



## **Anti-Blackness in Germany!**

### **A Definition of anti-Blackness**

anti-Blackness / anti-Black racism refers to the interpersonal as well as institutional and structural forms of a specific type of racism towards Black people. From the more day to day structures; within our workplaces, organising spaces and creative spaces, to our close and intimate connections as well as on a structural and institutional level.

anti-Blackness works both to dehumanize and invalidate Black people and the experiences of Black people as well as to systematically exclude and marginalise Black people.

### **The German Context**

In Germany anti-Blackness is produced and received in many different ways.

One common example of German anti-Blackness is the white idea that you can't be both Black and German. Black people get constantly asked where they are from by white people.

From a young age Black people are confronted with anti-Blackness in Germany, from the stories told in German children's books, children's songs, and even children's games amongst other things.

To being presented with it around the streets, as there are still many colonial street names, e.g. in Berlin the M.-Straße, Iltisstraße, etc with a need for holding onto the past.

Germany's violent colonial past is constantly being denied and downplayed. The mainstream white German narrative is that Germany wasn't that bad compared to other colonizers and didn't have that many colonies and gave them up.

### **LesMigraS' Perspective**

We at LesMigraS recognise the important issue surrounding anti-Blackness and the structural level at which it operates, affecting both the Black queers attending our organisation and our very own Black colleagues. We are aware that our space is also not always free from anti-Black racism.

We acknowledge the deep-rooted and internalised historical and systemic biases that uphold discrimination, marginalisation, and the unjust treatment of Black individuals, even in our very own spaces. We understand that addressing anti-Blackness requires more than just acknowledging its existence; and promising to work on how we as institutions or organisations aim to process our own reproductions of anti-Blackness.

It requires concrete actions and initiatives to effect meaningful change. We are grateful for those who have along the way been in dialogue with us around these issues, and for all the emotional, theoretical and organisational work that Black queers and trans people have and continue to put into our communities.

It is very important that intersectional struggles and experiences of Black people are considered when aiming to dismantle anti-Black racism.

The following posts are from the perspectives of Black queers to everyone, Queer People of Color to other Queer People of Color and white queers to other white queers on the work needed to dismantle anti-Black racism within German spaces.

## **Anti Blackness from queer People of Color (PoC) in Germany**

### **From a Black queer perspective.**

Deconstructing the term POC:

Within a German context the use of the word People of Color still holds a lot of ambiguity especially due to the different levels of racialisation different groups receive. Many Black people who may have used this term or still use it in certain contexts still find that this catch all term for the explicit level of anti-Black racism that is active doesn't quite fit. It also invisibilises Black people in PoC and even BIPoC centered spaces.

Many PoC until recently were never put in a place to consider what it meant or means to be in solidarity with Black People, to be considered the other like Black People. Or Even racialised as Black People are, all over the globe. For many PoC, Black People were considered the others in their cultures. And deconstructing AntiBlackness had never been needed.

### **Black Erasure:**

Often PoC erase the issues of Black people by putting the struggles of themselves over Black people or constantly comparing struggles. It isn't a competition about marginalization and this is exactly what living under white supremacy and capitalism want us to do, by dividing and conquering marginalized people rather than uniting.

Often PoC find it easy to judge or tell their perception or judgement to Black people especially Dark skin people. From their innate fear of Black bodies, to the perception of not trusting Black People or being viewed as overly angry.

When being invited to speak on structural racism be active in asking who's perspectives are being presented.

To address anti-Blackness means leaving your comfort zone, it means allowing a conversation about Black peoples oppression to take priority over your own also valid experience. It means not bringing the conversation back to your self or centering yourself.

There is no where on the globe that Dark skin Black ppl are not read as Black. Be mindful when you speak about your proximity to whiteness or racial ambiguity in Black people's presence and how much room you take up with this.

As non-Black people it is also not advised to list off the Black movements you've helped or individuals you've supported etc as a way to legitimise how supportive of an Activist you are.

## **How does Anti Blackness show up in Queer PoC spaces?**

### **Reflections from a Queer non Black PoC perspective.**

### **Understanding anti-Blackness as a consequence of Colonisation that is internalized by PoCs:**

As PoC living in white dominated societies we tend to act as if all BIPoCs are affected in the same way by structural, institutional and interpersonal racism. This neglects the specificity and historical context of anti-Blackness and racial hierarchies that have been established under colonialism that have an effect right up to the present day.

A lot of the contexts and cultures that people who identify as PoC in Germany originate from have histories of anti-Blackness and perpetuate anti-Blackness until this day. anti-Blackness is therefore being perpetuated by us as PoC within BIPoC spaces and discussions about inherited anti-Blackness are being avoided.

