

**GLOBAL FEMINISMS
COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES OF
WOMEN'S ACTIVISM AND SCHOLARSHIP**

SITE: GERMANY

**Transcript of
Katharina Oguntoye
Interviewers: Sławomira Walczewska
& Manu Giese**

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**University of Michigan
Institute for Research on Women and Gender
1136 Lane Hall Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1290
Tel: (734) 764-9537**

E-mail: um.gfp@umich.edu

Website: <http://www.umich.edu/~glblfem>

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Katharina Oguntoye (born January 1959 in Zwickau, East Germany) is an Afro-German writer, historian, activist, and poet. She founded the nonprofit intercultural association Joliba in Germany and is perhaps best known for co-editing the book *Farbe bekennen* with May Ayim (then May Opitz) and Dagmar Schultz. The English translation of this book was entitled *Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out*. Oguntoye has played an important role in the Afro-German Movement. Born in Zwickau, East Germany, to a German mother and a Nigerian father, Katharina Oguntoye was raised in both Nigeria and Heidelberg, Germany. Growing up with her father and other African relatives allowed her to see her Blackness in a positive way and she missed that when she returned to Germany at the age of nine. That move back was hard and she often describes internalized racism. Within *Showing Our Colors*, Oguntoye features her own poetry, much of which focuses on her own understanding of Afro-Germanness, her Afro-German subjectivity, and the relationship between Afro-German women and white German feminism.

Sławomira Walczewska, born 1960, feminist activist and philosopher (PhD). In 1999, Walczewska published *Ladies, Knights and Feminists: Feminist Discourse in Poland*, the first Polish book about the history of women's emancipation in Poland from a cultural perspective. That book was nominated, as one of 20 books, for the most prestigious book award in Poland at that time, NIKE, in 2000. She is author of ca. 50 articles about feminism and history of the women's movement. She was teaching history of philosophy at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow (1985-1990), history of feminist ideas at the Warsaw University (1997), at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow (2000) and the feminist critics of history at the Viadrina University in Frankfurt a/O (2019).

In 1991 she co-founded the eFKa- Women's Foundation, one of the first feminist organizations in post-socialist Poland. She edited the feminist magazine "Pełnym Głosem" (*In Full Voice*, 1993-1997) and was member of the editorial board of *Zadra*, the feminist quarterly (1999 - 2018). She is director of the Feminist Institute for Research and Education (www.efka.org.pl/fibe).

Manu Giese, born 1960, trade union employee at HBV (Union of Retail, Bank & Insurance, later ver.di). She came into contact with the women's movement when she was a teenager and had been active in the women's occupied house at Potsdamer Straße 139 in Berlin-Schöneberg since 1981. She belonged to the responsible group of women who, with the help of state subsidies and a great deal of self-help and work, renovated the house from the ground up. In 1986 the BEGiNE -Meeting Place & Culture for Women was opened in those premises. She lived in the house until 1998 and was active in self-administration (e.g. as a board member of the house association). She is also active in the BEGiNE as owner of the women's pub(1986 -1998 and again since 2004).

Katharina Oguntoye: No, no, the 15th. Sorry. Tomorrow is the 16th.

Sławomira Walczewska: Today is the 15th, 15th of March. We are in Krakow. I am, Sławomira Walczewska, sitting in front of Katharina Oguntoye. Did I pronounce that correctly?

KO: Correct.

SW: From Berlin and—

KO: It is 2018.

SW: 2018. I'd ask you if you're okay with me recording what you're about to say. And do you agree with the fact that this recording is going to be used for educational purposes?

KO: Yes, I agree with that.

SW: Okay.

KO: Do you have to hold that all the time?

SW: Yeah, I love that, yeah.

KO: It's heavy isn't it?

SW: No, it's not hard. It's physical recording. It's about me personally. Actually it's—I don't know if you can call that a question at all. But all in all I wanted to ask you to tell me about yourself, about your life. About how you came to be involved with women? Where did your interest for that come from? How did you become interested in women's issues? And how did that continue? Tell us about your feminism.

KO: If I may start from the beginning. I was very lucky that I was a young woman in the 80's and the 80's were simply a good time for the women's movement. Even during the beginning of the nineties that was still a thing, before it ended. It was called the second women's movement in Germany¹. That was quite painful for me. To me it was the end of this time of community. Although, of course, individual things have gone on and something new is emerging right now as well. Now, let's go back to the very beginning. I

¹ Following Germany's first wave of feminism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the movement was largely non-existent in Nazi Germany and after the fall of the Third Reich. Germany's second wave of feminism gained traction in the 1980s as a result of changing political and educational climates. ("Feminism in Germany." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feminism_in_Germany, 5/22/20).

think I was born as a feminist and I am a lesbian and I live a very happy life as a lesbian and I am happy with this identity and this community. I really think I was born a feminist. This is my original identity. It doesn't matter whether I'm lesbian or hetero, it's a huge topic regardless and I have to get involved again. But that was simply a matter of course for me. Of course I was terribly upset when I was a girl and there was such an injustice towards women, which is quite strange. My father is from Nigeria and my mother is German. I grew up in Leipzig and lived there until I started school.² That was a secular state. That means that both my parents were non-believers.

My mother used to say, "Yeah, you gotta listen to Grandma." The grandmother in Africa and the grandmother in Germany both represented religion so to speak. They always said: "You have to pray and that is important". They gave me this message, so to speak. I like both of them very much. Later I was able to interpret their message in my own way. I wanted to meditate. You have to create a connection with the Allness, so to speak. I was able to do something with that. But both my parents said: "Whether they want to believe or not is something the children can decide for themselves when they grow up,". They said, "I don't know if there is a God or not. You will find that out for yourself. Or you can say that yourself, decide what it is like for you". I think that was a big element of freedom we had. I have another brother with whom I grew up.

The second element was that in the GDR, in East Germany, the official opinion or doctrine stood for equality.³ Men and women are equal. Of course, that wasn't really true if you looked at the situation more closely. People aren't able to get rid of their old habits and traditions, something they had learned for so long, that easily. But when it comes to ideology this was the first time equality was announced. At home it was the same. Boys and girls are equal. But at the same time I heard how they started coming up with names for a boy, because of course their child was supposed to be a boy. Equality. I didn't get it back then so to speak. They didn't come up with a name for a girl because they couldn't imagine that it could be a girl. In retrospect you can say I was lucky, otherwise my name would be Toxi. Ulla Tokumbo is the name of the overseas-born. But they wanted to save that name for the boy. In West Germany they made a film about a Toxi and I would have suffered there too. That's what they always said about Caterina Valente.⁴ That happened during my childhood, so to speak. Everyone thought that Katharina had a connection to this singer, who was very famous in Germany at that time. My mother had read a novel and she gave me the beautiful name Katharina, which I also like very much. From then on the egalitarian side in Africa held a celebration for my birthday. Basically after some months a celebration is made so to speak. All relatives come together and they put money

² The city of Leipzig is located in the state of Saxony in east-central Germany. ("Leipzig." Encyclopaedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Leipzig-Germany>, 5/22/20).

³ The German Democratic Republic (GDR), or East Germany, was occupied by the Soviet Union following World War II and was reunified with West Germany in 1990. ("East Germany." Wikipedia. https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_Germany, 5/22/20).

⁴ Caterina Valente is an Italian musician and actress. She is popular in Germany for playing Schlager music. ("Caterina Valente." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caterina_Valente, 5/22/20).

in a bowl. The money is for the child and then they give the child a name. When you visit these relatives, they call you by that name. I also have many African names. I know that I was once named after my grandmother Victoria, my African grandmother. Then there is Pokolla, which means 'God has added good things'. I also know that one of my names is Falachat, because you always choose a name from every culture. It's just a system we use there and it basically says, that it's good if you can identify with different systems. So it's also a very open culture, so to speak.

Then, of course, I have a dozen more I don't know. But I just wanted to say that on the one hand there was this equality. But on the other hand, there was still this appreciation of the masculine, so to speak, and that really got on my nerves. That was such a fundamental injustice during my childhood. That's the feeling I had back then. When I got older as well. For example when I was a small kindergarten child, maybe five or six, I asked my mother why men actually rule the world. Why do men rule? Then she said that there used to be a female rule, a matriarchy. My parents knew about these things, but they said it would just be the other way around. If women were to rule they would just do the bad things and misbehave. That's the reason why it's okay that women don't rule. As a little child that kind of seemed to make sense. It wouldn't be better either way. It does suck that we are oppressed. But it wouldn't be much better if it was the other way around. That was actually a picture in my head over the years. It was something I struggled with but it also played a role in the modern women's movement. Are women better people? Equality means of course that you have both bad and good-- So no matter if I am black or white or Asian or whatever. Or whether I am a man or woman or transgender. You can be a good person or you might be a less stable person. That was a nice way to express it. Yes, all right. Those were the kind of topics I came in contact with early on. When I was 14, Emma came out.⁵ That was the first women's newspaper in Germany. Shortly after that *Courage* was released as well.⁶ That was the one from the left spectrum, an intellectual magazine. I read that one as well but I didn't understand it. That was too complicated for a non-academic approach. Emma was a newspaper that really did a striking job for women's rights. It was a statement to go to the store. That was announced on the evening news.

