

**GLOBAL FEMINISMS PROJECT
PODCAST SERIES:
CONTEXTUALIZING FEMINIST VOICES**

SITE: GERMANY

**Transcript of Verena Klein
Interviewer: Kristin McGuire**

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Intro: This podcast series, *Contextualizing Feminist Voices*, is designed to provide background information for people using the Global Feminisms Project website. The podcasts aim to provide users with a well-informed perspective on interesting aspects of the interviews from a particular country. For each episode one of the project staff interviews an expert on that country site.

Kristin McGuire: Welcome to this episode of *Contextualizing Feminist Voices*. My name is Kristin McGuire. I'm talking with Verena Klein, who will provide some insight on the German interviews. Verena, could you start by identifying one or two themes that come up in the interviews that users should pay close attention to-- themes that are particularly important in Germany women's movement, scholarship, or activism?

Verena Klein: So, one interesting theme that runs through the interviews, is the increasing institutionalization of the women's movement in Germany. And after the protests of 1968 and its associated feminist movement, one can learn from the interviews that since the 1980s, the women's movement has become increasingly differentiated. In other words, various interest groups such as immigrants, lesbians, and academics, each organized themselves into their own associations to advocate for their specific concerns. And although the interviewees do not explicitly articulate this, the interviews demonstrate the specific process of institutionalization of the women's movement in political associations and institutions, as well as its struggles or struggles connected with that. For example, the interview with Sigrid Metz-Goeckel captures how the women's movement has influenced higher education in Germany, such as the establishment of women's research centers. Heidi Meinzolt demonstrates how issues of the women's movement found their way into the newly formed Green Party, and the archives also have one interview that offers an excellent discussion of the tradition of black women's activism in Germany. Katharina Oguntoye initiated the nonprofit intercultural association, Joliba, that mostly works with African and German African families, which provides an example of how organizations were formed by black activists and intellectuals. The intersection between the women and lesbian movement is represented in the interviews, centered around the Women's Center Begine in Berlin. Moreover, those interviews are a powerful demonstration of how activism may be performed on a day-to-day basis, by a variety of ways, including through the creation of art and dance. And in addition, the interviews demonstrate the wide range of innovations in the cultural sphere: How women's theatre groups, bands and so on were founded during the women's movement. However, users might be surprised, but from a historical perspective the institutionalization of the women's movement came along with a decrease of demonstrative forms of activism, with the consequence that the attention and public interest the women's movement received declined more and more over time.

KM: That's great. Thank you. I wonder if we could also talk for a minute about some topics that would be illuminating about the women's movement in a particular setting that aren't covered in these interviews. Are there topics that you'd like to point out for users to notice that are actually missing from the German collection?

VK: The interviews focused mostly on the women's movement in West Germany. So one topic that comes up, only in passing, is the history of the women's movement in the GDR.¹ In the GDR, policies on women's issues were dominated by the agenda of the SED, the state party of the GDR. But from the 1980s onwards, various women's opposition groups formed - which were, interestingly, mainly organized under the umbrella of the Church. That is an issue I would like to say that is missing in the archives. Another issue is that, in Germany, most people still associate the women's movement with the name Alice Schwarzer. Alice Schwarzer organized, for example, the "Stern" campaign: "Wir haben abgetrieben"; in English, "We have had an abortion," in which hundreds of women admitted to having had an abortion. This campaign was historically important for the right to a legal abortion and an end to the criminalization of abortion in Germany. She also founded the first German-language feminist magazine, called "Emma." Interestingly, although Alice Schwarzer might be Germany's best-known feminist,² she is not mentioned in one of the interviews.

KM: That's really helpful. Thank you very much.

Outro: Thank you for listening to this episode of *Contextualizing Feminist Voices* created by the Global Feminisms Project. The entire podcast team hopes it will help you understand and enjoy the materials on the website. If you liked this episode, check out the other podcasts in this series, as well as materials about countries, teaching resources, and interviews.

¹ German Democratic Republic, often referred to in the U.S. as "East Germany."

² Schwarzer is also today quite a controversial figure, not only because of her feminism.