius. . . . It is only in the last 15 years, however, that sustained studies of geo-thematics which link Blacks and German culture have appeared, for example, in two collections of essays (Gilman, 1982; Grimm

& Hermand, 1986). An anthology edited by Gisela Fremgen (1984) continues that aspect of geo-thematics with personal accounts of non-German black women. ("The Private/Plural Selves" 220).

There are, however, more recent texts about African Germans who recount their personal experiences in Germany, such as the book Farbe bekennen, and four magazines published by African Germans: Onkel Tom's Faust, afro Look, Afrekete, and Strangers (Hopkins 534). Hodges describes the current body of literature of African-German literature as consisting mainly of poetry and essays of a biographical and confessional nature, which, although not comprising a large body of literature, generated a great deal of interest in German Studies ("Crossing Borders" 5-6). Racism, marginalization, and identity are just some of the major themes that African Germans treat in their poems, interviews, and essays. For example, in Farbe bekennen Ayim tells stories about her childhood, specifically about not knowing her parents, about being adopted by a strict German family, and being marginalized by Germans because of her skin color (202-10).

This chapter focuses primarily on the late Ayim because she is the most well known among contemporary African Germans and has played a major role in the exposure and promotion of African German issues. In a series entitled Contemporary Authors, a short biography on her life and works reveals that May Ayim Opitz (born May 3, 1960, in Hamburg, Germany) was the daughter of Emmanuel Nuwokpor Ayim (a physician and university professor from Africa) and Ursula Andler (a German dancer). From 1984 until her death she lived in Berlin, working in speech therapy, educational sciences, and as a poet. In 1986 she co-edited Farbe bekennen: Afro-deutsche Frauen auf den Spuren ihrer Geschichte, became one of the founders of the Initiative of Black Germans (ISD), and in 1986 received her master's degree, for which she wrote a thesis entitled "Ethnocentrism and Sexism in Speech Therapy." Three years later she was a co-founder of Literatur-Frauen, an association that promotes the written works of women, with particular emphasis

on black and immigrant authors. After receiving a speech therapy certification, she worked as a research assistant with an interdisciplinary research project titled "Female Identity in the Process of Change" at the Free University of Berlin and went on to become a lecturer at the Institute of Educational Sciences of the School for Social Work and Social Pedagogy, the Technological University, and the Free University of Berlin. She started studying for her doctorate in education, writing a dissertation on ethnocentrism and racism in the therapeutic field, and at the same time found time to work as a writer. In 1992, she edited some books, among which is Entfernte Verbindungen, and also contributed to other works, including anthologies and textbooks, such as Aus Aller Frauen Länder, Kreise: Erstes Jahr Deutsch im Kontext, Daughters of Africa, and some periodicals, including Afrekete, The Black Scholar, Isisvivane, and Beiträge zur Feministischen Theorie und Praxis ("May Ayim" 20-21). In an interview Ayim reveals some interesting data concerning her name, background and writings. She states:

Until 1992, I used the name of my white foster parents in Germany--Opitz. Recently my African father agreed to adopt me and I have started using his surname, Ayim. . . . When I am writing, I like to focus, with prose and lyrical verse, on black peoples' lives in the Diaspora. I feel a strong need to express personal experiences in a political and cultural context. At the same time, it is important for me not to limit myself to certain topics. I write about everything! ("May Ayim" 21)

Some of her works, in particular the poems, describe her feelings of being marginalized and being treated as an outsider. Unfortunately, her life ended tragically at the age of thirty-six on August 9, 1996, in Berlin. Karin Goertz writes:

In August, 1996, after being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, she committed suicide. Her research interests centered on racism in the fields of education and therapy, the experiences of black children in orphanages

(dissertation topic), and the history of blacks in Germany (master's thesis). She was very active in the black community, in the Women's Movement, and was one of the founding members of the Initiative of Black Germans and Blacks Living in Germany. (72)

In a letter addressed to Ayim published on the internet and entitled "Brief an May Ayim Opitz," some of her friends and admirers add:

Es fällt uns schwer, einen Liebesbrief an Dich zu schreiben, besonders, wenn der Brief der erste und gleichzeitig der letzte ist. . . . Wir möchten mit Dir reden, quatschen, diskutieren, essen, trinken, tanzen, lachen, aber auch mit Dir weinen. . . Liebe May, Du bist zwar weggegangen, aber wie Du merkst, bleibst Du unter uns. Da Du jetzt mit den Ahnen verweilst, bitte Sie, uns in unseren Anstrengungen zu stärken, damit wir Deinem Ziel näherkommen. . . . In Liebe. . . DEINE BLACK COMMUNITY BERLIN.
("Erste und letzter Brief an May Ayim Opitz von der Black Community Berlin" <http://www.fed.de/bhm/may-letr.htm;internal&sk=ROBOT>)