The first women's magazine appeared today. It is published nationwide and you can buy it at the kiosk. I went straight to the kiosk, but they didn't have it yet. But the next month you were able to buy it at the kiosk every month. I always bought it and it was a statement. It wasn't en vogue at all, as in it wasn't popular to fight for women's rights.⁷ We had no information at all. There was the first women's movement you had seen around the

⁵ Germany's primary feminist magazine, *EMMA*, was first published as a newspaper by Alice Schwarzer in 1977. ("EMMA (magazine)." Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/EMMA_\(magazine\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/EMMA_(magazine)), 5/22/20).

⁶ *Courage* was a German leftist-feminist newspaper first published in 1976. *Courage* competed with *EMMA* and eventually ended publication in 1984 after declaring bankruptcy. ("*Courage* (newspaper)." Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Courage_\(newspaper\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Courage_(newspaper)), 5/22/20).

⁷ Translated from French, "en vogue" means "in fashion" or "fashionable." ("En Vogue." Collins Dictionary. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/french-english/en-vogue>, 5/22/20).

1900s.⁸ This basically introduced women's occupations. It introduced welfare. That was the first women's movement. We know the bourgeois side. Unfortunately, there was a separation between the workers' side and the bourgeois women's movement. This women's movement has achieved a great deal, but it basically vanished again and disappeared as a result of the Second World War. Due to the National Socialism in Germany.⁹ The Lette club still existed. This is, so to speak, a women's training centre, a vocational school where you can learn five to six professions. The school still existed, but nobody knew who founded it and that it was a women's initiative. That's what we did in the second women's movement, the one I grew up in, that's what we achieved, to bring these women, these events back to life. I later became a historian and worked as one for my whole life, so for me that was of course fantastic. Searching for and finding this was great. That's why I was so happy. If I had been six or seven years older, I would have grown up during the 70s. That was the student movement and that's where the women's movement originally developed from, when women fought against male dominance and exploitation in the left. But these women also had a very difficult time. For Alice Schwarzer, who founded Emma, Simone de Beauvoir was the heroine who broke this total silence about "being a woman".¹⁰ Mrs. Zackpad says something about that as well. For me it was basic de Beauvoir. I read her stuff and her book was simply something you had to read. *She Came to Stay*.¹¹ I don't remember the title of the other one. I found both books to be almost unbearable.

In my opinion that wasn't women's solidarity. I was terribly annoyed that Simone de Beauvoir, with her mad talent, with her big head, was not able to express what she could do for women's solidarity. She was dependent on having this partnership with Sartre, which legitimized her and supposedly showed that they were free to love whom they wanted to love.¹² The fact that she had accepted that there were these other women. Her sexuality was only revealed much later, and whatever freedom she enjoyed. But that was concealed in a way. The focus was on the genius Sartre and how she supported it. That comes out in the books. *She Came to Stay* S and she is the third student, the young student

⁸ Germany's first wave of feminism occurred from the late 1880s to the early 1920s. The movement focused on political and educational access for women and resulted in women's suffrage in 1919. Feminism became largely nonexistent in Nazi Germany. ("Feminism in Germany." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feminism_in_Germany, 5/22/20).

⁹ National Socialism, or Nazism, refers to the fascist ideologies and actions of Germany's Nazi Party. ("Nazism." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazism>, 5/22/20).

¹⁰ Simone de Beauvoir (1908 – 1986) was a French existentialist and feminist philosopher commonly known for her book *The Second Sex*, in which she famously stated, "One is not born but becomes a woman." ("Simone de Beauvoir." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simone_de_Beauvoir, 5/22/20).

¹¹ Simone de Beauvoir's 1943 existentialist novel *She Came to Stay* follows the difficulties of a Parisian couple's open relationship. The novel is based on her relationship with Jean-Paul Sartre. ("*She Came to Stay*." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/She_Came_to_Stay, 5/22/20).

¹² Simone de Beauvoir's lifelong partnership with philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre was characterized by commitment, but non-exclusivity. Sartre's relationship with and prolonged financial support of Wanda Kosakiewicz is commonly known and was the basis of de Beauvoir's novel *She Came to Stay*. ("Simone de Beauvoir." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simone_de_Beauvoir, 5/22/20).

who falls in love with her master and then kills herself in the end. I thought: how on earth is that supposed to be a feminist approach? It's interesting to see that it's hard to step out of your generation, to step out of your time as well. Even today I have to see what the young women are doing. I am really happy that 20 years after the end of our women's movement there are new approaches, new discussions. Women sometimes ask me whether or not I already dealt with it at that time. That's crazy. We basically told ourselves we have to look for the foremothers and we wished we could have meet them. That's when I said: You have the advantage that you can still talk to us. Luckily you were born in a better time period than the previous generation. You can talk to us. It's bittersweet really. We knew about this [the oblivion/forgetting] and we actually said that when we started. We won't let that happen. We will make sure that this is not pushed away again. It's been an interesting historical lesson to see how things can be pushed away again and how fast that happens. As an academic and historian, I find a lot of things incredibly exciting. If I were young today and had to start over again with this political situation which we are in today, 2016, 2018 when the election of the presidency in the USA did not go to a woman for the second time.¹³ That was a huge thing. I think it all has something to do with each other. Today I would study politics. That didn't appeal to me at the time, so to speak, to understand the political game because I find it very tedious and very exhausting. I preferred to identify myself with this extra-parliamentary opposition in order to be able to move on, to initiate small things, so to speak. That was the more interesting part for me.

At the moment, of course, politics is very important again. I need a little break. When I was a young feminist, so to speak, it wasn't modern at all to be a feminist, but the student movement helped get that started. I grew up in Heidelberg and there were always student demonstrations in the city.¹⁴ Back then it was about the increase in public transport fares but it was also about protesting against the stench that was under the old robes, that was one of those sayings.¹⁵ That something new was about to be created. That's when the first women's bookstore was established and the first women's demos took place and I went there with a lot of enthusiasm.¹⁶ I was 16 back then. It was the kind of topic that really spoke to me. I was against nuclear power. That was also a big topic. Ecology, nuclear

¹³ Oguntoye is referring to Donald Trump's win against Hillary Clinton in the 2016 United States presidential election. Clinton also conceded the party nomination to Barack Obama in the 2008 Democratic primaries. (Caroli, Betty Boyd. "Hillary Clinton." Encyclopaedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hillary-Clinton>, 5/23/20).

¹⁴ The city of Heidelberg is located in the German state of Baden-Württemberg and contains the Heidelberg University. ("Heidelberg." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heidelberg>, 5/23/20).

¹⁵ "Unter den Talaren / der Muff von tausend Jahren," (translated as "under the university gowns, the musty smell of a thousand years") was a catch-phrase of the German student movement, which opposed the antiquated customs of German educational institutions. ("Außerparlamentarische Opposition." (translated as "Extra-Parliamentary Opposition.") Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Au%C3%9Ferparlamentarische_Opposition, 5/23/20).

¹⁶ Lillemor's was Germany's first women's bookstore. It opened in Munich in 1975. ("Female Makers: Pioneering Feminist Projects in Germany." FrauenMediaTurm – Feminist Archive and Library. <https://en.frauenmediaturm.de/feminism-germany-second-wave/feminist-projects/>, 5/23/20).

power no thank you was one of the mottos.¹⁷ There were big campaigns. There were traffic-free Sundays and things like that and then you had stickers on the cars: nuclear power, no thank you. People who had these stickers took people with them who were not allowed to drive on these traffic-free Sundays. Only a few cars with certain license plates were allowed to drive, and they took these people with them. At that time I was called "Miss Environment" and "Emanze" [women's libber] by my comrades at school in the youth club. A title of honour, of course. I thought it was a good idea to keep it that way. It was frightening to discuss nuclear power, for example, and to say: but that's what's written there. We had these small notebooks that explained in detail that it would take a really long time for this nuclear waste to degrade.

And then during this discussion I asked colleagues, in school, "Do you want to build your house next to a nuclear power plant? You realize that your children will be contaminated with radiation and get sick", "Yes, why of course". Some people had no awareness so to speak, these facts just went straight over their head. That was pretty crazy. And it was the same in regards to women's topics. They always said: "You just want women to be the preferred gender". Imagine that. I just said: "No, I only want justice," that you don't just talk about our forefathers, so to speak, or, for example, just talking about the fathers of the Basic Law.¹⁸ I asked them: "What about all the women that searched through the rubble? First of all, men and women were involved in the assembly creating the Basic Law, that's why you also say Fathers and Mothers of the Basic Law. What about all the women who cleaned up after the Second World War, who had to turn every stone, so to speak.¹⁹ They had to clean up because Germany was destroyed and the women had to feed their children and themselves.