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### **PoCs also benefit from anti-Blackness:**

In BIPoC spaces, the work load to dismantle racism often lays on the shoulders of Black people and PoCs with darker skin while more light-skinned PoCs or PoCs with white-passing privileges remain neutral and silent. The narrative of "but we are all affected by racism" serves as a defense mechanism to not examine one's own anti-Blackness and the ways in which we benefit from it. It also denies the actual differences in experience and unequal access to resources.

### **Recognizing the work of Black People in PoC spaces:**

This is also shows within our spaces: Black people often end up being marginalized and invisibilized while at the same time doing a majority of the intellectual, emotional and educational work. The specificity of anti-Black racism does not get acknowledged and gets obscured by statements like "we all experience racism." Black people are sometimes completely absent from so-called BIPoC spaces which then barely gets acknowledged.

### **We should therefore ask ourselves:**

- Who is working the hardest in queer BIPoC spaces to dismantle anti-Black racism?
- Who is generally doing a majority of the care work, the intellectual work and other forms of labour?
- Whose voices get centered?
- Are Black people being appropriately compensated for the work that they are doing?
- Who gets credit for accomplishments in spaces and collectives and who benefits of the labour of Black people?
- Who ends up on the forefronts of events, stages, panels, workshops and who gets the access to opportunities and resources?
- Who is being heard, believed and taken seriously?
- Are there Black people in our spaces and if not, can we ask ourselves the uncomfortable questions of who is missing in the space and can we identify why?
- How are emotional displays perceived depending on race, e.g. how do we react to a Black person's anger and how do we react to a lighter-skinned PoC person's tears?

## **Anti Blackness and the role of us as PoC to dismantle it within BIPOC spaces**

PoCs in BIPOC spaces need to learn to listen and remain quiet when Black people speak. Hire Black people for events, workshops, organisational development processes and make sure to pay them fair wages for their labor.

Avoid tokenism and actually do the work of dismantling the anti-Black structures within your spaces.

Accept criticism from Black people and give protagonism to Black people in BIPOC spaces.

### **Address anti-Black racism, show active solidarity:**

When anti-Black racism occurs, speak up and do not put the burden on Black people to do all the educational and emotional work of bringing it up and finding a solution to it. This is especially goes for PoC with more perceived proximity to whiteness and white-passing privileges.

Bring conversations about anti-Black racism to the table, have uncomfortable conversations with family, friends and colleagues, point out anti-Black racism and educate other PoC about it.

Show active solidarity when Black people bring up racism in BIPOC spaces. Address colorism within the PoC community. That means be aware of which positions PoC who are light skinned and white-passing occupy in the space and question it.

Learn about Black people's contribution to science and knowledge and do not only invite them to events when it is about arts, sport and culture. Give credit when you refer to Black people's knowledge, contributions to science and intellectual work.

### **Don't give up on educating yourself:**

Keep educating yourself and learning about anti-Black racism: be aware of the historical relevance of Black people in queer and anti-racism struggles and their role in the fight for the rights that we have today; read about important Black historical characters and their struggles; do research and educational work about Black histories in Europe and your context and background in order to counter the dominant narratives.

### **Take it seriously!**

Center anti-Black racism in anti-racism discourses and acknowledge the specific harm caused by anti-Black racism. Be aware of the fact that Black people experience more police violence than other people in Germany.

### **Solidarity is intersectional!**

Remind yourself and those around you of the importance of building solidarities between different struggles instead of pushing them against each other. In order to abolish racism and achieve liberation we need to fight against anti-Black racism. **"The truth is, no one of us can be free until everybody is free"** (Maya Angelou)

## **Anti-Blackness within "majority" white queer spaces**

## **Reflections from a white queer perspective.**

All the information that follows is based on a long tradition of Black knowledge. We as white people are not the originators of any of these ideas.

### **anti-Blackness in white-dominated Queer Spaces**

white-dominated queer spaces are often not "safe/r spaces" for Black queer people. We as white queers question Black queers' belonging in these spaces because we as white queers have problematically internalized white Western ideas of queerness.

### **Blackness as Cultural Capital**

We as white queers often appropriate or consume parts of Black (queer) cultures, such as music, dances, language, clothes, etc. when we think things are cool or trendy without acknowledging the Black originators and just discarding them again whenever we feel like it. Black culture becomes a product that is chosen when it best suits white queers. Images of Black people are used by white people to promote parties and events which Black people are very rarely present or centered in. So we in many ways profit from Black people.