In an interview entitled "Laura Baum, Katharina Oguntoye, May Opitz: Drei afro-deutsche Frauen im Gespräch," Dagmar Schultz poses a series of questions to these three African German women that focus on their sense of identity and how Germans relate to them. Schulz asks the women how they define the concept "beautiful," how others treat them, how they respond to it, how they feel about not belonging and being appropriated at the same time, what it means to be an exception, and why there is so little contact among African Germans. In her interview Ayim emphasizes that Germans often respond to her based on pre-conceived ideas of blacks, and are usually perplexed or even disappointed because she does not fit their stereotypical images. Ayim states: "Viele Leute setzen voraus, daß ich einen besonderen Bezug zu Afrika habe, auch wenn ich erkläre, daß ich dort nie gelebt habe (149)." She goes on to say:

Ich erlebe oft, daß die Leute ihre Erwartungen über das stellen, was ich ihnen sage. Wenn ich erzähle, daß ich hier aufgewachsen bin und mein ganzes Leben hier verbracht habe, kann es dennoch sein, daß hinterher die Frage kommt: "Ja, und wann gehen Sie zurück?" Die Art, wie sie einen ansprechen, hat was Väterliches, Bevormundendes an sich. Diese Haltung nehmen sie sofort ein. Sofort, wenn sie mich sehen, denken sie, daß ich kein Deutsch kann. (150)

Ayim offers examples of her experiences when she was a student in school, and she explains that because of color Germans also often saw her as less intelligent and unable to learn on the same level as her peers. She writes: "Eine Ausnahme zu sein, wird hier im allgemeinen nicht mit hohen Erwartungen an Intelligenz und Leistung verknüpft. Von daher werden Afro-Deutsche in Schulen und dergleichen auch nicht oder selten bevorzugt" (158). Then she goes on to tell a particularly painful experience that she had with a biology teacher:

Ich erinnere mich an einen Biologie-Lehrer, dem ich unterstelle, daß er mich wegen meiner Hautfarbe nicht ausstehen konnte. Seine Art, Themen zu behandeln, bei denen es um Rassen ging usw., brachte seinen ganzen Rassismus zum Ausdruck, und einige Mitschüler haben das dann auch noch von ihm übernommen. . . . Ich schrieb fast alle Arbeiten mit Eins und bekam immer die Endnote Vier. Als ich diesen Lehrer darauf ansprach, begründete er die Vieren mit Notizen über mich, die er nebenher gemacht habe. (159)

Finally, she relates that many Germans refer to all non-whites as Neger (meaning both nigger and negro), regardless of what the person looks like or from where he or she comes:

Ich finde es auch schwierig, einerseits weil sich Afrikaner offensiv manchmal zum Negersein "bekennen" und andererseits bedeutet gerade

“Neger” in der deutschen Sprache alles mögliche: “Neger” sind alle, die irgendwie dunkler sind, egal, wie sie aussehen oder wo sie herkommen, es wird alles über einen Kamm geschoren. (159-60)

Some of Ayim’s responses to those situations and her struggle with self-identification are reflected in her poetry.

The nine poems by Ayim included in this chapter focus attention on some of her personal feelings and experiences dealing with racism, marginalization, and identity in Germany. The poems depict some of the hardships she endured, her feeling of being alienated in her homeland, and her struggle to define herself against racist generalizations and stereotypes. Seven of the poems are included in Farbe bekennen, one is found in Showing Our Colors, and, finally, the last of the nine poems that I will discuss was printed on August 24, 1994, in Die Tageszeitung. Karen Obermeier explains: “Farbe bekennen, a unique combination of personal histories, poems, group discussions, and scholarly texts, is the first published account by Afro-German women of the historical and contemporary aspects of their experience as ‘outsiders’ in a white German society” (172). Ayim wrote some essays in Farbe bekennen that introduce the poems.

In “Rassismus hier und heute: Alltäglicher Rassismus in Kinder- und Jugendbüchern” Ayim discusses derogatory racist and sexist stereotypical images of blacks/African Germans which often appear in German literature. She points out that fiction, non-fiction, textbooks, history, and current events depicted in the media portray negative images of third world nation peoples, which then develop, especially in the minds of children, into racist and paternalistic feelings of superiority toward people from these countries (127-31). In this case it is sometimes difficult for black children growing up in Germany to have a positive approach to their black/African heritage.

The first of the poems offered as part of this essay is entitled “Das sind Menschen wie wir.”

Nee! Wir haben wirklich nichts gegen die Schwarzen
 Meine Frau und Ich
 Wir fahren ja auch jedes Jahr
 nach Afrika
 : Diese einfache Kultur, das unbeschwerte Leben
 das ist echt mal ganz was anders
 un wie die tanzen können
 herrlich
 Wir sind wirklich der Meinung
 daß alle Menschen gleich sind.
 Niemand sollte diskriminiert werden,
 bloß weil er anders ist.
 Daß die Afrikaner
 auf 'ner andern
 Entwicklungsstufe stehn
 ist natürlich klar

 Wir müssen aufhören
 jedes Jahr
 diese Millionen Entwicklungshilfe
 auf den schwarzen Kontinent
 zu blasen
 : Was machen die denn mit dem Geld?
 Aufrüsten und
 sich gegenseitig
 die Köpfe einschlagen.
 Und wie die ihre Frauen behandeln!
 schrecklich!
 (136-37)

It is a monologue about a man trying to cover up that he is not racist and does not have racist thoughts about Africans. The man contradicts himself, however, and overgeneralizes when he says that he really believes all people are the same and then goes on to say that Africans are at a different stage of development.