I said, "Why are they not honored? Why does no one see them?", so when we have a discussion now, it goes without saying that we remember them as well. And that was seen as me being a women's libber, not emancipation, as we called it later. Emancipation also means liberation, but women's emancipation has always been seen in such a way that it only ends in chaos, it only ends in society being destroyed, so to speak. And I think that it's simply very interesting to see that there are always reasons why I can't treat others the same way. "I'd like to be more just, but I can't, because that would lead to X, Y, Z. So unfortunately I have to exploit people, otherwise the system can't work", and in the 90s, much later, I went to a pretty good, interesting lecture from one of my professors who was considered to be a pretty good professor. There were free lectures, I went there because he is interesting and a historian. And then he ran up and down and said "Hm, hm, hm", because at that time the emancipation movement had already achieved a lot and created the awareness that something had to change and he

¹⁷ "Smiling Sun" badges with the phrase "Nuclear Power? No Thanks" have been an international symbol of the anti-nuclear power movement since the late 1970s. ("Smiling Sun." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smiling_Sun, 5/23/20).

¹⁸ The term "Basic Law" refers to Germany's constitution, which was approved in 1949. ("Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basic_Law_for_the_Federal_Republic_of_Germany, 5/23/20).

¹⁹ This is a reference to "Trümmerfrauen," a term used to refer to the women who cleaned up rubble and played an important role in Germany's reconstruction following World War II. ("Trümmerfrau." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tr%C3%BCmmerfrau>, 5/23/20).

said "They're right that it's unfair, but then who's supposed to do the household?", "How is intellectual work supposed to develop if men aren't exempt from the household?" Well, he was really quite honest and seriously desperate.

He could not imagine how equal rights could be possible, because he thought that if no one would have his back, as in the child labour, domestic work being done by others, then he would not be able to create such intellectual works. I think some gentlemen had to say goodbye to this thought. The next generation of men has grown up I think. Some of them see it differently and some of them still see it that way. That's what I think anyway. But I was lucky so to speak. I was born in a time when I wasn't alone with this topic. At the time I slowly grew up from 14, 16, 18, then I became an MTA, a medical-technical assistant, a women's profession so to speak, but there were always two men in a class. I was in a circle of friends so to speak, then I worked there for two more years, and then I went to Berlin at the age of 22, 23, and I think I was unconsciously looking for the women's movement and probably for my coming out as well. All that was not on an unconscious level, and I think I felt great happiness because there were all these possibilities. Well, I knew from my mother and my grandmother what limitations there are, so to speak, and my mother, for example, had to feed two children as a secretary. As a secretary you earned very little money. I think shop assistants earned even less. Sales assistants, nurses, secretaries, who had to take care of their job first, but on the other hand--they had to feed children, families, but they earned a very small amount of money, and yet she still managed to put aside ten D-Mark a month, which I think was quite some money.²⁰ At the age of 18 I had to pay 2000 D-Mark to get a driver's license.

And she never got her driver's license, because it was too complicated for her to drive, and because it was too expensive. She told me: "I don't want you to be dependent, I don't want your mobility to depend on others, I don't want you to always have to ask others to take you with them". Well, she has done things like that before, even though she always said she has nothing to do with feminism, with women's rights activists on a large scale. But de facto she just wanted to promote my independence. Then she said, "You'll learn it". That's why I became an MTA, and then- that's when I did the compulsory secondary education. In Germany we have something called the tripartite school system.²¹ You can change from one to the other. For my twelfth grade I went to a vocational school, and then

²⁰ D-Mark is an abbreviation for the German currency the Deutsche Mark. The Deutsche Mark was used from 1948 until 1999 when it was replaced by the Euro. ("Deutsche Mark." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deutsche_Mark, 5/23/20).

²¹ Following elementary school (*Grundschule*), Germany's tripartite education system funnels students into various categories of curricula. The three categories are Main School (*Hauptschule*), which offers vocational training, Upper School (*Oberschule/Realschule*), which grants apprenticeships in some service and educational fields, and *Gymnasium*, which prepares students to graduate to Baccalaureate (*Abitur*) and provides admittance to university. (Schneider, Cornelia. (2013). "Germany." In Ainsworth, James (Ed.), *Sociology of education: An A-to-Z guide* (p. 319) SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://books.google.com/books?id=xw5zAwAAQBAJ&pg=PA319&lpg=PA319&dq=tripartite+school+system+germany&source=bl&ots=YJYh8zlbnc&sig=ACfU3U2IzeOSOrSpHZIqnXSGTtFMHUIKZQ&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwikwbr9u8rpAhWGGs0KHWR3CbI4ChDoATAFegQIChAB#v=onepage&q=tripartite%20school%20system%20germany&f=false>, 5/23/20).

I went to high school in the neighboring city. I drove there with my little car. That was also a time of freedom, it was unbelievable. The generation that came after me, they were always worried about the pension, what would happen if something went wrong. I mean, we were just incredibly happy to be able to use money freely. Most of them didn't have to bring money back home while our predecessor generation had to part with some of their money or they had to go to work earlier to earn some money for the family. And in the 70s this began to change. The children were given this freedom, to ensure they could make something out of themselves. And that was simply a beautiful thing. There was no war between us, one was in Cambodia and Vietnam unfortunately and so on, but we had—and that's something we heard from our grandparents, aunts, uncles, that they had to fight in the war at that time, when they were young.²² Basically we were lucky for not being in a war.

Well, we've always been lucky, actually. But then she said, "It's better if you learn a profession", so she chose a profession that also provided a little more money for women. Well, as a newcomer to the profession I actually earned as much as she did with the MTA profession. That's what she had seen in her work. She saw this difference. And maybe my brother still wanted to study as well, but she would only be able to finance one study. It's such a twisted thing. On the one hand she takes care of my independence and my freedom, on the other hand she always had this thought in her head, "I have to take care of the boy and see that he is being supported as well". But he wasn't psychologically able to do that. From an intellectual perspective he was able, because he is very smart, but for psychic reasons, his biography, his fate was just like that. He didn't finish school, no vocational training, nothing at all. That's why I left high school, and that was a stroke of luck. But at that moment I naturally had this feeling— it was nagging, in English you say nagging, so it pulls you down. This little injustice. You can't even say, "try to get the both of us through". Why not? It can't be that bad either. She could also have said, "Then make sure to study quickly and you can still go with him". I would have understood that too. I could have taken care of him. But that old thought prevailed. The boy must be taken care of and that is why that is not possible now.

In the end, I actually financed my entire studies with the MTA profession and then there was also parent-independent BaFöG.²³ I first felt very sorry about it but the great thing about this detour was that I met these friends at the MTA school. That was a great time. We spent two wonderful years in the green grass, not only during the break, we were also together in Florence and so on. The other thing was that, after two years of being an MTA I earned a good amount of money and thought, "For God's sake, I'll have to spend thirty

²² They were referring to WWII.

²³ BAföG is an abbreviation for "Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz," Germany's Federal Training Assistance Act, which controls student financial assistance at secondary schools and universities. The abbreviation is generally used to refer to the financial assistance that higher education students in Germany receive. ("Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bundesausbildungsf%C3%B6rderungsgesetz>, 5/23/20).

years in this profession". I wasn't really interested in the profession. There were colleagues who were simply interested in the details of biochemistry, and then they talked to the doctors. The doctors were always like that. That was also more of an assistant profession. As an MTA, you can provide groundwork very well for the doctors. You do all the rows. That's where you have some independence, because they are very important, these test series. My best friend in the office needs independence and she does something like that in cancer research, for example, she looks after these rows until late into the night when that is necessary and so on. But you always stay in this assistant role. That didn't interest me very much and I wasn't interested in the content either. Well it did interest me a little bit but my heart wasn't attached to it and the job is relatively boring, very monotonous, because now they are doing- back then we used to pipette everything and now the machine does that. You take a certain amount of serum and then you can do ten parameters. You put that into the machine and we are actually only there to calibrate the machine, to coordinate it so that it works, which it can probably do on its own by now. It's a well paid job for a woman's job, but I told myself, "I have to try something else." It was quite a leap. To get out of everyday life and look for something new, for new horizons. Then I was in Berlin and in Berlin there was an event called "Tu Nix".²⁴ It was sort of an alternative festival all over Berlin. They discussed socio-political topics and then there were a lot of concerts and parties.

I went there with people and everywhere I went, I met the same people and thought, "Oh, this is like Heidelberg". Only bigger. That's exactly what "Tu Nix" [Do Nothing] was and two years later there was "Tu Wat" [Do Something] and I was the "Tu Wat" at the second event.²⁵ "Tu Wat" means "to do something". That was a great experience and I eventually choose Berlin as the place for my second education. In Germany you have something called second education. That's when I went to the school for female doctors. It's a school that works by managing itself, and it works by people paying school fees. I got 650 Euro Bafög. That's money from the state to do your second education, without you having to ask your parents, because usually there's a law, for example if you have rich parents, then you couldn't get any support, because the parents first had to show whether they had enough money or not. But this was independent of parents, every child, all the young people have this right, no matter what the parents earn. That was very important, to ensure that this conflict between parents and children would not arise.