### **anti-Blackness in the Work Space**

white people are dominantly present in decision-making positions and therefore white norms are established and maintained in most queer organisations. These white norms of what it means to be "professional" put extra burdens and heightened demands on Black queer coworkers. white people often micromanage the work of Black people in these spaces.

### **anti-Blackness in Mental Health Support Structures**

When it comes to therapy, counselling and support structures for queer people, most queer NGOs in Germany are white-dominated. A colonialist mindset is still deeply rooted in white people's minds. So when working with Black queer clients, white counsellors, therapists or social workers often deny Black queers' realities. Also we white people often deny Black clients agency and perceive them in need of being helped by white people (white saviorism). Some struggles that Black clients face are often downplayed or interpreted as being a cultural problem (culturalization). So Black queers are blamed for the discrimination and exclusion they face within white supremacist German society and a white-dominated queer scene.

### **Appropriating Black Knowledge Production**

A lot of approaches and concepts, that are rooted within Black movements, such as intersectionality, community accountability, political rest and rest as reparations, are taken on by white-dominated queer organisations without crediting the Black originators and breaking with the original focus on Black liberation. There is a white-washing of queer history and Black trans and queer people's outstanding fundamental contributions.

### **Blackness in Interpersonal Relationships**

anti-Blackness has immense effects on our interpersonal relationships with Black people. Perceiving ourselves as "woke" and educated about anti-Black racism, can lead to us reproducing anti-Blackness without being aware of it.

When Black people are rightfully frustrated, impatient or even angry about their treatment, white people often become defensive and label Black people as being too emotional or aggressive.

## **Objectifying Black Bodies**

In the white queer and trans community, Black bodies are often fetishized or exoticized by white people. This perpetuates colonial structures, dehumanizes Black people, and treats them as objects.

## **anti Blackness and the role of white queers to dismantle it in queer spaces**

**Reflections from a white queer perspective.**

### **De-Centering whiteness in Queerness**

As white people we profit the most from anti-Blackness - whether we want to or not. Also it's important to stop believing that - because we also face discrimination as white queer people - we can't act anti-Black.

It is important ask ourselves if we constantly center white people's experiences of queerness and tend to neglect Black queers' experiences. Who do I imagine when I think of a "typical queer person"? Do I think of a Black person? If not, why not?

### **Educating Ourselves on anti-Blackness**

We have to take responsibility to educate ourselves proactively on Black history, anti-Black racism and what makes it specific compared to other forms of racism as well as white supremacy. We should not wait for Black people to educate us on these topics. Most importantly we need to give credit to the creators of the information we are learning from.

It's important to think about Black people's roles in queer communities and not just subsume them under the BIPoC umbrella. This means that even if in our organization or event non-Black PoC are present, it is still important to see if Black queers are missing - and if so, why.

### **Profiting from Black Culture as white Queers**

When we as white queers invite Black queers as speakers, performers, DJs, etc. at an event, we need to make sure not to tokenize them and pay them well. It is important to ask ourselves who profits from Black discourses and culture. We need to think about who is being invited to represent this and we should be critical of non-Black DJs, performers etc. who are profiting off of Black culture.

### **Sharing white Resources and Privileges**

As white queers we need to reflect about our white privileges and how to use them for the benefit of all - and especially for the benefit of Black people. We can support Black (queer) organizations financially or see if we can support them in other ways. We need to use our platforms to promote specific issues around Blackness. If we have an idea of how to share our privileges, we should firstly ask if our support is welcome. Also we need to be clear about our intentions of our actions.

### **Supporting Each Other as white People in Unlearning anti-Blackness**

Dismantling our own anti-Blackness takes work and leaving our comfort zones. If we get some critical feedback from Black people about anti-Black behaviour, we should welcome this as valuable information. We will most likely feel uncomfortable emotions such as guilt, shame, fear or anger. It is important to find other white people to support us with processing these emotions and exchange

about our own anti-Black racism - and not demand this emotional and educational labor of Black people.

### **Addressing anti-Blackness in Interpersonal Relationships**

In close and/or intimate relationships with Black people we should be aware of the power hierarchies created by anti-Black racism. We should talk about it proactively and center the needs of our Black friend(s) and/or partner(s). Outsourcing our issues and hard feelings into other (white) spaces can help take some burden off of your Black friend(s) or partner(s).

We need to make words like solidarity, justice and accountability become alive. What do these words really mean and which actions do they require to be realized?

We should create spaces where Black people are encouraged to voice criticism, to name anti-Black racism and to have confidence that their criticism will be taken seriously and changes will be made accordingly. We should see critical feedback as a chance to actively change and dismantle internalized anti-Blackness.

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