The second poem is entitled "Afro-Deutsch."

Sie sind afro-deutsch?
 . . . ah, ich verstehe: afrikanisch und deutsch.
 Ist ja 'ne interessante Mischung!
 Wissen Sie: manche, die denken ja immer noch,
 die Mulatten, die würden's nicht
 so weit bringen,
 wie die Weißen
 Ich glaube das nicht.
 Ich meine: bei entsprechender Erziehung. . .
 Sie haben ja echt Glück, daß Sie hier aufgewachsen sind.
 Bei deutschen Eltern sogar. Schau an!
 Wollen Sie mal zurück?

.....
Afro-Deutsch
... hm, ich verstehe.

.....
Na ja, aber die Probleme habe ich auch.
Ich finde, man kann nicht alles auf die Hautfarbe schieben,
und als Frau hat man's nirgendwo einfach.
..... (138-39)

This poem includes two monologues of a German woman sharing her views about an African German woman she has just met. In both monologues the German speaker's racism is immediately revealed, because from her perspective the concept of a black German seems impossible. In the first section of the poem, she expresses shock when she hears that the stranger is African German. At the same time, the German too denies that she is racist. Because the German is simply ignorant about blacks and African Germans she is confused when the African German insists on her German heritage, and to the African German she replies: "Sie haben ja echt Glück, daß Sie hier aufgewachsen sind. Bei deutschen Eltern sogar. Schau an! Wollen Sie mal zurück?" (138). In the second monologue the German believes that the problems the African German is having are not a racial issue, but instead a gender issue: "Ich finde, man kann nicht alles auf die Hautfarbe schieben, und als Frau hat man's nirgendwo einfach" (139). Through this example, Hodges notes, Ayim objects to "traditional, essentialist models of identity which offer limited, binary markers of difference, delineating an either/or choice between opposing categories of cultural or racial identity, i.e., non-European/European, foreign/German, black/white, Black/German" ("Crossing Borders" 7). She goes on to write that "Ayim demonstrates how, based on skin color, assumptions are made as to her national, cultural, or racial identity and she is denied affirmation of her German ethnicity (in this case a German refusing to recognize her as German)" (7).

“Exotik”

nachdem sie mich erst anschwärzten
zogen sie mich dann durch den kakao
um mir schließlich weiß machen zu wollen
es sei vollkommen unangebracht
schwarz zu sehen. (142)

This very short poem portrays an African German being marginalized by her compatriots. The poem also deals with fragmentation, the problem of having to choose between being either black nor white. This is very problematic for African Germans, because they are in the middle and do not want to choose one aspect of their mixed heritage over the other. If an African German is forced to choose between his/her African or German background, then he or she ends up denying a part of the self. For example, if African Germans emphasize their German heritage, then they sometimes feel they must deny or eliminate everything related to the black heritage, so as not to seem to be black, in order to prevent them from contradicting themselves. Ayim feels that Germans do not see her and other African Germans as one of them, and, when African Germans are not treated negatively they are instead exoticized. In this case the term “exotic” also carries a very negative connotation, even though the word means mysteriously beautiful, for the word generally refers to things or people who are unusual, strange and even exciting. Alice, one of the black women in Germany interviewed by Giesela Fremgen, wrote that blacks are viewed as sex symbols and nothing else (62). Ayim believes that, apart from their appearance, African Germans have very little to offer that is exotic. They can speak perfect German, have German names, and/or have no direct connection with Africa or the United States, and live a very normal everyday German existence (141).

“gewitterstille”

manchmal
leuchten die schönen momente bis
heute und
umstreichelte wunden flüstern
schmerzen
in sanfte träume

im sandkasten
 seh ich uns am liebsten
 erde und wasser zu mutkematke verrührend
 die häuser die wir bauten waren schön und
 zerbrechlich
 wie blitze die schläge
 auf kopf und gerippe
 wenn wir gegen SIE lachten und weinten wuchs
 unsere nähe
 ich lachte so gerne mit dir!
 manchmal leuchten
 die schönen momente bis heute
 dann rühre ich mutkematke
 und male unsre gesichter (208)

This poem seems to reflect Ayim's identity and her relationship with her foster family. She wrote this poem to her foster brother. Her German foster brother was not biologically related to her, but the poem suggests that she felt very close to him, even to the point that he represented a brother-figure. She writes about her childhood memories playing in the sandbox with her foster brother and about how good those times were. There seems to have been a special bond between them, probably because the foster brother did not marginalize her, since they lived and grew up together as children.