Of these 650, we then paid 150 in school fees and the school paid for itself. The school still exists. Now it works a bit differently, but it had a system of self-government We were there during the time of the women's movement and that's when the second women's

²⁴ The "Tu Nix" event was a grassroots organization of leftists held at the Technical University in West Berlin in 1978. It consisted of lectures, panel discussions, demonstrations, and film showings. The event was a response to the German Autumn and is credited as the beginning of West Germany's alternative movement and a change in the political New Left. ("Meet in Tunix." Wikipedia. https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treffen_in_Tunix, 5/23/20).

²⁵ The Tu Wat demonstration was held in Berlin in 1981 in protest of the evictions of squatters from eight houses. ("Tuwat Congress." Wikipedia. <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tuwat-Kongress>, 5/23/20).

class was founded. The first one already existed and we were told: Who wants to participate? Who wants to join the women's class? That was when I started getting into the community, to actively network with the women's movement. That was a great thing.

[Pause]

[Min. 35:30]

KO: And I have just said, I have now arrived in Berlin but how did I actually come to Heidelberg. So I came from Heidelberg from the small town in the big city, like many others, to grow in the big city, the anonymity of the big city.

So I was born in Leipzig and there I grew up. I was born in Zwickau,²⁶ until I went to school, and then we went to Nigeria, where I lived in Nigeria for two years, then there was a very big war there, the Biafra War,²⁷ which was about oil, because Nigeria has a lot of oil, and in the time when the war started, my mother separated from my father and went back to Germany. Then she thought about whether she should go back to the GDR, because she had connections there, and then she realized that it was not a good idea to go back to a locked-up state. Her sister had already arrived in Heidelberg, an aunt lived there too, a cousin of hers, and aunt Mariana was still alive, and then she went there with me. And then my brother unfortunately stayed alone in Nigeria, which was very difficult for him, it was also a man-woman thing again, so that both of us, our egalitarian parents, were told that we are separating, but of course we love you, um, but you can decide with whom you want to stay or go.

And then my brother said yes, he wants to stay with dad, and I said I'd go with mum, and then after a few hours he said he wanted to go with mum, because he was only seven, a very little one. And then he wasn't allowed to. My father let me go because I'm a girl, and didn't let him go because he's a boy. And that is, so this, on the one hand, so to speak, the appreciation that is conveyed on the other hand in reality it was a negative thing. So of course I lost my father, but on the other hand I had two years with my mother for myself, yes? And of course I was in a much better economic situation, yes? And he, who was alone there without a mother, and I, with a 1:1, in the West we have a 1:1 mother-child relationship, so to speak. And an African child learns to feel cared for in the group, so to speak, that doesn't have to be in a 1:1 relationship with the mother. He didn't have that. And then had to relearn, so to speak. I know that a cousin turned to be his strongest attachment figure, so on the one hand he got this advantage, but on the other hand he also experienced many difficult situations as a result. Exactly like they used to say, he should

²⁶ Zwickau is the name of both a district in Saxony, Germany and its capital town. ("Zwickau." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zwickau>, 8/12/20).

²⁷ The Biafra War (1967 – 1970), also known as the Nigerian Civil War, occurred between the Nigerian government and the secessionist state of Biafra. The war was caused by ethnoreligious, political, and economic conflicts between the Nigerian government and the predominantly Igbo state. The war resulted in a large-scale famine in which over three million Biafrans starved to death. ("Nigerian Civil War." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_Civil_War, 8/13/20).

become a pilot, he should become an engineer, he should become a professor and so on, and in the end, this demand that other people project themselves into you, their dreams, is obviously a very heavy burden. It was always clear to me that what he is experiencing is not very nice either, that it is a burden that you can hardly cope with, and since nobody wanted anything from me, I could, so to speak, take the freedom to choose something, yes. I also felt this contradiction very strongly in my childhood. Yes, but well, in real life, I always noticed afterwards that these are all small things, that this is really such a huge issue, the oppression of women.

It started with my first best friend, whom I had when I was 18 in this MTA school, where she tries to tell me that she has experienced this abuse, but the way she says it is not to say it. To say it and not to say it. So I have experienced this taboo, so to speak, through others. Now I was lucky not to be affected by it myself, by physical violence, by sexual violence, but very quickly it became an issue, when growing up, that this is obviously the system, yes? You had to understand that, we all had to understand that first, that is the unimaginable, you could guess that, but it was simply not clear that it was so comprehensive, it was really difficult to understand.

The women's movement was a place where we understood and learned together, it was an incredible pioneering work done by the women who wrote these books, it was also such a stroke of luck for me that I lived in a time where you could read all the books that were published about the new women's movement, which were, I don't know, just a hundred books or so, and you could just know them all and read them several times and it was just so important to find out everything. So even the fairy tales were important. So there was Verena Stefan, she wrote a fairy tale (incomprehensible), you could say a fantasy, science fiction, but that was so important, the idea of another world.²⁸

One of the basic themes we had was, I don't remember what the foremothers had said, that women had no honor. And I thought about it for a very long time. And that is, I think that many white women also often don't think it up to that point, so this dehumanization, this depersonalization of women, yes. We all experience it, yes, there is, so to speak, an inner rebellion against it, but the analysis to say that men are allowed to kill out of honor. Yes. Do I have the right... I am violated in my honor, in my family pride, I have the right to do this or that. And women don't really have this room at all. What makes you feel affected? That something is done to you, that you are hurt, that you are insulted, this kind of depersonalization and what that means, that was simply an incredible disillusionment, revelation, an insight, yes. To see this realization, to have a room for discussion, 10, 30,

²⁸ Verena Stefan (1947 – 2017) was a feminist author from Switzerland who spent much of her life in Germany. Some of her published works include *Häutungen* (English: Shedding) and *Mit Füßen, mit Flügeln* (English: With feet, with Wings.) ("Verena Stefan." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Verena_Stefan, 8/13/20).

with a hundred women, and these things are discussed, so that was just wonderful for me.

And then I come home, I liked my family, and I didn't take such a hard line against them, because I had no reason for it, and then they said, yes, but what do you actually want there, what do you want in the women's movement. I tried to explain that. Then I explained that every third woman is affected by violence, and then my aunt said yes, but our father not! Yes. Actually, the father, we were only women, so apart from my brother, he was the only man. I would say in the small circle of women, and yes, that was nothing special. But I also said he wasn't. He could have been, but he wasn't, but still it's true.

And then, that pain, although I did not experience it myself, I have that pain about this situation and I also say, you do want to, you also want to protect children, yes. That was a basic principle, so to speak, that you do not allow anything to happen to children. And these things already happen to children, it starts with the children. For me it was simply so natural that this must be the fight, that I, the more I dealt with it, the more theory I learned, the more actions I took part in, the more I knew, that is exactly the focus point, from my point of view, where I am, who I am, where you have to start, yes. If you want to fight poverty, if you want to prevent violence against children and women, then you have to do women's movement. Then you have to stand up for equal rights. So that was a very, very, very strong feeling for me, physically.

So then I arrived in Berlin, in the wonderful Berlin that you actually have in your head, that mythical Berlin from the 1920s, the roaring twenties, the golden twenties, where Josephine Baker dances, where cabaret plays and so on, and somehow Berlin always had this broken charm, still, right?²⁹ And I came there, joined the women's movement, and there were many great women there, they all came to Berlin from all over Germany. Of course there were also, I don't know, Hamburg, Bremen, or Munich, but these big connections were of course in Berlin, and the exciting thing was, so to speak, that we had this, this mythical Berlin, which exists for all people, which exists at the women's level, too, so to speak.³⁰

We then gradually discovered that in the 1920s, before the Nazi regime, there were over 600 women's restaurants, women's magazines, women's clubs, and it was an El Dorado.³¹

²⁹ Josephine Baker (1906 – 1975) was a singer, dancer, and activist. She was the first Black woman to play the lead in a major motion picture and was also a symbol of the Jazz Age of the 1920s. She is known for her activism in the French Resistance against Nazi occupation and the Civil Rights Movement. ("Josephine Baker." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josephine_Baker, 8/13/20).

³⁰ Hamburg and Bremen are cities located in northern Germany. Munich is a city in southeastern Germany. ("Hamburg." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamburg>, 5/24/20; "Bremen." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bremen>, 8/14/20; "Munich." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Munich>, 8/14/20).

³¹ El Dorado (literally translated as "The Golden" or "The Gilded (place)") was a mythical city in 16th century South America known for its abundance of treasures. The term is also used to refer to a place full of opportunities or wealth. ("El Dorado." Collins Dictionary. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/eldorado>, 8/14/20).

Mind-Blowing. One could almost not understand it. The topics they discussed. Yes, it was. Actually, one has, we learned every day, we had also converted this male language into a female language, which I caught up on, which bothers me now when I always say "one" (german: man), but we simply learned without hesitation and found out new things. And then there was the feminist women's archive,³² FGZ,³³ Women and History Centre, then there was the lesbian archive,³⁴ and there was also the gay archive,³⁵ and these were only the first three. Then there was a medical women's archive, many places were created, unfortunately these places are gathering dust at the moment, some of them are still there, the luck of the times, and the money that was on its way back then, has led to the fact that women's culture, the whole offset culture, was financed by the state. That was the case in Germany, that was a good thing. And in the 80s women could easily get money from the state.