The next three poems concern Ayim's biological father. These poems highlight the theme of identity and reflect her relationship with her father, whom she cared for and wished to be a part of her life. Unfortunately, she did not have the opportunity to know him because she was raised in a foster home and only met him during his visits every few years. She explains that he was "Uncle E" for her and for her foster brother, and he also remained "Uncle E" even in letters, until at some point in time she wrote to him as "Father" (Farbe bekennen 206). The first of these three poems is entitled "vatersuche."

als ich dich brauchte
 hielt ich das bild an der wand
 für wahr
 das schönste was ich von dir hatte
 und das einzige
 du warst
 wie ich dich wünschte
 ernst und klug und zart. unendlich zart.
 von angesicht zu angesicht

traf mich dein augenblick:
ernst und klug und kalt. bitterkalt.
wortlos hab ich das bild
erhängt
das den traum vom vater mir
träumte
zartbitter der abschied
ich gehe und staune (209)

In the poem she reveals that the only possession of his that she had was a picture of him, which she looked at when she needed him to comfort her. She did not know him very well, but imagined him to be as the warm, tender, and intelligent father she imagined him to be; yet this picture stands in contrast to the bitter reality of his cold, serious, distant look she experiences when she finally is truly united with him.

“überhaupt fast gar nicht”

ich kannte dich immer überhaupt nicht
und nachdem wir uns
vor jahren
fünf minuten sahen
fast gar nicht
fünf minuten braunes haar braune augen ängstlicher mund
fünf minuten und damals neun monate
zwangskindmutterschaft
wir kannten uns immer überhaupt nicht
und nunmehr fast gar nicht (210)

This poem about her father is devoid of any warmth or love and emphasizes discontent and coldness. She talks about the visits that he made, but they were so long ago, it is as if she does not remember the visits or ever becoming closer to know him.

Another poem addressed to her biological father is entitled “berührung.”

ich ahnte immer daß es dich gibt
auch wenn ich auf ästen der einsamkeit
tränen rollte
und gerade dann --
ich ahnte es
ich weiß es (210)

The tone of this poem seems to shift back to that of "Vatersuche" and shows a more positive sense of warmth and yearning. She tells him that she always sensed her father's presence and she believed that her father wanted to be there for her and take care of her.

The next poem was included in Showing Our Colors, but not in Farbe bekennen and entitled "Blues in Black-and-White."

Over and over again
there are those who are
dismembered, sold off and distributed
those who are always are, were, and shall remain the "others"
over and over again
the actual others declare themselves

the only real ones
over and over again
the actual others declare on us
war

it's the blues in Black-and-white
1/3rd of the world
dances over
the other
2/3rds

they celebrate in white
we mourn in Black
it's the blues in Black-and-white
it's the blues

a reunited germany
celebrates itself in 1990
without its immigrants, refugees, jewish and black people
it celebrates in white
but it's the blues in Black-and-white
it's the blues
united germany united europe united states
celebrates 1992
500 years since columbus
500 years--of slavery, exploitation, and genocide in the americas
asia
and africa

1/3rd of the world unites
against the other 2/3rds
in the rhythm of racism, sexism, and antisemitism
they want to isolate us; irradiate our history
or mystify it to the point of
irrecognition

it's the blues in Black-and-white
it's the blues
but we're sure of it--we're sure
1/3rd of humanity celebrates in white
2/3rds of humanity doesn't join the party

(Translated by Tina Campt, 232-33)

This poem portrays racism on a broader scale, that is, as a global issue that we continue to deal with today. The speaker reveals that there is still a race problem in this world between blacks and whites, and that we simply live in a world where those in the minority based on numbers (white) continue to isolate and exploit those in the majority (people of color). One-third of the world (white) celebrates and reunites against the other two-thirds, who mourn in the rhythm of racism, sexism, and anti-Semitism, and the one-third minority wants to isolate the two-thirds majority and erase the history of those who suffer. Ayim clearly points out that there is in fact a "race war" still going on and it is not only in Germany, but all over the world. It is very interesting that the one-third minority rules over the other two-thirds, the majority, by controlling most governments and ignoring or doing very little to resolve the issues and concerns of the others. Ayim also uses color and music as a part of this poem. The color black here represents all people who are non-white (regardless of their national origin or heritage). The color blue in a metaphorical sense and in music represents "unhappiness" or "sadness." Ayim depicts the sadness that people suffer in a black-and-white world which ignores various shades of humanity.

The following is a poem that appeared in the German newspaper Taz, die Tageszeitung on August 24, 1996:

"grenzenlos und unverschämt: ein gedicht gegen die deutsche sch-einheit"

ich werde trotzdem
afrikanisch
sein
auch wenn ihr
mich gerne deutsch
haben wollt
und werde trotzdem
deutsch sein
auch wenn euch

meine schwärze
nicht passt
ich werde
noch einen schritt weitergehen
bis an den äussersten rand
wo meine schwestern sind
wo meine brüder stehen
wo unsere
FREIHEIT
beginnt

ich werde
noch einen schritt weitergehen
und noch einen schritt
weiter
und wiederkehren
wann
ich will
wenn
ich will
grenzenlos und unverschämt
bleiben

This ninety-three word poem was probably one of the last Ayim wrote before her death and serves as a message to all Germans as well as to Germans of dual heritage. She wrote this poem to clearly affirm her pride in her dual heritage. She demonstrates that, in contrast to the pretense of German unity, she is not in the least ashamed of her mixed heritage, but is determined to speak out about her identity along with her "brothers and sisters," that is, her African German compatriots. Regardless of the German response to approve or accept them as African Germans, she re-affirms the strong sense of identity by describing herself as borderless and branzen.