So Berlin is actually one district, one state and one city. And there were simply funds available for culture and for women. A lot was developed there, for example the FGZ, the women's health center, the women's archive, that all of them have received money for jobs. And they still have them. That is also important. It is not only in Berlin, but also in Hamburg, Cologne and so on.³⁶ That was a great thing. These women's centers, bookshops, they were autonomous, but then there were also things that were not institutionalized. Yes, that didn't prevent the world from spinning around.

I was going to say to myself, I'm black, I'm black German, and I was in this SFE, School for Adult Education, and I did my second education, and in the time when two years passed and we were supposed to take the Abitur,³⁷ well there were incredible connections, where we discussed feminism, why are there no female mathematicians, can women do mathematics at all, we discussed all these topics. Then there were internal disputes, we learned how we actually deal with differences, what does that mean? For example, there

³² The FFBIZ archive, founded in 1978, contains materials that focus on international second-wave feminism. The archive, located in Berlin, is open to the public. ("History." FFBIZ: Das Feministische Archiv (English: "The Feminist Archive.") <http://www.ffbiz.de/ueber-uns/geschichte/index.html>, 8/16/20).

³³ Das Feministische Frauen Gesundheits Zentrum (FFGZ; translated as "The Feminist Women's Health Center"), founded in 1974, is a non-profit health center in Berlin that uses an interdisciplinary approach to treat health concerns specific to women. ("Unser Leitbild." (English: "Our Mission Statement.") Feministisches Frauen Gesundheits Zentrum e.V. <https://www.ffgz.de/ueber-uns/leitbild/>, 8/14/20).

³⁴ Spinnboden: Lesbenarchiv und Bibliothek Berlin (English: Lesbian Archives and Library Berlin) is Europe's oldest and most expansive lesbian archive. The archive began with the group Homosexual Action West Berlin in 1973 and now offers a variety of services in addition to archive access. ("Spinnboden: Lesbian History You Can Touch." Visit Berlin. <https://www.visitberlin.de/en/spinnboden>, 8/16/20).

³⁵ The Schwules Museum (English: Gay Museum) was established in 1985 in Berlin. The museum houses an extensive archive of LGBTQIA+ history dating back to the late 1800s. ("*Schwules Museum*." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schwules_Museum, 8/16/20).

³⁶ Cologne is a populous city in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. ("Cologne." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cologne>, 8/16/20).

³⁷ The Abitur is an examination that German students must pass prior to attending university. ("Abitur." Merriam-Webster. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Abitur#:~:text=%3A%20an%20examination%20that%20students%20in,a%20different%20route%20to%20underemployment>, 8/16/20).

was a book called "Sisters' Dispute",³⁸ which dealt with this kind of conflict, and then there was another book, that was in the publishing house sub rosa, which later became the Orlanda publishing house,³⁹ and these books were just very important, the discussions were also held in real time, but then came the Abitur, and all these disputes stopped, and working groups were formed by those who wanted to take the exam now.

In this time of exams one gets into such a phase of concentration, and I was very enthusiastic, because I had the feeling that everyone had left, I am still here now and want to discuss further and everyone has disappeared. [laughs]. But then they all came back because they were the ones who had an interest in taking that test. And then we prepared for that exam by going to college. Because Audre Lorde⁴⁰ gave three seminars at the Free University⁴¹ on black writers and writing. Audre Lorde was now one of the most important theoreticians, an African-American who had very radical thoughts and formulated them in essays and she worked very often with Adrienne Rich.⁴²

Adrienne Rich is also important. "The dream of a common language" is the name of a book of her poems that we read up and down at the time.⁴³ Also very important. She is of Jewish origin. She's the mother of four sons. (laughs). Five! Five! What am I saying? Five. (laughs). And that was totally exciting. She wrote about her lesbian coming out. She wrote about this feminist point of view and Audre and her exchanged a lot of information about it and they were interesting partners as white and black feminists at that time. And now comes this woman, so both of them together had essays translated into German in one volume. It was titled "power and sensuality",⁴⁴so I would say the most radical lyrics you can imagine until today, for example you can't dismantle the master's house with the

³⁸ *Schwesternstreit*, written by Birgit Cramon-Daiber, Monika Jaeckel, Barbara Köster, Hildegard Menge, and Anke Wolf-Graaf in 1983, outlines the authors' unique experiences of and opinions on conflicts within the women's movement. ("Schwesternstreit – Buch gebraucht kaufen." (English: "Sisters' dispute - buy used book." Booklooker. <https://www.booklooker.de/B%C3%BCcher/Birgit-Jaeckel-Cramon-Daiber+Schwesternstreit/id/A02jIMQ001ZZo>, 8/19/20).

³⁹ The Orlanda publishing house is a social justice-centered publisher founded in 1974 in Berlin. ("Orlanda Frauenverlag." Publishers' Catalogues. <http://www.lights.ca/publisher/db/7/3787.html>, 5/27/20).

⁴⁰ Audre Lorde (1934 – 1992) was a Black American author and social justice activist. Lorde spent many of her later years in Germany and was integral to the Afro-German movement and intersectional activism in Germany. ("Audre Lorde." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Audre_Lorde, 8/19/20).

⁴¹ The Free University of Berlin, founded in 1948, is a prestigious German research university. ("Free University of Berlin." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_University_of_Berlin, 8/19/20).

⁴² Adrienne Rich (1929 – 2012) was an American feminist author and activist. She is well-known for her collection of poetry, *A Change of World*, and for coining the term "lesbian continuum." ("Adrienne Rich." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adrienne_Rich, 8/19/20).

⁴³ *The Dream of a Common Language*, published in 1978, covers Rich's personal life, feminist socio-political stances, and the concept of art as a universal communicator. ("The Dream of A Common Language." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Dream_of_a_Common_Language, 8/20/20).

⁴⁴ "Macht und Sinnlichkeit" (English: "Power and Sensuality"; 1983/1991) is a collection of poems and essays by Audre Lorde and Adrienne Rich., edited by Dagmar Schultz. The work explores racism, antisemitism, the German women's movement, and lesbianism. (Schultz, Dagmar. "Audre Lorde — Her Struggles and Her Visions." Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Gunda Werner Institut: Feminismus und Geschlechterdemokratie. (English: Heinrich Böll Foundation, Gunda Werner Institute: Feminism and Gender Democracy.) http://www.dagmarschultz.com/downloads/audre_lorde.pdf, 8/19/20).

master's tools, is one of the sentences that Audre has shaped. So you can't dismantle the master's house with the master's tools.⁴⁵ A thought about which you can think a lot. [laughs] Which also has a lot to give. Exactly.

Then it was, for example, communicated self-reference is the German translation of - now I forgot - the English statement, but that was again a very important element that brought her to say, women, that women must learn to accept themselves, yes. To really make their power felt. And that I find, that I found very difficult to translate and then there is the German translation. The communicated self-reference, yes. So that on the one hand I accept myself and that I then also share, that is, can share with others. Yes, now this book is coming, the woman who co-wrote this book, and the most important author we discussed at that time is coming to the Free University and we said that we will prepare for the English exam by going to her seminar. And that was, I think, for me a thing that changed my life again, because then I had just my lesbian coming-out two years ago, and then came a black coming out. [laughs]. That's what I call it, because it was actually similar, similar feelings about the problem to say, I, I also have an opinion, so it's not just about being a woman or being black, but also about dealing with it offensively, yes. That is the difference.

And when I had my coming-out as a lesbian, I thought, oh my God, I will have to go to the ghetto, how terrible [laughs]. And that was very difficult for me, because then everyone already knew I was a lesbian, but I didn't know that yet, yes. [laughs]. And everyone asks me, are you already, have you already had your coming out, and I was like huh? I don't know what they're talking about. Because I was, I had to defend myself as a teenager by saying, just because I like women doesn't mean that I don't like men, yeah. That's also true. Because they always said, you are a woman-hater, uh, I mean you are a man-hater. No, I'm not a man-hater, I just love women. However, until that love went a little bit further, [laughs]. There was still a little way to go. And when I got to that point, I really had the feeling that I had this picture in my head, so I go into the ghetto, with head down, behind the wall. But what happened, as soon as I came out, only worlds opened up to me, Yes. So the experience was, so to speak, exactly the opposite of what I expected, so my world didn't get smaller, it got bigger. That was an interesting phenomenon. Yes.

Later, of course, I was discriminated against for being lesbian, of course. People said: "No, not with her, she's a lesbian" and so on and so on, but in this phase I was in, in the beginning it was just wow! I had opportunities that I hadn't experienced in this world where I wasn't lesbian, just like that. A lot of possibilities. And then there was the thing with the black identity awareness. There was Audre Lorde, who gave the seminars and

⁴⁵ Oguntoye is referencing Audre Lorde's famous comment at the 1979 Second Sex Conference. Lorde's essay was later published in a collection of her work, titled *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. (Lorde, Audre. "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House." 1984. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Ed. Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press. 110- 114.

http://s18.middlebury.edu/AMST0325A/Lorde_The_Masters_Tools.pdf, 8/19/20).

then came Gloria Joseph, her partner, and she also once led the seminar and Audre supported us, we were only a handful of blacks, I think three or four people in the seminar, she always supported us.⁴⁶ [laughs]. And she tried to give us a room to talk, but I felt absolutely overwhelmed, yes, I don't know, I was 23 or 24. And then, yes. She always gave us room to talk or to learn to express ourselves. And then I was able to go with her often, if I hadn't been a young black woman I might not have been invited to go with her [laughs]. So once again I was lucky. And Audre became, was something like a mentor for me. She came to Germany again and again for the next eight years, first she was there with the seminar, I always said that it was a mutual love affair between the German women's movement and Audre Lorde. Because we could hear and accept things from Audre Lorde that probably –

[tape breaks off]

[Min. 57:39]

One of my activities in the women's movement [laughs]. I spent my political upbringing, my youth in the women's movement. The first big experience in my first year after my coming out. There I was at the Lesbian Spring Meeting.⁴⁷ The Lesbian Spring Meeting is always at Whitsun and I think it's now 45 years old.⁴⁸ At the age of 40 they had made a film.⁴⁹ However, it was a bit long. [laughs] But I was there again and again. LFT was the abbreviation for Lesbian Spring Meeting. When I was there- I think it was in Osnabrück, somewhere in West Germany.⁵⁰ 1982. You have to imagine 5000 lesbians in one place. Such wonderful big meetings don't exist anymore now. It was so crazy to me back then. I just celebrated my Coming Out and there is also a picture where I sit at an event. Jill Johnston was there, *Lesbian Nation* [laughs].⁵¹ That was really crazy, but it was also interesting. Anyway, I'm sitting in a room with 2000-3000 women. It all took place in tents and it was pouring and raining all the time. I still remember it, but we were all just

⁴⁶ Gloria Joseph (1928 – 2019) was an internationally acclaimed author, social justice activist, and professor. Her published works include *The Wind is Spirit: The Life, Love, and Legacy of Audre Lorde*, which received a Lambda award in 2017. ("International Community Recalls Gloria I. Joseph, Author, Teacher, Activist." St. John Tradewinds. <https://stjohntradewinds.com/international-community-recalls-gloria-i-joseph-author-teacher-activist/>, 8/19/20).

⁴⁷ The annual Lesbian Spring Meeting remains Germany's largest and most famous gathering made by and for lesbians. The meeting occurs on Pentecost weekend and features discussions, workshops, and other events. ("Lesbian Spring Meeting." Wikipedia. <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lesben-Fr%C3%BChlings-Treffen>, 5/23/20).

⁴⁸ Whitsun is a name for the Christian festival of Pentecost, the seventh Sunday after Easter. The day celebrates the Holy Spirit's descent upon the Apostles and Christ's followers. ("Whitsun." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whitsun>, 5/23/20).

⁴⁹ The film Oguntoye is referencing, "Vierzig plus zwei – vier Jahrehnte Lesbenfrühlingstreffen": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r46s6NZvcBA&feature=youtu.be>, 5/23/20).

⁵⁰ Osnabrück is a city in Lower Saxony, Germany. ("Osnabrück." Encyclopaedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Osnabruck>, 5/23/20).

⁵¹ Jill Johnston (1929 – 2010) was an American author, feminist activist, and proponent of the 1970s lesbian separatist movement. She is best known for her book *Lesbian Nation* and her controversial stances of feminism and lesbian separatism. ("Jill Johnston." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jill_Johnston, 5/23/20).

happy. We had a pin that represented the LFT. I had this badge and a friend of mine took a picture of me sitting there among thousands of lesbians. That was cool. That was great. In the evening, of course, there were parties and that was just the time when big events took place. It was a huge movement and something new to discover and learn. Lesbian Spring Meeting.

Then, like many women, I went to these women's events over and over again in order to get to know partners there. So you go everywhere. I was at the-

[01:00:00]

KO: at the women's center. I was at Autofeminista, because that interested me.⁵² I wanted to know how to change a spark plug. We tried out everything that was socially negated, so to speak. Then I visited "Lärm und Lust".⁵³ "Lärm und Lust" still exists today. This is a women's music centre in Berlin. There women could practice music, try out musical instruments. I just went everywhere and was interested. Then at some point there was Begine as well.⁵⁴ This is also a women's café, it exists today as well and it's a place many women call home. What else was there? Dimelo, it hasn't existed for a long time. That was great. Then I visited "Bauschock". It existed for one summer. There were many occupied houses in the eighties in Berlin and one centre was the chocolate factory. It was then called Schokofabrik.⁵⁵ It used to be a chocolate factory and it's in the middle of Kreuzberg, near Oranienplatz.⁵⁶ That was rebuilt as a center, a cultural center with a café, a Hamam bath, which is run by Turkish women, there is a wood workshop in it, a movement floor, so there are a lot of things.⁵⁷ Then there are 20-30 apartments. That was all planned. They received money from the state for that. Of course, this should also be renovated by women. Then I was in a troop of people. They called themselves Bauschock. [laughs] We

⁵² Autofeminista is an auto repair shop in Berlin run exclusively by women. It offers various vocational courses and workshops. (Kraft, Nadine. "Women Explore Berlin." Taz Archive. <https://taz.de/!1242616/>, 5/24/20).

⁵³ Lärm und Lust (translated as "Noise and Lust") is a women's music association in Berlin established in 1982. The center offers workshops, events, and rehearsal spaces for women. ("Musikverein 'Lärm und Lust.'" (translated as "Music Association 'Noise and Lust.'") Musikverein Lärm und Lust. <https://laerm-und-lust.de/>, 5/24/20).

⁵⁴ Begine is a café and meeting center for women in Berlin founded in 1986. It hosts art and education events as well as rentable group meeting spaces. ("About Us." Begine: Treffpunkt und Kultur für Frauen. <https://www.begine.de/ueber-uns.html>, 5/24/20).

⁵⁵ The Schokoladenfabrik center (also referred to as "Schokofabrik" or "Schoko" (translated as "chocolate factory") is the largest women's center in Berlin. It was founded in the 1980s and currently provides women with counseling and educational services as well as recreational opportunities. ("About us." Frauenzentrum Schokofabrik. <http://www.frauenzentrum-schokofabrik.de/index.php?id=22&L=1>, 5/24/20).

⁵⁶ Oranienplatz is a square in the Berlin district Kreuzberg. ("Oranienplatz." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oranienplatz>, 5/24/20).

⁵⁷ Hamam baths, also known as Turkish baths, are public baths that generally include exfoliation, massage, and other relaxation services. ("Hamam, Turkish bath for women." Frauenzentrum Schokofabrik. <http://www.frauenzentrum-schokofabrik.de/index.php?id=25&L=1>, 5/24/20).

had these giant Hilti drills. Do you know what a Hilti drill is? It's a big machine and the drill is so long. It's so thick.

There the holes are drilled into the walls for the heating pipes. They have to be drilled from one floor to another, from one room to another. This follows a plan made by the architect. That was exciting. I also found a lover in this group. It was a very nice affair with Manou, who later became a writer, and we lost sight of each other. But back then you just romped around everywhere, tried out what interested you, what kind of activities interested you. Basically it was about trying everything. I remember learning **[imitation of drilling noises 01:02:56]** eight hours in this "Bauschock", for six hours you do this thing and it vibrates so much that in the evening your hand feels like it's bigger. I thought to myself: "I understand why they're always drunk." [laughs] They don't notice anything anymore. That's such a dull job. It's so hard that I thought to myself: "Okay, men can keep this job." [laughs] Of course, there are a lot of women who are also great craftswomen, and that's awesome, but it was important to try it out, to see if it fits and if it's possible or not. It was about figuring out who is actually suitable for the craft, who actually likes to do that, is there any such thing?

It wasn't so clear. That was the ideal time to try all these things.

Then I was in- So there was this women's week- let me think about this. I think I was at the last two- women's summer university and I was at the last two because after that there was a conflict between the hetero women and the lesbians.⁵⁸ This conflict led to a separation, so there was a lesbian group. Then there was no more women's university and that was kind of a bummer. In other cities there were still women's universities, but in these women's universities there were also about 5000 women. That was still exciting. When there was lesbian week, there were 2000-3000 women there. That was great. I actually had a strong interest in the heteras⁵⁹ as well. I thought they were great and having the same sexuality wasn't so important to me. I liked their spirit and the political interest, that was the important thing. That's why I missed the heteras. That splitting up was so stupid, and that was because there was this discussion about it in this organisation group - I had nothing to do with the organisation group yet. The money came from the state for these events. That was a problem because they said, "Most of them said they didn't want lesbian events that sound too lesbian, as in they didn't want these explicitly named events to be included in the application". Of course, many of the lesbians who were the main organisers of the women's week felt cheated, "Why do I organise this for women if you exclude me or discriminate me as a lesbian? Unfortunately, there was no consensus on this. And then everything kind of fell apart.