As a distinct minority, contemporary African Germans must often deal with the problems of racism, marginalization, and identity in Germany. May Ayim and other African Germans, particularly those in the ISD, and a growing number of scholars, address these issues and concerns in several works. For the people who knew Ayim, her unfortunate death was quite shocking, yet African Germans continue to raise and advocate a public forum for their concerns. Their situation is not unlike the situation of African

Americans in the United States, but as an even smaller minority they must first work together and unify themselves as well as get some help from their fellow German citizens in order to accomplish their goals.

Chapter 5. Blacks and African Germans in Two German Films: Angst essen Seele auf and
Schwarzfahrer

Since World War II, a small number of blacks and African Germans have slowly made their way into the world of film in Germany. Blacks and African Germans represent a small number in the German film industry and they seldom get the opportunity to play leading roles in films. In some cases, if a black or African German plays a minor role in a German film, he or she is generally cast either as a tragic character or as an exotic figure. For instance, in the 1978 film Die Ehe der Maria Braun, directed by Rainer Werner Fassbinder, an African American soldier shares some intimate moments with Maria Braun, until, suddenly, her husband Hermann unexpectedly returns home from the war and finds his wife in bed with the soldier. As Hermann struggles briefly with the soldier, and Maria Braun realizes she still loves her husband, she picks up a bottle and strikes the soldier, inadvertently killing him. Francine Jobatey gives other examples in an article, "From Toxi to TV: Multiculturalism and the Changing Images of Black German," wherein she writes: "A black German actress from former East Germany played a leading part in the highly acclaimed film production of the Klaus Mann novel, Mephisto. But she is still a seductive dancer, involved in a passionate love affair. . . The dancer can only be seen as a tragic figure" (32-33). Mephisto is a 144 minute film directed by István Szabó in 1981. Earlier in the same article Jobatey discusses a film about a young African German girl named Toxi. Jobatey explains that the film Toxi was one of the first attempts to feature a black in a prominent role in a German film. Toxi premiered in 1952, some seven years after the Second World War. It is a story about a five-year-old girl whose father is an African American soldier and whose mother is German. Jobatey writes: "Toxi's protagonist represents the naive child who enlightens white society to its prejudicial limitations. She

appeals to human decency and kindness” (30). Jobatey mentions that since the mid-eighties there has been an increased representation of African Germans in film and that these African Germans are seen in a variety of roles (29).

More recent films offer a more complex and multi-dimensional portrayal of racism and xenophobia. Two contemporary German films which fit in this category are Fassbinder’s 1973 Angst essen Seele auf and Pepe Danquart’s 1992 Schwarzfahrer. In both films racism and xenophobia affect the two main characters; and these behaviors are depicted through spoken and body language in particular. It is very interesting to observe that in the two films both main characters are young black men involved with middle-aged German women, but their relationships are quite different based on how they treat each other.

The word “xenophobia” is defined by David and Julia Jary in Collins Dictionary of Sociology as follows: “An exaggerated hostility towards or fear of foreigners” (738). Racism also means fear, but in addition suggests a feeling of superiority over other races. Merriam-Webster defines racism as “a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race (969).” Earlier I discussed how Germans previously defined themselves strictly by a blood notion. This is important to mention again, because there are currently many immigrants who have been living and working in the Federal Republic of Germany since the 1960s, and some of these immigrants have become or are applying for German citizenship. Fulbrook explains:

These foreign residents, in contrast to their ‘German’ predecessors, were never fully accepted as an integral part of a culturally diverse society. It was first assumed that individual foreign workers would stay for a while, working for relatively low wages in often disagreeable and non-unionized conditions, would contribute their taxes without being any drain on the

education or social security systems, and would eventually return to their countries of origin before becoming a burden by drawing a pension from the funds to which they had, as employees, contributed. In the event, however--and quite predictably--many Gastarbeiter stayed and settled, married, had children and grandchildren. But the presence of those 'foreign' residents, for many of whom Germany was more home than the less familiar country from which their parents or grandparents had come, was never fully accepted by the majority of their German 'fellow-citizens'. . . . With the growing economic recession following the oil crises of 1973 and 1979, the status of Gastarbeiter became ever less welcome. In 1982, nearly two-thirds (62 per cent) of West Germans thought that there were 'too many foreigners' in West Germany; and 50 per cent of West Germans thought that 'foreigners' should be sent back to their countries of origin. (93-94)

These facts are all relevant to a discussion of both films Angst essen Seele auf and Schwarzfahrer, because the black characters in both films suffer the affects of xenophobia and they are harshly victimized by racist, terrorist acts of violence that are clearly portrayed in the films.

The first film, Angst essen Seele auf, is a ninety-three minute color film that takes place in Munich, in 1973. In this film Brigitte Mira (German) stars as Emmi, a widowed, middle-aged cleaning woman, and El Hedi Ben Salem (North African) stars as Ali, a guest worker from Morocco. Ali and Emmi face racism and harassment within the society in which they live because of their intimate relationship. Emmi is naive about the society in which she was raised. After she and Ali meet, she convinces him to move in with her, hoping and thinking that everything will be perfect between her and Ali. Ali, on the other hand, knows what to expect from society and how it will treat him and Emmi, but he pursues the relationship anyway. Almost everyone associated with the couple--family,

neighbors, co-workers, and merchants--express their racist views in showing their strong objection to the relationship, because Ali is a black man and a Moroccan. While the people of Morocco derive from various racial groups (have various shades of skin complexion ranging from very dark to light olive), Ali appears to have more Negroid traits, because of his hair texture and the color of his skin, although he is relatively light-brown skinned.

Emmi's three married children are ashamed of their mother, the neighbors gossip about her, the owner of the store where she frequently shops sends her away, and her co-workers warn her and then later exclude her during social time at work. There are five scenes in the film that portray the cruel treatment of Emmi and Ali. These scenes depict the racist attitudes that the main characters experience in society, particularly in the body language and the spoken language that the other characters use to express these attitudes. After the first ten minutes of the film Emmi arrives home with Ali, and a very curious neighbor watches them closely as they go upstairs towards Emmi's apartment. There is a brief dialogue between Emmi and the neighbor, and then the neighbor immediately focuses her full attention on Ali. She stands very stiffly, as if she is frozen or in a trance, staring at Ali. Judging from her large glowing eyes that continue to get even larger, one can easily see that she is in a state of shock or even confused because Emmi is with a black man. She does not look happy at all to see the couple together. As soon as the couple vanishes, the neighbor rushes to the first door and rings for a nearby neighbor, in order to share her latest news/gossip with her:¹

Neighbor 1: Stellen Sie sich vor, Frau Kurowski hat einen Ausländer dabei.

Neighbor 2: Was?

Neighbor 1: Ja, einen Schwarzen.

Neighbor 2: Neger?

¹ All transcriptions of scenes from the films discussed in this chapter are my own.

doch.

Neighbor 2: Aber sie ist doch nicht keine richtige Deutsche, Kurowski. . . .

Neighbor 1: Was will sie mit ihm?

Neighbor 2: Keine Ahnung, vielleicht einen Teppich kaufen.

Neighbor 1 and 2: Ha ha ha ha.

Neighbor 1: Abends um halb zehn?

Neighbor 2: Wer weiß? (Fassbinder, Angst essen Seele auf).

Judging from the dialogue of the two women, it is clear that they are only concerned about the fact that a black man accompanied Emmi home. The theme of sexuality is raised when the neighbors laugh at the suggestion that she wants to buy a carpet, since they both draw the implication that Emmi's attraction to Ali is solely sexual. Watching their facial expressions and listening to the tone of their voices, one can see that these women are angered and upset about the situation. What is also very interesting in this scene is that the women believe that Emmi is not completely German because she has a Polish last name, retained from her late husband who was Polish.

A second important scene takes place at Emmi's place of work the next day during lunch. Emmi tells her co-workers that she met a guest-worker, and they all begin to criticize the thought of having a relationship with a guest-worker. They try to warn Emmi that guest-workers will stop at nothing to get their way, that they are unclean, that their families live in one room buildings, that they only think about sex--because the newspapers are full of stories of rape--and, finally, that any one who has any type of relationship with them should be considered on the same level as a prostitute. Of course, since Emmi feels very close to Ali, she remains quiet and does not reveal any more news. These co-workers not only express lies based on stereotypes of guest workers, but they also believe them too. None of the co-workers mention that they personally know guest workers but they all seem to overgeneralize and support each others' xenophobic views.

In a third scene which takes place at Emmi's home, she has requested that her children come see her immediately. They are unaware of what their mother is going to tell them, and they are afraid and concerned that she is ill. Looking at their faces, one can see that the children are nervous and frightened, because they fear what she has to tell them. Emmi, revealing that she is not ill and that she just gotten married, presents her husband Ali to her children. Suddenly, the worried, frightened looks change to looks of anger and loathing, because of the shocking news. In an act of rage one of the sons gets up and kicks a big hole in the television and the rest of the children get up and leave at once, telling their mother: "Du sollst dich schämen!" Emmi is so confused and overwhelmed with shock that she just cries because she knows she has lost the respect of her children.

A fourth pivotal scene takes place at a very small grocery store where Emmi frequently shops. First Ali goes to the market and the store-owner refuses to help or serve him, presumably because he can not understand him, even though Ali speaks German. Later Emmi returns to the market in a hostile manner and demands an explanation for the store-owner:

Emmi: "Warum bedienen Sie meinen Mann nicht? Hat er irgend etwas
getan?"

Owner: Wieso bediene ich Ihren Mann nicht? Der kann nicht sagen was
er will.

Emmi: Er hat eine Libelle verlangt, eine Margarine.

Owner: Ach so, ich habe ihn nicht verstanden.

Emmi: Doch, das haben Sie verstanden. . .

At the end of the dispute the store-owner tells Emmi that until her husband learns to speak German he will not serve him. Emmi boldly tells the owner that Ali can speak better German than the owner. He becomes very angry and sends Emmi out of the store and forbids her to return. Emmi knows exactly what she is dealing with and comes to her

husband's aid in order to obtain justice. Whether or not she is allowed in the store does not disturb her, and she just decides to go to the store-owner's competitor.