⁵⁸ Oguntoye is referring to the Annual Cross-Cultural Black Women's Studies Summer Institute, founded by Andre-Nicola McLaughlin in the late 1980s. The institute focused on diasporic and feminist approaches to issues of social justice. (Florvil, Tiffany. "Forging Transnational Ties: Afro-German Women and the Cross-Cultural Black Womens Studies Summer Institute." ResearchGate.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267901676_Forging_Transnational_Ties_Afro-German_Women_and_the_Cross-Cultural_Black_Womens_Studies_Summer_Institute, 5/24/20).

⁵⁹ A term for heterosexual women

Then there was lesbian week. I think that one lasted for ten years. [laughs] During the lesbian week I worked in some of them on the subject of racism and gave seminars. Before the topic was "racism", the main topic for me was "sexual violence against women". I was affected as a friend. Somehow this was so common in my life that it was always a topic. That's why it was so important to me. I always worked a lot on these events. This lesbian week, it had hundreds of seminars, 100-200. Then you chose the topics that were important to you. Then it was always a whole week. Then came the topic "racism", "making people aware". That was parallel, for example, to the topic of "Lesbianism among cripples". That topic was a very strong one for a while. On the subject of racism, I think I went to the organizing committee in 1992. For example, I participated for two years. Then there was a year when there was a racist scandal. That's when it was decided that the next week should be about "racism" and then I co-organized. I always got involved in this organizing. But I had already told you before that I worked on the book "Farbenkind - Afrodeutsche Frauen auf den Spuren nach ihrer Geschichte".⁶⁰

The book also originated from the women's movement. That is, it was published by the Orlanda publishing house. I don't think another publisher would have done this book, but there was no awareness in the majority society or in Germany at all about racism. At Orlanda a publisher got involved with the subject and together with **[unintelligible 01:08:53]** encouraged us to do that, and then we worked for two years to find women who would tell their story. We also discussed whether we should interview men as well, and then decided against it, assuming that we thought that a men's book would certainly be written afterwards. Unfortunately, it never came into being. There are only individual biographies of individual men, but it was nevertheless important to do this as a women's book. It turned out afterwards that it didn't play a huge role anyway. The men could read the texts just as well, for example the texts were read aloud in an event. That also worked, because that was easy to experience as black Germans. Back then we just couldn't work out what the differences between women and men and their experiences are. Then we found two women who were born in the Weimar Republic.⁶¹ This suddenly gave us a story about how black people lived here under National Socialism.

[01:10:00]

⁶⁰ "Farbenkind - Afrodeutsche Frauen auf den Spuren nach ihrer Geschichte" (Translated as "Show Your Colors - Afro-German Women on the Trail of Their History"), written by Katharina Oguntoye, May Ayim, and Dagmar Schultz explores Afro-German women's unique experiences with racism and the authors' investigation into their history. (Oguntoye, Katharina; Ayim, May; Schultz, Dagmar (ed.): Show your colors. Afro-German women on the trail of their history. Fembooks.

<https://www.fembooks.de/Katharina-Oguntoye-May-Ayim-Dagmar-Schultz-Hrsg-Farbe-bekennen-Afro-deutsche-Frauen-auf-den-Spuren-ihrer-Geschichte>, 5/25/20).

⁶¹ The Weimar Republic, named after the town of Weimar, was Germany's government in the period between the end of World War I and the beginning of the Nazi regime. ("Weimar Republic". History. <https://www.history.com/topics/germany/weimar-republic>, 5/27/20).

KO: or rather how they survived. They were young people who grew up. Of course, it was great to meet those who were willing to share their stories and they had a lot to share with their family. Yes and they put that in the book. It was a very important part for them. The youngest was 14 and the oldest was 65. So this is still a handbook which has its own value. When I was in Nigeria in school, in the second class I heard the story for the first time. In the second or third class.

The term "to enter history". To make a mark on history. And then I came home and said: "Mommy, mommy, I want to enter history". And that's crazy. These omens. They were actually a premonition and I have actually become a part of German history with this book. I think that's really funny. I always try to keep it off my back a little bit in my private life, because I-well, that's not just my thing, but it's also somehow a nice thing that we could achieve a lot, so to speak. What we have achieved by showing our colours. "Farbe bekennen" released in 1984, I worked on "Farbe bekennen" till 86 and then the book came out and that was too expensive. Nobody wanted to pay 30 DM for it.⁶² It also had something to do with the topic of racism, and the taboo of racism was very strong back then. And then May Ayim and I decided to do events.⁶³ Readings to propagate the book. The idea behind it was that we thought we wanted people to see the work we did in those two years, to make sure that it would be accessible.

And that was the beginning. I counted up to 50, how many interviews I gave and then I noticed relatively fast that I like that, that I can do that, because if you do a radio interview, for example, then you don't have to talk for two hours like we're doing right now. You only have three minutes. And how do you get your message across in three minutes? Because the questions they always ask you first is this: Tell me about your bad experiences. When did you really get hurt?

And that's where most people tell you something and go back to that experience and until you can tell them what you actually wanted to say the time is up of course and then they never do an interview again because it's a terrible experience to expose yourself so to speak. So basically you can't answer this question, it's not legitimate either. You don't go around saying: "Show me your scars! Can I see them? Can we take a photo of them? I just came up with that sentence and that's how it is. That the people- that it's far too direct and actually has nothing to do with the political work we grew into. To learn that, to say that. I was always interested in saying: My parents were a normal couple, they fell in love and that was the basis of my existence.

⁶² DM is an abbreviation for Deutsche Mark.

⁶³ May Ayim is the co-author of "Farbe bekennen." (Oguntoye, Katharina; Ayim, May; Schultz, Dagmar (ed.): Show your colors. Afro-German women on the trail of their history. Fembooks.

<https://www.fembooks.de/Katharina-Oguntoye-May-Ayim-Dagmar-Schultz-Hrsg-Farbe-bekennen-Afro-deutsche-Frauen-auf-den-Spuren-ihrer-Geschichte>, 5/25/20).

It was simply like that for me. Or I simply drew a lot of strength from the diversity of my biography because I know Africa. I mean it's the same for me now. If you've never been to Africa or if none of your African parents have a positive image of Africa it might be different. But I just had a positive picture of Africa and at the same time a positive picture of Germany. So it grew together well and we just wanted to say that we are there. That's what it was all about. To introduce ourselves to the world. We are here and there is not so much to marvel at, but this is a completely normal thing, because if people come together, they really come together and then new children are born. Yes and that was an interesting process. I just got into this work of the lecturer and at first I did workshops alone, later I did it together with my girlfriend.⁶⁴ She is Canadian. She was the white foreigner and I was the black native, that alone always had this "Aha" effect. My stereotype is wrong. That has always worked quite well. She did a lot of anti-racism work in Canada and the USA, and she brought methods and insights to these workshops and that was always very good to convey in combination.

SW: Exactly.

KO: Those were the two work structures I dealt with a lot over many years, the lesbian and women's movement was still very active, so as I said I always went to the Lesbian Spring Meeting. I didn't go to the Lesbian Week anymore, because I didn't want to, they were opening it to the transmen, man to woman, so to speak. And once again a lot of arguments were involved. Arguments between each other. That happened all over the world in the women's movement and that was a point at which I simply left, because that was just a feeling I had from the beginning. I didn't really want to argue with women or with black people publicly. That's just not the message I want to convey. Maybe in a private circle you can argue about these topics, but I wouldn't want to do that on a stage. That's why I decided to no longer be a part of it. And for me that meant to leave. To say: "that is no longer my discussion." I can understand it but I don't have anything peaceful to contribute now, because for me it was already quite clear that these are women's spaces we have fought for this and I simply expected the others to respect that and say: Can we open this up for them and create topics that allow us to work together? It's a cool request.

But to say, you have no right to your space. I can't accept that. I must say that was absolutely terrible and those were young women who then attacked other women on behalf of this man to woman concept, for these transsexuals, so to speak, and they insulted them, called them conservative or reactionary and they didn't really seem to have any awareness. So that's exactly why I made this decision. You'll end up in the devil's kitchen if you put up with this shit. It's like arguing with yourself. So what now? How can I talk about a lesbian week, women's week, how can I talk about solidarity among women when we start fighting to the death with ourselves. I think there is enough conflict without

⁶⁴ Oguntoye is referring to her partner, fellow writer Carolyn Gammon. (Goliger, Gabriella. "From Fredericton to Berlin." Canadian Writers Abroad. <https://canadianwritersabroad.com/2019/10/03/from-fredericton-to-berlin/>, 5/30/20).

this. I mean, of course there is a fight. There will always be fighting. And there will always be enough arguments. So the issue of racism and migration has also led to a lot of big differences, but that was a dispute with each other. It wasn't pretty either, it wasn't nice. But I was not affected because I was not in the women's shelter movement.⁶⁵ It took place mainly in the women's shelter movement.