A fifth scene which takes place in a restaurant reflects upon the society in which they live. It is an example of what could happen in public with strangers. Emmi and Ali are sitting outside at a table waiting to be served. One can clearly see that the couple has an intimate relationship, because they are holding hands and looking at each other. The serving personnel are standing about fifteen feet away from the couple outside of the restaurant directly in front of the entrance, and Emmi and Ali, who are the only customers, notice they are being stared at. It is quite obvious that these people are only staring at the couple, because the film directs all of the attention on the couple as if one sees the couple from the serving personnels' eyes. There is no dialogue from the spectators. They stand far enough back just so that they can stare, making the couple feel very uncomfortable and unwelcome. Soon Emmi cries and shouts at them, but nothing changes.

At the midpoint of the story, after Emmi and Ali have married and taken a trip to escape briefly from the racism in their society, they return home and suddenly find themselves accepted or tolerated. Basically, the people just use them. For example, the female bar owner prepares a typical Moroccan meal for Ali, and so entices him into an affair. In another example, the store-owner apologizes and begs Emmi to come back to his store, not because he wants to befriend or help Ali. Although their life seems on the surface to have improved, all personal issues have not been resolved and Ali's internal state deteriorates. "Die Wandlung entspringt indes vor allem geschäftlichem Kalkül. Alle nützen Emmi nun aus. Als der äußere Druck auf Emmi und Ali nachläßt, werden die inneren Probleme des Paares deutlicher (Iden et al. 164)." At the end of the film Ali becomes very ill. He suffers from a stomach ulcer, a malady, a doctor informs Emmi, suffered by many foreign workers because of stress. The title Angst essen Seele auf

becomes the phrase that Ali says to Emmi in order to describe the suffering he has been dealing with since his relationship with her (Lowry 44).

Schwarzfahrer is a twelve-minute black-and-white film produced by Pepe Danquart which takes place in Berlin in 1992. The German word "Schwarzfahrer" ("black rider" in English) means one who rides public transportation without paying for or having a valid ticket. In this situation the word is doubly ironic because the young man is black, but he is not "riding black" that is, without a valid ticket, unlike the motorcyclist whom no one notices. The film centers attention on a young black man who boards a street-car and sits next to an elderly German woman. She objects to his sitting next to her, and her racist views are revealed. For the rest of the journey she complains out loud to her fellow passengers about the problems with foreigners in Germany. She exaggerates, claiming that African people are responsible for literally everything that is wrong with the world, e.g., crime, disease, and poverty. She boldly tells the young black man how unwelcome he is in Germany. The nature of her rambling monologue recalls May Ayim's statements that Germans often assume that people of color do not understand the language. She is speaking as if to nobody on the assumption that the young man next to her cannot understand a word she is saying. The irony--and the central fact for Germans of African heritage--is that he understands every word.

Die Flegel!!! Warum setzen Sie sich nicht wo anders hin? Es gibt doch genug Plätze hier. Man kann schon nicht mehr Straßenbahn fahren, ohne belästigt zu werden. . . . Warum kommt ihr alle überhaupt hierher? Hat euch jemand eingeladen? Wir haben es alleine geschafft. Wir brauchen keine Hottentotten, die uns nur auf der Tasche herumliegen. Jetzt da wir selber so viele Arbeitslose haben. Dann arbeiten die alle noch schwarz. . . . Als ob die Italianer und Türken nicht schon genug wären. Jetzt kommt noch ein Afrikaner. . . . Die vermehren sich ja wie die Karnickel darunter

alle quer durcheinander. Kein Wunder, daß die alle Aids haben. Die kriegen wir nie wieder los. Wenn das jetzt so weiter geht bei uns, gibt's bald nur Türken, Polen und Neger hier. Man weiß nicht mehr in welchem Land man lebt.

The other passengers do not seem to care because none of them protest against her or offer the black man any support. He endures her racist babble for only so long before he improvises a wonderfully satisfying and funny revenge. He quickly snatches her ticket and swallows it. The conductor arrives and does not believe the woman's "preposterous" excuse: "Der Neger hat meine Karte gefressen." He demands that the elderly woman leave the train immediately and issues her a citation for being a "Schwarzfahrer."

The film gets right to the point in portraying racism. Before the young black man boards the street-car, there are other people also waiting to board. While they are waiting, one notices some of them are constantly staring at the young black man and a couple of young Turks. Just because one stares at another person, as do the people in the film Schwarzfahrer, does not necessarily mean something negative, even though many cultures find it extremely rude to stare at people. There are also cases when people are just curious or even fascinated with strangeness or differences of people. It is the coldness and bitterness in the facial expressions of the people that suggest that these people are staring with loathing because they do not like the black man. He is neatly dressed, well mannered, and does not cause any problems, but his skin complexion stands out uniquely. The elderly woman does not stare. She takes one look at him for a split second and makes her judgment. It is very interesting and ironic that the elderly woman addresses the young black man with the polite address "Sie" (You) and not the familiar "Du" (you), especially since she insults him. Although she finds him unacceptable, the young black man is a stranger and she thus follows the more traditional form of address.