Well, for me it was easy then-- it was outdated. And then I think it was also the point at which I and my girlfriend - we made it through this second chance in education and came to the point at which we found our professions so to speak.

Some went to university, others were glad they went to high school but now I want to become a homeopathic practitioner or something else and for me- due to my connection to "Farbe bekennen", well something happened that year. It appeared in the year 86 and that's when the initiative "Schwarze Deutsche" was founded. It is now called Initiative "Schwarze Menschen in Deutschland"⁶⁶ and at the same time the women's group was called "ADEFRA - Afrodeutsche Frauengruppe" and in these contexts I was active for ten years.⁶⁷ And then when I left the women's movement I had the need to have some continuity. When I start new projects I want them to last for a long time. I was also active in the Afro-German movement, and it was important for me to create something where black children and their families- they were often white mothers.⁶⁸ Now they are also black women, from Africa. But at that time they were often white mothers with black children and African or African-American fathers or they were from the Caribbean. And to create a framework, so to speak, where I can offer something for the kids. That's where Joliba came into being, because the Schwarze Deutsche initiative was always about one's own identity.⁶⁹ That was also a really great time, those ten years, to find out is there something like an Afro-German culture? What is our place here? Where do I want to be?

⁶⁵ The women's shelter movement gained momentum in West Germany with the opening of the country's first women's shelter in 1976. The West Berlin group "Women Helping Women" received funding to open the shelter to focus on issues of domestic violence. (Freeland, Jane. (2019). Domestic abuse and women's lives: East and west policies during the 1960s and 1970s. In K. Hagemann, D. Harsch, & F. Brühöfener (Eds.), *Gendering post-1945 German history: Entanglements* (p. 259). Berghahn Books.

https://books.google.com/books?id=7jiPDwAAQBAJ&pg=PA54&lpg=PA54&dq=domestic+abuse+and+womens+lives+freeland+jane&source=bl&ots=zetiick6FH&sig=ACfU3U2IEbeT_LBqD08tp-ioFj16lcvs1w&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjh3FTlwdzpaAhXEKs0KHf_0Bd4Q6AEwBXoECAkQAQ#v=onepage&q=domestic%20abuse%20and%20womens%20lives%20freeland%20jane&f=false

⁶⁶ Schwarze Menschen in Deutschland (translated as "The Initiative of Black People in Germany") is an anti-racist non-profit organization in Germany. Their objectives are to fight racial discrimination and exploitation as well as create physical space and support for black youths and political projects. ("ISD-Bund e.V." ISD Online. <http://isdonline.de/>, 5/30/20).

⁶⁷ ADEFRA e.V. – Schwarze Frauen in Deutschland (translated as "Black Women in Germany") is a cultural and political forum created by and for black women. The forum was founded in the mid-1980s by a group of black activists in Berlin, which included Audre Lorde and Katharina Oguntoye. ("Welcome." Generation Adefra." <http://www.adeфра.com/>, 5/30/20).

⁶⁸ The Afro-German movement began in the 1980s and pushed for the visibility of Afro-German people and intersectional feminism. Audre Lorde was a key proponent of the adoption of the term "Afro-German." ("Afro-Germans." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afro-Germans>, 5/30/20).

⁶⁹ Joliba is a non-profit organization and intercultural networking group co-founded by Katharina Oguntoye in 1997 in Berlin. Joliba advocates for intercultural understanding and offers a variety of psycho-social services for families, specifically African-German families. ("About Us." Joliba: Interkulturelles Netzwerk in Berlin e.V. <http://www.joliba-online.de/index.php?/English-Version/about-us.html>, 5/30/20).

Who do I want to be? I encountered these kind of events for the first time in the Netherlands, they had events that was a place where we met as well. Then I thought, what's going on now? Nobody speaks to me, nobody looks at me because I was normal. My life experience has always been like this: the moment I speak somebody comes over and wants something from you, wants to be friends with you, wants to ask you something. Blah-blah-blah. And to realize that whenever I want to get to know someone I have to go and talk to them, that was a new experience for me. And to experience the same in the Afro-German group in such a way that now nobody has any strange expectations of you at all, but to experience yourself again in a completely different way than what you were used to. That was interesting.

Not another biography or whatever, or a fantasy of someone. Now it's just about being myself and how I behave or how I position myself within the group. That was an interesting and important experience. But that was also-- After ten years it came to an end, because many-- I was one of the oldest when we started. I was 25 and the youngest was 13. Now in Berlin. So there were older people in Wiesbaden who were about 30.⁷⁰ But in any case this group was practically- after ten years- around 25, at the end of 20, at the point where they had finished their studies. Now the thing at the center was creating a family and that's when people slowly drifted apart. But then new impulses slowly came into being. But I could not implement what I wanted within the initiative of "Schwarze Deutsche". That is to say, to confirm that something lasting is developing and that's why I joined an Afro-Brazilian colleague and a German woman, whom I knew from the women's movement, who had an Afro-German family and who contributed very much to the anti-Semitism discussion in the women's movement. With the two of them I founded the association. Then she left relatively quickly, because the financing of the subculture ended in the middle of the nineties. When we founded the association it was the year 96, 97 and it could not be foreseen yet, but there was no more project financing. So you had to organize mixed financing. That was a bit dramatic, because the colleague left due to financial constraints, because she had to feed her family. I noticed that it would be difficult to build this project with my colleague. The whole thing seemed to be crumbling but we built it back up again. I neither studied business administration nor did I engage in fundraising. I was a historian.

I was interested in education and art. That was very difficult. Then it almost took us 20 years to get actual funding for the work of Joliba. But among all the difficult aspects there were also good aspects. We actually had-- the contents stood in the foreground. There were a lot of volunteers from different contexts. So I was there, had my own development in this association. I led it the next 20 years until now. Then that was always - Then I had my wave, there were loud young white men. Then I had a time, there were completely many young white women. Then suddenly there were a lot of Americans. They always

⁷⁰ Wiesbaden is the capital city of Hesse Land in southern Germany. ("Wiesbaden." Encyclopaedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Wiesbaden>, 5/30/20).

came in groups like that. That was funny. Without having an appointment so to speak. But it was also a joy. I had to learn that they would go again. So it's always like that, volunteers, especially those who have quite a lot of capacity, they leave relatively quickly. But there are others as well, it's all about mobilization. They are encouraged to find their own way through the work in the association. But then they are away from the work of the association. Of course I imagined it differently. I thought, well, more will join and then we will build this together. Then it turned out that it wasn't like that. We were a role model. We were a pioneer and sent ideas and pictures into the world. That was a great thing. We did cultural events. We did educational events. I made a historical film series with Tobias Nagl, a cultural historian.⁷¹ He always borrowed from the Federal Archives and stuff like that. We combined social work with cultural work. That meant it could stabilize and support each other, because I worked with black children. From the beginning they always said: "Why do you need an association for black people? When the topic was about women you could say: "Listen, women make up half of humankind. We have a right to have our own space.

No one says the Lions club can't be for men only."⁷² But-- I was often speechless. I didn't know what else to say, because if you don't understand that, you just don't understand it. So they've been hiding the subject of racism, so to speak, and why? They can go to another social agency. "Why not?" is what I should have said. I don't know. But I couldn't think of a suitable argument. But of course I knew what I wanted and that it was necessary to make a social offer once. That was also just being professional. So we noticed that very quickly. I tried to go for social offers for the initiative "Schwarze Deutsche" before and that was simply too difficult. You have to have specialist knowledge to be able to absorb a lot of things, because if certain problems are tackled, then it can become too difficult very quickly. There are also spaces, of course. This is the case with Joliba, where you help each other as peers, as neighbours and so on.

As a community. That also works. But the community had to grow first, that took quite a while. This community that we have. So in Joliba it's a community that has no limits. So it was a very conscious decision to say, I don't care whether they are men, women, Asians, Arabs or Germans. That doesn't matter at all, but they should want to work together on a topic. No matter which topic. And then people came and they brought their culture with them. We, who started it, brought along the theme of the Afro-Germans and the African culture. So through the cultural work we were able to convey that we also care about this opinion of society, that the image of Africans changes in society. On the other hand, when people just have problems, we also have experts who are able to respond to them. So to this day I believe there are two psychologists, one of whom does not work at all. So she is

⁷¹ Tobias Nagl is an academic at Western University in Ontario. His work explores film theory, post-colonialism, and political modernism. ("Tobias Nagl." Western Arts & Humanities. <https://www.uwo.ca/english/people/nagl.html>, 5/30/20).

⁷² Lions Club International is a service organization established in 1917. The organization is non-political. ("Lions Club International." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lions_Clubs_International, 5/30/20).

no longer working as a psychologist in Berlin. That is still a field that is not occupied at all.

But at least there are already some social workers. We do a reception work. These are not all African or black helpers, but others as well. But then, as it were, they are able to respond differently to the clients thanks to Joliba's concept. When they come to us they see an exhibition of black artists or, I don't know, a historical theme. That's incredibly satisfying. So that developed very well as a combination. Now I think I have to stop.