Blacks and African Germans are slowly gaining some prominence in the German film industry. They, too, face problems with racism even in the entertainment sector. Since the mid-1980s blacks and African Germans have been represented in various ways. Some of the issues that they face are portrayed realistically in the films. Issues such as racism and xenophobia are being addressed in some contemporary German films. One can easily identify these issues in Danquart's Schwarzfahrer and also in Fassbinder's Angst essen Seele auf. Producing more and more films which portray realistic situations and showing how blacks and African Germans live in contemporary Germany will certainly expand people's knowledge and hopefully not only make them more aware that these problems do exist but eventually also inspire them to find a solution to the problems.

Conclusion

This thesis presents some historical, political, and literary aspects of the experience of African Germans and blacks in Germany. It was not until the late twentieth century that African Germans asserted their nearly century-long claim to German heritage, but blacks have been in Germany dating back to the Medieval times and German literature has since its earliest beginnings included black characters. For example, the literary figure Feirefiz (son of a German knight and of a North African Queen), Parzival's half brother in Wolfram von Eschenbach's Parzival, dates back to the Middle Ages, and the historic figure Dr. Amo of the Universities of Halle, Wittenberg, and Jena received his doctorate in philosophy and taught a number of years at some of Germany's leading universities during the early eighteenth century. The twentieth century concept of African Germans is more visible today in literature and history, because there is an interest in this topic and this has generated research about the experiences of African Germans and blacks in Germany e.g., Oguntoye's, Opitz's, and Schultz's Farbe bekennen, Giesela Fremgen's ...und wenn du dazu noch schwarz bist, Carol Aisha Blackshire-Belay's The African-German Experience, and original works by African Germans, e.g., May Ayim's Blues in schwarz-weiß, and the periodical afro-Look, published by the African-German organization ISD.

Today, there is a need for a deeper understanding of the African German's role in German history, politics, and culture. With the generations of Africans and blacks who have permanently settled in Germany and inter-married with Germans over the last half a century and the publication of Farbe bekennen, which chronicles much of the history of blacks in Germany, African Germans have pushed to be recognized as an ethnic reality. Since they have met and addressed their common concerns, they have even established some organizations, e.g., ADEFRA and ISD. In addition, other ethnic minorities in

Germany are getting involved and also making contributions to help and establish multicultural organizations and community resources. It is interesting to observe that while these ethnic minorities are addressing their concerns they are simultaneously redefining the concept of Germanness. It is essential that Germany recognize this expanded concept in order to meet the needs of its increasingly multicultural society.

Many African Germans came together, made contributions, and established their organizations as a result of dealing with issues of racism, marginalization, and identity that they faced in their daily lives. They remain on a quest to improve their situation by changing the old traditional way of thinking about what it means to be "German." Addressing these issues has aided the African German community in overcoming some of their major concerns by helping them to redefine themselves and to triumph over the cruel past which to a great extent has ignored them and in many cases denied them full recognition and rights as Germans.

The history of African Germans and blacks in Germany reveals a constant struggle against racism and marginalization. This is expressed in contemporary literature written by and about blacks in Germany and in films in which they are featured as the subject of the film and as actors/actresses in the films. In literature, African Germans have been addressing some of these concerns since the publication of Farbe bekennen in 1986. As a result of the book there are many other works that have appeared, such as Blackshire-Belay's edited volume, The African German Experience, in which she and several other scholars examine numerous aspects of history, literature, and culture of African Germans. In film, some of the same issues are present, but they have not always been well addressed through that medium. The 1952 production Toxi is one of the first films that dealt with some of the issues of African German. For a long time blacks in German films had been stereotyped and cast as one-dimensional, exotic characters. Only recently have films been

produced which deal with complex racial issues and feature blacks or African Germans as complex characters.

Today, African Germans continue to address their concerns for equality and full participation in all aspects of German life. Only in recent years has sufficient research become available to expand this topic. Not only is there a need to discuss this topic as it relates to literature and film, but attention should be directed to other areas, such as art, music, and television. These additional areas also play a vital role, because they are important for promoting awareness and understanding.

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Vita

Cedric Allen Cunningham was born in Greensboro, North Carolina on January 10, 1971. He attended primary and secondary public schools in Greensboro. In the summer of 1989, when he won a full scholarship to travel to Alfeld, Germany with Youth For Understanding, a youth exchange organization, his interest in German began. After graduating with honors from Ben L. Smith High School in May 1990, he immediately enrolled at Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, North Carolina. During his undergraduate years as a student in the Department of Modern Foreign Languages he served as an apprentice teacher in the intensive French program and as a tutor of German. He became a member of the University Honors Program and Mortar Board Senior Honor Society. On May 7, 1994 he graduated with associates honors, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in German and a minor in French. He was awarded a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship to spend a year at the University of Hildesheim, Germany. In 1995 he spent a second year abroad at the University of Salzburg, Austria with Bowling Green State University's graduate program. In 1996 he entered the graduate program in German at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville with a teaching assistantship. In December 1998 he will receive a Master of Arts degree in German. Afterwards, he plans to seek a career in either education or with the federal government.